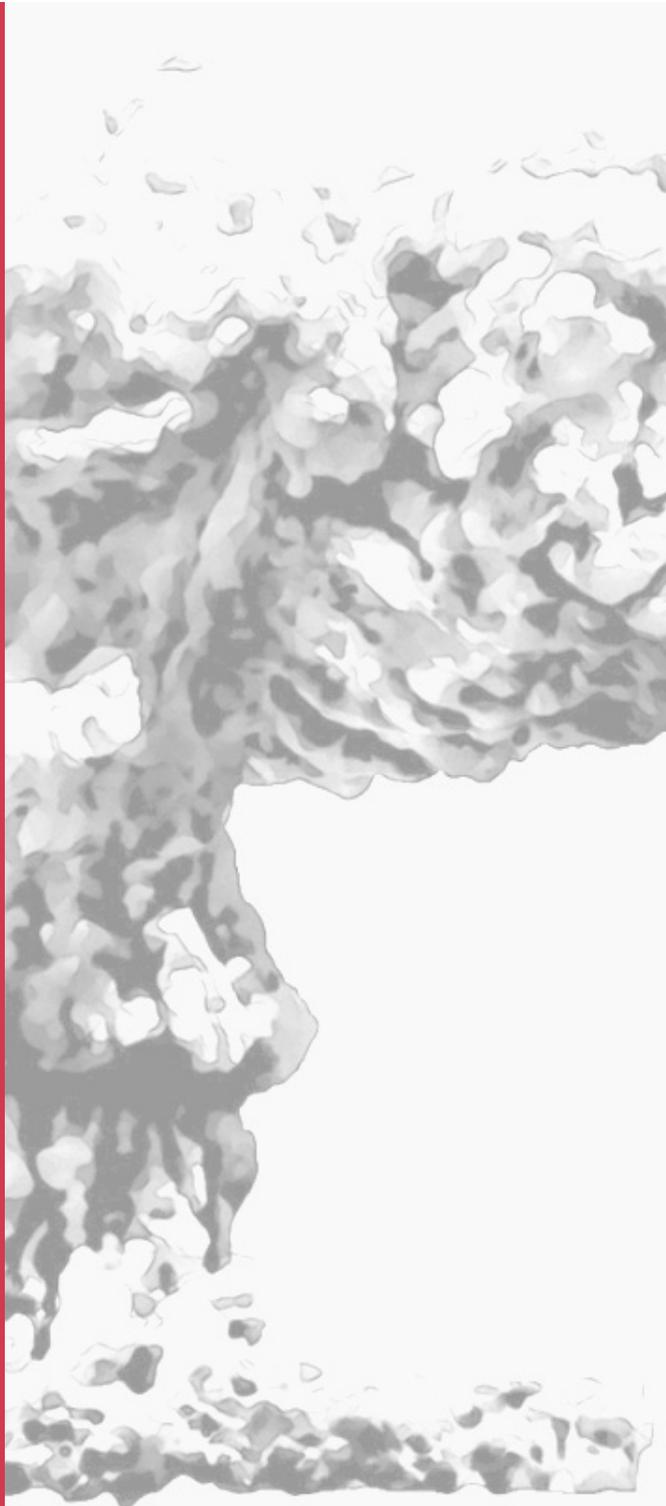


END INFO

European
Nuclear
Disarmament

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Nuclear Ukraine

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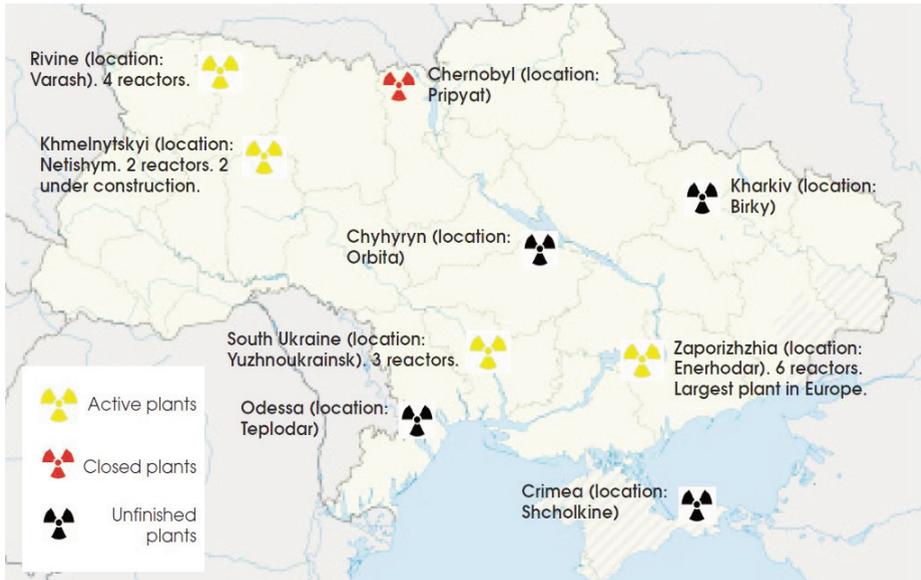
Up until the dissolution of the USSR, Ukraine hosted about a third of all Soviet nuclear weapons. Following a 1991 referendum, where an overwhelming proportion voted for independence, the fate of these Soviet weapons was in the hands of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Ukraine was a 'founder' of the CIS but did not actually join after declining to sign the CIS Charter in 1993.

It was not until 1994 that Ukraine formally agreed to dismantle the

'left behind' nuclear weapons system. That same year it signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty and renounced nuclear weapons possession for good.

Nuclear weapons possession was firmly and quite rightly renounced in 1994 but nuclear power has been an enduring feature of Ukraine's infrastructure. The risks and hazards of nuclear power have been well documented, not least in the recent Spokesman Dossier titled *Nuclear Power? But the people of Ukraine have no need for book-length summaries of the potentially deadly consequences of nuclear power for in the north of the country, on the Belarus border, sits Chernobyl. Such peace-time risks have now been joined by the acute risks of nuclear power in times of war. As Jan Vande Putte, co-author of a recent Greenpeace study, points out: "For the first time in history a major war is being waged in a country with multiple nuclear reactors and thousands of tons of highly radioactive spent fuel". The Greenpeace study (02/03/22) focuses on severe nuclear hazards at just one of Ukraine's nuclear power sites: the Zaporizhzhia plant, which with six nuclear reactors is the largest such plant in the whole of Europe. The study sets out the risks:*

"In a worst-case scenario, where explosions destroy the reactor containment and cooling systems, the potential release of



radioactivity from both the reactor core and spent fuel pool into the atmosphere could create a disaster far worse than (at Fukushima) ... with areas of land hundreds of kilometres from the reactor site potentially becoming inhospitable for decades. Even without direct damage to the plant, the reactors rely on the electric grid for operating cooling systems, on the availability of nuclear technicians and personnel and access to heavy equipment and logistics.”

If Putin’s invasion of Ukraine and his subsequent nuclear threats weren’t bad enough - and they are very bad indeed - then the prospect of nuclear disaster, either deliberate or accidental, compounds an already awful situation.

If those who attempt to maintain some form of safety at the Chernobyl site are prevented from doing so, if supplies are cut off, if shifts cannot change or similar then Putin will have yet more death and destruction to account for. If a single shell or missile ‘accidentally’ hits just one reactor at one of the active plants then the consequences could be immense. If electricity supplies are disrupted and cooling systems fail, then nuclear-meltdown and all that means could unfold. These are risks of waging ‘conventional war’ in places with nuclear power plants. The world knows all of the risks of nuclear power but has failed to act. Will it take another ‘unthinkable’ disaster like Chernobyl to force the issue? We must hope that it doesn’t.

Meanwhile, as energy supplies are impacted as a consequence of

Putin's actions, there will be many who rush towards nuclear power as a means of 'energy independence'. Such a rush is misjudged on many levels - not least the questions of timescale and interdependence of nuclear fuel supply - but it will be fundamentally misjudged because nuclear power is dirty, dangerous and - as can be seen from events in Ukraine - potentially deadly.

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End this war

Tom Unterrainer

It is not possible to fully capture the appalling dimensions of a war by listing grim statistics. If such statistics made a difference to those who control the armies and institutions that wage war, then millions slaughtered in wars, large and small, over past decades would not have perished. The disturbing truth is that human life means little to war-makers. A different class of mathematical object matters much more to such people: the calculus of power.

We are the opposite of war-makers. We aim for peace and strive to remove all roadblocks to it. So in reckoning with the calamities produced by President Putin's invasion of Ukraine, we absorb the grim statistics. The UN Office of the

High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that between 4am on the morning of 24 February 2022 and midnight on 12 April 2022, civilian casualties totalled: "485 men, 313 women, 31 girls, and 54 boys, as well as 72 children and 977 adults whose sex is yet unknown". 1,932 corpses. In addition, many thousands of men, women, boys, girls and children have suffered injuries of which many will be life-changing. The report comments:

Most of the civilian casualties recorded were caused by the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery and multiple launch rocket systems, and missile and air strikes.

Added to the civilian deaths are those of the 'combatants'. According to Ukrainian, Russian and NATO estimates, thousands on each side have died in the fighting. Both Russian and Ukrainian forces include conscript fighters.

To these numbers should be added all those who have died in the eight years of fighting in Eastern Ukraine/Donbass between 2014-2022 and all those yet to be slaughtered. As in all wars, the death toll only ever increases. This war must end.

In a 1964 letter to German social psychologist and humanist philosopher Erich Fromm, Bertrand Russell argued that: "War should be

treated as murder is treated. It should be regarded with equal horror and with equal aversion." War is organised murder. The organisers of murder together with the individual murderers richly deserve our collective horror and aversion.

In the case of the war in Ukraine, international legal procedures have been initiated to catalogue the crimes already committed and to document those that will come if the war continues. Tribunals and hearings are under preparation. The leaders of NATO member states have been very clear in describing the horrors of the war in Ukraine and in identifying a culprit. Yet Mr Biden, Mr Johnson and allies are less forthcoming in their denunciations of the wars, some of them 'illegal', waged by US, British and NATO forces. Mr Johnson is vocal on crimes in Ukraine but silent on crimes in Yemen, a horror-show of human suffering imposed on that country by Britain's ally, Saudi Arabia, and fuelled by arms sales from the UK. Mr Biden sees horror in Ukraine but sees nothing wrong with the wars he supported over decades of 'public service'.

As bad as this rank hypocrisy is, the stark fact is that the US, UK and allies in the nuclear-armed NATO alliance are already preparing for the next war. Peace, justice and human rights are not actually on their agenda.

The next war

Without doubt, ultimate responsibility for the war in Ukraine rests with Mr Putin. It would, however, be untrue to say that each and every opportunity to de-escalate was taken. *END Info* and other publications traced the facts of these failures and documented the troubling developments that went with them. We argued for alternative measures: real security and cooperation, denuclearisation and a nuclear-free-zone in Europe. We advocated for diplomacy rather than brinkmanship. In so doing, we echoed the calls of the peace movements throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, when opportunities for a comprehensive change of course seemed credible after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Rather than taking steps to achieve real security, NATO expanded both geographically and in terms of posture. NATO is now a 'global' force with an ever-expanding area of operation.

Despite the growing risks, 2021 seemed like a year of real possibilities compared to today. In 2021 we witnessed widespread discussion in Germany on the future of US nuclear bombs stationed in that country under NATO agreements. We witnessed some NATO member states agreeing to send observers to the First State Parties meeting of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Think-tanks and trade unions were

actively engaged in developing a new approach to common security. Everything has shifted in a deadly direction.

It is common knowledge and common sense that all wars and military conflicts end in diplomacy and negotiation. Even where 'military victory' at the expense of murder, death and destruction is 'achieved' by one side or another, diplomacy and negotiation conclude the matter. It will likely be the case that the horrors in Ukraine will end in a similar fashion. Everyone knows this, yet those in power do not have the good sense to act on this basis. Rather, they are preparing for the next war.

For example, just three days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a referendum in neighbouring Belarus approved a new constitution that ditched the country's non-nuclear-weapon status (27 February 2022). According to reports, 65.2% of those who voted agreed to this change, which makes it possible, for example, for Russia to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus. No doubt, Mr Lukashenko will tell the people of Belarus that such a move 'enhances our security'. Such a turn of phrase will be familiar to the peoples of Finland and Sweden, two countries which look set to join the NATO nuclear-armed alliance to 'enhance security'. If it's true that the Belarus decision has made the world a more dangerous place, then it is also true that Finland and

Sweden joining NATO makes the world a more dangerous place.

Military 'solutions' are nothing of the sort, they just bring greater risks and a greater possibility of death and destruction. 'Security' is not enhanced with nuclear weapons or by joining a nuclear-armed alliance. Rather than achieving 'security', risks are multiplied and the foundations for the next war are established.

Militarisation

Preparations for the next war can be detected not only in the serial failures to pursue peace, the geographic expansion of NATO, the development of new nuclear weapons and the rest. Europe is now entering a period of rapid re-militarisation. If we wind the clock back a year or two, we will recall President Trump's repeated complaints about the lack of military spending by European states. Trump has departed the political scene and we should hope that he never returns. However, Trumpian levels of military spending are now on the agenda.

As social conditions in Europe spiral ever downwards, as the prospect of widespread poverty intensifies, as living costs skyrocket and as the impacts of Covid and the deficiencies of the economy endure, European countries are pledging billions in increased military spending. Trump would be proud. These things cannot be isolated

from the growth of right-wing political forces across the continent: from the Johnson government in Britain, through the streets and voting booths of France, to the government of Hungary. The situation is dangerous. Billions of Euros for machines of murder and destruction whilst the poor get poorer will not 'guarantee security'. Quite the opposite.

The dimensions of this crisis are not limited to developments in Europe. Note the already-shifting remit of the 'AUKUS' alliance between Australia, the UK and US. Within the past month, it has been announced that this alliance will now cover the development and deployment of hypersonic missiles. For what purpose? Who will be the target? Additionally, further efforts have been initiated to include Japan in the alliance. Such a move would massively escalate existing tensions in the region and would mark a significant change in military posture for Japan.

The arc of militarisation extends across the Atlantic, over Europe and far into the southern hemisphere. Existential risks follow this same arc.

End this war ... stop the next one

The peace movements face a monumental challenge as a result of Putin's war and the militarism of NATO and Europe. There are visible tensions and sharp disagreements. We are, however, united by an understanding that the immediate

tasks are to end the war in Ukraine, end the death and destruction that come with it and to resist the drives to escalation. We are also united by the aim of stopping anything like this happening again. To achieve our aims, we must be clear-sighted about the longstanding dynamics and the more recent, dramatic, shifts. We must understand the potential consequences and prepare to resist them.

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Europe is militarising

Ludo De Brabander

What came before

NATO's relations with Ukraine date back to immediately after independence in 1991. The North Atlantic Alliance included the country in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991) and the Partnership for Peace program (1994). From 1997, cooperation was deepened with the establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC). In 2008, the NATO summit in Bucharest decided that Ukraine could eventually become a member of the military alliance, without, however, opening the procedure for this (Membership Action Plan, MAP). Russia responded by labeling Ukraine's membership as a "red line." In 2009 the Euro-Atlantic military integration

of Ukraine was started through an 'Annual National Programme'.

Ukraine has been actively contributing to NATO military operations ever since. From then on, NATO also conducts annual multinational manoeuvres in Ukraine (under the name 'Rapid Trident') and in the Black Sea. The latter regularly take place off the coast of Crimea, which led to a serious incident last year between a British frigate and the Russian army, during which warning shots were fired. Moscow considers such military exercises 'provocations'. Secret British documents that were unintentionally made public show that scenarios of possible Russian reactions were calculated in advance.

Since the Warsaw summit (2016), NATO support to Ukraine has been provided through a 'Comprehensive Assistance Package'. In 2019, Ukraine's pursuit of NATO membership was constitutionally enshrined by Kiev. In 2020, Ukrainian President Zelensky approved the New National Security Strategy to further develop ties and integration with NATO into full membership.

Following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in the Donbass region (2014), NATO responded with troop deployments, rising military budgets and arms supplies to Ukraine. That same year, at the summit in Wales, NATO heads of government agreed that

member states' military budgets must be at least 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2024. At that time, only Greece, the United Kingdom and the US reached that standard. Between 2015 and 2021, NATO's combined budgets grew by \$155 billion.

The developments in Ukraine also have major repercussions for the Belgian military-budgetary trajectory. In 2017, the Swedish coalition decided to commit 9.2 billion euros in a program law for investments in weapons systems. The government is thus making an important concession to that other NATO standard of Wales, to set aside 20% of the military budget for military investment. In addition, the Michel government approved a defense growth path that should bring the military budget to 1.3% of GDP by 2030.

Belgium also responded to NATO by supplying around 300 soldiers to be stationed in Estonia and subsequently in Lithuania. They are part of the 4 multinational 'battlegroups' that the military alliance in Poland and the Baltic States developed in the context of the 'Enhanced Forward Presence', a decision of the NATO summit in Warsaw (2016).

In response to Russian military action in and around Ukraine, which eventually culminated in open war, NATO decided to increase its military presence in Eastern Europe. There are now 40,000 troops under

NATO command with another four new multinational battlegroups in Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. Belgium pledged 300 troops to reinforce NATO's flank in Romania.

Military budgets are rising sharply

From the beginning of this year, European armaments and militarization gained momentum. Immense budget increases - until recently seen as unfeasible - are now becoming reality without significant debate.

In Belgium, at the end of January 2022, the government gave the green light to the STAR plan - 'Security, Technology, Ambition and Resilience' - which foresees that defense resources should increase to 1.54% of GDP by 2030. This includes a new investment plan worth more than 10 billion euros. The government approved a preliminary draft law for this at the end of February "for updating the military program law and the defense budget up to and including 2030". Additional costs have to be added to this for increasing the number of personnel from 26,000 to 29,000 and for the implementation of the POP plan (People-Our-Priority plan), which is intended to improve working conditions and the pay of the troops. Additional expenditure is also made for investments in infrastructure and in research and development of new technologies

in collaboration with Belgian industry. The STAR plan reserves 1.8 billion euros for the latter.

Ultimately, the military budget is expected to amount to 6.9 billion euros in 2030, compared to 4.4 billion today. In reality, that could be even higher. In the run-up to the NATO meeting in Brussels at the end of March, the De Croo government has decided to allocate an additional 1 billion over the next three years for arms and ammunition stocks, protective equipment, anti-tank weapons, the vehicle fleet and IT and communication systems. This means that over a five-year period, a total of more than EUR 20 billion in military investments in weapon systems has been committed.

The same pattern can be seen in almost all NATO member states.

Immediately after the invasion, the German government announced that it would invest another 100 billion euros in the army this year. A growth path had already been mapped out for the German defense budget that was budgeted at 53 billion euros in 2022, an increase of 3.2% compared to the previous year. The war in Ukraine means that not since the defeat of the 'Third Reich', will so much money be invested in the military apparatus in such a short time. Chancellor Scholtz said his country would immediately increase its military budget to above 2% of GDP, up from 1.53% now.

In the Dutch coalition agreement of December 2021, it was already agreed that a structural additional 3 billion euros would be added for defense, to reach 1.85% of GDP in 2024. According to recent reports, the Rutte government is working on a plan to go to 2% of GDP in order to respond to a parliamentary motion that was passed with a large majority.

On March 16, the Italian parliament voted by a large majority to increase the military budget from 1.41% to 2% of GDP, or from 29.8 billion euros to 41 billion euros.

Although the US already spends astronomically high amounts on the military apparatus - almost 40% of global military expenditure - Washington is also planning another billion-dollar injection. US President Biden proposes increasing the military budget for the next fiscal year (starting this fall) to \$813 billion, which would be an increase of \$31 billion in one year.

French President Macron, who is in full electoral battle, has announced that the already planned increase in the military budget should be increased, without however giving details. According to the French military programming law (2019-2025), a strong budget increase is already foreseen. In 2025, military resources must be increased to 50 billion euros, compared to 41 billion euros this year. So probably a few billion

more.

Spain, Denmark, Poland and Romania are also announcing major budget increases. Poland even wants to go to 3% of GDP next year (compared to 2.2% this year).

NATO member states together accounted for \$1,049 billion in military expenditure in 2021. With the announced budget increases, many tens of billions will be added.

Russia's military budget is about \$62 billion, which is 17 times less than NATO's military resources. Russia is unlikely to follow in the new arms race, as Moscow already spent 4.3% of GDP on military spending last year. With the sanctions on top, it looks like there's little margin left for further increases. This suggests that the military imbalance of power with NATO will become much greater. The question therefore arises as to why all these extra military resources are needed in the NATO member states? It seems that NATO is preparing for a possible new superpower confrontation. NATO defines not only Russia, but also China as a 'systemic rival'.

European 'Peace Facility' for Ukraine

A few days after the Russian invasion, the Council of the European Union decided to allow EUR 450 million worth of arms supplies to the Ukrainian army through the so-called 'peace facility' that came into effect at the

end of March 2021. On March 23, 2022, the Council doubled the amount, so that eventually 900 million euros in arms can be supplied.

The Peace Facility was created to finance military missions and support to third countries under the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The EUR 5 billion planned for the period 2021-2027 will be realized outside the EU budget. After all, according to the EU Treaty, expenditure in support of military operations must be financed with separate contributions from the Member States.

EU Member States have the right to supply weapons under the 'right of self-defence' provided for in Article 51 of the UN Charter. The 'Common Position', which regulates arms exports from the EU, also allows this in the context of self-defence. In contrast, both the Peace Facility and the Common Position impose restrictions. For example, arms transfers must not prolong or aggravate the conflict (Common Position criterion 3), which is difficult to assess in this existing war. Arms deliveries could greatly enhance the Ukrainian army's strike capability to bring a swift end to the war. Conversely, arms deliveries can effectively prolong and aggravate the conflict.

Criterion 7 states that the weapons must not fall into the hands of 'undesirable' end users.

That could be Russian troops in the event that they overpower Ukrainian troops, weapons that are distributed to civilians, or weapons that end up with 'undesirable' militias when the fighting becomes 'unconventional'. In the event of Russian forces being expelled, such militias could target the Russian minority in the country or could be used to further fight the conflict with the insurgent republics (Luhansk and Donetsk).

Finally, criterion 2 states that the weapons may not be delivered if there is a risk that they will be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law. In addition to the reporting of Russian war crimes, there have already been reports of members of the Ukrainian army committing war crimes.

Similar provisions are also included in the Q&A of the European External Action Service which regulates arms transfers under the peace facility. However, the Council has not taken a public position on all these possible consequences of arms transfers. A concept note has been leaked that lists the above-mentioned risks, including restrictive measures, such as the provision that the weapons may not end up with entities other than the Ukrainian army. However, President Zelensky has stated at the start of the Russian aggression that Kiev will provide weapons to any civilian willing to fight.

Billions of arms deliveries to Ukraine

A large flow of weapons has been making its way to Ukraine since 2014, with the US as the main supplier. Between 2014 and 2021, the US provided at least \$2.5 billion in weapons and military aid. More than \$1 billion has been added since the Russian war. The Czech Republic, Poland, France, Turkey and the United Kingdom have also been supplying arms to the Ukrainian armed forces for several years, and it cannot be ruled out that they have been deployed against the insurgent rebel republics in the Donbass region.

Since the Russian invasion, arms deliveries have increased in intensity and volume. Most NATO member states (and some EU member states) have announced the delivery of defensive as well as offensive weapon systems. Belgium has stated that it will deliver 5,000 machine guns and 200 anti-tank weapons to the Ukrainian army.

The United Kingdom is one of the most active arms suppliers in this war, ranging from anti-tank and other missile systems, armored vehicles and artillery to associated ammunition. London is also committed to the delivery of eight naval vessels and a £1.7 billion frigate.

If you go over the list, you will arrive at hundreds of millions of euros in weapons and other military support.

Arms industry

Rising military budgets and massive military aid to Ukraine provide billions in revenue for the military industry. In January, a month before the outbreak of hostilities across Ukraine, US arms giants Raytheon and Lockheed Martin openly stated to their investors that the tensions “will make more business” for the arms companies. Raytheon supplies Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and together with Lockheed Martin the Javelin anti-tank missiles. Both companies are among the top five arms giants to have pumped \$60 million into influencing US politics by 2020. In Washington, the arms industry employs 700 lobbyists, which is more than the number of Congressmen. At least 19 of those Congressmen have bought shares of both arms giants, some of them after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Even before the outbreak of large-scale hostilities, the global military industry was predicted to grow by 7% in 2022 (from \$453 billion to \$483 billion). Western Europe would become the fastest growing market according to these forecasts. The military bidding with rising budgets means that the predicted increase in turnover will turn out to be a serious underestimate. Two weeks after the invasion, arms companies’ shares rose sharply. Shares of Raytheon rose by 8%, General Dynamics by 12%, Lockheed Martin by 18% and Northrop Grumman even by 22%. British BAE Systems saw

its shares rise by 14% in the first week after the Russian invasion.

Rising military budgets and arms supplies are a boon to the arms industry, but are having negative repercussions on negotiations and diplomacy. If one side believes in military victory thanks to these deliveries, it could lead to a very bloody prolongation of the war in eastern Ukraine.

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Ukraine Negotiations

Joseph Gerson

Regardless of whether we agree with him or not, President Biden's statements that Vladimir Putin cannot remain in power and that Putin is a war criminal have compounded already complex negotiations to end Moscow's devastating and nationally self-defeating war of aggression.

Humanity will be sleepwalking to its doom unless the great powers negotiate nuclear disarmament, and to collaborate to stanch the climate chaos that haunts humanity's future.

With Russia's military advances in Ukraine stymied, and with the mounting death tolls, we are receiving contradictory reports about the state of Russian-Ukrainian diplomacy. Ukraine's lead negotiator Mykailo Podolyak reports that the negotiations with Moscow

are "absolutely real", but that the Kremlin hasn't pulled back from its most ambitious war aims. Negotiations, he has said, could continue for months. Ukraine's Defense Intelligence, Brig. General Kyrylo Budanov is less optimistic, reporting that the negotiations are "vague and unpredictable". Turkey's President Erdogan, who has met with both the Russian and Ukrainian presidents in his efforts to mediate an end to the war, reports that negotiators have reached "understandings" about Ukraine and NATO, partial Ukrainian disarmament, collective security, and the use of the Russian language, but there have been no agreements on the future status of Crimea or the Donbas. And, contrary to Podolyak, the *New York Times* claims that Russia is signaling a change in its war goals, announcing that the "first stage of the operation" has been "mainly accomplished." While it "does not exclude continuing attacks on major Ukrainian cities, the *Times* reports that they are not Moscow's "primary objective". It contends that Russian forces will be concentrated on the "liberation of the Donbas."

Ukrainian and Russian lives will continue to be shattered until either a ceasefire or completion of successful negotiations are announced.

In recent months, I have been privileged to be a set of ears in a confidential series of track II

discussions, initially designed to prevent the war and now to help frame diplomatic compromises that could end the bloodletting. Participants include former U.S., Russian and European officials—including military officers, advisors to their respective governments and scholars. A number of the participants communicate with their country's policy makers. A number of these people, despite their differences, have negotiated and otherwise worked together over many years. And even as emotions run high, the discourse is civil and "professional." While there could be unhappy professional consequences for some of the Western participants, one of the senior Russians has commented that "No new initiative comes without the risk of punishment."

This past week, as Ukrainian and Russian negotiators were meeting and other governments weighed in, one of these track II sessions was held to discuss the advocacy and dangers of a possible Western no-fly declaration, as well as what Ukrainian neutrality and disarmament would entail. With the exception of near unanimous opposition to the exceedingly dangerous possibility of a no-fly zone declaration, as described below, a range of possibilities were identified which hopefully will inform the diplomacy needed to end the war.

A No-Fly Zone and NATO "Peacekeepers"

While Russian forces grind away at Ukrainian resistance, there is glee in Washington that Moscow may have trapped itself in an Afghanistan-like quagmire. But one thing that thoughtful U.S. and Russian elites agree upon is that despite the ongoing negotiations, the situation may be as dangerous as during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Then the Kennedy Administration believed the odds were between a third and a half that the crisis would result in a thermonuclear exchange between the world's two most heavily armed nuclear powers.

Just as the United States has done at least thirty times during international crises and wars, Vladimir Putin has threatened the possible use of nuclear weapons and increased the alert status of his nuclear arsenal. In the words of former U.S. Strategic Command Chief, Admiral Charles Richard, the U.S. has used its strategic nuclear forces to "create the 'manoeuvre space' for us to project conventional military power strategically." This strategy works both ways. It has prevented the U.S. and NATO from establishing a no-fly zone over Ukraine to eliminate aerial support for Russian ground forces. As was the case during the Cuban missile crisis, nuclear alerts increase the danger of accidents, insubordinations, or miscalculations triggering the unimaginable. There

are also fears that if the Russian military and President Putin find themselves on the defensive, in desperation Putin might fall back on attacking with chemical or low-yield nuclear weapons, risking escalation up the nuclear ladder.

Zelensky has repeatedly appealed for NATO to impose a no-fly zone, an appeal that has found resonance in Congress. Fortunately, thus far NATO leaders have bowed to the reality that enforcing a no-fly zone against Russia would inevitably trigger World War III, in the form of genocidal or omnicidal nuclear exchanges. Enforcing a no-fly zone would require attacking Russian anti-aircraft installations and shooting down Russian planes, to which Russia would respond in kind. Yet, in the track II discussion, a senior American warned that the longer the war continues, and as the Russian military is degraded, the temptation to impose a no-fly zone will grow.

A second reckless proposal, which was fortunately disregarded in Brussels, was made by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, Poland's president in the run up to the NATO summit. Standing beside Volodymyr Zelensky, he floated the idea of dispatching NATO "peacekeeping" forces, capable of defending themselves, to operate in Ukraine. His spokesman later elaborated that the operation would involve deploying NATO and other forces in regions of Ukraine that have yet to

be occupied by Russia and protecting them "against further Russian activities".

In the track II session, a senior Russian advisor commented that "If Poland moves to impose a no-fly zone or otherwise intervenes in Ukraine, it will be considered an attack by a NATO member state." Similarly, immediately following the NATO summit, NATO leaders warned that if weapons of mass destruction were used within Ukraine, but their fallout drifted into NATO's territory, it could be interpreted an attack on NATO, necessitating military responses.

Neutrality & Demilitarization

Every war, for better or worse, ends with negotiations. While the details of Russian-Ukrainian negotiations remain tightly held secrets, track II participants assume that Russia's invasion will end with assurances that Ukraine will never join NATO and that it will become a neutral and significantly demilitarized state. Less certain is whether Moscow will insist on regime change in Kyiv in the guise of "denazification" or if Russia's territorial conquests will remain in place.

Russian ambitions in Ukraine, undefined as they continue to be, indicate that negotiating Ukrainian neutrality is at best a complex affair. As one Russian advisor commented, Moscow will insist that there be no possible military threats emanating from Ukraine for many decades to

come. Recognizing the fragility of Swedish and Finnish neutrality, with both nations currently debating the possibility of applying for NATO membership, Russian leaders believe that neutrality cannot be rooted in what they perceive to be a hostile political environment. Thus, it is argued that meaningful agreements on Ukrainian neutrality will require progress in U.S-Russian and Russian-NATO negotiations, and they will need to be confirmed by an international treaty or United Nations Security Council resolution.

As if these obstacles are not sufficiently daunting, while Moscow states that regime change is not its goal, believing that neutrality must be rooted in a nation's political system and culture, it will demand some restructuring of the Ukrainian state, perhaps in the guise of its denazification demands. Not as difficult, but no slam dunk, are indications that Russia will demand intrusive inspections to verify Ukrainian neutrality and placing Kyiv's nuclear power plants under a special verification regime or in the future to be run by international operators.

Nonetheless, first steps in the direction of Ukrainian neutrality are being made. Under the pressure of Russia's invasion, President Zelensky has stated that, despite Ukraine's 2019 constitutional commitment to seeking NATO membership, he will not press the issue. He has stated that he is prepared to discuss

neutrality as part of a peace deal with Russia but it needs to be guaranteed by third parties and approved in a referendum. It is possible that Zelensky may have wanted to opt for neutrality to prevent Russia's invasion, but political pressure from right-wing Ukrainian nationalist forces—including assassination threats—raised the political (and personal) costs of pursuing that option.

Regardless of how it is designed, Kyiv agreeing to becoming a neutral state will face significant Ukrainian political opposition necessitating strong support, and likely considerable input, from the United States and other NATO states.

There are, in fact, many forms of nation-state neutrality. Swedish, Austrian, Moldavan, Irish, and Swiss neutrality differ from one another. International law would require that Ukrainian neutrality, which prevailed between its 1990 independence until 2015, would require renunciation of Kyiv's ambitions to join NATO, a ban on the presence of foreign military troops and bases, the commitment to treat warring parties equally, and guarantees from a number of countries. Militarily, Ukraine would need the ability to defend its neutrality and territorial integrity. Whether this would include Donetsk, Luhansk, and other regions now controlled by the Russian military appears to

be the most divisive issue. Ukraine would also be prohibited from taking part in any international military conflict, making its territory available to nations at war (as Cambodia did during the Vietnam War), and providing troops or mercenaries to forces at war.

Determining how Ukraine would defend its neutrality will require intense negotiations. Sweden maintains a professional military, reinforced by conscripts, and its military-industrial complex produces weapons for export as well as for national defense. Switzerland has universal male military service. And at the end of the neutrality spectrum is Ireland which spends little on its military and is widely believed to be unable to defend itself against possible aggression, theoretical though it may be. That said, a neutral Ukraine would require some form of police for domestic security, a border/customs patrol, and a minimal military. Determining where weapons and related training for these forces would come from implies further questions about orientation and influence, and would be another highly contested issue.

Guaranteeing Ukrainian neutrality raises other questions. President Zelensky has said that it would require guarantees from the United States and other NATO nations. Russians respond by asking how this would differ in substance from Ukraine formally joining NATO.

There is also the reality that nothing, even constitutions and international treaties that guarantees they will endure. With the people of and governments of Sweden and Finland debating whether to end decades of neutrality and apply for membership in NATO Russian analysts are wondering how Ukrainian neutrality could be guaranteed.

What Then?

Ukrainian civilians and soldiers and Russian soldiers are being killed and maimed every day. Many of Ukraine's cities are being reduced to rubble. And indiscriminate sanctions are wreaking havoc and delivering despair to innocent Russians across that continental empire. These must all end.

International civil society has almost universally condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. With our demands for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, a negotiated settlement to the war, and the withdrawal of all foreign military troops, we have helped to frame and apply international pressure to end this unjustified and tragic war. No one should be sacrificed or displaced while political leaders and diplomats debate the fine points of the negotiated settlement of the war. Negotiations can take place amidst a ceasefire. This must be our immediate demand.

Looking to the future, after the

guns are silenced we will face the shattered remains of the post-Cold War order, especially the continuing existential nuclear and climate existential threats. Recalling that NATO's expansion to Russia's borders was a contributing cause of the Ukrainian disaster and the long record of devastating U.S. imperial wars, Americans would do well to approach the new era with humility.

Putin has given us new lessons about the catastrophic perils of the arrogance of power. Slow though the restoration of trust and normal diplomatic relations will be, we will face the urgent necessity of Common Security negotiations. The imperatives will be to replace the new ice age of a Cold War with a new Euro-Atlantic order in which no nation seeks to ensure its security at the expense of other nations. This was the promise of initial post-Cold War diplomacy, including the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. And humanity will be sleepwalking to its doom unless the great powers negotiate nuclear disarmament, and to collaborate to stanch the climate chaos that haunts humanity's future.

From END Info 31

Lakenheath added to nuclear weapon storage site upgrades

Hans Kristensen

US Defense Department documents show that NATO has quietly added the United Kingdom to the list of nuclear weapons storage locations that are being upgraded.

The documents do not identify the specific facility, but it is believed to be the US Air Base at RAF Lakenheath in southeast England approximately 100 kilometers northeast of London.

Previous budget documents listed "special weapons" storage sites in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey as receiving upgrades under a 13-year NATO investment program. The Biden administration's FY2023 defense budget request adds "the UK" to the list (see image below).

RAF Lakenheath was not on the list of "active sites" in the 2016 contract for the upgrade of the nuclear weapons storage site in Europe. The budget documents indicate the base has since been added to the list.

The US Air Force used to store nuclear gravity bombs at Lakenheath, which in the 1990s was equipped with 33 underground storage vaults. By the early 2000s, there were a total of 110 B61 gravity bombs in the vaults for delivery by F-15E aircraft of the 48th Fighter Wing.

In 2008, I disclosed that the

nuclear weapons had been withdrawn from RAF Lakenheath, the first time since 1954 that the United States did not store nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

What's Going On?

The addition of the United Kingdom to the list of nuclear storage locations being upgraded in Europe signals a change in the nuclear status of RAF Lakenheath. It is unclear if nuclear weapons have been returned to the base yet or NATO is upgrading the base to be capable of receiving nuclear weapons in the future if necessary.

After nuclear weapons were withdrawn nearly two decades ago, the empty storage vaults were kept in caretaker status. The F-15Es fighter-bombers retained their nuclear capability but at a lower operational level. In recent years there have been rumors about nuclear exercises at the base.

The nuclear upgrade comes as RAF Lakenheath is preparing to become the first US Air Force base in Europe equipped with the nuclear-capable F-35A Lightning. The first of the fifth-generation fighter-bombers arrived in December 2021. A total of 24 F-35As will form the 495th Fighter Squadron of the 48th Fighter Wing at the base.

The US Air Force is scheduled to begin training the nuclear units in Europe within the next year to receive the new B61-12 guided nuclear bomb that will begin full-

scale production next month. It is possible the first B61-12 bombs will be shipped to Europe in 2023, where they will replace the B61-3/-4 bombs currently deployed there.

Given NATO's cautious nuclear response to Russia's nuclear saber rattling at the start of its invasion of Ukraine, it would be odd if the nuclear upgrade at RAF Lakenheath reflected plans to deploy additional US nuclear bombs to Europe. FAS estimates there currently are roughly 100 nuclear bombs deployed at six air bases in five European countries.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declared in December 2021, that "we have no plans of stationing any nuclear weapons in any other countries than we already have these nuclear weapons as part of our deterrence and that... have been there for many, many years." Unless NATO has changed its plans since, that seems to be a clear signal that there are currently no plans to deploy nuclear weapons to RAF Lakenheath for now (see map below).

Rather, the upgrade at RAF Lakenheath could potentially be intended to increase the flexibility of the existing nuclear deployment within Europe, without increasing the number of weapons. Adding RAF Lakenheath as an active site would potentially allow it to receive nuclear weapons from other existing locations in Europe, if that became necessary. Such a

contingency could potentially involve receiving weapons withdrawn from Turkey. There are unconfirmed rumors that many of the weapons at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey have already been withdrawn and moved to other bases in Europe.

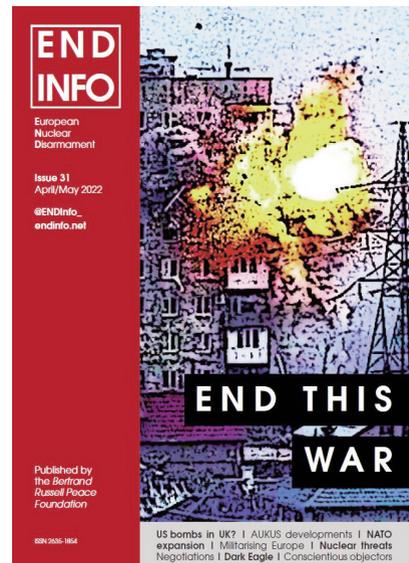
Readying RAF Lakenheath could potentially also be intended to better realign the overall nuclear posture in Europe with the rapidly deteriorating relations with Russia. This is a delicate issue because changes in NATO's nuclear posture in Europe might trigger retaliatory changes in Russia's nuclear posture,

including potentially deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus, which recently changed its constitution to allow for just that.

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