

USA's tidligere ambassadør i Sovjetunionen, John Matlock, insisterer på, at USA skal presse på for at få en våbenhvile i Ukraine

Den 17. okt. 2022 (EIRNS) – “Den eneste praktiske mulighed for at stoppe de nuværende kampe [i Ukraine] ville være at opnå enighed om en våbenhvile”, skriver USA's tidligere ambassadør i Sovjetunionen, Jack Matlock, i dag i {Responsible Statecraft}. “Som den væsentligste våbenleverandør til Ukraine bør USA tilskynde ukrainerne til at indvillige i en våbenhvile. Som initiativtager af de mest restriktive sanktioner mod Rusland, bør USA anvende sin indflydelse på at tilskynde Rusland til at indgå i oprigtige forhandlinger under en våbenhvile.”

Matlock siger, at forhandlingerne både skal være private og involvere en genoplivning af det amerikansk-russiske diplomati, som er blevet vanskeliggjort af udvisningerne af diplomater fra begge nationer.

Matlocks forslag udspringer fra hans vurdering af, at vi må forkaste ræsonnementet om, at Ukraine ved bedst, både fordi de ukrainske ledere ikke véd, hvad der er bedst for det amerikanske folk, samt fordi “under krigens stress er [de] ikke nødvendigvis de bedste til at bedømme deres egne ultimative sikkerhedsinteresser.”

Eksempelvis, i forhold til emnet “om USA bør støtte det ukrainske mål om at genoprette kontrollen over alt det territorium, som det blev tildelt, da Sovjetunionen brød op”, ræsonnerer Matlock, at “hvis forfølgelsen af dette mål

fremskynder den gradvise ødelæggelse af Ukraine, er det naturligtvis ikke i Ukraines interesse.”
(<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/10/17/on-ukraine-the-u-s-is-on-the-hook-to-find-a-way-out/>)

Jack F. Matlock Jr.

Four recent events have put the war in Ukraine on a distinctly more dangerous course.

– The Russian annexation of four additional Ukrainian provinces blocks compromise solutions that were feasible earlier.

– The disabling attacks on both North Stream pipelines make it impossible in the near term to restore Russia as the principal energy supplier to Germany, even if the war in Ukraine should be miraculously ended.

– The Ukrainian attack on the bridge to Crimea gave Russia a pretext to escalate attacks on Ukrainian civilian targets.

– The Russian retaliatory attacks on civilian targets are certain to do more damage to Ukraine than Ukraine can do to Russia.

The leaders of both Russia and Ukraine have set impossible goals. In fact, not a single participant in the war in Ukraine has espoused a goal that can restore peace in the area. Russia's recent incorporation of four Ukrainian provinces into the Russian Federation will not be accepted by Russia's neighbors or by most European powers.

Given the passions aroused by the war and its atrocities, Ukraine, even with NATO support, cannot create a stable, functioning state within all the borders it inherited in 1991. If Ukraine tries to regain these territories by force and is encouraged and empowered by the U.S. and NATO to do so, Russia (and not just President Putin) will very likely demolish Ukraine in retaliation. Reality trumps illusion whenever the

two conflict.

And if war should stop with the destruction of Ukraine – Kyiv and Lviv leveled as Grozny once was – that would assume that escalation does not involve the use of nuclear weapons. If the Russian leader feels convinced that the U.S. and “Western” goal is to take him out, what is to prevent him taking out others as he goes?

What Went Wrong

It did not have to happen. When the Cold War ended (by negotiation, not by victory) and the USSR fragmented into 15 separate countries (because of pressures from the inside, not from without), Europe was suddenly whole and free, the goal of U.S. and NATO policy during the Cold War. If the future stability and prosperity of Europe were to be ensured, the principal task was to build a security system covering all the countries of Europe.

But a succession of American presidents, from Clinton to Trump, chose instead to enlarge NATO, to trash arms control treaties that ended the Cold War, and to enlist former Soviet republics in a military alliance that excluded Russia. Benjamin Abelow summarized the portentous events in his insightful *How the West Brought War to Ukraine*.

The war might have been prevented – probably would have been prevented – if Ukraine had been willing to abide by the Minsk agreement, recognize the Donbas as an autonomous entity within Ukraine, avoid NATO military advisors, and pledge not to enter NATO. Nevertheless, what was possible even as late as January 2022 may not be possible now. The Russian annexation of additional territory raises the stakes. But the longer the war continues the harder it is going to be to avoid the utter destruction of Ukraine.

America's Security

We Americans can only admire the valiant resistance Ukrainians have mounted to the Russian invasion and should be proud that we have been able to support their defense. Everything possible should be done to make sure that Ukraine survives as an independent state. But that does not mean that Ukraine has to recover all the territory it inherited in 1991. In fact, given all the passions aroused by the war and what preceded it (the violent change of government in 2014 that many Russians considered a coup d'etat organized by the United States), the population in some areas is likely to resist a return to Kyiv's control.

Some will argue that the United States has a moral obligation to support whatever the Ukrainian leaders demand since "they know best." No, they do not know best what is in the security interests of the American people, and that should be the primary concern of any American government. They also, under the stress of war, may not be the best judges of their own ultimate security interests.

I was ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1990 when the Lithuanians declared their independence from the Soviet Union. The United States had never recognized the annexation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia by the Soviet Union, so the Lithuanians requested immediate U.S. recognition of their independence. I had total sympathy with the Lithuanian aspirations but had to explain that it would be a mistake to do so until Lithuania was in fact free. Why? Because, in 1990, U.S. recognition would almost certainly have precipitated a Soviet crack-down which the U.S. could not counter without risking nuclear war.

The Lithuanians, along with their Baltic neighbors, kept their demands for independence peaceful. The U.S. privately kept pressure on the Soviet Government to refrain from using force, and the USSR State Council recognized the independence of Lithuania and its two neighboring countries in September 1991, freeing them legally before the rest of the Soviet Union broke

up.

The issue with Ukraine and Russia of course is not recognition of independence but whether the U.S. should support the Ukrainian goal to restore its control over all the territory it received when the Soviet Union broke up. If pursuit of that goal precipitates the progressive destruction of Ukraine, it is obviously not in Ukraine's interest.

Effect on the World

The fighting in Ukraine continues and intensifies while the world is still struggling with the covid-19 pandemic and remains vulnerable to mutations and new pathogens, while global warming is producing ever more destructive effects. Meanwhile, migrations caused by famine, flood, war, and misgovernment are overwhelming the capacity of even the richest countries to absorb the afflicted. And to all of that one must add the threat of Armageddon, a nuclear holocaust – something no rational leader would risk. But rationality cannot be assumed in either domestic or international politics today.

Europe's position will be severely tested during the upcoming winter as the result of drastically curtailed trade with Russia, particularly when it comes to energy. Increasingly, European publics are likely to blame the United States for policies that fuel inflation and bring on economic recession, especially as their currencies weaken against the dollar. The U.S. sanctions on Russia will be seen by many as self-serving attempts to dominate Western Europe.

A new iron curtain is now being imposed on Russia – this time by Western policy – even as the United States announces more measures to confront and “contain” an assertive China. This will result, inevitably, in more cooperation between Russia and China. Also, the increasing use of economic sanctions to achieve political purposes will encounter push-back with a

greater volume of international trade conducted in national currencies other than the U.S. dollar.

As Europe is weakened and more countries suffer from U.S. sanctions, coalitions to resist U.S. dominance will flourish. Geopolitical competition will take precedence over action to deal with common problems, even as international conflict intensifies them.

What all the parties to the conflict in Ukraine seem to have forgotten is that the future of mankind will not be determined by where international borders are drawn – these have never been static in history and doubtless will continue to change from time to time. The future of mankind will be determined by whether nations learn to settle their differences peacefully.

Is There a Way to Stop the War?

There may not be, given the passions aroused by the conflict. Both Ukraine and Russia have lost enough blood that their populations are likely to oppose any effort to give the other side any portion of what it wants. Their presidents hate each other and see any concession as a personal defeat. But the more the war continues, the more Ukrainian lives will be lost, property destroyed, and the probability of a wider conflict increased.

The only practical way to stop the actual fighting would be to agree on a ceasefire. This is difficult for the Ukrainians since they are liberating some of the occupied territories, but the reality is that if the war continues Russia is capable of damaging Ukraine more than Ukraine can damage Russia without risking a wider war.

As principal arms supplier to Ukraine, the U.S. should encourage the Ukrainians to agree to a ceasefire. As the sponsor of the most punitive sanctions on Russia, the U.S. should use its leverage to induce Russia to agree to genuine

negotiations during a ceasefire.

Negotiations must be conducted in private to be successful, which would require a revival of U.S.-Russia diplomacy. Over the past few years, tit-for-tat expulsions have reduced both countries to skeleton diplomatic staffs. Nevertheless, if there is a will to talk and negotiate, ways can be found. So far, it is the will that seems to be lacking.

At present, none of the relevant parties to the conflict in Ukraine seem to be willing to stop fighting and enter into genuine negotiations to bring peace in Ukraine. Until this changes, the fighting stops, and serious negotiations get underway, the world is headed for an outcome where we all are losers.