

„Do NATO states continue to have enough willpower and strategies to help Ukraine to stop Russia and what are the prospects of Ukraine's NATO membership?“

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“Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never-in nothing, great or small, large or petty — never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

– Winston Churchill

Introduction

The battle between Russia bear and Western alliance has been waging on for over two years. The so called „Special Military Operation“ in Ukraine started on February 22nd, 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine. Since then, the Western democracies and especially NATO countries have rallied around Ukraine and have been supporting them diplomatically and militarily. The war has put European and global security in question, and it is necessitating NATO members to adapt to the emerging situation.

The military equipment that NATO has been sending to Ukraine has depleted some of NATO stockpiles and one of the biggest problems is that NATO is not able to replenish them at the rate that they are being used. Coupled with that the Russian ability to outproduce NATO countries in military equipment raises important questions about the policy of reshoring and what it would take to bring industry back to Europe.

The President of the United States Joe Biden has been a key supporter of Ukraine and under his administration America has allocated over \$110 billion to Ukraine. However, his rival former President Donald Trump has said numerous times that he would have Ukraine and Russia make a peace deal which would end up with Ukraine losing land. The politics in the United States have a big significance for the Ukrainian cause as well as NATO role in the whole continent as US is the backbone of the NATO alliance. This over-reliance on US

support raises concerns about European security and the need for a European armed forces that could support Ukraine independently of the US.

With all these problems being laid out, the purpose of this essay will be to take a closer look at the problems and concerns surrounding the war in Ukraine. How these issues may affect NATO countries' support for Ukraine. Proposed solutions to fix the problems laid out. How or if there is a possibility for victory against Russia. As well as analyse the prospects of Ukraine in NATO.

Energy and industry

With the resuming of hostilities in Ukraine, Europe has been experienced an energy crisis. Western Europe and most importantly Germany were heavily reliant on cheap Russian natural gas which was the backbone of their industrial might. With the likely US sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines Germany has lost access to cheap Russian energy. In one sense it is good since Russia cannot leverage its cheap energy exports against the West. But at the same time, this turn of events has crippled German manufacturing industry. Without cheap and abundant energy no large-scale production is possible. Couple this with the fact that Germany planned to shut down its three last operational nuclear power plants by the end of 2022 and you have a disaster an energy crisis at hand. To combat this the German government has reopened several coal power plants as well as increased imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the United States. Even with these measures taking place, the German economy is still stagnating having shrunk by 0.4% in 2023, while in May 2024 the German industrial production declined by 2.5%. Modern wars cannot be won without industry. If the German industry continues to contract, then it has no prospects of being able to effectively supply Ukraine with the necessary equipment needed to push back against Russian incursions. It is not that the German people are unwilling to support Ukraine it may just soon prove to the case that the German state is unable to materially support Ukraine. Without the necessary structural changes taking place the European powerhouse may just become the "Sick Man of Europe". The most obvious solution to begin to fix Germany's issues is to invest in cheap and abundant energy sources. If Germany is to continue its transition into green/environmentally friendly energy then it should heavily reconsider nuclear power as it is one of the safest, cleanest and cheapest energy sources

that we have available today. Another benefit from nuclear is that it runs perpetually and can serve as a great backup energy source.

Remaining on the topic of energy we can look at the nation of France. The French Republic while still reliant on Russian natural gas was not as dependant on it as Germany. One of the main reasons for this was that France gets around 70% of its energy via nuclear power plants. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 France vowed to cut its nuclear production by a third by 2025, but in recent years this has changed. In February 2022 France announced that it will build six new nuclear reactions which could be operational by 2035. While the French are planning on transitioning to green and renewable energy this plan is in stark contrast to the Germans. The German plan hinged on the supply of cheap Russian energy which was always going to be volatile even if the war in Ukraine did not resume in 2022. France, being able to supply most of its energy at home was able to withstand Russia's withdrawal of natural gas.

That being said, while France can be self-reliant in the energy sector, this may prove to be more difficult in the future. France gets a lot of its uranium from its former colonies in West African. The country with the largest uranium reserves in the region is Niger. In 2023 Niger experienced a coup d'état and the establishment of a military junta which was backed by the Russian Private Military Company Wagner (PMC Wagner). While Niger has not suspended uranium shipments to France, this situation could be used as leverage against France in future negotiations with the Russian state.

Victory conditions

One of the common slogans surrounding the war in Ukraine is "For as long as it takes". While this statement in itself is fine and even inspiring what does it mean exactly? How does Ukraine and most importantly the West define victory? Are the victory conditions the reclamation of Ukrainian lands lost after 2014? Is it the reclamation of the four oblasts that have been occupied by Russia. Perhaps it is the minimization of territorial loses by Ukraine to have a stronger position at the negotiation table. However, Ukraine and the West define victory they should plan their strategies accordingly. Currently the most plausible strategies

for Ukraine would be to try and minimize the territorial losses to the Russians. It is highly unlikely that Ukraine will be able to mount another offensive against Russia in the remaining weeks of summer as they are lacking artillery and other essential war materiel. Couple that with the fact that Ukraine has a far smaller manpower pool in can tap into than the Russian Federation. Thus, it would be the most logical for Ukraine to delay the Russian advance and conserve its manpower. Land can be lost and regained, fighting men cannot be so easily replaced. This strategy would be quite similar to the American strategy of deteriorating the Russian armed forces. The benefit of this strategy is twofold. If the West were to shut off or decrease aid to Ukraine and pressure it to enter the negotiation table Ukraine would be in a much stronger position. If the West were to double down on its aid and begin sending more and more war materiel Ukraine would be in a stronger position to counterattack the Russian lines.

Waning American support?

Since the start of the war the United States has been the biggest supporter of Ukraine. It is the biggest contributor to the Ukrainian cause in terms of both war materiel and financial aid. The Biden administration has been leading the sanctions regime against Russia. This has been very beneficial for Ukraine to fight its aggressive neighbour. This, however, may not last as the United States has a serious chance of re-electing Donald Trump as its 47th President. While the Trump administration was the one to start sending lethal aid to Ukraine, it is undeniable that Trump has had a very close and some might say friendly relationship with the Russian President Vladimir Putin. This may be of concern to the Ukrainian leadership as well as Europe. Former President Trump has also made some problematic statements concerning NATO and how he would let Russia attack some of its members were they not meeting the 2% defence quota. A major foreign policy shift by the former Trump administration was their focus on China and the Pacific Ocean. If the United States recalibrates it's focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific this may prove troublesome for Europe, and not to mention Ukraine, as the primary focus of the United States will be to encircle and contain China.

This too, however, may prove to be of benefit to Europe at the expense of Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has undeniably pushed Russia closer to China. The problem with

that is that Russia has vast natural resources while China has major industrial capabilities. Were Trump to pursue a Reverse Nixon strategy where he would try to decouple Russia from China, he would be able to encircle China and cut it off from the vast resources of Russia. While this could alleviate America's need of defending Europe, Russia may in this theoretical rapprochement demand the lands it has occupied in Ukraine to be ceded to them. This course of events would, of course, be unacceptable to Ukraine but this may be on the table were another Trump administration be elected.

Another point that needs to be mentioned is that the US and especially the Republican party consider Israel as its primary ally. Ever since Iran retaliated against Israel for the bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus the GOP broke its months long log jam in the House of Representatives which also halted aid to Ukraine, to send aid to Israel. The running mate of Donald Trump JD Vance has also been critical of US policy towards Ukraine and has stated that it is in Washington's best interest for Kyiv to make concessions to Russia.

In short, the possible Trump presidency in 2024 could spell doom for the Ukrainian war effort as the administration would put much more emphasis on the Pacific region as well as aiding Israel in its fight against Iran and their proxies.

Ukrainian future in NATO

One of the strategic reasons that Russia has begun its invasion into Ukraine was because NATO being this close to Russia was unacceptable to Russian leadership. This in no way justifies an invasion of another sovereign state, but this does let us understand the reasoning behind Putin's actions. Even before the war started Putin's demands were that Ukraine must remain a neutral state. Essentially a buffer between Russia and NATO. As the war began, so did Russian demands and war aims evolve. It is unlikely that Russia aims to annex all of Ukraine as it would be too costly and exhausting on the Russian state to subdue the nation. With Ukraine and the Western world so galvanized against Russia, occupying and subduing Ukraine may prove to be Afghanistan 2.0. The more logical course of events that Russia might take is destroy the Ukrainian armed forces so that they would not be able to pose any threat to Russia. Annex pro-Russian or Russian majority regions into the Federation as well as draw a new, more defensible borders against NATO. This may mean

that Russia could push as far as the Dnieper, or they might just consolidate their gains in the four occupied oblasts. Only then could there be a possibility of Russia letting go of Ukraine and Ukraine joining NATO. The situation does look bleak for Kyiv as currently they are not able to join NATO because of the ongoing war in its lands. Without negotiations and peace, NATO is unlikely to allow Ukraine to join the alliance as that could possibly drag the whole alliance into the conflict.

Conclusion

To sum it is evident that NATO states are still willing to support Ukraine in its war of survival. While the diplomatic support and financial aid come a long way for the Ukrainian effort the West is not so capable of supplying the necessary equipment and weapons that would allow the Armed Forces of Ukraine to halt Russia's advance. Germany's overreliance on Russian natural gas and the inability to find a cheaper alternative has hampered the German industry. France in contrast to its eastern neighbour has displayed the ability to withstand Russia's energy blackmail by being able to provide itself with cheap and abundant energy via nuclear reactors. While this is certainly beneficial to France now, it is quite possible that pro-Russian Nigerian government may sabotage the put an end to uranium exports to France.

The best strategy that Kyiv can use against Russia is conserving its precious manpower and equipment and minimizing the territorial losses. This strategy would help Ukraine have a better hand at the negotiating table or a better position at a future counterattack.

The politics across the Atlantic may prove disastrous for the Kyiv were Donald Trump to be re-elected as President. His administration would pour more of its focus on the Pacific ocean as well as on its primary ally Israel at the expense of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian prospects of ever joining NATO look quite bleak. It is highly unlikely if not impossible for NATO to allow a warring state to enter the alliance. Assuming that Russia would ever allow Ukraine into NATO, Kyiv would likely enter the alliance as a rump state unable to pose any tangible threat to Russia.

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