

## Ukraine Crisis Has Brought US' Naïve Foreign Policy Into Sharp Focus

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As the war in Ukraine drags on, political scientist Francis Fukuyama [has reasserted](#) his “end of history” proposition, saluting the Ukrainians for making sacrifices for it.

Fukuyama's position deems Ukraine as an attestation of Pax Americana being resurrected, in that **it is only a matter of time before Russia collapses**, as the Soviet Union did in the aftermath of its invasion of Afghanistan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched “special military actions” into Ukraine on February 24, claiming that Nato’s incessant expansion eastward threatened Russia’s national security, leaving him no choice but to push back.

Since then, Washington has orchestrated swift and severe international sanctions against Russia, including a halt to the [Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline](#) which links Russian gas to Europe via Germany, ejecting selected Russian financial institutions from the [Swift global payment system](#), and providing Ukraine with [all the means](#) for resistance. Germany promised to increase military spending to €100 billion (US\$113 billion), an unprecedented move in the post-World War II years.

The [rouble tanked](#) under the crushing sanctions; even McDonald’s [shut its operations](#) in the country. Russians’ assets are [being seized](#) overseas.

US President Joe Biden vowed to make Putin a “[pariah on the international stage](#)” and called him a “[war criminal](#)”, a designation the US Senate endorsed in a resolution.

Meanwhile, Russia so far has achieved much less in Ukraine than generally anticipated. However, the US and Nato have all along made it clear that they won’t send troops into Ukraine to fight the Russians, not even considering a “[no-fly zone](#)” in the country.

A feel-good atmosphere permeates Washington. It is confident that it has benefited from Putin’s ill-conceived actions, and that Russia, now proven to be weak **even in the battlefield**, will fade into economic and political impotence, that the erstwhile wavering

European nations are returning to their place under the US' wing, and that China is daunted by the severity of the sanctions imposed on Russia. Capital flight to the US is the nice usual windfall, of course.

Only a handful of American **observers**, such as John Mearsheimer and, to a lesser extent, **Niall Ferguson**, aired their concerns about **the negative implications** of Washington's adamant stance. Mearsheimer's criticism of Nato's eastward expansion, which he maintains served to unnecessarily alienate Russia when America needs to focus on China as its chief rival, prompted students at the University of Chicago where he is a tenured professor to call for him to disclose the Russian sources of his funding and for the university community to state that it does not condone "anti-Ukrainian ideology". **Ferguson feels unease at the unrealistic optimism of many commentators, as well as the Biden administration, about Ukraine's capacity to fight indefinitely.**

Washington's confidence bordering on complacency is evident in its current aggressive posture towards China, expressed in the [provocative visit](#) by former US military and security officials to Taiwan, and White House Indo-Pacific policy coordinator Kurt Campbell's statement to the effect that the US can manage military confrontations with both Russia and China.

Before meeting senior Chinese diplomatic Yang Jiechi in Rome **on Monday last week**, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan [issued a stern warning](#) that "there absolutely will be consequences" if China helped Russia evade US-led sanctions. **In the Biden-Xi virtual meeting on Friday, Biden described to Xi "implications and consequences" if Beijing provides "material support" to Russia as it attacks Ukrainian cities and civilians, according to the White House announcement after the summit.**

For all this, we are being presented with an adventure akin to what George W. Bush called [a "crusade"](#) against Islamic terrorism in the wake of September 11.

In these columns in the past, I've discussed the naivety of American diplomacy; my fear now is that the current developments in Ukraine are bringing this into sharp focus.

Beijing is convinced that Washington is determined to foil its rise to the status of superpower. Moscow is pushing back against Nato, even though Russia has been steadily reduced to a weakling in the international arena over the past three decades.

Both China and Russia are trying to secure their existential interests, but **Washington** shouts "good-versus-evil" slogans at them, relying on its still unrivalled military and financial power.

In the US, problems such as income inequality, [racial tensions](#) and political polarisation are growing. Washington has been trying to delay the implosion by being aggressive internationally, particularly by leaning on China, challenging Russia and keeping a tight grip on Europe where France **and Germany** have long been pushing for the continent's ["strategic autonomy"](#).

Now, with Putin throwing down the gauntlet to the US, and with Beijing refusing to abandon Moscow in the belief that China is locked in the US' crosshairs anyway, Washington's decision to simultaneously take on two formidable rivals is ominously fraught.

What if Putin, cornered or emboldened over Ukraine, calls the US' bluff and presses on, acting against Nato's East-European members, or in the Middle East or Korean peninsula, or even resorting to nuclear warfare?

What if China continues to defy the US determinedly but shrewdly, thus also calling Washington's bluff, and refusing to renege on its ["no-limits"](#) strategic partnership with Russia?

Washington is dominated by ethical narratives, as borne out by George Soros' passionate declaration **in 2019 that "my interest in defeating Xi Jinping's China goes beyond US national interests", which sounds astoundingly ideological and cosmopolitan.** It's just that, when the grand die is cast, **as seems the case in Ukraine now**, the world probably will brace for, not biblical Parousia, but another turn of history's "eternal recurrence" in Nietzschean sense.

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