



Lessons from the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022: Moving the World Beyond War*

Ketan Patel

Founder & CEO, Greater Pacific Capital;
Trustee, World Academy of Art & Science

Christian Hansmeyer

Founding member, Greater Pacific Capital

Abstract

Russia's aggression in Ukraine has shaken the post-war liberal order, originally designed to prevent war in Europe and between advanced industrialised countries. While the mechanisms to avoid drawing neighbouring countries (and their allies) into the conflict appear to be holding, the risk of further escalation between Russia and NATO remains considerable. With deterrence, pre-emption and negotiation having failed, Western efforts have now shifted to actions that apply pressure for Russia to cease hostilities and withdraw all forces from Ukraine. The US and its allies have firmly ruled out direct military intervention, leaving escalating economic sanctions as the primary tool with which to respond to Russia's actions. While the package of sanctions in place to date is unprecedented (and continuing to expand) it remains unclear whether it will compel Russia to negotiate before achieving a military victory in Ukraine. Regardless of Russian military's success or failure, or the shape of the eventual compromise the parties may reach, the current crisis provides a number of observations and lessons with deep implications for both the parties involved and for the wider global order. If the world is to pre-empt future bloodshed and move conflicts without war, it will need to learn these lessons and create highly effective penalties on regimes as a deterrent against violence.

1. A Very Brief Context

The first land war in Europe between two sovereign states since the end of the Second World War has raised a series of alarm bells. The first and foremost is that advanced industrialised countries are neither too advanced nor too civilised to wage wars upon each other. Secondly, that Europe following 75 years of peace is still a theatre of war, and one with the potential to drag in the rest of the world. And thirdly, that the EU as the front line of the conflicts, and needs to be a cohesive force confronting global challenges in times of crisis where time is short and the stakes are high, rather than weakened by a UK establishing its own credentials following Brexit. It also implies that a dramatic shift is required in how the rules-based liberal order works with and across the world to prevent war. President

* This article was first published on March 3rd, 2022. It has been edited for clarity

Putin's aggression may well have inadvertently renewed the effort to address one of the most important projects for humankind, how to move the world beyond war.

Putting aside the debate over the possible role NATO's eastward expansion has played in the current crisis, there has been an overwhelming recognition that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an act of extraordinary aggression and a blatant violation of international laws and norms that cannot be tolerated. It demands an appropriate response for the sake of the people of Ukraine, their continued right to self-determination, and for the sake of a functioning rules-based security order.

Russia is now already politically isolated within the global order with only half-hearted support from China and with even the abstainers of the UN Security Council vote to condemn Russia's attack openly calling on it to end its hostilities. With the idea of NATO entering the war off the table, other means of coercion have come to the fore, among these are economic, social and media, and geopolitical levers. Given that the start of the war has not

gone as well as Russia had hoped, it therefore is widely expected to escalate its efforts with harsh consequences for the Ukrainian people, and the effectiveness of Western measures needs to be at a level that counters these, while paving the way for a peaceful resolution.

A renewed land war in Europe rings several alarm bells around the world ... advanced industrialised countries are neither too advanced nor too civilised to wage land wars on each other, Europe is still a theatre of war, and one with the potential to drag in the rest of the world, and that Europe needs to be a cohesive force in confronting challenges around the EU

2. Current Sanctions and their Context: Unlikely to Succeed

Sanctions appear to be at the core of the West's strategy to pressure Russia to withdraw. More than a century's use of sanctions across the world has shown that for a package to be effective, it needs to lead to real consequences for the target, inflicting severe economic and ultimately political pain that cannot be weathered or otherwise managed. However, throughout history, Russian leaders have demonstrated the ability to weather enormous hardships, often at the expense of the populace, so for sanctions to be effective they will need to be calibrated to be sufficiently severe while of course avoiding triggering a potential humanitarian crisis.

Russian prudence has enabled the accumulation of considerable foreign reserves, of c.US\$640 billion, the fourth highest in the world (compared to America's US\$129 billion), providing it with the capacity to withstand considerable economic sanctions

Effective sanctions against Russia need to recognise the reality of its fiscal and economic situation. Firstly, Russia is to some degree a strategic petrostate, its energy exports exceeding 10% of its annual GDP.¹ While it is critically dependent on these revenues, Moscow's conservative fiscal and monetary policy has set the

Russian budget to balance at an oil price of only US\$44, less than half the current market price. Secondly, this prudence has enabled the accumulation of considerable foreign reserves,

which at the beginning of the war stood at c.US\$640 billion and are the fourth highest in the world,² bear in mind that the US has only US\$129 billion. These reserves provide the regime the capacity to withstand considerable economic sanctions, particularly given that, thirdly, Russia has been reducing its exposure to foreign private dollar debt, from US\$500 billion in 2013 to less than US\$400 billion (c.25% of GDP) in 2020, an amount well covered by reserves.³

The current tranche of sanctions appears to be focused on four distinct areas, hampering the Russian financial system, import restrictions, barriers on the oil and gas industry, and sanctions against regime-aligned individuals (see inset).

Current Sanctions, Evident Framework	
<i>Sanction Area</i>	<i>Key Measures Enacted</i>
1. Financial system Restrictions: Hampering “core infrastructure”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected bank asset freezing • Correspondent bank denials • SWIFT suspensions
<i>Assessment: Disrupts majority of forex transactions and Central bank access to reserves but allows trade transactions to continue</i>	
2. Import Restrictions: Limitations on dual use goods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU restrictions on semiconductors, telecom, lasers, sensors, navigation, avionics, and maritime technologies • Planned restrictions on oil & gas technologies
<i>Assessment: Significant short term supply chain disruptions with the potential for alternative imports from China over the mid-term</i>	
3. Export Restrictions: Oil and gas exports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension of the US\$15 billion Nordstream II gas pipeline • No restrictions on current oil and gas exports
<i>Assessment: Russia continues to export US\$350 million of energy to the West every day. Supplying 40% of Europe’s gas, Russia is too big a part of global energy markets to allow comprehensive sanctions against it</i>	
4. Sanctions on Individuals: Focus on regime supporters and enablers	Asset freezes and travel bans on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oligarchs and business leaders • Parliamentarians • Cabinet members
<i>Assessment: Oligarchs’ ability to influence Putin is questionable, given his track record of keeping them in line through imprisonment, asset seizing, or exile (e.g., Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky)</i>	

Russia’s dominant position in global energy markets, financial conservatism, and the inward turn of its economy since the Crimean invasion provide a series of defences for Moscow. While this inward turn has occurred at the expense of international investment, trade, economic diversification and long-term growth, over the near term it provides it with a significant buffer to weather restrictions. Other sanctions, such as airspace restrictions for Russian aircraft, or corresponding sanctions by allied countries like Australia and Canada

have also been put in place, but it remains to be seen whether the current package of sanctions will force Russia to the negotiating table, particularly given Putin's need to show strength in the face of adversity.

The impact of the current sanction regime on Russian GDP in 2020 was estimated in the early days of the war as being 1%. While this seems like a significant number for a country previously projected to grow at only 3% that year as one of Europe's most sluggish economies, Russia has proven its ability to withstand prolonged economic shocks. The (ineffective) sanction imposed on it after the invasion of Crimea in 2014 caused a 2.5% drop in Russia's GDP, indicating that to be effective, sanctions will need to be significantly more disruptive.

3. The Compelling Challenges and Lessons Emerging from Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

This war has taught the world a series of sombre lessons that it had perhaps optimistically thought it would no longer need to be taught, that land wars in Europe are an outdated part of the past. Following weeks of anticipation and increasingly confident predictions of military action, Russia's invasion of Ukraine moved into full swing.

Western efforts initially focused on increasing pressure for Putin to cease hostilities and withdraw all forces from Ukraine, as well as continuing to arm the defenders. If the international response is insufficient, and Ukrainian defences are overcome, the terms of Ukraine's on-going governance and way of life will likely be on terms dictated and favourable to Moscow.

While Russia continues its advance and the West escalates sanctions, and ordinary Ukrainians resist and fight back, the future shape of events remains unclear, the only certainty is that the reality is different from the plan. Regardless of Russian military success or failure and the shape of any ultimate peace deal, there are a number of key challenges and lessons that have already emerged from the crisis, and that have major implications not just for the parties involved but also for the wider global order. The key lessons include:

1. **The West's Current Leaders are on a Journey to Being Coordinated in Global Crises.** While the major western powers of the US, EU and the UK are clearly aligned in their ultimate objectives, their engagement with Russia and with each other lacked coordination at the outset and impeded the effectiveness of their responses in the face of threats, with leaders appearing to compete for face time with Putin. While the current group of leaders appears to be determined to stop Russia, it is uncertain whether each successive cycle of elections in the West will put leaders with more or less determination in place.
2. **The US Will Not Deploy its Military to Support 'Non-Strategic' Interests.** Having failed to support Georgia in the 2008 invasion by Russia, and Ukraine in the Russian invasion of the Crimea in 2014, US non-intervention in the current war provides further confirmation that the US will not treat all its allies in the same way and for most, it will not automatically defend them in the face of foreign attacks.

3. **US Political Divisions and Interests Abroad are Potentially Leverageable.** The US political partisanship has now reached levels such that members of the political opposition (including former president Donald Trump and right-wing journalists) initially publicly praised a foreign aggressor and discredited the US government. This creates a wedge that can potentially be exploited by America's competitors for propaganda purposes, and has indeed been used by Russian media.
4. **Without US Leadership, NATO Still Appears to be More Like Just a Collection of States, For Now.** NATO is not organised to act effectively without US leadership and the default mode is for individual members to prioritise their own interests and struggle to pursue shared ones, acting based on national economic considerations or domestic political ones.
5. **The EU Lacks What May be Critical in its Crisis Response Capabilities if it is to Wield the Power that it has.** While its external leverage is predominantly economic, the Union lacks the organisational power to wield this leverage to full effect needing to balance the priorities of 28 diverse member states, and while it has achieved more than many would have predicted, it has further to progress to respond to live crises in real time.
6. **Multi-lateral Institutions are Structurally Unsited to Intervene in Such a Situation.** Institutions built on a consensus driven global security order are unable to address conflicts involving major countries or blocs of countries, with governance mechanisms not allowing for effective action, as evidenced by the more peripheral or supporting role of the UN in the current crisis compared to NATO countries.
7. **Encirclement is A Key Component of Western Security Strategies in the Face of Regional Threats.** Western security doctrine is based on the idea that the best defence against potential security threats is to form alliances to encircle opponents, neutralising an opponent ideally without the need for offensive strategies, whether in Europe through NATO or in the Indo-Pacific through the Quad.
8. **Gaps in Spheres of Influence Leave a Vacuum That are Inevitably Filled.** Maintaining spheres of influence requires the constant exertion of power and any interruption in this power creates gaps in a country's sphere of influence that are at a risk of being filled by economic, military or political competitors.
9. **War Still Requires Boots on the Ground.** Despite Russia having among the world's most advanced cyberwarfare capabilities, there have been no significant cyberattacks on critical infrastructure or government reported to government, implying that tanks and guns are still the primary assets of warfare in the 21st century.
10. **Casualties Still Matter Despite COVID.** Six million deaths during the past two years from COVID has not inured the public to outrage over reports of loss of life in military actions; while 200 daily deaths from COVID are deemed sufficiently low in some countries to drop all coronavirus restrictions, 200 dead from a military invasion still elicit shock and outrage by the public.

11. **False Flags are Quickly Exposed in Today's Networked World.** Russia's claims of troop withdrawals and reports of Ukrainian aggression were quickly debunked by countless sources on the ground, making large scale false flag operations very challenging in a networked and connected world, and very short lived as a result.
12. **Aggressive Action Damages Soft Power by Ceding the High Ground.** Russia being the aggressor in an offensive war has caused it to cede its claim of being wronged by NATO expansion with its incongruous and indefensible actions, having led to a loss of support from former allies and supporters, including large parts of the Russian émigré diaspora. While Russia appears to place little value on soft power, other potential aggressors may do so.
13. **Asymmetric Escalation and the 'Mad Man' Act have a Limited Effect.** When Putin countered 'aggressive statements' by NATO powers and 'illegitimate Western sanctions' by ordering Russian nuclear forces on high alert, Western countries largely ignored the move and thereby effectively side-stepped Russia's attempt at asymmetric escalation, at least for now.
14. **The Threat of Action can be More Powerful than Action Itself.** While the threat of action creates risk that can be used as a tool to extract concessions, acting resolves uncertainty, often with unforeseen consequences that rob the action of its effectiveness. Russia has demonstrated the shortcomings of its military planning and execution, some of the limitations of its soldiers being asked to fire on Ukrainians, and the apparent inability to align its government⁴ as well as its diaspora including major oligarchs with the Putin.
15. **Strategic Exports Provide a Critical Counterweight to Sanctions.** Sanctions on Russia have been explicitly tempered to allow energy exports to continue to flow, given Russia's importance in global energy markets and its position as Europe's leading gas supplier demonstrating that scaled or strategic exports provide a critical counterweight to sanctions.⁵
16. **An Aggressor's Justification for Their Actions is Irrelevant to the International Response.** Rationales for invasions that are based on the higher strategic value of the target to the attacker, relative to the defender or the international community, are flawed since even if a territory has little strategic value to the global community, the invasion itself can provide the rationale for isolating, alienating, and countering the attacker.
17. **Economic Independence and Reserves Are Valuable in a Crisis...** Russia's economic inward turn in the past decade will enable it to withstand much greater western pressure on its economy and better than it has in the past, given its reduced dependence on foreign debt and high foreign currency reserves.
18. **...But Do Not Fully Safeguard an Economy in the Face of Concerted Efforts.** While Russian reserves provide an important buffer to its economy, the Central bank still needed to double interest rates to 20% to shore up the rouble, a move that is set to hurt borrowers and businesses, and further escalation may put the country under pressure.

19. **Social Media Quickly Unites the Individual and the World.** Russian aggression has galvanised the world to unite quickly with individuals, interest groups, media stars and personalities with tens of millions of supporters, galvanising online against aggression and raising the stakes for their politicians.
20. **The Private Sector is a Powerful Force for Boycotts.** The private sector has emerged as a powerful force for effective economic pressure, with companies from a range of sectors not subject to sanctions withdrawing from Russia in response to public pressure, closing businesses there and suspending trading activities.
21. **The West Can Unite, Coordinate and Exact a Heavy Price, and Quickly.** Despite the oft quoted accusation that the West is soft, divided, in decline and increasingly incapable of addressing major issues, and the initial seemingly uncoordinated nature of the Western response seemed to bear that out particularly in the run-up and launch of the invasion, the measures launched in the first four days demonstrate impact and speed.

4. Preventing Future Wars: Creating an Effective Alternative to Killing

At some point, the world must move beyond waging wars fought with deadly weapons to wars fought with words and sanctions, and eventually move beyond that too. Taken together, the lessons from the Russian invasion of Ukraine have significant geopolitical implications and risks in that, if successful and without dire consequences, it (re)establishes lethal wars as a credible means of achieving strategic goals in bilateral relations. While the other major deadly conflicts in the world underway today in places like Yemen, Afghanistan and Ethiopia, are civil wars with in some cases significant foreign interference, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a war between two sovereign states in Europe fighting one another with conventional armed forces, and one of the aggressors is one of the great powers that fought the Nazis in World War II.

5. Emerging Lessons for Potential Aggressors

Regardless of the outcome of the current invasion, the events to date provide a series of insights for other aggressor countries willing to take lives to achieve their objectives. While it is too early to draw the full range of lessons in a live and quickly changing situation; at this juncture, the key insights for prospective aggressors include:

- i. The global community of advanced economies lacks the willingness or ability to intervene militarily in third party conflicts, even near their doorsteps unless the considerations are strategic or retaliatory.
- ii. Most current military planning is based on previous conflicts and does not consider appropriately the increased complexity of today's digital and interconnected world.

Taken together, the lessons from the Russian invasion of Ukraine have significant geopolitical implications and risks in that, if successful and without dire consequences, it (re)establishes lethal wars as a credible means of achieving strategic goals

- iii. Highly egregious aggressors can unite the world to counter forcefully against them.
- iv. A ‘playbook’ of sanctions for use by the international community is emerging,
- v. This may provide future aggressors with the opportunity to pre-empt future sanctions by building resilience against them and require the ‘policemen’ to constantly innovate and renew sanctions.
- vi. Ultimately, mature geopolitics requires ‘conflict potential’ to be actively managed, forestalling the need for war, and this requires a change in the approach to and governance of world affairs.

Depending on the circumstances of each country and on the conclusions drawn by its leaders, the lessons above can serve as both a deterrent to war and as a playbook on how to manage one.

6. Shifting from War to Diplomacy Backed by an Arsenal of Penalties

Shifting from war to diplomacy, requires the international community to make the cost of war fundamentally unaffordable, rather than something that can be justified given sufficient benefits. This will require further breakthroughs in existing alliances and international cooperation, the development of clear escalation protocols and the rethinking of long-standing political principles and policies. In the unfolding crisis there are increasing signs that such breakthroughs are occurring, but more will be required, both to resolve the current crisis, and to reduce the likelihood of future crises around the world. In this regard, there are a number of insights for leaders of international community will need to consider.

For a system of penalties to be effective it would need to be multifaceted, high impact and quick and powerful enough to safeguard against all-out war. It would not, of course, substitute for diplomacy but would be an effective deterrent providing certainty around the minimum level of the penalty for waging war.

The key elements of such an arsenal, some of which are now being deployed to varying degrees of severity against Russia, include:

- I. **Banking and Finance:** Hobble the Banking System. A full suspension of access to the SWIFT system, would bring hobble the financial system, causing Russia’s economy to contract by an estimated 5% by limiting investment, portfolio flows, cross border transactions and trade;⁶
- II. **Imports:** Ration Non-Essentials. Broad based export control with limited exemptions for food, medicine and other essentials to shut down the Russian industry and discretionary consumption;
- III. **Exports:** Stop Revenue Flows. Energy import restrictions by the EU severely limiting foreign cash inflows to the Russian economy;

- IV. **Energy and Resources:** Withhold Energy and Resource Security. This is a key component of any effective sanction regime, Russia as the world's largest gas and as a major producer of metals and minerals is autarkic with regards to resources, making restrictions less relevant here;
- V. **People: Interrupt the Flow of Human Capital and IP.** Systematic visa restrictions for Russian nationals in the West, including targeted cancellations negatively affecting business and government relations;
- VI. **Strategic Relations:** Damage International Position. Sanction participation in multi-lateral political, security and economic organisations, damaging Russia's standing in the world, and applying pressure on allies and holdouts to condemn its actions;
- VII. **Culture, Media and Soft Power.** Exercise soft power levers to exclude Russia from the community of nations, blocking participation in sporting, cultural and economic events and leveraging media platforms to highlight illegitimate Russian actions;
- VIII. **Domestic Political Position:** Undermine the Powerbase at Home. Prioritise sanctions designed to impact domestic government support, incentivising key stakeholders, including voters, financiers, security force, and others, to apply pressure on governments;
- IX. **Military:** Arm the Victim When Direct Engagement is Not Possible. Where physical presence is not the favoured option, arming the victim can exact a higher price from the aggressor and in certain situations may buy time for negotiation, events to change or be changed. And for future aggressors, may be a critical factor to sway the decision to attack.

7. Some Observations on the Size, Scale and Scope Required to Succeed

To reverse and forestall future wars requires extreme actions. The list of penalties is an extreme one and represents a degree of severity that has never been applied in totality with intent to a major country before, and without it, war remains an option and countermeasures require warring.

Applying measures to a global economic nation is new territory for the world. While elements of the above, like total SWIFT exclusion and export embargos have been applied to smaller countries like Venezuela and bigger ones like Iran but never to a top 15 global economics.

Sanctions are a double-edged sword, even before retaliation is taken into account. Effective sanctions will clearly have a blowback effect, hurting not just Russia but the sanctioning countries and global economic and financial stability as well, and the world will need to prepare for that for the future. Such high-cost sanctions are powerful though, since they send an important signal about the pain the sanctioning party is willing to bear to achieve their aims. Germany's suspension of Nord Stream 2 is a good example since it creates a material problem for the country's energy security that Berlin has proactively chosen to embrace despite the expected future cost to the country.

To be effective, disproportionate pain needs to be borne by the aggressor. Ultimately though, the West will need to work closely to minimise the cost of sanctions to itself, supporting those bearing a disproportionate share of the costs, which in turn of course creates more new headroom for the imposition of additional sanctions and escalation. Sanctions will hit Russia much harder than they will the rest of the world overall, given that Russia's share of the global economy is less than 2%, although its dominance in European energy markets will create significant regional disruptions.

While history has shown that the Russian people can endure nearly unbearable hardships, in the past century they have also toppled both imperial and communist Russia via mass revolutions

power, driven by mass unrest by the Russian population. An 'information and soft power' war therefore is likely to be needed to create the momentum to unseat a leader who enjoys approval ratings of 60-70%.⁷ While history has shown that the Russian people can endure nearly unbearable hardships, in the past century they have also toppled both imperial and communist Russia via mass revolutions.

The ultimate arbiter may well be a threat to the aggressor's own political position. Having weathered political and economic storms in the past, Putin is unlikely to be swayed by anything less than a real threat to his continued

When one wages war (even non-lethal war), one has to prepare for retaliation. Effective sanctions are painful and may well trigger responses similar to those used against military threats. Russia has proven highly willing to wage information warfare against the West, including cyberattacks and misinformation, even in times of peace, and so may escalate to more drastic responses, both virtual and physical through the use of proxies.

De-escalation requires a way out. Countries employing sanctions will need to sign-post clear 'off-ramps' that provide opportunities for de-escalation, allowing sanctioned countries to backdown and or backout at any time, which requires continuous engagement and regularly planned interventions for negotiation.

Sanction and engagement architecture to maximise participation across the world. Sanction regimes need to be supported by a critical mass of countries, implying a design that allows states to participate in varying ways based on their own circumstances, and an engagement strategy to pressure holdouts seeking to free-ride from sanctions regimes imposed by others.

Engaging civil society around the world to mobilise the individual against violence. Truly effective sanctions go far beyond the level of government policy and are supported by a global mass-movement. Corporations, cultural and sporting institutions, non-government organisations are not just expressing their support for Ukraine, they are enhancing the sanction regime with bottom-up boycotts of their own, withdrawing assets, cancelling commercial contracts and events, and otherwise breaking off relations with Russian counterparts in a show of global solidarity.

Pre-emption, forestalling war, remains of course the necessity and the best solution. While effective sanctions are the last resort before needing to fall back to violence, the best solutions forestall confrontation entirely through political engagement, whether through treaties, *détentes*, inducements, or even implicit threats.

“To prevent war in the future requires a new architecture for international relations no less and a new arsenal of measures and practices to address aggressors.”

8. Conclusion: Beyond Territorial Spheres of Influence to Mutual Interest

This war appears to be an anachronism. It follows a pattern long enshrined in human history, whereby disputes are resolved or aims are achieved through violent conflict. As the reactions to the war across the globe have demonstrated, it is out of sync with the world as it is today and fails to understand the architecture of the world emerging from an ever-connected information era. In essence, the conflict needs to accelerate or leapfrog to an endgame rather than go through the destruction of war itself.

To break the pattern of this war, and a potential occupation at the end, requires an urgent catalyst—this may be an actor that may be one of the ‘abstainers’ of the UN Security Council resolution censuring Russia’s attack, China, India or the UAE—to accelerate to a positive end game, or stop its destructive progression at one of the milestones enroute to the end game, which include:

1. **Pause as a Prelude to Exit.** With Russian military operations not moving with the speed Moscow had hoped for in the early stage, Putin could likely choose to step up efforts to crush Ukraine’s armed force and overrun the country. The benefits of such a move looks to be increasingly questionable. A full-scale military assault would likely cost countless civilian lives and shred the last remains of Russia’s international reputation and continued civil resistance would necessitate a brutal occupation regime from which it will be difficult to plot an exit strategy.
2. **Provide for ‘victory’.** Putin has hinted at his desire for regime change in Kyiv but it is abundantly clear that Ukrainians will not recognise the non-elected pro-Russian government he would put in place. And so, a Russian ‘victory’ may find Putin occupying a territory he can neither safely hold nor safely withdraw from without the risk of the West accelerating Ukraine’s economic and security integration (into the EU and NATO, respectively) as soon as Russian forces are gone.
3. **Negotiate Peace Sooner Rather than Later.** Even the most crushing and one-sided victories ultimately lead to a negotiated settlement, and at some point the parties will need to engage to find a solution. What remains to be seen is at whose point of choosing these talks will take place. For Ukraine the critical priorities are clearly the cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of Russian troops, protection of Ukrainian sovereignty and

democracy, and the freedom for its people to determine the course the country will take in the future.

4. **Address Russia's Perceived Security Concerns.** The goal of mutual security is shared by the West, who are also focused on the regional peace, the preservation of Europe's security architecture, and demonstrating the futility (and in acceptability) of waging war. For Ukraine's and Europe's sake, they will also need to be focused on reducing the threat of future Russian aggression, which will ultimately require addressing the country's own perceived security concerns.
5. **Address Russia's Need for a Sphere of Influence.** Leaving aside any assumed expansionist or revisionist delusions about reconstituting a Russian Empire, Putin has stated that NATO's eastward expansion is a betrayal of prior promises.⁸ In addition to demanding that Central and Eastern European NATO members effectively demilitarise, Russia is insisting on a halt to further expansion of the alliance. The most charitable interpretation of Russian demands indicates that its desired solution is the creation of a sphere of influence that includes carving out dependent breakaway republics from countries on its borders and a further zone of non-aligned countries, either neutral or under its political and economic influence (as it has done in Georgia and started to do in Ukraine). This needs to be addressed, not necessarily acquiesced to.
6. **Integrate Interests, Moving Beyond Spheres of Influence.** Even real security concerns do not result in the right to a sphere of influence, a concept common to Great Power relations in the 19th Century. Such spheres clearly run across modern conceptions of national sovereignty and self-determination, disenfranchising millions of people who end up subject to de-facto foreign rule, and they have therefore fallen out of favour in the eyes of the West in the post-war period, having been replaced with greater economic and political integration, as the integration of France and Germany into the EU have demonstrated with them relinquishing their previous spheres of influence.

Russia may have provided the perfect incentive for the world to create a new architecture for international relations and provide a warning to those that might see violence as a low cost means of achieving their goals

However, with the current prospects of greater integration into Europe's political, security and economic architecture appearing quite slim, Russia's security concerns seem unlikely to be addressed over the near to medium term, creating an on-going source of risk in Europe. At some point however, the two sides will need to respect each other's interests and find a common cause.

To prevent war in the future requires a new architecture for international relations no less and a new arsenal of measures and practices to address aggressors. Russia may have provided the perfect reason to the rest of the world to create this. It may also provide a warning to those that might see violence as a low cost means of achieving their goals.

Successful grand strategy achieves great victories at little cost. On the current trajectory Russia appears to be heading towards minimal gains at exceedingly high costs. Sun-Tzu, the ancient Chinese general and author of “The Art of War” famously quoted, “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.” By this measure Russia has already lost. It just remains to be seen how high the price is for itself, Ukraine, the EU and the world at large.

Authors Contact Information

Ketan Patel – Email: Ketan.Patel@greaterpacificcapital.com

Christian Hansmeyer – Email: Christian.Hansmeyer@greaterpacificcapital.com

Notes

1. Statista
2. Central Bank of Russia, Reuters
3. Central Bank of Russia
4. As witnessed by Putin’s dressing down of his top security officials during a televised meeting on 22 Feb. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-60485967>
5. See: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/biden-spares-russia-s-crucial-energy-exports-from-sanctions>
6. Estimate by Russian Finance Ministry 2014
7. Source: Levada Center
8. Despite Russia having officially acknowledged this expansion in the NATO Russia Founding Act in 1996.