

To Avoid Another Munich, Europe Must Act to Secure Ukraine

Sunday 3 November 2024

For nearly a thousand days, Ukraine has resisted full-scale Russian aggression: the heroism of its armed forces and its people stand as an example to all free nations. But as the US election approaches, Ukraine and its allies face a twin strategic danger.

The first is that an incoming Trump administration will attempt to impose a deal with Russia detrimental to Ukraine's interests, and to European security. This would leave Ukraine adrift from NATO and the EU, in a condition of fake neutrality – and Europe with a destabilizing geopolitical greyzone in the heart of the continent.

The second is that an incoming Harris administration will continue with the policies of stasis and red lines, which have to date withheld the capabilities with which Ukraine could win the war. In this scenario, the fatalism of key European governments who refuse to believe Ukraine can win, and are tempted to commit – at best – only to the bolstering of NATO defence in response to a Ukrainian defeat, could become decisive within the alliance, while damaging its credibility.

In both cases the parallels with the 1938 Munich Agreement are clear: it would be a false 'peace' achieved through European acquiescence in the dismembering of a sovereign state, and would leave that state unable to defend itself against future aggression, while buying an unacceptably small amount of time for our own rearmament. It would be likely to lead to a wider and even more destructive war.

In the first scenario, such a deal would be Trump's Munich. In the second it would be – collectively as Europeans – our Munich.

The signatories of this appeal, which is being circulated privately among policymakers in the NATO alliance, are convinced that a third course is possible, which can lead to Ukraine's survival as a sovereign state and Russia's defeat. This is not only the right thing to do; it is the best way to secure Europe in the short-term and buy ourselves time to build the capabilities we need to defend ourselves in future.

Our belief is premised on five grounds.

1. **The inevitability of Russia prevailing is a myth.** Russia cannot sustain its war effort at current levels beyond 2025. For example, Russia is losing 260 heavy caliber cannon barrels (artillery and tank) per month and can produce only 20.^[1] Likewise,

Russia is losing an average of 144 infantry fighting vehicles per month, yet can produce only 17.^[2] For these items of equipment, as with many others, Russia is scheduled to exhaust its stockpiles in the second half of 2025.

- 2. There is no credible plan for Ukrainian (or European) security after any 'ceasefire'.** The Putin regime has demonstrated time and again that it is not a credible negotiating partner and that it cannot be trusted to keep to any 'deal' that it signs. Yet Ukraine's route into NATO – the only truly credible security guarantee in the medium term – is blocked and there are no compelling alternative offers yet on the table. If this continues to be the case, a ceasefire only buys Russia time to reconstitute its forces, while European allies have not yet kicked their own production into gear, leaving us at a major disadvantage.
- 3. Failing to win endangers all European allies.** A 'Minsk III' (or Munich II) agreement, reached in full knowledge that it was the failure of Western willpower that obligated it, would neither guarantee Ukraine's stability nor enhance the security of its European neighbours. To the contrary, demographic models suggest it would create a new refugee crisis in Europe and require uplifts of European defence spending well above any currently envisaged. It would also signal weakness and a lack of resolve that only invite coercion upon us.
- 4. The route to Ukrainian victory still exists.** This is well understood in defence ministries across European NATO states. Using new military technology we can quickly leverage Europe's industrial capacity to build the capabilities Ukraine needs to disable Russia's war machine. For example, building a massed precision strike force for Ukraine, with no external restrictions on its targeting, is within our grasp. To realise this goal, we must, however, strategically focus our support around a clear theory of victory.
- 5. Those who want to act, can.** The means to victory do not require sign-off at the level of the 32-country NATO alliance but can be provided by a coalition of willing powers, including all those committed to Ukraine's recovery of its currently occupied territory and then to providing Kyiv with real security guarantees.^[3] These are the countries that understand that our own security is dependent on defeating Russia in Ukraine and thus buying ourselves time to boost our deterrence. They understand that we still can, and must, act in the name of our security and freedom – and that if we do so in ways that change facts and policy on the ground, others will follow.

With the US election looming, time is of the essence. We are launching this appeal today because it is essential that European capitals arm themselves with a real contingency plan – both in the event of a Trump victory, a withdrawal of support and pressure exerted on Ukraine to accept permanent neutrality and territorial concession, or in the event of a

Harris victory and the continuation of a policy that would fail to secure Ukraine and thus endanger Europe.

The course of action we propose is, for a coalition of willing nations within NATO to commit to enhance military and financial support to Kyiv and to recommit to the aim of a sovereign Ukraine within its borders recognised by international law, focused around a clear strategy and theory of victory. This is necessary to avoid any immediate detrimental effects in Ukraine after the election, which would aid Russia, to live up to our alliance commitments and to take responsibility for our own security.

Signatories *

1. **Prof. Sir Hew Strachan**, University of St. Andrews and Special Advisor to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the National Security Strategy
2. **Lt. Gen. (retd.) David A. Deptula**, United States Air Force, Dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Power Studies
3. **Gen. (retd.) Michael V. Hayden**, fmr. CIA and NSA Director
4. **Maj. Gen. (retd.) Mick Ryan AM**, fmr. Commandant, Australian Defence College
5. **Air Marshal (retd.) Edward Stringer**, Royal Air Force
6. **Air Marshal (retd.) Greg Bagwell**, Royal Air Force
7. **Vice-Admiral (retd.) Didier Piaton**, French Navy, fmr. Deputy Commander, NATO Maritime Command, current Assoc. Professor
8. **Toomas Hendrik Ilves**, President of Estonia (2006-2016); Professor, Tartu University
9. **The Rt. Hon. Sir David Lidington**, fmr. UK Minister of State for Europe and Deputy to the Prime Minister. Chair, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)
10. **Hon. Chris Alexander PC**, former Minister for Citizenship and Immigration, Parliamentary Secretary for National Defence and Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan
11. **Prof. Eliot Cohen**, former Counsellor of the Department of State (USA)
12. **Prof. Phillips O'Brien**, University of St. Andrews
13. **Dr Artis Pabriks**, fmr. Foreign and Defence Minister of Latvia
14. **Michael Roth MP**, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag and former German Secretary of State for European Affairs
15. **Dr Konstantin von Notz MP**, Chair of the Intelligence Oversight Committee & Deputy Chair of the Green Party Parliamentary Group in the German Bundestag
16. **Dr Anton Hofreiter MP**, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag

17. **Thomas Erndl MP**, Vice-Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag
18. **Sara Nanni MP**, Defence Spokesperson for the Green Party, German Bundestag
19. **Dr Sebastian Schaefer MP**, Budget & Defence Special Fund Committees of the German Bundestag
20. **Edward Lucas**, CEPA Senior Fellow & Columnist, The Times
21. **Dr. Anna Wieslander**, Director for Northern Europe, Atlantic Council and Chair of the Board, ISDP.
22. **Nicolas Tenzer**, guest professor at Sciences Po Paris, author of Our War: Crime and Oblivion
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25. **Marko Mihkelson MP**, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian Parliament
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35. **Robin Wagener MP**, Head of the German-Ukrainian Parliamentary Friendship Group
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37. **The Hon. Senator Dr. Stanley Kutcher**, Independent Senator for Nova Scotia, Senate of Canada
38. **The Hon. Senator Donna Dasko**, Senator for Ontario, Senate of Canada
39. **Pavel Fischer**, Senator for Prague & fmr Czech Ambassador to France
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41. **Adam Kinzinger**, Former member, US House of Representatives
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62. **Marc Polymeropoulos**, CIA (retd.)
63. **Alex Finley** (pen name), Author and CIA (retd.)
64. **Ed Bogan**, CIA (retd.)
65. **Jacob Kaarsbo**, Independent Security Policy Advisor and former Danish intelligence officer.
66. **Denver Riggelman**, fmr member, US House of Representatives & fmr US Air Force intelligence officer
67. **Terry Virts**, Colonel USAF (retd.) Former Astronaut and ISS Commander
68. **Romana Vlahutin**, Distinguished Fellow for Geostrategy, GMFUS
69. **Rosemary Thomas**, fmr. British Ambassador to Belarus
70. **The Rt. Hon. Sir Roderic Lyne**, fmr. British ambassador to Russia
71. **Bryan Cartledge KCMG**, fmr. UK Ambassador to the Soviet Union, 1985-1988
72. **Remus Cernea**, War Correspondent in Ukraine
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102. **Robert Dalsjö**, Senior Defence Analyst, FOI, Stockholm
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106. **Prof. Suzanne Orr**, Associate Professor of History, University of Kansas
107. **Prof. Jeannie Johnson**, Department of Political Science, Utah State University

**** In all cases, the institutional affiliation of each signatory is given for the purpose of identification and does not imply that the institution concerned endorses this open letter.***

Notes

^[1] Dylan Malyasov, '[Russia faces artillery barrel shortage](#)', *Defence Blog* (18 July 2024); David Axe, '[Russia Needs Fresh Artillery Barrels. Bad. It's Yanking Them Off Old Guns By The Thousand](#)', *Forbes* (12 January 2024).

^[2] Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, '[Russian Military Objectives and Capacity in Ukraine Through 2024](#)', *RUSI* (13 February 2024); Pavel Luzin, '[Russia's Kurganmashzavod Factory Data Shows the Limits of BMP-3 Production Rate](#)', *Jamestown Eurasia Daily Monitor* (22 July 2024).

^[3] See, for example: James Rogers and William Freer, '[The trilateral initiative: A minilateral to catalyse Russia's defeat?](#)', *Council on Geostrategy* (24 September 2024); Benjamin Tallis '[Security Guarantees for Ukraine](#)', *DGAP* (30 June 2023).