

OPINION

What is the path to peace in Ukraine?

Persuade the Russian president that he simply cannot win militarily, setting the stage for substantive peace negotiations.

Earl Turcotte

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Assessing America's new posture vis-a-vis Ukraine, Canadian columnist Andrew Coyne has observed that recent pronouncements by the administration of United States President Donald Trump are not—as described by many—irresponsible concessions to Russia. They are demands aimed not at Russia, but at Ukraine, and presented to it jointly by America and Russia.

In mere weeks, Trump's America has shifted from stalwart defender of Ukraine, and—in broader terms—of democracy and international law, to effectively joining forces with an aggressor state that has flouted interna-



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump. America's transition to possible adversary has sent shock waves around the world, writes Earl Turcotte. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

tional law in an attempt to conquer a neighbour, and end its very existence as a sovereign nation.

America's transition from reliable to unreliable ally and possible adversary has sent shock waves around the world. Even a qualified "win" by Russia—in addition to its dire implications for Ukraine—sets a dangerous modern-day precedent in international relations, undermining a core principle set out in the United Nations Charter regarding the inviolability of national borders. It would also encourage

states with similar ambitions, such as China vis-a-vis Taiwan, or possibly the U.S. vis-a-vis Greenland/Denmark, Panama, or, for that matter, Canada.

Ukraine appears determined to continue to resist Russia's assault. But without the U.S., can it? I believe so, if Ukraine's remaining supporters fill any gap left by U.S. withdrawal, and—if necessary—commit their own armed forces to bolster Ukraine's military capacity, as Russia has with North Korean forces. Yes, escalate to de-escalate. Persuade Russian President Vlad-

imir Putin that he simply cannot win militarily, setting the stage for substantive peace negotiations.

Deployment of western forces must be—and must be clearly presented as—a limited military operation to restore Ukraine's borders and bring an end to Russia's attack. Not a declaration of war on Russia. Assurances must also be given that Russia's legitimate security concerns would be addressed in any ensuing peace agreement—a deal that should also include the return of Russian territory in the

Kursk region, the exchange of all prisoners of war, and the return of Ukrainian children who were kidnapped by Russia. Ukraine should also commit in advance to holding internationally monitored referendums in each of its majority Russian-speaking regions to determine if their citizens truly wish to remain part of a sovereign Ukraine, or to become part of Russia. It is then incumbent upon the international community to provide security guarantees to secure enduring peace.

Would the potential deployment of western troops to further assist Ukraine risk nuclear war? In my humble view, it's less than NATO is already prepared to risk to defend any one of its member states in similar circumstances, which would likely involve a declaration of war by both sides. And it's a risk worth taking to protect a nation under mortal threat and to send a clear message to potential aggressors everywhere that you cannot act with impunity and will not prevail.

Concurrently, the world needs to expedite the elimination of nuclear weapons, and establish effective common security arrangements for everyone.

Earl Turcotte is a former Canadian diplomat, and United Nations official.

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