

Putin's war on Ukraine will either be the catalyst that revives the spirit & credibility of NATO or the end of the global order. As the Korean War shaped NATO after its birth under Harry Truman's vision of containing Communism, this is democracy vs authoritarianism.

Retreating from Putin to hide behind a piece of paper is too familiar to Ukrainians . The 1994 Budapest Memorandum promised Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for its nuclear arsenal. USA & UK rushed to deny it was a guarantee when Putin invaded in 2014.

As with NATO today, lack of contractual obligation does not equal prohibition nor a lack of moral and strategic necessity. It's about political will and the choices of leaders. The refusal to defend Ukraine in 2014 led directly to Putin's escalation now.

Yet they are eager to repeat the mistake, ignoring that every act of appeasement makes Putin's inevitable escalation more dangerous. This overconfidence affects not only Putin, but the generals who give orders and press even the biggest button.

Instead of knowing that escalation will seal their own fate, they begin to believe there will be no retaliation because there hasn't been in the past. This is what I have warned against for so long. Impunity breeds carelessness, overconfidence, and catastrophe.

As Truman and the other architects of the Cold War understood, credibility in deterrence means not having to use force. If your enemy believes you will not use force, you will be pressed until you do or until you are destroyed. There is no middle ground.

Russia is not the only nation with a nuclear deterrent. If Putin & his generals are certain they will be annihilated if they use nuclear weapons, they will not. If they doubt the West will retaliate, the odds of Russian use in UKR & E Europe is higher.

How will their calculations be influenced by allowing Ukraine to be destroyed or by defending it? Putin may be a madman, but his generals are not delusional. They know NATO could obliterate the Russian military. Its refusal to do so in Ukraine sends a message.

Why are US/NATO ships not moving to the Baltic Sea? Why are significant forces not being sent to the UKR border? If you hadn't noticed, Putin doesn't need to be "provoked" to escalate or attack innocents. Weakness provokes. Strength prevents.

Cities are being destroyed. Thousands killed, millions displaced. Waiting in the hope of making an agreement with the mass murderer in the Kremlin is repulsive. There is no real victory if Russia stays in Ukraine or if Putin stays in power, only next time.

Ukraine is a sovereign nation, or is it only Putin who doesn't believe that? Any forces coming to Ukraine's aid will be there at the invitation of its legitimate leader. Conceding all of Ukraine to an invader without a fight is absurd.

Declare safe zones and corridors for refugees and supplies. Invent whatever legal framework you want, knowing that Putin doesn't care about such things at all. If Putin is given free reign to obliterate Ukraine, what world are we fighting for?

NATO nations, led by the United States, are being challenged to stand up for the values of human life & liberty while Ukraine bleeds. Those are Putin's real targets and destroying Ukraine is a means to that end. He must not succeed. Glory to Ukraine.