

The Ukrainian Trap and NATO's Future: War Plans to Contain Russia and Encircle China

(Translated)

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has begun developing war plans and future studies for a potential war with Russia. NATO member states have adopted and prepared “thousands of pages of military plans,” described as “secret,” concerning a possible confrontation with Moscow. These plans include details of a potential military confrontation with Russia for the first time in decades. Experts say that this is because, after the start of Russia’s war against Ukraine, NATO reviewed its policy toward the Russian Federation, which it had long not considered an existential threat to the alliance.

Initially, Russia attempted to join NATO and entered into agreements with it. In 1997, it signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which obligates both parties to work together for peace, democracy, and security. The permanent deployment of additional NATO combat forces in member states was also restricted, but remained permissible in cases of self-defense or in the event of a threat. They also agreed on long-term political cooperation, and the NATO-Russia Council was established as a joint consultative forum.

However, NATO’s refusal to admit Russia, followed by its “open door” policy and eastward expansion, left Russia feeling betrayed and humiliated after receiving secret assurances from Western leaders that NATO would not expand eastward or annex Ukraine. As Putin stated in his February 2022 declaration of war on Ukraine, “You promised us in the 1990s that NATO would not move an inch eastward. You shamelessly deceived us. Five waves of NATO expansion have already occurred.”

On May 18, 2022, Finland and Sweden formally applied to join NATO, abandoning their decades-long policy of neutrality.

America saw trapping Russia in Ukraine as a way to achieve significant objectives, because the Russian-Ukrainian war did not arise naturally, but was orchestrated by America for major strategic goals. This involved drawing Russia into the war after discussions about Ukraine joining NATO, and then prolonging the conflict until the desired objectives were achieved.

“Military assessments close to the Kremlin indicated that the military operation would take no more than a few days to accomplish its assigned task, which involved annexing some Ukrainian provinces to Russia. However, the administration of former US President Joe Biden had a different vision. It saw its own geopolitical objectives in the war raging in eastern Ukraine, and therefore did not hesitate to open channels of military, intelligence, and logistical support to Kyiv in order to hinder the Russian offensive.” (Al Jazeera)

James Landale, the BBC’s diplomatic correspondent in Kyiv, wrote on this subject on 27 April 2022, “...the conflict has reminded the West of what it represents -

freedom, sovereignty and the rule of law. This in turn has produced a united response to Russia's aggression.... Perhaps the most important tensions could come over the aims of the war. At the moment the West is united behind the defence of Ukraine. It is providing economic and military support to help the country resist. But what is the longer-term aim? A cessation of hostilities, of course. But must Russia be defeated? Must Ukraine win? What would defeat and victory look like in practical terms?"

Writing for the American magazine, The National Interest, Harrison Kass stated on 6 July 2025, "Wisely, the United States has kept its own forces out of direct combat, choosing instead to treat Ukraine as a proxy in a broader strategy to degrade Russia's conventional military capabilities. The strategy aims to impose long-term costs on Moscow—roughly comparable to those experienced when the Soviet Union became bogged down in a decade-long conflict in Afghanistan and subsequently suffered regime collapse—without risking US lives or instigating open conflict between NATO and Russia."

C.J. Atkins, editor of People's World, in an article of 8 April 2022, titled "Fresh analysis is pointing toward the conclusion that, with its invasion of Ukraine, Russia may have stepped into an Afghanistan-style trap set by the U.S. ... Exploiting legitimate Russian security worries, combined with the Putin government's own imperial ambitions, made setting the trap a rather straightforward, if not simple, affair."

Putin, as is typical of the Russians, known for their shallowness and political naiveté, fell into the trap, thinking the war in Ukraine wouldn't last long. In reality, Ukraine was the bait the Russian bear swallowed, without understanding the contours and objectives of American policy.

America aims to achieve three goals in the war in Ukraine:

1. To weaken Russia, not to destroy it. This was explicitly stated by prominent Western officials, most notably Lloyd Austin, the former US Secretary of Defense, who said on 25 April 2022, "We want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine." Yes, Russia fell into the trap, thinking Ukraine would collapse within days and that Western support would vanish. However, this approach collided with a different reality. Instead of collapse, the Ukrainian ranks rallied, supported by popular mobilization and international media coverage, which thwarted the rapid offensive and forced Russian forces to retreat, turning the conflict into a long war of attrition.

2. To demonize Russia and frighten Europe into remaining under American protection and not considering building its own defense system. Biden succeeded in portraying Russia as the greatest threat to the West, thus thwarting attempts to build sustainable Euro-Russian relations due to the clash of strategic visions between the two sides. The National Interest magazine noted that the Russian war contributed to the revitalization of NATO, which had suffered a decline in the decades following the Cold War. This led to increased defense spending by European allies and the inclusion of formerly neutral countries like Sweden and Finland, strengthening the alliance's cohesion and its security role on the European continent. NATO even increased its civilian budget by 27.8% to over €370 million, and its military budget by 25.8% to nearly €2 billion. Finally, the war demonstrated that Europe still

needs Washington's security umbrella, its deterrence of intra-European conflicts, and its leadership of the alliance.

3. Severing the relationship between Russia and China, and even attempting to incorporate Russia, after containing it, into a strategy to contain China. Weakening Russia and exhausting its power in the war also weakens China, a situation from which America benefits. Due to the war in Ukraine, China may lose an important ally that supported it internationally and coordinated diplomatic positions with it. Thus, Putin's miscalculation in the war has, to some extent, drawn China into the Ukrainian quagmire.

Jeffrey Reeves wrote on 13 July 2024 for National Interest magazine that, "Since identifying China as a "systemic challenge" in its 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO has been pursuing closer strategic and operational relations with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand, collectively known as its Indo-Pacific Four (IP4) partners. According to recent reports, NATO leadership plans came closer to formalizing a NATO+IP4 security alignment at this week's summit in Washington, DC. NATO justifies its expansion into the Asia-Pacific as essential for maintaining the global rules-based order... Neither would China be alone in seeing NATO's Asia-Pacific expansion as an existential threat. North Korea and Russia, for instance, would view a NATO+IP4 partnership as a significant new Western-led security challenge, one Pyongyang and Moscow would respond to militarily."

As a result of the protracted war, European and American approaches have diverged. However, Europe lacks any real power, even regarding its own security, and certainly not regarding the war in Ukraine. In fact, it is not the ultimate decision-maker, as the negotiations are between Russia and the United States. Europe wants an unconditional end to the war because it is suffering its consequences and repercussions. Russia, having lost its prestige and, according to Western estimates, more than a quarter of a million soldiers, is desperately seeking a meeting with Trump to save face. Trump, however, is refusing, attempting to achieve his third objective: containing China.

The British newspaper, The Telegraph, published an analysis on 17 October 2025 titled "The myth of Putin's strength is crumbling. The end may be closer than he thinks," written by Mark Brolin, a specialist in geopolitical strategic affairs. Brolin argued that the myth of Russian President Vladimir Putin's power is beginning to crumble, and that the end of his regime may be closer than many, including Putin himself, imagine. He believes that the recent shift in US President Donald Trump's stance toward Moscow could hasten the end of the war in Ukraine and perhaps even the collapse of the Russian regime itself.