

# WHY UKRAINE MATTERS (AND SHOULD BE SECURED FROM DANGER)

By Walter Zaryckyj

Last week, several 'political elders of the Ukrainian American community' held an emergency web meeting to strategize about the responses that the 'Hromada' (said community) needed to provide in the face of Vladimir Putin's growing military build-up on the border of Ukraine and the distinct possibility of 'an invasion (of some unspecified magnitude)'. While a number of the individuals participating were assigned to the obvious task of immediately mobilizing various members of the Senate and House, perceived as 'Friends of Ukraine on the Hill', to show support for the threatened nation, others were asked to provide 'talking points' to elicit such support. I was steered into the latter group and, after putting in some admittedly sleepless nights to produce something useful, came with a memo (channeling my inner Professor "Zbig" Brzezinski meets General "Ben" Hodges) entitled: *"Points to Press to Convince the West (and the Global Community as Well) that Ukraine is a 'Crucial Geo-political Pivot Point' Worth Securing from Danger"*. A couple of the web meeting participants saw the memo and encouraged me to circulate it more widely in an article form and that is what this item is an attempt to do.

The talking points in the original memo (all in reference to the consequences of Russia occupying some or most of Ukraine after an invasion) amount to *a bakers' dozen* (in honor of the work that Paul Goble has done monitoring Russia in the last two decades) and are divided into the following categories: transcontinental/continental impact, local regional impact, wider regional impact & the probability of major food supply chain disruptions.

Contemplated even shortly, they are powerful enough to conjure up some darned scary 'apocalyptic visions'.

## Global Consequences:

(1) Allowing Russia to further truncate or possibly dismember Ukraine (a founding member of the UN) would do to the United Nation what the slow motion dismantlement of Czechoslovakia ultimately did to the League of Nations in 1938-39; the rubble would most likely not bounce this time.

(2) Allowing Russia to make further inroads into Ukraine would remind all newly minted or aspiring nuclear powers (N. Korea, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia) to avoid non-proliferation accords (such as the Budapest Memorandum) like the plague.

(3) When Ukraine controlled Crimea, the peninsula was a nuclear weapon free zone (as per the mentioned Budapest Memorandum); with Russia exercising 'de facto' sovereignty over Crimea (and with a probable grab of the water rich nearby Kherson province set to reinforce that fact), the territory could soon harbor nuclear weapons (or be prepared to become such a harbor).

(4) A number of old naval installations and airfields of Crimea were built (during the Soviet era) to shelter nuclear delivery systems of continental, if not trans-continental, reach. Clearly, Crimea's geographic position, even if accounting only for intermediate nuclear delivery systems (like the TU22M3), would threaten most of Europe, most of the Middle East and very large stretches of Central Asia (if Russia were to actually weaponize the said systems).

## Local Regional Consequences (Think Black Sea Coastline):

(5) The capture of large portions of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast would threaten to turn a body of water with three NATO states (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey) and two aspiring NATO States (Georgia & Ukraine) on its shores into **a Russian lake (ozero)**.

(6) Turning the Black Sea into a Russian ozero (starting from the west) would immediately pose a potential threat to the Danube Basin and could trigger a new Russian-Serbian entente that would again threaten the peace in the Balkans.

(7) Turning the Black Sea into a Russian ozero (heading east) would permanently place Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (and most likely a number of the Central Asian states) in a dependency status vis a vis Russia.

(8) Turning the Black Sea into a Russian ozero (looking south) would force a long time (if not always well behaved) NATO ally like Turkey to seek its own accommodation with Russia.

(9) Given that Turkey might finally give Russia free-reign through the Bosphorus (certainly the end of the Truman Doctrine benefits and possibly post Montreux in texture), the Eastern Mediterranean (with allies Israel and Jordan) would be exposed to new RU adventures.

### **Wider Regional Consequences (Think Mediterranean & Beyond)**

(10) A solid Russian naval presence in the East Med would give RU the ability to influence the North African shoreline (vide Libya), depriving the US from possessing a strategic platform for getting into Europe (if need be) that it had in WWII and the Cold War.

(11) A solid Russian naval presence in the East Med would eventually allow RU to penetrate into Central and even Southern Africa with its hybrid war bred mercenaries (the Wagnerians).

(12) Please notice that the untapped natural resources of Africa (example: cobalt needed for batteries in a greening world) would then lay open to the Russians (in very possible alliance with the PRC)

### **A Baker's Dozen Consequence - The Likelihood Major Food Supply Disruptions (or Southern Hemisphere Famines)**

(13) With an estimated 5-7 million Ukrainians likely on the run and major transport facilities in ruins, Ukraine would automatically stop being a major global supplier of foodstuffs. As Ukrainian Minister of Defense Reznikov has pointed out, Ukraine's disappearance from the worldwide food marketplace would not only disrupt the global food supply chain; it could trigger famine in the poorer areas of the world.

For any one of the 13 reasons listed above (and note that all of them could ultimately be in play), Ukraine's safety is critical to global security (in a countless number of dimensions: military, diplomatic, political, economic, social, demographic, etc). Many of the frightening scenarios impact most directly on the West (the Euro-Atlantic world and its network of 'democratic allies' globally), but the 'specter of starvation' (a subject Ukrainians really know well) should be enough to spark planetary concern.

Here's to praying that it does!!

*Walter Zaryckyj is executive director of the [Center for US-Ukrainian Relations](#). The center provides informational platforms for venues for senior-level representatives of the political, economic, security, diplomatic and cultural/academic establishments of the United States and Ukraine to exchange views on a wide range of issues of mutual interest, and to showcase what has been referred to as a "burgeoning relationship of notable geopolitical import" between the two nations. Dr. Zaryckyj completed his undergraduate and graduate work at Columbia University. He taught political science at New York University for nearly three decades before moving on in recent years to do post-doctoral research work on Eastern Europe.*