

# Ukraine: What needs to happen next?

I agree with Zelensky when he argues that “Russia's aggression targets all of Europe” (BBC 10<sup>th</sup> April). I would go further and say that it threatens liberal democracy worldwide, and even further, that this is a battle for freedom, for the freedom to have meaningful relationships on all levels, rather than relationships dominated by power. It is a battle for Consciousness and Love against the forces of alienation, repression, imprisonment, brutality, and the profoundly negative pull of those unconscious forces, with roots in trauma, that would rather destroy the world than face the repressed pain. The only way to stop a bully is to put up a powerful enough boundary that says No!

NATO has been and is being, a coward. It is letting a European democratic country be decimated, letting tens of thousands of innocent people be killed and maimed and their country destroyed, to a significant extent on behalf of its members. By supplying weapons, NATO is encouraging Ukraine to do its “dirty work” for it, but this situation surely cannot go on. I do not believe that NATO will really stand by and let Ukraine be crushed after all the suffering? The idea that it will let it all go to waste and be lost in futility, is untenable.

NATO needs to be honest about this now! (17<sup>th</sup> April, as Russia is about to attack again in Eastern Ukraine) It needs to openly say “NO” to Putin, and make it clear what its “red lines” are, that it will not allow Ukraine’s defeat and that both sides need to stop fighting start talking. Talking about the form a compromise would take, talking about what it would take for sanctions to be lifted, listening to Russia’s security fears, but also being very clear and open about what NATO’s red lines are. The lack of the latter has surely been NATO’s biggest error, amongst its many missteps that allowed this nightmarish situation to develop.

Putin has repeatedly used threats about going “nuclear” and he will continue to do so until his bluff is called. There was a Guardian article on 8<sup>th</sup> March by Christopher Chivvis which spelled out chillingly and clearly how the end game of this war will play out, that there is almost inevitably going to be an escalation towards some kind of nuclear stand-off. Also, I agree with Simon Tisdall (Guardian 17<sup>th</sup> April) that morally NATO needs to back Ukraine more fully and openly. But it is clear that this will pretty soon lead to a nuclear showdown, for which NATO needs to be prepared. This means foremost, being prepared to talk, being prepared to admit mistakes, but also being prepared to respond to nuclear attack! Putin’s aim is to protect Russia’s security, so, surely he, and all those in control in Russia, can see how entirely self-defeating a nuclear war would be.

As with any bully, it is only when the consequences of continuing become unacceptable, that they stop. So, NATO needs to stop hiding and take responsibility for the situation and say “Enough!”, and now. (it is now clear how much better it would have been to have done this before the war began). This means NATO saying clearly that it will not allow Ukraine’s defeat, and that it is prepared to take this to the ultimate level if necessary, so there is no point in continuing with the war, now.

Because nuclear weapons have been invented, because they are available to be used at any moment, there is surely no alternative but to call Putin’s bluff, otherwise NATO will be forever at the mercy of his blackmail. Everyone is understandably avoiding this “elephant in the room”, but there comes a point where this is ridiculous and counterproductive.

There is the alternative economic “nuclear” option whereby the West stopping buying any oil or gas from Russia. Germans must feel incredibly awkward about this situation, financing Russia as they are. The West as a whole could try and support Germany, and other affected countries, to diminish as far as possible the economic difficulties that such a boycott would cause. Yes it would be very tough, but surely this is a better option than letting the intolerable continue or moving to the brink of nuclear war. Not doing this surely reveals a whole heap of more cowardice. Germany needs to face this, not

hide from it, and again, how much better it would have been to do this from the start. However, it is by no means clear that this would make Putin back down, in which case we are back to the above option, red lines of last resort?

There was a helpful article by Rajan Menon in the Guardian (13<sup>th</sup> April) arguing that NATO needs to take responsibility for its part in creating the circumstances that led to the war, along with how it now needs to facilitate a compromise solution, with Russia retaining control of parts of Eastern Ukraine. He argues that this would be better than ever more destruction and casualties along with the increasing risk of nuclear war. This means NATO stepping in, in a different way, to force a compromise on Ukraine, which would be very uncomfortable for all. It would also mean NATO admitting that it made grave mistakes in helping to create this situation, something that seems unlikely. But I can see that this would be a more honest way of proceeding, and could stop Ukraine suffering even more on its behalf. The downside is that it would leave Putin with a victory of sorts and Ukraine humiliated and let down by its "friends". This seems very unlikely, which goes towards creating the logic that there will be a nuclear stand-off.

It is clear though, whatever unfolds, that the United Nations needs a drastic upgrade. We obviously need to move towards a system of global governance as quickly as possible, not only to tackle the madness of wars but even more crucially to implement the changes the world needs to prevent the oncoming climate catastrophe. NATO is the closest thing we currently have to a global police force, and it is an alliance of free (at least the freest we have just now) democratic countries working together. Ultimately all military forces worldwide need to come under the control of the United Nations, as without power it is toothless and next to useless. The UN Charter is an excellent place to start (it is a wonderful document!), but the UN needs the power to implement it. So, NATO acting temporarily as an enforcing agent might be the best option we have right now. NATO could be rapidly expanded to include many more countries as a steppingstone to eventual UN control.

Surely, the one thing that the war in Ukraine has clarified so extraordinary is that the world is in a profound battle between regressive and progressive forces. The freedoms that open democracies bestow, need to be defended and supported, including as ever, through independent judiciaries and press freedom. I agree that the latter is very relative, as it is hugely manipulated by wealth and power for their own regressive agendas, but compared to the authoritative regimes of Russia and China etc., it is still very free. This enables "Truth" to still be possible. A world dominated by "post-truth" lies and manipulation is a nightmare that I do not want to live in! There was a lovely recent article on aeon.com by philosophy professor Crispin Sartwell entitled "Truth is Real" in which he argues that despite a century of the concept of Truth being attacked and undermined, it remains stubbornly important and relevant. His point is that Truth is about "what is", about what is "real".

It still seems to me that the unfolding path of the development of consciousness, of love and freedom in all its aspects and levels, and throughout the globe, is through the development of liberal democracies. In these societies justice and the rule of law can exist, they are laws are based on principals that the United Nations already has in place (and which ostensibly the whole world has already signed up to!). Optimistically perhaps, I see the "decadence of the West" as the growing pains of populations working through their trauma filled pasts, and the arguments from reactionary sources and authoritarian regimes about "alternative societal structures" as being entirely spurious and manipulative. It feels like this is a time for liberal democracies to stand up and be counted! Political freedom transfers directly into personal psychological freedom, this creates the space which supports people to take responsibility for themselves and their development.

However, as Simon Jenkins (Guardian 12<sup>th</sup> April) argued, over the last few years there has been, and is, an increase in populist politicians around the globe gaining power and creating a ratcheting down process towards the lowest common denominator. I.e., a negative defensiveness from people's fight,

flight, fear-based reactivity. The question is, is this part of generalised decline and regression of global civilisation towards more chaos and conflict, (fuelled by climate breakdown) where the forces of repression and violence overwhelm us? Or are we living through just a nasty hiccup on the global evolutionary journey of developing consciousness and freedom? A journey towards the healing and repair of humanities heart, head and body where the sum of these parts creates a new whole of presence and Being.

If there is one thing I could wish to happen in this current situation, it is for the world leaders to read Alice Miller and understand that the causes of bullying, violence, and regressive negativity in us all, is the fear and insecurity from trauma. But I am painfully aware of the how slow and difficult healing trauma is, and I guess the whole point here is that we are out of time for slow healing. We desperately need accelerated change in order to avert catastrophe. The madness of fighting wars whilst our planet is dying ... leaves me speechless!

Jeremy Lent in his recent book "The Web of Meaning", argues wonderfully for the innate developmental goodness of all life, including human beings, just as Gestalt therapy has been doing for some seventy years. Given half a chance people heal, nature heals, Gaia can heal, our societies can heal. And one key to this, is understanding the nature of the bully, whether it is on the personal intrapsychic level of undoing the internal bully of our "shoulds" (those introjects from trauma that get identified with and/or projected out), or on the relational, familial, tribal, societal, corporate, bureaucratic, national or international levels. Each level needs its boundaries. Obviously, where possible, imposed with love. But where that is not possible, boundaries still need to be there and held in place, for sanity, healing, health, and development, to be able to flourish.

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