



**CENTRE FOR BREXIT**  
POLICY

# PUTIN'S WAR AT YEAR'S END: WHAT NEXT?

## Lessons Learned Through Four Historical Couplets

FEBRUARY 2023





<b>THE CENTRE FOR BREXIT POLICY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PROLOGUE - TWO VISITORS TO CONGRESS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>I - THE FIRST COUPLET: THE 1932-35 CHIEFS OF STAFF SAGA WITH JANUARY 2023 AND BEYOND</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>II - THE SECOND COUPLET: 1940 NORWAY FIASCO WITH JANUARY 2023</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>III – THE THIRD COUPLET: 1935-36 ETHIOPIAN CRISIS WITH THE FEBRUARY - DECEMBER 2022 SPLITTING OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY</b>	<b>16</b>
ORIGINAL SIN OF THE NATION-STATE LEADS TO SUPRA-NATIONAL IDEOLOGY	16
LEAGUE OF NATIONS DISINTEGRATION AND RETURN OF SOVEREIGN STATES	18
THREE-WAY HISTORICAL PULL BEHIND GERMAN AND FRENCH APPEASEMENT	20
German Dependency and Appeasement	20
Mutual Fascination and French Appeasement	20
CONTINENTAL SPLITS AND APPEASEMENT VS MARITIME EUROPE UNITY AND RESISTANCE	22
EU ROLE IN DECLINE VS ASCENDANT NATO AND SOVEREIGN STATES	23
<b>IV - THE FOURTH COUPLET: 1919-20 ALLIED INTERVENTION INTO THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR WITH 2023 ONWARDS</b>	<b>27</b>
RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR THROUGH 1919-20	27
THE MACKINDER MISSION, 1920	28
LESSONS FOR TODAY'S SUPPORT OF UKRAINE	31
<b>IV - PUTIN'S WAR SEEN THROUGH EASTERN EYES</b>	<b>33</b>
JAPAN 1902-1923 TO 2023: COMPLETING A CIRCLE IN STRATEGY AND ALLIANCES	33
CHINESE VIEWS OF PUTIN'S WAR MAY NOT BE MONOLITHIC	34
<b>CONCLUDING THOUGHTS</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>ANNEX - THE TEN YEARS' ASSUMPTION</b>	<b>40</b>

# THE CENTRE FOR BREXIT POLICY

The Centre for Brexit Policy (CBP) is a think tank backed by cross-party voices who support the UK leaving the EU. The CBP was formed to propose the critical policy changes enabled by Brexit that will boost national prosperity and well-being in years to come, as well as help ensure that Britain fully 'takes back control' after leaving the European Union.

The CBP aspires to trigger a deep and wide debate about what Brexit should mean for the UK over the next decade or two. By providing a focus for the development of post-Brexit public policy, the CBP hopes to help formulate an overarching framework for the UK that maximises the opportunities Brexit affords. This will be promoted to Government, Parliamentarians, and the public welcoming contributions from those who want to see Brexit open a new and fruitful chapter in our country's life.

The CBP has three core objectives:

- Identify the benefits and opportunities of Brexit across the full spectrum of economic, trade, social, foreign, defence and security policy areas proposing new policies for the Government's agenda
- Continue to make the intellectual, evidence-based case for a 'real' Brexit and provide the Government with clear and constructive advice on how to deal with ongoing negotiation and implementation issues. A 'real' Brexit means regaining full control over our laws, borders, seas, trade, and courts.
- Check any attempts to dilute Brexit, as well as serving as a catalyst and rallying point for positive news stories that, over time, will be able to persuade and demonstrate the many substantial advantages of Brexit

Delivery of these objectives is based on professional, substantive fact-based research by experts in their fields leading to authoritative reports, short papers, OpEds, events, and briefing meetings - both within and without Government.

The CBP is supported by a cadre of expert CBP Fellows drawn from multiple disciplines to provide additional expertise and experience in developing an agenda for policy change that will ensure the British people benefit from Brexit.

# AUTHOR

## PROFESSOR GWYTHIAN PRINS

Professor Gwythian Prins is Research Professor *Emeritus* of the London School of Economics and Political Science where he directed the Mackinder Programme until his retirement and, since the outbreak of Putin's war, has been one of the MoD's unofficial panel of Defence Opinion Leaders. He is a member of the editorial advisory boards of *History Reclaimed* and *Briefings for Britain* and is a Fellow of the Centre for Brexit Policy. He is the Academic Board Member of Veterans for Britain.

He was previously Alliance Research Professor jointly at the LSE and Columbia University in the City of New York (where he also advised at the UN) and before that for most of his academic career was Fellow and Director of Studies in History at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and University Lecturer in Politics. In his public service career he has variously served in the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of NATO, as Visiting Senior Fellow in the MoD's Defence Evaluation & Research Agency, as a member of the discontinued Strategy Advisory Panel to British Chiefs of the Defence Staff, as a founder member of the Royal Marines Advisory Group and as consultant to several foreign governments on global security and specifically energy issues.

He was the first British Senior Academic Visiting Fellow at the Ecole Spéciale Militaire de St Cyr, 2016-2019. He was founding convenor of the Hartwell Group on Energy and Climate issues, 2007-17, an international consortium which led the case for radically pragmatic climate and thermodynamically competent energy policies.

**Acknowledgements:** The origin of this paper lay in a short talk that was heard by Edgar Miller, Convenor of the Centre for Brexit Policy, and it owes its present form to him in two ways: first because it was upon his suggestion that the talk has been written up and subsequently, for his skilled editing which was instrumental in turning what was, almost by default, an academic draft into a more accessible format. The earlier draft was kindly reviewed by Dr John Constable, Sir Richard Dearlove, Oleksii Goncharenko MP, Dr Miriam Borop Prins, Andrzej Skrzydio and Professor Robert Tombs. I am grateful to them all for their helpful comments, corrections and additions, as also to some anonymous senior military experts. All views expressed and errors remaining are mine.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The turning of the year 2022-23 is an apt moment to reflect on the course of Putin's botched invasion of Ukraine because (1) the central consensus among the western community of strategic commentators a year ago failed to interpret the signs of Russian mobilisation correctly and also failed to appreciate the vigour of the Ukrainian resistance that it would stimulate and (2) there are lessons to be learned as this is not the first time in modern history such events happened. There are real advantages to be gained from studying geo-strategic and geo-political precedents.

The paper's purpose is to examine the making of decisions of consequence at four crossroads in history when all participants knew that the stakes were high but where there was little consensus on anything else; and to illuminate and help interpret current events in light of lessons they provide.

Therefore, the paper is structured around four historical couplets where each historical narrative is linked to a contemporary analogue. The echoes heard between the four episodes provide four matched historical couplets that offer us lessons from convergent directions as we ponder what comes next and what different interested parties should do in Ukraine.

- **1932-35 Chiefs Of Staff Saga with January 2023 Onwards.** The first couplet compares today's request by the Prime Minister for a 'banker's dashboard' review of the costs of the Ukraine war with an analogous Treasury directive in 1932 that the Chiefs of Staff should assume that no war was to be expected for ten years on a rolling annual basis - effectively undermining the nation's ability to be militarily prepared. The Chiefs of Staff won that battle by pointing out that rather than war being "a luxury which we cannot afford", it was "a financial disaster we cannot risk". 'Practitioner's Logic' overcame 'Accountant's Logic', which has ramifications today for Whitehall.
- **1940 Norway Fiasco with January 2023.** The second couplet pairs the Allied failure in 1940 to deter the German sweep into Norway and Denmark with grand strategic choices to be made in 2023 with regard to the Ukraine war. It explores the dangers of muddling up levels of analysis as in 1940 when the Allies failed to develop a sufficiently flexible integrated military strategy; the British allowed unconstrained personality clashes amongst ministers in the War Cabinet and with and within the Chiefs of Staff to undermine taking decisions; and the British Government continued to behave as if the country was not at war. Similar factors face the allies of Ukraine today.
- **1935-36 Ethiopian Crisis with the February - December 2022 Splitting Of European Diplomacy.** Couplet Three uses the 1935-36 Ethiopian Crisis as a prism to focus insights from the 1930s relevant to the February - December 2022 splitting apart of European diplomacy. The central lesson is the dangers of betting on the wrong institutions. The paper traces how the supra-national League of Nations – born from distrust of sovereign nation states - failed to resolve the conflict in Italian occupied Somaliland and how that led to sovereign states reasserting themselves. It compares that to today's situation where the historical three-way pull amongst Germany, France, and Russia has led to differently appeasing behaviour by the two European states and by the EU. This is in contrast to the unified ascendancy of NATO and the key sovereign powers supporting Ukraine that, incidentally are mainly historic sea power states.

This paper is derived and expanded from remarks for the Eastern Institute (Warsaw)/New Europeans (Brussels) seminar on 'Ukraine, Poland and the United Kingdom: What Now? What Next?' at the Royal Overseas League on 8th December 2022. Most of the substance is new although the framework is as delivered in abbreviated form, but with the addition of the events in the Prologue of which plainly I could not have had prior knowledge.

- **1919-20 Allied Intervention into the Russian Civil War with 2023 Onwards.** The fourth couplet examines the 1919-20 Allied Intervention into the Russian Civil War with an eye on what Russia may do next in Putin's War. The historical lesson is of the consequences of half-measures, reflecting the dithering nature of British thinking in 1919-20 and the government's failure to implement Sir Halford Mackinder's far-sighted recommendations. At the end of 2022, without properly realising it, we are agonising over similar choices and dangers to those that preoccupied the British Cabinet a century ago.

Together the couplets offer us lessons from convergent directions as we ponder what comes next and what different interested parties should do next in Ukraine. The paper makes clear that Britain was a driving force in the rescue of Ukraine to this point, which has also radically transformed British security guarantees to Scandinavia. The couplets provide historical evidence for the wisdom of the British people instructing their Government firmly and politely to:

- Avoid the fading EU Institutions and their hooks, given their uncooperative and feeble conduct with regard to the war and their serial hostility to the UK
- View both Germany and France, on their respective records, as demonstrated spoilers and, therefore, treat each with traditional caution
- Slough off the declinism of much of the British chattering and administrative classes, which, in their obsessive disrespect of the result of the 2016 referendum, now pose a tangible threat not only to national prosperity but also to national security.
- Embrace fully the opportunity that Brexit has provided to resume Great Britain's role as a leading sea-power state, which is expressed not only within NATO and by the Scandinavian Treaties but through AUKUS and rapidly deepening re-establishment of Britain's position in Pacific alliances, led by *de facto* reanimation in 2023 of the 1902-23 Anglo-Japanese Treaties.

The paper ends with a geo-political contrast of how British perspectives compare with those from the East – specifically Japan and China. China and Japan draw their conclusions. We see Japan completing a one hundred year circle in its alliances and we see that surprisingly soon after Xi Jin Ping's apparent consolidation of personal power at the XXth Party Congress, the Mandate of Heaven may have different ideas, as it has differed from the ambitions of past Emperors.

This last perspective underscores the wisdom – on the basis of Japanese logic in its dramatic new national security doctrine - of doubling down for the duration in supplying Ukraine with the tools to finish the job. Equally - on the Japanese example, - of reforming a British civil service that has become too large, too under-skilled and too over-politicised since 1997. It has become an impediment more than a help. It has been a perennial problem and an impropriety that has currently crystallised around an unstated but obvious mission to frustrate Brexit. Civil servants are servants. The clue is in the job description.

# PROLOGUE

## TWO VISITORS TO CONGRESS

*Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.*

T.S.Eliot, "Burnt Norton", Four Quartets, 1936

*"It was with heart-stirrings that I fulfilled the invitation to address the Congress of the United States... I must confess that I felt quite at home... The loudest response came when, speaking of the ...outrage, I asked, 'What sort of people do they think we are?' The sense of the might and will-power of the American nation streamed up to me from the august assembly. Who could doubt that all would be well? I ended thus: 'Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Representatives, I turn for one moment from the turmoil and convulsions of the present to the broader basis of the future. Here we are together facing a group of mighty foes who seek our ruin; here we are together defending all that to free men is dear... It has been proved that pestilences may break out in the Old World from which, once they are afoot, the New World cannot by any means escape. Duty and prudence alike command ...that the germ-centres of hatred and revenge should be constantly and vigilantly surveyed and treated in good time...'"<sup>1</sup>*

*"... Against all odds and doom-and-gloom scenarios, Ukraine didn't fall. Ukraine is alive and kicking. Thank you. And it gives me good reason to share with you our first joint victory: we defeated Russia in the battle for minds of the world. We have no fear, nor should anyone in the world have it. Ukrainians gained this victory, and it gives us courage which inspires the entire world. Americans gained this victory, and that's why you have succeeded in uniting the global community to protect freedom and international law... This struggle will define in what world our children and grandchildren will live, and then their children and grandchildren. It will define whether it will be a democracy of Ukrainians and for Americans — for all. This battle cannot be frozen or postponed. It cannot be ignored, hoping that the ocean or something else will provide a protection. From the United States to China, from Europe to Latin America, and from Africa to Australia, the world is too interconnected and interdependent to allow someone to stay aside and at the same time to feel safe when such a battle continues."<sup>2</sup>*

It was Mark Twain who famously observed that "history doesn't repeat itself; but it often rhymes." Even the least historically literate of the modern media could not fail to notice the resonances between the two addresses to Congress by two war-time leaders, especially as the Ukrainian President's words were tuned to pluck the heart-strings of the most heroic version of Americans' popular self-image. But in fact the resonances are deeper than the words.

Each leader made the same physically perilous trip because each was at a similarly critical moment and each knew that only the USA held the key to their country's survival. Churchill came aboard the new battleship *Duke of York*, thundering through heavy seas at top speed to evade U-Boat attack within weeks of the sinking of her sister-ship *The Prince of Wales*. Zelenskyy travelled in an elaborate USAF operation aboard a C-40B transport aeroplane taking off from Rzeszow airport in Poland, with Geilenkirchen-based AWACS oversight and Mildenhall-based F-15 Strike Eagle escort across the North Sea to the gates of the Atlantic crossing. Each needed to secure an assurance of American support for the duration and felt that

---

<sup>1</sup> Describing and quoting from his speech before Congress on 26 December 1941, W.S.Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol III The Grand Alliance*, 1st edition, Cassell (1948) pp 595-6;

<sup>2</sup> V Zelenskyy, "Speech before the Joint Houses of Congress", 21 December 2022; [www.nytimes.com/2022/12/21/us/politics/zelensky-speech-transcript.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/21/us/politics/zelensky-speech-transcript.html)

the stakes were so high that nothing other than such a journey would suffice. But their circumstances were quite different. What he later described as the 'hinge of Fate' which turned with Montgomery's victory at El Alamein in North Africa in October 1942 and the OP TORCH Anglo-American landings in Sicily that followed, still lay ahead for Churchill. He spoke in Congress against the back-drop of a history of recent defeats. In contrast, Zelenskyy spoke after a recent run of spectacular tactical victories but facing the possibility of a renewed Russian offensive on four fronts in 2023.

In addition to the accompaniment of repeated threats of nuclear intimidation which began from the time that Putin's first plans were defeated, the first offensive is already here: Putin extending Russian Federation (RF) threats against NATO by making hostile dispositions against Finland and Sweden. After a winter of continuous smashing of Ukraine's critical infrastructure, which would have been mitigated or even preventable if fully layered air defence including aircraft had been provided earlier when it was first requested by Ukrainians, to 'close their skies', the second and most worrying is a possible fresh ground attack which might be aimed at Kyiv. The third is also here: a crescendo of aggressive cyber and deniable energy infrastructure attacks against the West in general of which the simultaneous Faroe and Shetland undersea cable breaks and the Nordstream pipeline sabotages were probably early manifestations. Finally comes Putin's main effort. Following in a long Russian tradition of propaganda, it is aimed at disheartening and fragmenting Free World support for Ukraine by prolonging the war and exploiting those tendencies in Europe and the USA which favour prematurely forcing Zelenskyy to negotiate before victory is decisive. It is noteworthy that, for reasons that I will explore later in this essay, it was not to Brussels and the EU Institutions but to Washington DC that Zelenskyy travelled. The comprehensive humiliation of the EU, and its patent and obstructive powerlessness, form one lesson and consequence of 2022: it is the obverse of the power of sovereign action, which is also a lesson.

Therefore the two visitors to Congress do not show history repeating itself, but it is rhyming; and we may use this metaphor to further extend our insights at year's end. What is rhyme? Strictly speaking, in poetry the key feature is that the stress lies on the last (not the first) vowel of the line.<sup>3</sup> In history, let's say that it's an invitation to identify the most resonant aspect in each couplet. What we shall discover are illuminating historical analogies that do not give us exact parallels but which do give us cognate circumstances, often decision-points with similar bifurcations, as we shall see.

---

<sup>3</sup> eg restore - two vowels, stress on the 'o', rhymes with boar. I am indebted for this reminder to Professor John Constable, the author with Professor Hideaki Aoyama (both then of Kyoto University) of formative work on the deep mathematical structures of prose and poetry.



# INTRODUCTION

For two particular reasons beyond mere anniversary, the turning of the year 2022-23 is an apt moment to reflect on the course of Putin's botched invasion of Ukraine.

The first is that, with a few honourable exceptions, the central consensus among the western community of strategic commentators a year ago, including the present writer, failed to interpret the signs of Russian mobilisation correctly and also failed to appreciate the vigour of the Ukrainian resistance that it would stimulate. Second, this is not the first time in modern history that this has happened. Therefore there are lessons to be learned; but of what sort and what are they?

History does not give us detailed maps and we should be suspicious of anyone who says that it does. It only gives us a script of rhymes and echoes, more poetry than prose. Yet there are valuable lessons to be learned from them - and there is no shame in humbly doing so.

Consequently, this paper does not offer detailed predictions - neither an optimistic nor pessimistic view on outcomes - that is not its point. Its purpose is to examine the making of decisions of consequence at four crossroads in history: moments when all participants knew that the stakes were high but where there was little consensus on anything else; and to illuminate and help interpret current events in light of lessons they provide.

The paper is a reminder that there are good reasons and real advantages to be gained from studying geo-strategic and geo-political precedents. The former are valuable because geo-strategy, in the description of its founding intellect, Sir Halford Mackinder, is 'geography as frozen history'. It brings back unchanging features to present analysis in a way that avoids crass determinism. The latter, because understanding how our predecessors got their major decisions wrong or right can assist usefully in minimising the risks of getting our decisions wrong today. This is important at the pivotal cusp in Ukraine's defence against Putin's aggression after eleven months of hostilities, a war which, for better or for worse, is an inter-systemic show-down.

Each historical narrative is linked to a contemporary analogue. The echoes heard between the four episodes provide four matched historical couplets that offer us lessons from convergent directions as we ponder what comes next and what different interested parties should do in Ukraine.

Each couplet is explained in the first four chapters, with a concluding chapter providing a geo-political contrast of how British perspectives compare with those from the East – specifically Japan and China.

- I. **CHAPTER I - 1932-35 CHIEFS OF STAFF SAGA WITH JANUARY 2023 ONWARDS.** The first couplet pairs the 1932-35 Chiefs of Staff Saga with decisions over external support of Ukraine after a year of war. It shows how, with clear-sightedness and courage, 'Practitioners' Logic' can defeat 'Accountants' Logic'.
- II. **CHAPTER II - 1940 NORWAY FIASCO WITH JANUARY 2023.** The second couplet pairs the 1940 Norway Fiasco with grand strategic choices to be made in January 2023. It explores the dangers of muddling up levels of analysis.
- III. **CHAPTER III: 1935-36 ETHIOPIAN CRISIS WITH THE FEBRUARY - DECEMBER 2022 SPLITTING OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY.** Couplet three uses the 1935-36 Ethiopian Crisis as a prism to focus insights from the 1930s relevant to the February - December 2022 splitting apart of European diplomacy. The central lesson is the dangers of betting on the wrong institutions.

IV. **CHAPTER IV - 1919-20 ALLIED INTERVENTION INTO THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR WITH 2023**

**ONWARDS.** The fourth couplet examines the 1919-20 Allied Intervention into the Russian Civil War with an eye on what Russia may do next in Putin's War. The historical lesson is of the consequences of half-measures.

- V. **CHAPTER V - PUTIN'S WAR SEEN THROUGH EASTERN EYES.** China and Japan draw their conclusions. We see Japan completing a one hundred year circle in its alliances and that soon after Xi Jin Ping's apparent consolidation of personal power at the XXth Party Congress, the Mandate of Heaven may have different ideas as it has differed from the ambitions of past Emperors.

# I - THE FIRST COUPLET: THE 1932-35 CHIEFS OF STAFF SAGA WITH JANUARY 2023 AND BEYOND

With Clear-Sightedness and Courage, How 'Practitioners' Logic' Can Defeat 'Accountants' Logic'

The value of studying geo-strategic and geo-political precedents is demonstrated by a little-remembered historical episode with great relevance to events taking place in Whitehall at the turn of the year 2022-23. Prime Minister Sunak has reportedly called for a bankers' 'dash-board' type of review of the course of this war at year's end. Bankers and Treasuries tend to ask questions about the cost of things and, once tabulated, to ask, "how may we economise?"

In contrast, our first rhyming couplet suggests that the right questions - after less than twelve months of this war - are about the value of things, which, once uncovered, demand "what should we do next". Only then do costings follow. This is not a new tension.

In 1935 it took a largely forgotten British Admiral Ernle Chatfield being willing to threaten resignation to push back the Treasury - and winning - so that by the time that war came, Churchill had tools with which to finish the job.<sup>4</sup> This paper argues that a response to the Prime Minister's request is entirely justified, but should employ unconstrained methodologies that reveal strategic value, first. That is not the 'dash-board' approach and bankers are not the right choice of analyst. Theirs ought properly to be a secondary and facilitating role.

We should note also, at the outset, that an exercise like this is unusual and probably unwelcome these days in official circles. That is for three reasons (which is why, incidentally, it was such a brilliant pre-emptive stroke to force forward the 1941 analogy in Zelensky's Washington visit).

The first reason is that after several school generations of disjointed and 'empathetic' history teaching, basic levels of historical illiteracy are now shamefully high. Old-fashioned empirical narratives - Rankean narratives - are the sovereign remedy for this.

The second is that historical recollection has recently become further contaminated by the poison of pernicious anachronism invading the mind of the West through the Wokeish agenda that dissolves objective truth in the corrosive bath of 'my truth'. It has travelled from west to east, first brewing in dark corners of American universities and suddenly spreading across the English-speaking world first of all, reaching epidemic proportions during the pandemic years and particularly in Civil Service, University and - of especial concern because of its influence in public culture - BBC quarters.<sup>5</sup> The past really is a foreign country where they did things differently.

The third is that, while short time-scale comparisons - the last months, the last year, even as far back as Tony Blair - are commonly made by officials, nowadays deep historical examples are not, because (in my view) they break the mind-forged manacles of confirmation biases and are less controllable for the purposes of smuggling chosen narratives.

---

4 The story of Chatfield's triumph and specifically of the July 1935 Second Defence Requirements Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence is told in G.Prins, *The British Way of Strategy-Making: Vital Lessons for Our Times*, Occasional paper, RUSI/Humanities Research Institute, University of Buckingham, (2011) pp 10-1. Chatfield's own voice is heard in his autobiography, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again*, Heinemann (1947) Ch XI "The Chiefs of Staff Committee and its struggle" pp 77-86. Written in 1940, publication was blocked until the end of the war.

5 R. Tombs, "Western civilisation is surrendering to the woke totalitarian onslaught: This year has given little reason to hope that the push to rewrite our history might soon be defeated," *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 December 2022; [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/12/21/western-civilisation-surrendering-woke-totalitarian-onslaught/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/12/21/western-civilisation-surrendering-woke-totalitarian-onslaught/); A. Gray et al, "Can we trust the BBC with our history?" *History Reclaimed*, 28 December 2022; [historyreclaimed.co.uk/can-we-trust-the-bbc-with-our-history/](http://historyreclaimed.co.uk/can-we-trust-the-bbc-with-our-history/); M.K. Daouda, "The Corporation's divisive slandering of the Empire blights what's left of national identity" *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 December 2022; R. Aitken, "The BBC's only response to charges of systemic bias? Suck it up" *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 December 2022; [www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2022/12/30/bbcs-response-charges-systemic-bias-suck](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2022/12/30/bbcs-response-charges-systemic-bias-suck/)

It was not always so. In 1932 the urgent issue before the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was the demand from the Chiefs of Staff to discard - in the teeth of Treasury resistance - the Ten Year Rule, which assumed that no war was to be expected in the next decade on a rolling annual ratchet that was added by Winston Churchill, as Chancellor, in 1928. The Treasury wrote of the Ten Year Rule that "... this formula never ought to be regarded as an essay in prophesy. It is no more than a *working hypothesis intended to relieve the Chiefs of Staff from the responsibility* (emphasis added) of preparing against contingencies which the Government believe to be either remote or *beyond the financial capacity of the country to provide against* (emphasis in original)." The claim to relieve the Chiefs of their responsibilities on financial grounds showed the gulf in understanding across Whitehall at that time. It also has a contemporary ring.

The Chiefs' reply in 1932 was robust to a rare degree. They reminded the Treasury that whereas it appeared to view "war as a luxury which we cannot afford," the Services took the view that "... actually it is a financial disaster we cannot risk." Contrary to the Treasury's impression, the fighting services were not raring to go to war but saw themselves as "the premium which we pay for security from war and financial ruin."<sup>6</sup> The modern variant of the Ten Year Rule is the 'capability gap' that appears below.

To give context in support of the Chief's case in 1932, Chatfield's ally, Maurice Hankey, the long-serving Secretary of the CID, had composed and attached to the report of the Chiefs-of-Staff in February of that year an annex entitled "The difficulties of forecasting peace" which listed eight moments of epic complacency with precarious consequences. It started with the laying up of most of Queen Elizabeth's fleet at Chatham five months before the Spanish Armada was sighted off The Lizard on 29 July 1588 and ended with Lord Milner's memorandum from Moscow on 13 March 1917 observing that "there is a great deal of exaggeration in the talk about revolution".<sup>7</sup> The bread riots in Petrograd which ushered in the February (Julian Calendar) Russian Revolution had begun six days before.

Without question the British Government was intellectually better equipped for strategic assessment in the mid-1930s than now. The CID disbanded just before the outbreak of war.

No flashy forms of scenario planning or 'black box' prediction are superior to well-educated, historically literate minds, like Lord Hankey's. He stood in a tradition of deep applied historical thinking reaching back to Britain's greatest foreign secretary, Viscount Castlereagh, in his great State Paper of May 1820.

Our challenge today is no different in type and no less daunting. The quality of any views on what can and should be done in 2023 is a function of how well we understand what has been going on in 2022. Achieving that is helpfully assisted by recognition of the three further rhyming couplets in history discussed in following chapters of this paper.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Treasury note on Chiefs of Staff 1932 report and Chiefs of Staff reply," 11 March 1932, ¶15, CAB 1087-B, *National Archives (NA)*

<sup>7</sup> Hankey's Note is reproduced in full as an Annex to this paper.

## II - THE SECOND COUPLET: 1940 NORWAY FIASCO WITH JANUARY 2023

### The Dangers of Muddling Up Levels of Analysis

This whole moment in contemporary affairs in 2023 rhymes with another, in Moscow soon after the coup that ejected Gorbachev and installed Yeltsin.

At the opening of the first NATO-badged seminar to be convened in Russia, jointly with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences – widely known as ‘IMEMO’ - one of the hosts cracked the old joke in welcoming the westerners to his country where “the future is certain and only the past is unpredictable.” It now has an unnerving and precise resonance in today’s culture wars in the West.

We especially need to recollect this ironic Russian quip for our present and particular purposes because the first drafts of the history of Putin’s War are already heavily contested in two dimensions. As between Putin and his enemies is what is to be expected; but the contest is also within Ukraine’s allies in wider Europe, which is a source of danger. This takes us directly to this rhyming couplet. At issue in both the older and newer lines are familiar themes of strategic insight and decisive leadership.

The period from April to June 1940 was the darkest hour for the United Kingdom standing alone and bleakly witnessing the Nazi sweep into Norway and Denmark (OP WESERÜBUNG - a massive intelligence failure by Britain) and, after 10 May, the occupation of The Netherlands and Belgium up to the fall of France. It was a period that contains the simultaneous double blows of the Norway debacle (late April to early June) and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk (OP DYNAMO 27 May to 4 June 1940).

These events shaped and framed the moment of the changing of the guard from Chamberlain to Churchill on 10 May culminating in the “we shall fight them on the beaches” speech on 4 June when Churchill’s mastery of the House of Commons, which was by no means assured at his assumption of power the previous month, was consolidated.<sup>8</sup>

The Norway debacle, argues its definitive historian, Lt Gen Sir John Kiszely, was product of a muddle in three parts.<sup>9</sup>

First was lack of an integrated strategy sufficiently flexible to adapt to sudden events such as the defeat on 12 March of Finland by the USSR in the Winter War. This mental stiffness, he argues, proceeded both from a lack of clear grand strategic insight - more a feeling that ‘something must be done’ – and... “the ponderous decision-making structure and process in the higher direction of the war. This involved a hierarchy of four committees: at the top, the Allied Supreme War Council, then the War Cabinet, below which were the Military Coordination Committee and the Chiefs of Staff (COS) Committee. Although this looked logical in theory, it was, in practice, over-bureaucratic and time-consuming...” In contrast to the Germans, there was no theatre level of command, so campaign decisions were being taken either too high or too low. In *The*

---

8 Just how rocky that road was is illuminated in N. Shakespeare, *Six Minutes in May: How Churchill unexpectedly became Prime Minister*, Vintage, (2017). The full context is best found in Churchill’s finest modern biography, A. Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*, Allan Lane, (2018)

9 John Kiszely, *Anatomy of a Campaign. The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940*, Cambridge University Press, (2017) pp 277-85; Kiszely, “Strategic Muddle. The British Fiasco in Norway 1940 and the Impact of an Absence of Strategy”, *Stratagem*, 21 August 2021 <https://www.stratagem.no/strategic-muddle-the-british-fiasco-in-norway-1940-and-the-impact-of-an-absence-of-strategy/>

*Gathering Storm* (and taking into account that the book did not lack self-exculpatory purposes in light of his own far from blameless role in the Norway fiasco), Churchill later observed with good reason that "...one can hardly find a more perfect example of the impotence and fatuity of waging war by committee..."<sup>10</sup>

The second factor to which Kiszley gave weight was that of unconstrained clashes of major personalities pulling three ways: within the War Cabinet of nine ministers where Churchill was silver-tongued and over-awing; within the Chiefs, riven by inter-service rivalries and too much driven by the inadequate Chief of the General Staff (CIGS), General Ironside, and thirdly in the mistrust between the War Cabinet and the COS. Chamberlain mistrusted the 'brass hats' and, in Ironside's words, the Chiefs held the impression that the War Cabinet saw the COS as a 'clog upon their energies... bitterly jealous of their constitutional power to run the strategy of the war...'.<sup>11</sup>

The third part, enervating all, was a cultural factor: '...the British government found it difficult to shake off its peacetime mentality'. Throughout the planning phase for the Norwegian campaign, Government ministries worked peacetime hours and closed for weekends, with ministers (with the notable exception of Churchill) weekending at their country houses. Government business was transacted at a peacetime pace...'. Do we hear the bells ring?

Looking back eleven months to those crucial weeks in January and early to mid-February 2022, it is vital to clarify four points in the first draft of history.<sup>12</sup> They display most of the features just described from eight decades earlier, but with some distinctive extra specifics:

1. First and quite unlike in Norway 1940 where the Germans achieved comprehensive surprise, is the incontestable fact that western 'all sources' intelligence estimates by early February were accurate and were signalling all the tactical movements in type and scale commensurate with an ambitious Russian Federation (RF) plan of attack at many points across an enormous front. 110 battle groups advanced on five axes across a 1,000 mile front sustained by 66 supply lines of average length 50 miles but with special focus in a Kyiv-directed salient where control of Antonov Airport at Hostomel was a key objective and another at Kharkiv spear-headed by the illustrious (in Soviet history) 1st Guards Tank Army and the even more illustrious 4th Guards (Kantemirovskaya) Tank Division, famous from Stalingrad 1942-3 and from its role in the 1991 Moscow coup. 4th Guards did occupy Trostyanets near the Belgorod border on 1st March, straddling the H12 highway and supply routes southwards.
2. Second, and more like Norway 1940, as late as mid-February many, perhaps most, western observers including the present writer, read these signs wrongly and saw them as positional threats in a diplomacy of intimidation of an untested and largely unknown Ukrainian leadership in which there was a general expectation that Putin would only threaten and that it would fold. If there was going to be resistance, then guerrilla harassment of impregnable armour columns was thought likely to be its most probable form. As in 1940, the switch from peacetime to wartime thinking had not yet occurred except in some especially insightful minds. In fact this switch did not happen at any scale until the war crimes committed by the 64th Guards Motor Rifle Brigade under the command of Azatbek "the Butcher" Omurbekov, at Bucha, were revealed in April after the collapse of Putin's northern salient, incompetently commanded by General Yevgeniy Nikoforov, the first of the overall commanders to be shuffled through command of the Russian forces in twelve months.<sup>13</sup>

---

10 W.S.Churchill, *The Second World War: Vol I Gathering Storm*, 1st edition Cassell (1948) p.458. The scale of blame that most accounts place with Churchill is rehearsed in Shakespeare, *Six Minutes*.. Part II, drawing in particular upon an unpublished review by Admiral John Godfrey, Chief of Naval Intelligence, who wrote that '...the thing he loved most Churchill did least well i.e. strategy.' cited at p.77

11 Kiszley, *Anatomy*, pp 41-2

12 What follows draws in part from G.Prins, 'Lessons and Implications of Putin's War: one month in', *The Naval Review*, 110(2) (Spring 2022) pp.147-55

13 In December 2022 the detailed eye-witness testimony of Nikita Chibrin, a deserter from the notorious unit, became public in the west through CNN. [edition.cnn.com/2022/12/13/europe/russian-defector-war-crimes-intl-cmd/index.html](https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/13/europe/russian-defector-war-crimes-intl-cmd/index.html). Omurbekov personally and the entire Unit are now under wars crimes sanction.

Only after that moment did the centre of gravity in both western thinking and action begin to tilt. Seen from year's end, Starstreak, MAMBA (counter-battery radar) driven Self Propelled artillery and HIMARS have entered the fight. ATACMS and MIM-104 Patriot<sup>14</sup> will follow shortly, along with American Bradley and German Marder APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers) and some French AMX-10 RC light tanks. However, as this essay goes to press, the British decision has become public to supply the weapon that the Ukrainian High Command most needs for 2023: MBTs (Main Battle Tanks).

In British Army circles a now well-known joke of Australian origin says that tanks are like dinner jackets: you don't need them often but when you do, nothing else will do.<sup>15</sup> Probably taken from the moth-balled reserve in what is now a small tank fleet, a squadron of highly capable British Challenger II's designed originally to overmatch the T-72, will be the first to arrive. For the Ukrainians, who really need tanks in the hundreds for 2023 offensive operations, the Challenger II squadron of 14 may be of most immediate use as a diplomatic jemy to break open much larger supplies of the German Leopard II MBT drawn from Polish and possibly Finnish inventories in the first instance and from a manufactured pool of 3,200 units worldwide. However this requires German export permissions which have not yet been forthcoming. Nor will a British Challenger II squadron be without operational complications, formidable as the system is which, paradoxically, may be part of the problem. The squadron is, of course, small in number; and the Ukrainians have been already forced to cope with mixed types of artillery; but of greater concern is that, being very advanced, especially in its classified Dorchester armour, the capture intact of one of these AFVs by RF forces makes them a great prize which will constrain how they can be deployed. Robert Clark, Director of Defence at Civitas and a former soldier, has therefore floated a more daring proposal that is gaining rapid endorsement among senior retired officers. Britain supplied Jordan with a fleet of 400 Challenger I tanks that are being retired. Bought back, suitably refurbished, he suggests that these would avoid the national security difficulties of Challenger II and, quantity having a quality of its own, give Ukraine at a stroke a single type tank division of 300.<sup>16</sup> Chancellor Scholtz' inability to agree at the Ramstein Force Generation conference with his allies in their almost universal request that he 'release the leopards' surely heightens the salience of the Challenger I option - the 'Clark proposal'?

3. Third, in consequence of this peacetime mind-set in which the role of international institutions and agency rank pre-eminent and the power of "international law" is accorded a high level of authority (which usually shatters on contact with reality), the 'securocrats' in the United Kingdom were extremely cautious in early 2022 about offering material military aid as war approached. In the mid-1930s, their predecessors in post in the FO had made the same mistake and had over-invested in the multi-lateral institution of that day. It is a judgement which today combines with the MoD's unfortunately normal turgidity of process-driven, wasteful and ineffective procurement and of general inter-departmental complication within Whitehall, plus the fact that UK force posture and war stocks have been distorted and reduced, respectively, by a trend in defence reviews which had systematically de-funded and rendered incoherent traditional kinetic capabilities. The 2010 Cameron Coalition was especially self-harming in this respect. As well as reducing Army size and systems, it deleted without rationale, evidence or warning the fixed wing Fleet Air Arm Harrier Force and carriers for the duration of a so-called 'capability gap' (today's Ten Year Rule) and likewise long-range off-shore maritime surveillance. Only now are both capabilities beginning to be replaced in the ORBAT (Order of Battle), and with difficulty.

---

<sup>14</sup> Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept On Target

<sup>15</sup> The quip was originally made by Major General Kathryn Toohey of the Australian Army in 2019 at RUSI.

<sup>16</sup> R. Clark, "Britain is sending the Ukrainians the wrong tanks: Jordan has recently retired its fleet of around 400 British Challenger I tanks, enough to supply Ukraine with the entire fleet it needs", *Daily Telegraph*, 16 January 2022; [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/01/16/britain-sending-ukrainians-wrong-tanks/?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=lightigniter-onward-journey](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/01/16/britain-sending-ukrainians-wrong-tanks/?li_source=LI&li_medium=lightigniter-onward-journey) : I have rapidly canvassed this proposal with several senior retired Army fighting commanders. All endorsed the risks inherent in the Challenger II transfer and all believed that the Clark Option was worthy of serious investigation. I did have some involvement with studying tank issues when at DERA (and once was allowed to command a Challenger, under supervision, on Salisbury Plain, to get a feel of capabilities at first hand); but I defer to expert operators on this matter. I certainly support a decision to supply armour in principle: it aligns with the main thrust of this paper.

4. The fourth factor followed in a context set by the first three. When Russian attacks opened on 24 February, Ukraine was saved by the lion-hearted valour and morale of its people, the skill and ingenuity of the UKRAF commanders' general ship, which has been of consistently high quality throughout. Both were prerequisite but, above all other factors, Putin's plan was frustrated by three men and one other country than Ukraine during three crucial weeks.

Cometh the hour, cometh the men: that final stressed vowel. In this case, first a President of moral courage and eloquent turn of phrase who steadied his nation through its darkest hour. "I am still here. Your government is still here... I don't want a ride, I want ammunition" alerted us all to the emergence of the most charismatic and significant war-time leader to have appeared in the Free World since Churchill. Without Volodymyr Zelenskyy as an unexpected insurgent onto the world stage and as embodiment of the Ukrainian voice, as Churchill had provided the lion's roar (in his own description), the maintenance of Ukrainian national morale would have been immensely more difficult.<sup>17</sup> It is not useful to entertain the counter-factual that Zelenskyy was not there. Like Churchill at the analogous moment, he simply was. Yet Zelenskyy and Ukrainian patriotism, while necessary, were not sufficient. Ukraine was saved from defeat by Day Six by two other men and one country who were equally but differently indispensable.

It was good fortune, perhaps, that the British Minister of Defence was himself a former combat-decorated Scots Guards Captain with a hard-charging reputation that he brought with him into politics. Ben Wallace did not require advisers to tell him what the Ukrainians needed if they were to have a fighting chance. Unlike too many modern career politicians who have ridden the conveyor belt from university to 'think tank' to roles as "Special Advisers" to Parliament, unsullied by any real world experience, Wallace had a professional hinterland and the self-confidence which comes with it, making him in this sense more akin to politicians of the wartime generation, like Peter Carrington or Denis Healey, than to most of his contemporaries.

Double fortune for Ukraine was that Wallace's Prime Minister was the most charismatic and consequential, if mercurial, politician of his generation and also a man with deep and exotic hinterland outside politics. Wallace explained to Boris Johnson that what the Ukrainians required in the first instance were immediate supplies of man-pack 'fire and forget' anti-tank weapons - the now famous Anglo-Swedish new generation anti-tank weapon N-LAW, manufactured in Belfast. Johnson gave his Minister full backing to ride over the reservations of the British seurocrats who, left to their own devices, would not have made the transfers at scale, at pace and in the face of German opposition in particular, with Macron's grand-standing solo diplomacy at its back: we shall come back to these in the next couplet.<sup>18</sup> The RAF transport flights routed through Denmark and Estonia when German air-space (and use of Ramstein airbase) were closed to them: closed to a NATO ally in the critical weeks before the war went hot.

Without N-LAW (and the first anti-aircraft weapons), the RF *blitzkrieg* might well have succeeded by Day 5 or 6. If things had gone as Putin intended, the leading echelons might have found a use for their dress uniforms, which they were carrying in their lightly provisioned tanks, advancing without sufficient logistic capacity to sustain them for more than a short campaign, and with supplies often missing or of sub-standard quality - the Chinese truck tyres which burst too easily, for example - because of the corruption rife through the RFAF.

---

<sup>17</sup> "It was the nation and the race dwelling all round the globe that had the lion's heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar."

<sup>18</sup> S. Payne, *The Fall of Boris Johnson*, Macmillan (November 2022). Ch 3 "Putin's Move" quotes a 'Cabinet Minister close to Johnson': "It all goes back to the agreement to send arms to Ukraine which started some months before [the invasion] despite enormous official opposition. He took on the Blob and won..." Payne concludes that throughout his premiership "...Johnson sometimes failed to demonstrate the know-how on bending the civil service to his way. Ukraine was the exception."



Instead of providing the pivot of the plan, the RF elite Airborne assault on Antonov Airport, Hostomel, was a slaughter on Days 1 and 2. It was an essential Day One objective, but the rigidity of Russian top-driven command meant that when repeated attacks failed to secure the airfield, the RF field commanders simply acted as if it had been captured and moved on, leaving the UKRAF still in possession and Ukrainian air assets still aloft.

The Chechen General Magomed Tuchayev and his flying column of 56 tanks were obliterated near Hostomel with N-LAW on Day 3 where the likely plan was that they should join up with the Airborne to storm into Kyiv, kill Zelenskyy and the elected government and install a puppet regime. They were carrying identification cards of individuals to target: a sort of macabre Top Trumps.

The First Guards Tank Army was blown off the roads down which they advanced in dangerously close formation towards Kharkiv by Ukrainian soldiers shouting "God Save the Queen!" as they fired their weapons.

By the end of the month, the Ukrainians had drained the Russian offensive of energy to a point where morale began to fall apart. Around 11 March (Day-16) his unit having suffered 50% casualties, Col Yuri Medvedev of the 37th Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade outside Kyiv was run over deliberately by one of his own tanks. On 26 March the 4th Guards at Trostyanets was reduced to smouldering wreckage as Ukrainian soldiers re-took the town.

The United Kingdom exercised decisive sovereign will in this most indispensable initial emergency sustainment. It simply could not have done this had it still been under the bureaucratic suzerainty of the European Union and its actual leadership in the Commission; and during those critical days when Germany was actively obstructive and France was free-lancing, the EU institutions were passive verging on catatonic.

# III – THE THIRD COUPLET: 1935-36 ETHIOPIAN CRISIS WITH THE FEBRUARY - DECEMBER 2022 SPLITTING OF EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY

## The Dangers of Betting On the Wrong Institutions

This third couplet uses the 1935-6 Ethiopian Crisis as a prism to focus insights from the 1930s relevant to the February - December 2022 splitting apart of European diplomacy. The central lesson is the dangers of betting on the wrong institutions. These are, in many ways, the most fundamental and complex lessons in the paper and the chapter therefore develops in five stages and sections:

- First it recalls how the First World War was seen as the original sin of nation-states to be corrected by new supra-national ideology and institutions, led by the League of Nations within which the goal of a federal Europe was incubated: a fact often forgotten
- Second, it relates how the Ethiopian Crisis led to the supersession of the League by sovereign state action once more
- Turning to the present, the third section recalls the history of the three-way pull amongst Russia, Germany and France, which in 2022 expressed itself in different forms of appeasement of Putin
- The fourth section contrasts this continental appeasement with maritime Europe's resistance, led by the UK
- The fifth section, where a direct echo to the first is heard in the history of 2022, documents why and how the EU declined and botched its appointment with history just as the League did before it, while nation-states and their alliance, NATO, rose in clear ascendancy. The power dynamics entering 2023 are therefore much closer to those of a century before.

## ORIGINAL SIN OF THE NATION-STATE LEADS TO SUPRA-NATIONAL IDEOLOGY

The 20th century interwar years had invested much in a two-edged analysis: that nation-states were in their essence pathological because they had caused the Great War and that the solution was both to police them and to de-fang them through supranational bodies that applied a higher law.<sup>19</sup>

The League of Nations was to be pre-eminent of those bodies. Working for it in the 1920s were a group of friends - Jean Monnet, Arthur Salter and others - who imagined a regional federal companion for it. Within the League context and frame of mind, the European Project to inoculate against future war on the continent, was conceived. It is a common mistake to fail to understand that while it did not come into being until after the Second World War, the European Project of Federal Union, now the EU, was, in fact, a traumatised child of the First, just as was the Soviet Union.

---

<sup>19</sup> The canonical modern statement of this case for the prosecution is R Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*, Atlantic Books (2003) and most especially the first of its three component essays.

The French *eminence grise* of the Project, Jean Monnet (1888-1979), was a bureaucrat, inspired by that vision of a united Europe that Tennyson had expressed in words cherished by generations of world federalists: "Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd/In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."<sup>20</sup>

Arthur Salter, his friend and colleague also working at the League of Nations, was the Englishman who in 1931 wrote *The United States of Europe*, a book which sets out that shared vision in detail.

Another close collaborator was Walter Hallstein, a German technocratic academic who believed in international jurisdiction as the morally superior successor to the laws of the nation states; and his priority is inscribed in the constitution for the European Court of Justice, prescribing travel towards ever closer union.

Monnet, Salter and Hallstein were joined by Altiero Spinelli, a romantic communist who advocated a United States of Europe legitimised by a democratically elected European Parliament. In form but not substance that too has come into being with tepid and cooling public support, riven with long-known but now surfaced corruption scandals among MEPs.

The culmination of unbridled utopian federalism was French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand's proposal for a European Federal Union, which in May 1930 was summarily rejected in the same way that the Kellogg-Briand Pact proposal to outlaw war had been in 1928. The rebuff caused Monnet and his friends to reassess their tactics.

They chose creeping federalism (the covert acquisition of ever more power without consent). This is playing a constitutional game of Grandmother's Footsteps with the unenlightened *canaille*. By approaching the goal of federal union obliquely and enticing electorates with tasty a-political morsels at first, it could become – pouf! –an irrevocable *fait accompli*. This functionalist tactic is known as the 'Monnet Method'.<sup>21</sup> Irrevocability is the heartbeat of the process that expands the *acquis communautaire*: the unrepealable 'Community inheritance' of accumulating laws, policies and practices.

The founders sought and obtained the support of popular political leaders like Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman and Alcide De Gasperi to translate Monnet's Method into concrete political forms. After it was clear that the first choice of a military alliance proposed by the Pleven Plan had not gained traction in 1950, an idea from the 1920s to create a European coal and steel community (the 'Schuman Plan) became the initial step in 1951.

What justified playing such a game? Because, like latter-day Plato's Guardians, they trusted no-one but themselves and least of all the common people, a fear that ironically they held in common with all totalitarian regimes.<sup>22</sup>

This, then, was the institutional context of hope and intent.

---

20 Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Locksley Hall" 1835

21 An English children's game. One person ('grandmother') walks in front of a group of others who try to catch up with her to touch her without her seeing them coming. If 'grandmother' turns around, everyone freezes. Anyone caught moving by 'grandmother' is out. In the EU version, the people are 'grandmother' and the federal enthusiasts are trying to catch her without being noticed in time. For a more charitable assessment of such games see A-C Carls, "Functionalism and federalism in the European Union," *Public Justice Report*, (2, 2002)

22 Extracted from G.Prins, *Beyond the Ghosts: Does EU membership erode Britain's global influence?* Historians for Britain, 2015. A shortened version was published in (eds) P. Minford & J.R. Shackleton, *Breaking Up is Hard to Do: Britain and Europe's Dysfunctional Relationship*, IEA (2016), pp 58-81

## LEAGUE OF NATIONS DISINTEGRATION AND RETURN OF SOVEREIGN STATES

In early December 1934, a skirmish occurred in confused circumstances between soldiers of Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia and Somali soldiers fighting for Italian occupied Somaliland. The skirmish, which came to be known as the Walwal Incident, was referred to the League of Nations by the Emperor on 3 January 1935. However, the arbitration absolved both parties of any culpability for all events. Subsequent appeals for arbitration during 1935 were similarly inconclusive as great powers - notably Great Britain and France - sparred uneasily for diplomatic influence, their foreign ministers Pierre Laval and Samuel Hoare meeting with Mussolini in Rome.

The dictator's reply was to begin reinforcing the Italian military presence in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Between May and July 1935, two more attempts at League arbitration failed: a regional arms embargo and an attempted brokerage on 23-24 June by the British under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, Anthony Eden.

All states began to act increasingly as states on Palmerstonian principles - that they do not have permanent friends, only permanent interests. In that hierarchy of interests, Ethiopia's sovereignty ranked below efforts to prevent Italian Fascist and German Nazi alignment. Today, looking towards the linked fate of Taiwan is the echo to note - especially in French and German views and actions - when we turn to Ukraine's plight in 2022.

Within the view at that time, the same majority part of the British press that was to support appeasement of Hitler over his demands upon the Rhineland advised Haile Selassie to submit to Italy, "... not because the Italian blackmail is just, but because it would be so inconvenient for ourselves if he resisted.

"We might be called on to do more than lip-service to the League; and how extravagant would that be!... "wrote the classicist, literary critic and famous anti-appeasement intellectual Frank Laurence Lucas, a Fellow of Kings' College Cambridge, in one of his "political letters" to *The Daily Telegraph* on 25th July 1935. In words that ring across the decades to early 2022, he continued, "... the League has not yet called on us; but there are already plenty of voices busy finding pretexts for us to shuffle out of the whole thing. It is not our duty to defend Abyssinia single-handed - no-one has suggested it; but it is our duty, if covenants mean anything whatsoever, to oppose this piece of brigandage at Geneva, and after." The key pointer lay in his conclusion: "... It is our duty to be concerting with whatever Powers retain some decency, particularly the United States, what measures may be needed."<sup>23</sup>

In point of fact, League action was described at the time as "fifty led by one" - the one being Great Britain. But motives were deeply conflicted. And AJP Taylor reminds us in his *Origins of the Second World War* that in the Press it was pretty much all bar one (*Reynold's News*) that endorsed the 1938 Munich Agreement.

On 12 August 1935, Ethiopia unsuccessfully pleaded for the arms embargo upon it to be lifted. (The major powers were all still (including the UK) hoping and manoeuvring to prevent Italian-German alignment.) After a further refusal by the League to adjudicate blame over Walwal and having drawn his own conclusions, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia on 3 October without warning or declaration of war.

In December with prior British Cabinet approval (on the 9th), Hoare and Laval secretly proposed to Mussolini a deal through the League (on the 13th) whereby Italy would retain control over large parts of Ethiopia in return for an end to hostilities. Yet each was mistrustful of the other and the French, in particular, were suspicious that the British were trying under cover of League action to reinforce the British position

---

<sup>23</sup> Lucas was an Apostle but unlike others, staunchly anti-fascist and suspicious of the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s. When war came he became one of the phalanx of brilliant Cambridge dons who went to Bletchley Park and in Hut 3 he played an important role in applied cryptanalysis during the North Africa campaign.

in the eastern Mediterranean. Admiral Sir William Fisher, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, seemed in French eyes to have assembled rather a lot of powerful warships at Alexandria on the orders of the First Sea Lord.<sup>24</sup> (AUKUS. *Plus ça change.*)

Mussolini played along to buy time hoping and expecting a split in the united front. The Hoare-Laval details then leaked. Cabinet reversed course on the 18th after public outrage, which led to the resignations of both Laval and Hoare, who was succeeded by Anthony Eden.

In Parliament on the 19th, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, acknowledged public anger, read the rites over the plan, and apologised for ever allowing it. By now it was clear that neither country was serious about using the League of Nations, once the guns began to shoot. On 7 March 1936 Hitler invaded the Rhineland and frightened France - still naively hoping for Italian support against Germany - effectively withdrawing opposition to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.<sup>25</sup>

Thus unfolded the train of events that ended with Mussolini's full occupation of Ethiopia, and Haile Selassie's flight into exile in May 1936 to, strangely, the genteel dowdiness of Bath, Somerset.<sup>26</sup> The court remained in Bath until Haile Selassie returned to Addis Ababa by force of British arms in 1941.

But the biggest casualty was the League of Nations itself. Although the Manchurian Crisis had already shown the weakness of the League, "after its failure in Ethiopia, the common cause was gone. To base a state's security on a Covenant applied incompletely made no sense. It was a retreat from collective security by all states: a retreat into neutrality, isolation, regional groupings or appeasement."<sup>27</sup>

Churchill took a view on the episode in his history of the Second World War and for him it was the particular lesson that Hitler drew that mattered most. Churchill cited an article from the *Muenchener Zeitung* of 16 May 1936 that has a nasty modern ring,

*The English like a comfortable life compared to our German standards. This does not mean that they are incapable of sustained efforts, but they avoid them so far as they can, without impairing their personal and national security. They also control means and wealth which have enabled them, in contrast to us, for a century or so, to increase their capital more or less automatically... after the [Great] war in which the English after some preliminary hesitation showed certainly an amazing energy, the British masters of the world thought that they had at last earned a little rest. They disarmed along the whole line - in civil life even more than on land and sea...*

However, today we must take the first sentence with a pinch of salt due to the fact that, over the past two decades, the British have sabotaged their own energy grid by poisoning it with thermodynamically incompetent fuels, leaving them at possibly greater risk of being cold and dark than the Germans.

The conclusion that Churchill drew from this also chimes: His Majesty's Government had championed Ethiopia with words but when confronted with "brute facts, Mr Baldwin had recoiled." This had "led the League of Nations into utter fiasco." And shortly thereafter came the Spanish Civil War.<sup>28</sup>

---

24 Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again*, pp 89-90

25 H. G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*. University of California Press (1994); G. W. Baer, *Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations* Hoover Institution Press (1976).

26 Why so? Coincidentally the late John Gardner, who had been once tutor to the Crown Prince Asfaw Wossan and was later my Latin master, and my school, were in Bath, which was one of the reasons that it was to the Georgian Spa that the Emperor and entourage came.

27 Baer, *Test Case*, p 298

28 Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, pp 145-6

## THREE-WAY HISTORICAL PULL BEHIND GERMAN AND FRENCH APPEASEMENT

Much of the above resonates with events early in Putin's War. We can see how past ambitions, fears, and mutual fascinations have led to the current unsatisfactory positions of Germany and France.

### German Dependency and Appeasement

During the first weekend of Russia's invasion, the new German Chancellor Scholz appeared to stand the Russophile German foreign policy of three previous chancellorships on its head announcing large intended increases in German defence spending. Despite this flicker, the head-rush did not last.

After his immediate predecessors - most importantly Mrs Merkel - had structurally locked the German economy and specifically its energy economy into dependence on Russia, the long-set geopolitical orientation eastwards reasserted, of which the *ostpolitik* was only the latest iteration.

In a series of excoriating long form articles published since the war began, Daniel Johnson, the leading British journalist specialising in German affairs, has unpicked the enormity and the scale of compromise that are major factors in causing the German economy - and maybe even civil peace - to crash and burn.<sup>29</sup> To these must be added the thermodynamically illiterate *energiewende* (Merkel's policy drive to boost renewables while shutting both fossil power generation and nuclear).

Strange anomalies have appeared. In a desperate effort to square the unsquareable circle of the 'green' mis-analysis of both physical and political power, gas has been deemed to be 'green', modern coal-fired power stations are wisely being built quickly, and the strongest voice to be heard against appeasement of Putin is that of the Green foreign affairs minister Annalena Baerbock who seems to be following a political journey from eco-fundamentalism to eminent realism similar to that of her 'Green' predecessor, Joschka Fischer.

But overall, it is hard to disagree with Boris Johnson's verdict after his defenestration that German policy in nominal support of Ukraine against aggression, has been disgraceful. The 'free the leopards' debate, not yet concluded as this paper goes to press, may be its nadir. As Daniel Johnson observes channelling his inner Kipling, the leopard must surely change its spots?<sup>30</sup> At year's end, a new fracture in German solidarity with others, and a new appeasement, appears to be developing - this time in relation to Xi Jin Ping; but that comes later in this paper.

### Mutual Fascination and French Appeasement

In parallel and for radically different and much less well understood reasons, Macron has consistently pursued his own version of appeasement of Putin since the war began, free-lancing, seeking "off-ramps" and even, at year's end, suggesting that NATO should supply security guarantees *to Putin* to the great puzzlement and fury of many in the English-speaking world.

---

29 D.Johnson, "Hypocritical Germany is being brought to its knees" *Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 2022, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/07/13/hypocritical-germany-brought-knees](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/07/13/hypocritical-germany-brought-knees)

30 *idem*, "Leopard tank dilemma as Germany tears itself in two over Ukraine" *Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/01/22/leopard-tank-dilemma-germany-tears-two-ukraine>

There has been mutual fascination between French and Russian high society from the time of Catherine the Great. But fascination does not translate directly into trust.

What German-born Catherine imbibed from her reading of the Physiocrats (Quesnay, Turgot, du Pont de Nemours) was the revolutionary idea that *export* trade, specifically in grain in the context of the late eighteenth century, could become the foundation of an empire's wealth. Over two years, she distilled her thinking into a document known as her *Nakaz* or *Mandate*, which she wrote in French, translated into Russian, published in French and German as well as Russian in 1767 and promulgated throughout Russia. In it she wrote, "... the basis of trade is the export and import of goods *to favour the state*" (emphasis added) and likewise the customs collected from such trade.

For Russia to attain full imperial strength, a prerequisite was control of the *chernozem* - the Ukrainian black soil grain-lands: some of the richest and most fertile on the planet - which had for a millennium been linked to the Black Sea coast by the "Black Paths" (*chorni shlyakhy*) along which the ox-carts of the *chumaki* grain traders had rolled. A hundred-thousand soldiers were assembled and given both mobility and speed by issuing the *assagnat*: a promissory bill for the supply of provisions which was a first expression of national debt and also an early form of a modern transferable financial instrument.

Thus fortified, in 1768, the Tsaritsa's armies conquered the steppes and her Rescript of May 27 1794 ordered the founding of a free port on the site of a Turkish fort on the Black Sea coast on physiocratic principles<sup>31</sup>, free of import or export taxes, to attract the grain flows stretching back to Poland that revitalised agriculture, once more transported on the *chumaki* trails along the ancient black paths.

The Tsaritsa named the new port after the lost Greek *emporion* (trading post) Odessos and legend has it that she gave it the feminine suffix - Odessa. Coupled with the influx of new farmers stimulated under her 1763 *ukaz* (a decree that permitted foreigners to settle in Russian lands with a land grant, exemption from military service, and freedom of religion). Over the next century, Odesa became richly cosmopolitan and the principal source of grain to feed the cities of Europe - railways replacing ox-carts on the routes of the black paths - until that role was submerged by the wave of grain rolling across the Atlantic from the North America prairies.<sup>32</sup>

As David Abulafia, the historian of the world's oceans, has observed, Catherine's conquest of the *chernozem* also laid down as a geopolitical fact - well understood by Putin - that with its abundant food and foreign exchange Russia with Ukraine was an empire, and without it, it could not be. Ukraine's range of resources extend today to embrace the vast mineral deposits of the Donbas and unexploited gas fields, on possibly Norwegian scale, offshore the Black Sea coast as well.

Hence the actual and the symbolic importance of the precarious grain export agreement - underwritten by Lloyds of London - struck after Putin's forces failed to break out south along the coast from Kherson or to mount planned amphibious landings from occupied Crimea. The veiling, the defacing with red paint, the provision of a hangman's noose to Catherine the Great's statue in modern Odesa should be viewed in the same light. Its second removal, along with its four supporter figures, occurred on 28-29 December 2022: a potent reminder of the repudiation of Russian rule and the extent to which Ukrainian national identity is such a mortal threat to any Russian imperial ambitions of Putin or anyone else in Moscow.<sup>33</sup>

---

31 From the Rescript: "We hope that you not only will realize our idea, but that knowing how much the thriving trade contributes to the people's welfare and enrichment of the state, will try to make the city you are creating not only a safe haven from storm for tradesmen, but will also provide protection and encouragement for their benefits; therefore, no doubt, as our trade flourishes there, this city will be filled with people in a short time."

32 S.R.Nelson, *Oceans of Grain*, Basic Books, (2022), pp 42-8

33 The image in question has been quite mobile. Version one of the statue was installed in 1900 on the centenary of the city's foundation. It was removed by the Bolsheviks and later destroyed. Version two was installed in 2007 in controversial circumstances. 'Big Kate' was removed again at dead of night at year's end 2022 by popular demand of the citizens of Odesa after the terrible toll in human life that Russians had inflicted on them.

Shared ambition for Russian lands and riches from Napoleon to Hitler - from the Confederation of the Rhine to *lebensraum* - and the enduring sum of all French and German mutual fears entwined, are the historical rhyming and the principal driving political dynamic of the era.

Hurrying forward a century for the purposes of this paper takes us to our next significant landing point which is to record the enormous scale of French investment in Russia after 1871, notably in infrastructure and especially railways, and to the enthusiasm with which Tsar Nicholas II was greeted in Paris in 1896. This, argues Robert Tombs, eminent historian of France (and England and, with Isabelle Tombs, of the Anglo-French relationship<sup>34</sup>) and, for these purposes, of the French response to defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, was when the first drafts of the script which we must understand to interpret President Macron's present conduct, were written. Professor Tombs' point is that the intensity of this French activity in and with Russia should be seen in a three-way pull, for it was a response to the shock of defeat in the Franco-Prussian war and therefore should be seen, as most twentieth century French diplomacy, more as a reflex of and counterbalance to fear of Germany; and that Macron's Russia diplomacy is to be understood in that way too.<sup>35</sup>

## CONTINENTAL SPLITS AND APPEASEMENT VS MARITIME EUROPE UNITY AND RESISTANCE

These constants in French and German history form the bridge to the main feature of European diplomacy in 2022, which has been to see Europe spectacularly split asunder - like an over-ripe melon - in a way that can no longer be ignored or denied. The Franco-German axis, differently motivated as sketched, is on one side (with Turkish and Hungarian national narratives aligned) and a British-led axis is on the other, embracing familiar allies from the Second World war who also have for generations had salt in their veins - the Dutch, Danish, Norwegians. Today they are joined by the Baltic States liberated from Soviet rule and likewise, Poland and Czechia. Putin's contribution to this alliance during the year was the polar opposite of what he intended: to precipitate the abandonment of neutrality by Finland and Sweden and their entry into NATO.

This achievement is arguably the most important geopolitical alignment of the war year (and maybe of the past decade) in the western hemisphere. It makes the Baltic a Free World Sea, with sea routes to St Petersburg constrained and Kaliningrad more tightly bottled up. Churchill had made a similar argument for supporting the Finns against Russia in the Winter War in order to arrive at just this outcome eighty years earlier, although, of course, at that time, Russia prevailed. Within the Scandinavian transitions of 2022, Great Britain's implied extension of its nuclear guarantee to Sweden and Poland on 11 May 2022, ahead of NATO accession, is the furthest east security guarantee that the United Kingdom has provided in two generations. These Scandinavian agreements also bring Finland's large and specialised winter fighting capability to bear along with the largest artillery inventories in Western Europe and Sweden's highly efficient air force and naval capabilities. Both states also bring reinforcement to western cyberwarfare capabilities.

Along with Britain's role as one of the three state guarantors of Ukraine's sovereignty in the much traduced Budapest Memorandum of 5 December 1994, these latest guarantees are the clearest material evidence so far of the recovery of Britain's accustomed posture as one of the world's leading global sea power states (states that 'punch above their weight' by virtue of their prominence in maritime trade and the operational

---

34 I & R Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy. Britain and France: The History of a Love-Hate Relationship*, Vintage (2006)

35 R. Tombs, "Macron's shameful kowtowing to Russia is hardly a bolt from the blue: since the 19th century, French diplomacy has always played a long game, with national interest foremost" *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 June 2022, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/06/11/macrons-shameful-kowtowing-russia-hardly-bolt-blue](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/06/11/macrons-shameful-kowtowing-russia-hardly-bolt-blue)



excellence of their naval forces, which is not a function of numbers but of depth of naval culture). The Budapest Memorandum set the precedent and was followed by the 15 September 2021 Anglo/Australian/US nuclear submarine AUKUS treaty that was struck to incandescent French fury.

Britain's sea power had been enfeebled during the forty year excursion into and out of the European experiment with federal union. It is an echo of the 'one leading fifty' role that the country played in the last days of the League of Nations.<sup>36</sup>

## EU ROLE IN DECLINE VS ASCENDANT NATO AND SOVEREIGN STATES

The most faithfully inflected last vowel from the 1930s is to be heard when contrasting the relative efforts of principal states and their defence alliance, NATO, with inter-state or aspirant supra-state organisations, pre-eminently the EU.

In both cases, the existing inefficient institutions were preferred by powers-that-be. In 2022, this opened an opportunity for Putin - judging only on recent actions - to seek ways to turn the EU's introspections to his advantage. It should be no surprise that Putin fears above all the recovery of sovereign will and sovereign might.

In the period 24 January - 20 November 2022, Britain provided more *military* aid (€4.1bn) than the EU institutions combined (€3.1bn); and the underlying determination to do so was not in question under the previous two Prime Ministers. Despite reassurances to the contrary, this is what makes Mr Sunak's alleged bankers' audit, ordered at year's end, a matter of concern both in Kyiv and among those who support the cause of full-hearted support. This is because, as suggested in the Prologue, we are now at potentially the most critical moment in the war, with renewed RF offensives being one of the live possibilities giving full expression to Putin's view that Ukraine has no right to exist.

Similarly, Poland in assisting Ukraine since January 2022, has done more than any other single regional state, both in welcoming floods of involuntary Ukrainian refugees from the aggression and in military support. Poland's willingness to supply complex weapons consistently exceeded the wobbly risk appetite of the President of the USA during the pre-Bucha phase.

At such a climactic moment, what has the EU actually been doing? These things don't all appear in balance sheets. Its political objectives, adopted in March 2022, were most recently consolidated in *La Boussole Stratégique* (The Strategic Compass) with the stated objective of making the EU militarily competent at the geostrategic level. They are in practice a plan to increase differentiation from NATO.

However, the animating spirit seems to have been principally introspective, shoring up eroding domestic legitimacy and, insofar as the EU has addressed third countries, it has sought to administer punishment beatings to the UK for its temerity in leaving the EU and in leading Europe since Putin's invasion. There is

---

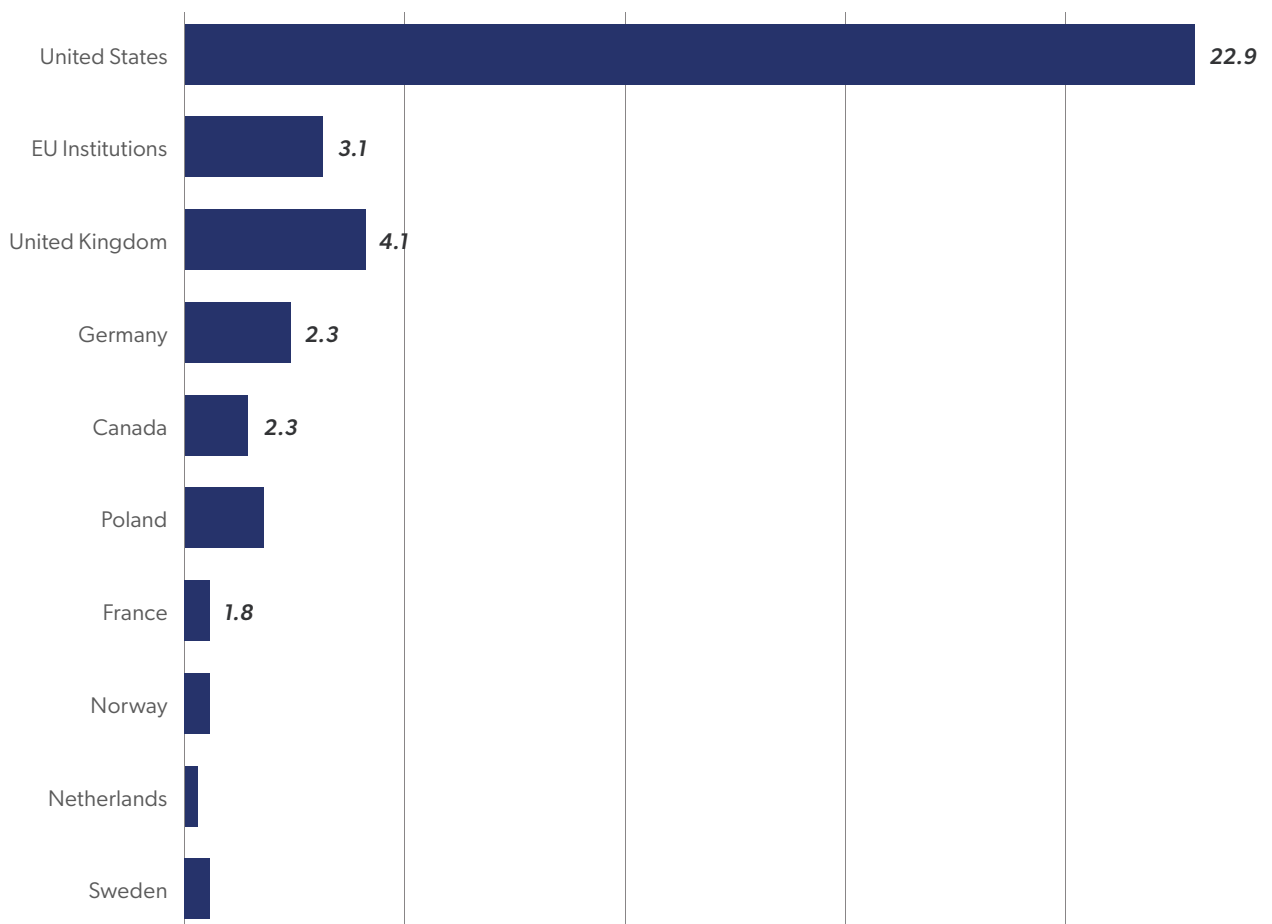
<sup>36</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-signs-new-assurances-to-bolster-european-security-11-may-2022>; The concept is fully explained in A. Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World*, Yale University Press (2018). Other 'seapower states' include Greece, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway for example. But the RN is pre-eminent as witness its role in 'working up' many of the Free World's navies' surface ships at FOST (Fleet Operational Sea Training) and training their submarine commanders on the PERISHER course. As Admiral Cunningham observed when losing ships around Crete during the Second World War, "it takes three years to build a ship but three hundred to build a navy". The Cunningham Criterion is one reason why comparison of ship numbers between the PLAN and the USN is not a meaningful indicator of deliverable combat power.

a palpably peevish tone in Gesine Weber’s account of how the Ukraine war has reanimated NATO. She warns openly of the danger of falling into the trap of seeking alignments between the EU *boussole* and NATO.<sup>37</sup>

Only at year’s end were enormous promises of financial aid made, albeit, with a view to future reconstruction of Ukraine after the ending of hostilities - the €18bn so-called ‘Macro-Assistance Package’ for 2023, bringing EU institutional promises on finance since January to €30.3.<sup>38</sup>

### Government Military Support to Ukraine (€ billions)

Commitments January 24 to November 20, 2022. Data on 41 donors



Source: Antezza et al. (2022) “The Ukraine Support Tracker” Kiel WP

The figures look enormous, but there are three problems: first, they are largely promises of jam tomorrow; second, with the war not yet won by Ukraine to the point where it can dictate a settlement, it is the wrong sort of promise to make at this moment (many more guns come before butter, let alone jam); and third, more darkly, such promises align uncomfortably with the EU’s appeasement instinct rather than bolstering military equipment and training first and foremost, as the Free World coalition led by the English-speaking world has been and continues to do.

37 “Dans le contexte de la confirmation de l’importance de l’OTAN et des priorités divergentes des États-membres, les ambitions formulées dans ce document de référence font face au risque de perte du niveau d’ambition pour l’intégration de défense dans le cadre des structures de l’Union.” G. Weber, “10 points sur la défense européenne en 2023”, *Le Grand Continent*, 2 janv 2023; <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/01/03/10-points-sur-la-defense-europeenne-en-2023>

38 *Ukraine Support Tracker*, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, November 2022, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/> Chart reproduced with permission.

In addition, the year has seen concerted renewed efforts through *la boussole* to animate the plans for an EU Military Union which, recall, were the first and failed preferred expression of pan-European identity in 1950 (the Pleven Plan). Fresh efforts toward this objective were launched formally immediately following the British people's vote to leave the EU on 26 June 2016 - against the wishes, the material interests, and to the horror of the majority of the British political and administrative classes.

The instruments of this endeavour were the European Security and Defence Implementation Plan (ESDIP) of 14 November 2016 and the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) of 30 November 2016, followed by PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) on 13 November 2017. Present plans are built around PESCO.

In parallel, the British 'Remainer' leadership swiftly morphed into 'Rejoiners', acting on the Monnet Method with strategies that became known as 'BRINO' (Brexit in Name Only) during the Prime Ministership of Mrs May. The Rejoiners are now revived, with their tails up, after the defenestrations of Prime Ministers Johnson and Truss. They are testing Mr Sunak's mettle.

Unfortunately, His Majesty's Government recently applied to join the PESCO Military Mobility (MM) project as a Third State and on 15 November 2022 was deemed to qualify. The Government was advised by the Civil Service that no risk attached to this subscription. This advice was incorrect.

Not only does MM replicate standing NATO facilities such as RAM (Rapid Air Mobility) but it threatens to distract operational priority from NATO and to intrude the EU into European defence at a time of war that is simultaneously 'grey' and 'hot'. But – most importantly - the point of all PESCO initiatives is political, not military, as the founding documents show. Some of the EU's own sources describing PESCO are summarised in the footnote.<sup>39</sup> This was why, ironically, the UK resisted all such initiatives during EU membership. Now, however, even in the midst of a full-blown war, British Rejoiners support the Commission in pressing for UK adhesion. British adhesion to the MM was warmly welcomed by Gesine Weber in her essay.

They have two motivations:

- First, everything in the EU Defence Union is attached to everything else by legal design. Therefore joining PESCO is like becoming ensnared in a spider's web.
- Second such adhesion, like the Northern Ireland Protocol, is seen as a main instrument to compromise the UK's regained sovereignty and thereby to maintain 'high dynamic alignment' to prepare the UK for re-joining the EU after the next election. This is now the openly expressed ambition of Tony Blair, Lords Adonis, Heseltine, Mandelson and their circle.<sup>40</sup>

This circle has important and vocal allies among retired Mandarins such as Lords Ricketts and Westmacott but also within serving senior ranks. For example, Angus Lapsley, ex FCDO, is the one official who has been continuously at the heart of creating PESCO since 2016 (as a drafter of the EU Global Strategy). Moreover, having escaped prosecution under Section 8 of the Official Secrets Act for a gross breach of

---

<sup>39</sup> PESCO is "fundamentally a set of binding commitments" between participating countries (EEAS). It is designed as a 'driver for integration in the field of defence' (EU Commission). It is part of the mechanism of the 'EU Defence Union' (EU Commission think tank and EEAS). The PESCO concept was among the EU military policy programmes found in the European Constitution in the early 2000s prior to being included in the Lisbon Treaty, 2007. Military components of the Lisbon Treaty, including PESCO, were expected to be activated within a short time of the Lisbon Treaty but were postponed due to the financial crisis. Groundwork for activation recommenced in 2014 and PESCO 'notification', the political agreement among EU member states, took place on 13 November 2017. The creation of PESCO and the wider expansion of EU defence programmes were 'not related to Russia, Trump or Brexit', but part of a longer-term EU plan (HR/VP Mogherini). PESCO is the political anchor for a web of sixty projects creating common EU military capabilities. The design, development and usage of these EU military capabilities are all under EU rules, as well as EU policies and budgets. The EU regards PESCO as a "decisive contribution for the development of Europe's capacity to act autonomously" (HR/VP Borrell). The EU considers it to be "key for the development of strong and integrated defence capabilities available to the EU." (HR/VP Borrell). /<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/11/15/pesco-the-uk-will-be-invited-to-participate-in-military-mobility-project/>

<sup>40</sup> The EU's rules for so-called third-states (non-EU) participating in PESCO were agreed on 27 October 2020 and published the following month (EU Council Decision 15529/18). These rules require participating third-states to accept a broad range of conditions. The conditions include a requirement for the third-state to support the strategic autonomy of the EU and the decision-making autonomy of the EU. Third-states must support the treaty objectives of EU CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and must agree not to contravene the foreign and defence policy- decision making of the EU. Norway was earlier snared by the MM and has now agreed to pay into the "European Peace Fund" which is an Orwellian name for a fund to support EU military deployments.

security (for reasons that have never been made properly clear), he has now been inserted into the key role from which NATO may be made amenable to EU ambition – the Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning.<sup>41</sup>

All this will be music to Putin’s ears because weakening British sovereign will and action by all means - with the EU’s vindictiveness as a useful lever - is a top priority ‘grey war’ aim of the Kremlin. It makes no secret of the fact that after Ukraine, Great Britain is foremost in its cross-hairs. This is an opinion backed up in material evidence of sophisticated and proven offensive cyber-attacks by the FSB on respecters of the 2016 referendum vote.

However, if the EU is a chosen weapon of Putin’s to help sunder and hobble his enemies, it is not in good shape. It now reels under three successive blows to its legitimacy:

- First was introduction of the single currency, which can now be seen to have been the biggest geo-political error made in Europe in the last quarter of the previous century. By water-boarding the southern European economies, it caused the trans-Alpine rupture.<sup>42</sup>
- Then came serial corruption scandals beginning with the auditors being unable to approve accounts for years on end. And, as mentioned already, this pervasive culture has just burst into probably the biggest episode yet, the Qatar Scandal. The Qatar Case now has boiled up to the level of a Greek Vice-President of the Parliament. It may be the worst in the history of the institution - which adds to the forces that are leading the EU into the zone of imminent collapse.<sup>43</sup>
- Finally, the chickens are coming home to roost with a vengeance from the imposition of the EU’s unilateral ‘green’ policies that have created the deepest crisis in European energy supply since the Second World War, which undermines the rest of economic activity built upon it.<sup>44</sup>

There is therefore every reason to rhyme this history with that of the collapse of the League of Nations within which the European Project was conceived. In both cases multilateral institutions failed under stress, whereas nation-states and state-based alliances like NATO, did not.

---

41 How the interlocks work is explained in G. Prins, “Escaping Hotel California,” *Briefings for Britain*, 28 May 2018, <https://www.briefingsforbritain.co.uk/escaping-from-hotel-california>. The roles of Angus Lapsley are documented in G. Prins, “What the Night Manager of Hotel California did next”, *Briefings for Britain*, 7 August 2021, <https://www.briefingsforbritain.co.uk/what-the-night-manager-of-hotel-california-did-next/>. He is currently the ASG for Defence Policy & Planning at NATO and the UK’s highest ranking civil servant within the Alliance.

42 Y Varoufakis, *Adults in the Room: My Battle with Europe’s Deep Establishment*, Vintage (2017)

43 For explanation of the dynamics of collapse, now being proven in fact, see “EU at clear risk of collapse, warns major new report by Gwythian Prins” *Briefings for Britain*, 2 April 2018, <https://www.briefingsforbritain.co.uk/eu-at-clear-risk-of-collapse-warns-major-new-report-by-gwythian-prins/>; G. Rayner, M. Oliver & J Barnes, “Could this corruption scandal signal the end of the EU? Allegations that MEPs have been taking cash bribes shine a light on inner workings” *Daily Telegraph*, 17 December, 2022; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/17/could-corruption-scandal-signal-end-eu/>; A. Carassava & B. Waterfeld, “You rely on us for your gas now, Qatar warns EU in bribery row”, *The Times*, 19 December, 2022, [https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/eb2491de-7f02-11ed-960f-633871a078dc?mc\\_cid=7fea155b81&mc\\_eid=ed6b6d6f12](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/eb2491de-7f02-11ed-960f-633871a078dc?mc_cid=7fea155b81&mc_eid=ed6b6d6f12). In a nice display of the law of unexpected consequences, the bribers are Qatari and Qatar, which is currently crucial in supplying the LNG that keeps Europe’s and the UK’s electricity grids running. They are threatening gas export embargo on Belgium and the EU in revenge for the embarrassment of these exposures.

44 J. Constable, *Europe’s Green Experiment: A Costly Failure in Unilateral Climate Policy*, Report 52, <https://www.thegwpf.org/content/uploads/2022/08/EU-Climate-Policy-Failure.pdf> In summary: “Since 1990, the European Union has pursued a rapid decarbonisation strategy, at first based largely on emissions trading but increasingly reliant on thermodynamically incompetent renewable energy. The results have been to increase energy costs, suppress energy demand, and prevent recovery after exogenous shocks such as the financial crisis of 2008 and the global pandemic of 2020. Energy consumption, particularly electricity consumption, has been falling steadily in the EU since about 2005, and it is reasonable to infer that these societies are regressing towards thermodynamic equilibrium, with the effects temporarily buffered by fossil-fuel manufactured goods from Asia.”

# IV - THE FOURTH COUPLET: 1919-20 ALLIED INTERVENTION INTO THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR WITH 2023 ONWARDS

## The Consequences of Half-Measures

Rhyming analogies, once noticed, appear all around, as Lord Hankey's Note of 1932, reproduced in the Appendix, and this paper, are intended to remind. Noticing them is a good habit to cultivate in order to keep policy-makers realistic.

Looking towards the next phase of Putin's War and in drawing practical conclusions to inform what can and should be done by the Free World, one final and different set of echoes merits attention: different because sometimes it is helpful to recollect the histories of things that did *not* happen. Counterfactuals can be of value if engaged with methodological rigour because they involve conscious reflection upon what were decisive factors at the cross-roads of decision-making. <sup>45</sup>

For our purposes, one such case-study lies in the history of Allied interventions into Russia in 1919-20. It enquires how, had different policies been pursued, the narrative of presumed inevitability with which the story of 'ten days that shook the world' as framed and broadcast by apologists for the Russian Revolution (especially in British school curricula), could have been quite different. "Branching histories" are explored in intelligence assessments but not enough pedagogically, where pupils too often are offered monochrome accounts to study.

The considerable scale of Allied military support to the White forces in the Russian civil war may now be forgotten in the west, but not by Putin. The central lesson that this episode teaches for today is that the most dangerous course is the course of half measures. At the end of 2022, without properly realising it, we are agonising over similar choices and dangers to those that preoccupied the British Cabinet a century ago. Putin and the *siloviki* (hard men) are not so muddled, as Putin's chilling essay of 15 July on the indivisibility - actually non-existence - of Ukrainian identity, reminded us.

## RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR THROUGH 1919-20

By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918, Bolshevik Russia withdrew from the war against Germany and ceded, in humiliation, vast territories in Poland, Ukraine, the Baltics, Finland, Georgia and Armenia to Germany. The acrid flame of that memory still burns in today's Kremlin. As Churchill later wrote during his wilderness years, it was perfectly logical for the Allies to intervene with strength in Russia since "... the Central Powers meant to have the corn and the oil of the Ukraine and the Caucasus."

Facing still disorganised Red partisans, five German reserve divisions swept in short order into Ukraine. On 13 March 1918 they occupied Odesa; on 17th Nikolaev; on 8 April Kherson; on 28th a German puppet General Skoropadski was installed; on 1 May Sevastopol was seized along with part of the Black Sea fleet; on 8 May the Germans took Rostov on Don. Allied intervention, both of troops and substantial arms shipments to the anti-Bolsheviks, followed.

---

<sup>45</sup> (ed) N. Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, Penguin (2011). Counterfactuals are not universally valued among historians. While conceding rigour in the Ferguson collection, Professor Sir Richard Evans views counterfactuals as mostly reactionary nostalgia; and some may be. But not all. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/17/alterred-pasts-counterfactuals-in-history-review>.

The British moved troops into the Caucasus to deny Germany oil from Baku (which they occupied for a crucial period), and in the north, British forces occupied Murmansk and Archangel both to check Germany in the Baltics and to try to ensure that prior shipments of arms and coal at the docks did not fall into Red hands. French forces moved to the Black Sea coast.<sup>46</sup>

The Russian Imperial Army split. Some joined the Bolsheviks. Trotsky was a strong proponent of appointing former Tsarist officers in the Red Army to impose form and discipline on the unstable and shifting combinations of students, former soldiers, and partisans - even Ukrainian anarcho-communists like Nestor Makhno (namesake of the *Makhnovshchina*) who they turned against after the defeat of the Whites in Crimea in 1920 and drove into exile to die of TB in Paris.

Sergey Sergeyevich Kamenev was one such former Tsarist Army Colonel, who became the Red commander in the Civil War. The Red Army was recruited and forged with a similar brutalising of its own people to that which has just been seen again in Putin's 2022 mobilisations. It is also as unwise to assume that Gerasimov and Surovkin aided by the Wagner Group of mercenaries will automatically fail as it was to underestimate Trotsky.<sup>47</sup>

Two counter-revolutionary groups formed. One in Siberia under Admiral Kolchak claimed to be the true successor all-Russia government in November 1918. The other, which became known as the Volunteer Army, formed in the Don basin after the Bolshevik truce with Germany in December 1917 and, after the Armistice, was supplied by the British with large amounts of war surplus equipment, sufficient to arm a quarter of a million men.

During 1919 Kolchak took Tsaritsyn before being driven back and, the other founding Generals of the Volunteer Army having been killed, Denikin advanced from the Don towards Moscow before being stopped. But compared to a Red Army whose discipline was being forged in its own blood at its own creators' hands, whose terror tactics were pervasive and which fought for a single cause, the Whites never overcame their fractures, which proved fatal to theirs.

After Lloyd-George was returned in coalition with the Tories in the 'khaki' - also called 'coupon' - election of December 1918, with an incoherence common to coalitions, British forces were withdrawn from Russia as part of general demobilisation, while at the same time resolving to arm anti-Bolshevik forces in the civil war.<sup>48</sup>

## THE MACKINDER MISSION, 1920

In January 1919, a British spy in Russia named Sidney Reilly<sup>49</sup> suggested that a British High Commissioner be sent to South Russia, with wide powers and adequate staff to co-ordinate this British support. But Cabinet prevaricated. Curzon at the Foreign Office wondered what would be the cost if Kolchak and Denikin were defeated. Would not such a high statement of commitment backfire? Only in October 1919 was the matter once more taken up and Curzon, Lloyd-George and Churchill, now at the War Office, together agreed to invite Sir Halford Mackinder MP to accept the post, which he did.

---

46 W.S.Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath*, Butterworth, 1st edition, (1929) p 83; 102; pp 272-6

47 Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed*, Vol 2, Pt 1 p 191 cit A.B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, Collier Books, (1965) pp 444-5; I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879-1921*, Oxford University Press (1954)

48 L. Blaxhill, "Khaki election 1918" in *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War 1914-18 Online* [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/khaki\\_election\\_1918?version=1.0](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/khaki_election_1918?version=1.0)

49 one of many names: he was in origin a profusely multi-lingual Jew from Odesa, admired by James Bond's creator Ian Fleming as a true 'ace of spies': Bond was no Reilly but Reilly was certainly a Bond, and much more

Mackinder was a creative choice and an unusual mixture: explorer, Member of Parliament, founder of the School of Geography at Oxford and second Director of the London School of Economics - but mainly remembered through a famous 1904 paper at the Royal Geographical Society ("The geographical pivot of history") as the intellectual founder of the modern study of geopolitics.<sup>50</sup> He certainly had appropriate experience and insight for this mission.

Each coalition Minister had different and divergent motives. The Prime Minister wanted three incompatibilities: to make peace with the Bolsheviks while respecting the sovereignty of the border states of the 'cordon sanitaire' and yet being willing to allow the Whites to fight on in South Russia with war surplus weapons.

To the exasperation of A.J. Balfour, Curzon's eye was on the lands of the Great Game - the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Persia - and the route to and protection of India: just where does the protection of India end, A.J. asked, rhetorically?

Churchill was the most focussed on the peril of Bolshevism. But the mission was still-born: really eight months too late. Mackinder's brief was changed by a vacillating full Cabinet from one of wider support to Denikin before his 1919 defeats to one of merely report. His staffing was cut back. News of pogroms carried out by Denikin's soldiers had reached London and were noted although, it must be said, without obvious effect.

Arriving at Novorossiysk on 7 January 1920 aboard the imposing Iron Duke class battleship *HMS Marlborough* which in April 1919 had conveyed the remnants of the Romanov court into exile, Mackinder departed at once to visit the battle front and to meet Denikin and later Wrangel (who replaced him). He found the White armies in disintegration. Exceeding his authority in the annoyed view of the Admiralty he promised shipping and Royal Navy protection to evacuate the families of White officers, which did have the effect of stemming desertions.

He returned to Novorossiysk and thence on 16 January back to London, temporarily for fresh instructions as he thought, but as things transpired, permanently. He composed his report aboard the light cruiser *HMS Centaur* and transmitted it to Curzon on the 20th from Marseilles. He was back in London to defend his recommendations before the Cabinet on 29th.

The nub of his paper was to pose the choice of double or quits. He believed that he had secured an assurance that the Polish leader Pilsudski would coordinate in anti-Bolshevik action with Denikin. He openly blamed Lloyd-George's Guildhall and Commons' speeches for disheartening the Whites and encouraging the Reds. Mackinder's conclusion was clear and - as it transpired - prophetic:

*"... no man can say for certain what would be the course of events if you allowed Bolshevism to enjoy its present triumph, but explore the future as you will on that assumption and I can see no peace for the world. Whether the future of Russia be anarchy, or tyranny, or servitude to the German, matters not; none of these conditions can co-exist with democracy in the world of today... Last spring... these dangers might have been exorcised at a comparatively cheap rate. This year I believe that they can still be effectively dealt with, though at a somewhat greater cost. Next year it may well be too late for any but heroic means."*

---

<sup>50</sup> The study of geopolitics was contaminated for fifty years, because Karl Haushofer, who visited Hitler in prison in 1924 and taught him the basics of geopolitics, was a declared enthusiast for the 1904 paper. Haushofer was a veteran of the Great War before he became an academic, was seduced by the power of the Nazis, yet could not accept their race theories: his wife Martha was Jewish. He later protested that his patron, Hess, and Hitler, had misunderstood his ideas, but it was too late. He had given them slogans to weaponise and the cover of respectability. He and his wife committed suicide with arsenic in 1946. His suicide note read 'I want to be forgotten and forgotten'. H.H. Herwig, "Geopolitik: Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum," (eds) C.S. Gray & G. Sloan, *Geopolitics and Strategy*, Cass, (1999) pp 218-41. Rehabilitation of geopolitical analysis began in the 1970s by scholar/practitioners such as Henry Kissinger. Kissinger's geopolitics are not Mackinder's but opened the door to a general reanimation of the field. Hedley Bull's review of *The White House Years* (1979) gives a concise account: H. Bull, "Kissinger: the primacy of geopolitics," *International Affairs* Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer, 1980), pp. 484-487

His political recommendations were stark: His Majesty's Government should issue a firm declaration that it would not make peace with Bolshevism (America did not recognise the regime as a state power until 1933). Naval assistance should be given "... for the holding of the Isthmus of Perikop and the defended areas of Odessa and Novorossisk." (The Navy was prepared to contemplate parts of this recommendation but Cabinet was not). A Polish-Denikin League of Governments that should be supported with underpinning loans and credit, and control for South Russian Trade which should be organised through western 'merchant venturers'.

Only such boldness would "... send a thrill through all the east of Europe... mere vague promises would not have much effect now. There have been too many of them..."<sup>51</sup>

Answering questions from the Cabinet, Mackinder did not mince his words either. "It was necessary to adopt the whole policy or to do nothing. The alternative was to see the Bolsheviks come down to the Black Sea, to Crimea, to Odessa which would be a complete moral victory for them."<sup>52</sup> This has a contemporary ring.

When it reconvened after lunch, there were three main Cabinet conclusions on Mackinder's paper and they are equally instructive for the present moment.

1. "There can be no question of making active war on the Bolsheviks for the reason that we have neither the men, the money nor the credit...", and public opinion is war weary.
2. "...There can be no question of entering into peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks."
3. Therefore "...the border states... must themselves take the full responsibility for deciding as between peace and war. Not the slightest encouragement should be given them to pursue the policy of war..." because we might be obliged to engage directly; but let's give them material support to defend themselves against attack.
4. On Mackinder's free-lance promise of evacuations for White refugees, the decision was that these should be limited to intra-regional transfers only and that the RN should stop any refugee ships seeking to escape the region - one was trying to reach Malta - on public health grounds.<sup>53</sup>

Perekop being the key to Crimea, the Bolsheviks took it and made Wrangel's position in Crimea untenable. Mackinder resigned and his prediction of a hundred years of trouble ("no peace for the world") came true.

Although he had not stood against the majority view in 1920, Churchill's verdict in 1929 echoed Mackinder's answers before him in Cabinet nine years before: "... enough foreign troops entered Russia to incur all the objections which were patent against intervention, but not enough to break the gimcrack structure of Soviet power." There could be no half measures. "Either the policy of helping all the anti-Bolshevik forces, which encircled Soviet Russia, should have been straightforwardly pursued, or a peace should have been unitedly made with the Bolsheviks... Neither the one nor the other was earnestly attempted. Half-hearted efforts to make peace were companioned by half-hearted attempts to make war... The achievements of the National Russians [for which read now Ukrainians]... exceeded what had been expected by Allied statesmen or generals. But deprived of world-wide moral support... they were one after the other broken up and destroyed."<sup>54</sup>

---

51 'Report on the situation in South Russia by Sir Halford Mackinder MP' 21 January 1920,, CAB 24/97/17, NA The promise of evacuation and rear-guard action is at pp 2-3. The conclusions are at pp 12-13. Mackinder's mission has also been described in G. Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: the Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, Oxford University Press (2009) pp 202-13 from which I have also drawn.

52 "Notes of points supplementary to his memorandum of 21 January 1920 made by Sir H.J. Mackinder in reply to questions put to him at the Cabinet Meeting on Thursday 29 January 1920 at 11.30am", FO 800/251 p.7, NA

53 "Cabinet 7 (20) Conclusions... at 4.30pm" CAB 23/20/7 p.1, NA

54 Churchill, *The Aftermath*, pp 273-4



## LESSONS FOR TODAY'S SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

Mackinder's recommendations, the tortuous Cabinet conclusions and Churchill's retrospective reflections are recalled from obscurity at this length because they can help inform analogous choices in the present moment. The divisions just described in the 1920s were within the British Government of the day whereas in 2022-23 they map onto the Continental versus British-led split in European policy towards the management of Putin and support of Ukraine, laid bare in the January 2023 Ramstein Force Generation conference.

Interestingly, Mackinder's bleakest prediction is echoed in the warnings of Zelenskyy. With benefit of hindsight, we know the outcomes of the choices made in all the historical episodes that we have revisited; and the lessons should be salutary. The implications of 1919-20 for the cusp of 2022-23 are now surely clear? Double down, don't quit. The risks of appeasement far outweigh the risks of consolidating the Ukrainian military successes that were generally unexpected, seen from the viewpoint of a year ago.

It follows that the emergency first response led by Johnson and Wallace needs to be followed through with conviction, clarity and continuity. Programmes of sustained rearmament, now to include main battle tanks (MBTs), and resupply, compose the safer diplomacy, brigaded with the continuing cycles of British Army training of Ukrainian forces that began after the annexation of Crimea with OP ORBITAL, which trained the 14,000 regular soldiers who held the lines in the Donbas.

The Alliance first reached a working consensus in Article IV NATO consultations, called for the seventh time in the Alliance's history on 24 February 2022, that the attack on Ukraine is *de facto* as much an attack on the west as a *de jure* assault which would trigger Article V, were Ukraine to have been a NATO member which it is not (yet). The message was reinforced across the year, most significantly with the Swedish and Finnish decisions to end neutrality.

The Ukrainians, as much as the Biden administration, need to appreciate the dangers inherent in EU PESCO posturing and the incorrectness of the different but parallel German and French strategic analyses. All this means full-hearted acceptance - not least in the British Civil Service - that Great Britain was the indispensable nation and continues to be so. The revision of the British strategic posture paper must reflect the fact of this relative balance of power in its starting assumptions. It would be wise to revert to the British way of strategy-making and to scrap unnecessary bureaucratic superstructure such as the "National Security Council" and Adviser, copying the American model, established by the Cameron coalition and reflexively inclining towards the EU affine, which proved their net negative effect in the weeks before and just after Putin's War went 'hot'.

As documented from the Kiel Index, British efforts in direct military support have exceeded those of any others except the Americans, but they could have been more cost effective as well as militarily potent. For example the decision to contract the BAE Systems factories in Northumberland and Wales to increase their rates of production of 155 mm artillery shells, which are in continual shortage, especially since the Ukrainians moved onto the offensive in the late summer, only came in autumn 2022 despite being called for by many much earlier in the war. It seems that little or no use of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs) - which can circumvent ponderous procurement protocols - was made; and that should be remedied.

Yet despite such deficiencies, British performance far exceeded that of either Germany or France in both scale and range. While, with Poland, supplying the largest sum of military support funding money in continental Europe (Poland: €1.8bn; Germany €2.34), German spending has been widely spread in secondary kit and, more to the point, Germany has consistently refused to supply Leopard tanks from reserve although as this paper goes to press, that position may soon be forced to change. It began to send first-rate front line systems, but in tiny packets, starting with the first of four IRIS-T advanced air defence batteries that were promised during the summer and became operational only after Surovikin had begun

missile assault bombarding Ukrainian electricity and water infrastructure in a brutal but failed effort to recruit General Winter 2022 to break the home front, having failed to prevail in battle. (This failure is one possible reason for his demotion.)

France supplied sixteen Caesar 155 mm SP artillery units by September. At year's end there is a promise of some reserve French armoured fighting vehicles. Capable and worthwhile as they all are, such military hardware gestures are too little and too late; nor do they offset the wavering diplomatic signalling of Chancellor Scholz or, in the French case, the diplomatic damage of Macron's free-lancing diplomacy, which has been arguably even more damaging to solidarity.

In 1919-20, exploitation of "the Propaganda" was well understood to be one of the Reds' leading edge weapons. It takes no diplomatic genius to see that Putin bends every effort to fracture Free World solidarity as a leading edge in his revised strategy. He does this by open means, taking advantage of the open split in Europe and exploiting Scholtz and Macron and the EU to his advantage. He also acts by covert means of offensive and covert cyber and infrastructure attack and through support of 'useful fools' in the West.

In this regard the current quasi-religious obsessions with climate catastrophism and with the demonization of fossil fuels are a gift to him. Therefore, evidence of Russian financial and active propaganda support for 'green' activism, most concretely of backing for anti-fracking campaigners in the UK (north of \$90m) should be no cause for surprise at all.<sup>55</sup>

---

55 M. Ridley, "The plot against fracking: How cheap energy was killed by Green lies and Russian propaganda", *The Critic*, December 2019 <https://thecritic.co.uk/issues/december-2019/the-plot-against-fracking/>. The sources of evidence cited for Russian funding and propaganda support via RT (Russia Today) are the Centre for European Studies and former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, respectively.

## IV - PUTIN'S WAR SEEN THROUGH EASTERN EYES

Leadership is not a mantle of fashion to be worn or discarded for any other than considered geo-strategic reasons. Once put on, it is a garment for all seasons - and Great Britain has put it on.

Those seasons are changing once again. Shall we continue to deal with Putin or, perhaps, his *siloviki* successor in 2023, should he retire to a sanatorium, for example, or fall downstairs? Nikolai Platonovich Patrushev, secretary of the Security Council of Russia and former head of the FSB, is the name most commonly mentioned by Russia experts. The final task of this paper is to offer a view of the global connections that link defeat and deterrence of whoever we face in the Kremlin to other flash-points, as seen by the Chinese and the Japanese. Eastern eyes can sharpen our own views of ourselves.

The UK's recent stumble in the defence budget, when earlier promises of a 3 per cent real term increase were dropped, has echoes of Lloyd-George's public musings about temporising with the Bolsheviks and the strategic illogicality of the Cabinet conclusions on Mackinder's ill-fated 1920 mission. However, strong negative reactions within the governing party in 2022 have now steadied the ship so that at least there is promised to be no real term fall in budget. Holding real-term levels is a qualified success for the Secretary of State Wallace. However, as the 1932-35 story reminds, in 'grey' wartime such as we are now it, let alone 'hot' war, setting budget levels should come after, not before, the military-technical prescriptions.

### JAPAN 1902-1923 TO 2023: COMPLETING A CIRCLE IN STRATEGY AND ALLIANCES

This British internal debate should be viewed in astringent contrast to the new Japanese Self-Defence Force's Strategic Concept. Japan is a country that is fastidious in its strategic analysis, as the current documents show.

Developing through the 2021 and 2022 policy cycles, the Japanese National Security Doctrine literally circles back a century. It returns that country to the geopolitical alignments of the Anglo-Japanese Naval Treaties of 1902-23 and the geo-strategic confrontation with Imperial Russia epically resolved in Japan's favour by the decisive naval Battle of Tsushima 27-28 May 1905 (in some large part because of British technical assistance).<sup>56</sup>

Both elements in contemporary form are now components in Japan's hierarchy of threat. A new Anglo-Japanese defence agreement in 2023 seals the circle. It is the most radical transformation in Japanese defence posture since the Second World War and has been accompanied by a commitment on 5 December 2022 to allocate about ¥43 trillion (\$318 billion) for defence spending over five years from FY 2023, setting a target of boosting annual defence outlays to around 2 per cent of GDP in fiscal 2027. This translates into a 56 per cent increase in the overall defence budget over the next five years, which will make Japan the third largest defence spender in real terms after China and the USA.<sup>57</sup> It is accompanied by

---

56 The definitive account of these events and their context is I. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1894-1907*, Athlone, (1966). Professor Nish, the acknowledged prime expert on this history, provided further valuable fine detail on the achieving of the Treaty in an LSE Anniversary Symposium paper: "The first Anglo-Japanese Alliance Treaty" in Discussion Paper No. IS/02/432 (April 2002), STICERD, LSE [https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/6884/1/Anglo-Japanese\\_Alliance.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/6884/1/Anglo-Japanese_Alliance.pdf)

57 J. Johnson & G. Dominguez, "Japan approves major defense overhaul in dramatic policy shift," *Japan Times*, 16 December 2022, [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/16/national/japan-dramatic-defense-shift/?utm\\_source=pianoDNU&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=72&pnewsid=puuQmoxOv.Ke8.LoqkfyuoUtb1HrC1uywg1DIVq71OVsVr76pdz.dQ52h0xv9JRLCSYUQ](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/12/16/national/japan-dramatic-defense-shift/?utm_source=pianoDNU&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=72&pnewsid=puuQmoxOv.Ke8.LoqkfyuoUtb1HrC1uywg1DIVq71OVsVr76pdz.dQ52h0xv9JRLCSYUQ); <https://news.rthk.hk/rthk/en/component/k2/1678570-20221205.htm>

significant upgrades within the Japan-US mutual defence treaties, extending Article 5 protection to space-based assets, strengthening US Marine expeditionary forces bases in Okinawa and planning to base US anti-ship missile batteries at the Japanese coast.<sup>58</sup>

Features of note are acquisition of counter-force capabilities given the missile threats across the Sea of Japan, rapid enlargement of the high quality Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JSDFN) (quality in ships, their systems and in operational efficiency proven in stand-off confrontations with PLAN in the South China Sea and around the Senkoku islands) and uplift to cyber-warfare capabilities, along with all-around strengthening signalled in the 2021 National Security Statement. In a subtle Japanese way, it made its new directions plain by placing a charging mounted samurai on the cover and by removing self-ruling Taiwan from the PRC - making it a grey area - in the mapping within.

The December 2022 National Security Strategy hierarchy of threat views China as the “greatest strategic challenge,” North Korea as a “graver, more imminent threat than before” and Russia as a “serious security concern.” From this derives a clear-sighted operationalised Japanese linkage of the importance of Free World deterrence of Putin in Ukraine to the credible deterrence of Xi Jin Ping’s renewed bellicosity towards Taiwan. This has been made more overt than ever before in the large-scale blockading exercises that began following the former Speaker of the US House of Representatives’ visit to Taiwan and one of President Biden’s many ‘walked-back’ speeches during which the veil of US ‘strategic ambiguity’ was dropped (or torn), whether by accident or by design.<sup>59</sup>

Another interpretation, not incompatible, of the significance of these massive Japanese strategic signals could be that its government has concluded that the Anglosphere-led parts of the Free World are now fading fast, lost in ‘wokeish’ introspection and economic self-sabotage and that Japan must therefore face the prospect of accommodating itself to China. They will try to remain as strong as possible to resist Chinese influence, and wait for China itself to weaken.<sup>60</sup>

## CHINESE VIEWS OF PUTIN’S WAR MAY NOT BE MONOLITHIC

Japan’s perspective may be a shrewd assessment indeed, because there are vividly developing material signs of popular exasperation at the draconian and failed zero-Covid lockdown policy in China - a policy designed to contain the consequences of the escape of the chimeric virus SARS-Cov-2 from a Chinese laboratory (now the leading hypothesis of causation), which has produced the biggest spontaneous social unrest since 1989.<sup>61</sup>

---

58 *idem*, “U.S. to boost military capabilities in Japan and step up cooperation amid China worries” *Japan Times*, 12 January 2023; [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/01/12/national/politics-diplomacy/us-japan-two-plus-two2023/?utm\\_source=pianoDNU&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=72&pnespid=vKliY9fvXB5a\\_spxi\\_tOhL4kkNvDZ5wqsnRVM5oEWWiITkSNpsGD6YfmN89yKBFT7xeQ](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/01/12/national/politics-diplomacy/us-japan-two-plus-two2023/?utm_source=pianoDNU&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=72&pnespid=vKliY9fvXB5a_spxi_tOhL4kkNvDZ5wqsnRVM5oEWWiITkSNpsGD6YfmN89yKBFT7xeQ)

59 P. Shetler-Jones, “Japan’s new security strategy: rising to meet the challenge” *Council on Geostrategy*, 19 December 2022 <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/britains-world/japans-new-national-security-strategy-rising-to-meet-the-challenge/>

60 I owe this shrewd observation originally to Dr John Constable. For collateral support see I Reynolds and B Westcott, “Japan looks beyond U.S. alliance for help to deter China military” *Japan Times*, 16 January 2023; [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/01/16/national/japan-looks-beyond-u-s-alliance-help-deter-china-military/?utm\\_source=pianoDNU&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=72&pnespid=9P.Pylwl7PbPpKvVvAGysOEq4AAarilugQwyEBQroF2V2h6WKdQwRxuXeQ8goAYlneUXhA](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/01/16/national/japan-looks-beyond-u-s-alliance-help-deter-china-military/?utm_source=pianoDNU&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=72&pnespid=9P.Pylwl7PbPpKvVvAGysOEq4AAarilugQwyEBQroF2V2h6WKdQwRxuXeQ8goAYlneUXhA). In full disclosure I advised METI from 2007-17 and again 2019-20 on fundamentals of energy and economics and specifically with reviews of EU and international energy policies.

61 In full disclosure, working as an historical epidemiologist with the world-leading Anglo-Norwegian virological team led by Birger Sørensen of Immunor since early 2020, we have been aware of the highly singular construction of the SARS-CoV-2 virus since February 2020 as well as soon thereafter the most likely history of who, how, when and where this laboratory manipulation in ‘Gain of Function’ experiments was done: an hypothesis which subsequently revealed evidence has been corroborating. The PRC has acquired great influence in scientific publishing. The Editors-in-Chief of both *Nature* (Magdalena Skipper) and *The Lancet* (Richard Horton) have both been awarded the high honour of the PRC Friendship Medal. Starting with *Nature Medicine* immediately after it had published what we knew then and is now confirmed to be a defective presentation of zoonotic origin on 17 March, for over thirty months our canonical paper was serially and instantly refused publication without benefit of peer review by both of these journals, and in 2020 key authors were threatened with dismissal by their employers if they were to dare to publish. But circulated privately, our evidence was made known to relevant high political authorities although not acknowledged until late 2022, when Freedom of Information requests had elicited data and other groups had begun to confirm our conclusions also. To correct the historical record in this field too, the first and original analysis of the historical lineage of the virus will be published prominently and eventually in 2023.

The breakdown of Xi's AI-state control so quickly after the carefully choreographed 20th Party Conference, must leave "... Xi wondering how such a carefully scripted display of his power over and control of the Party could so rapidly go awry in the world's leading surveillance state...". This is the view of a former Chief of the British Secret Intelligence Service, who continues,

*"The Party, it seems, remains bemused and confused by its inability to ignite any flame of enthusiasm for its leadership. Clearly it has no idea how to achieve this... The virus of democracy is a more potent infection and threat, witness the intensity of the Hong Kong demonstrations and the way in which they were suppressed, than SarsCov2."*<sup>62</sup>

He refers to evidence of the passion for democracy of young Hong-Kongers, accompanied and then followed by the 'lie flat' tactic of living as apolitically as possible among Mainland youth of the Weibo-using 'baby bust' generation.

Sir Richard's well developed antennae suggest that the 'Mandate of Heaven' may move with unexpected speed. It would not be the first time in Chinese history. He also warns that were Xi to sense power slipping from him, the invasion of Taiwan would most likely rise commensurately swiftly up his agenda as a neo-Bismarckian way of using foreign adventures to distract from domestic travails. The large Christmas Day deployments of PRC warplanes around Taiwan occurred as this paper was being composed.

The high likelihood that Xi would seek to twist all the hooks into our bodies (politic and social) that have been so skilfully implanted by the United Front Work Dept of the PRC Ministry of State Security should be added to this. Xi once described the UFWD as "... an important magic weapon for realising the China Dream of the Great Rejuvenation." Its hooks have been planted widely, notably in business aided by the 48 Group Club of sympathisers, in Universities greedy for Chinese money, and in all areas of advanced research where there is IP to steal, including some of the most secret.<sup>63</sup> Like the Russians, the Chinese have also successfully weaponised to their advantage the current 'green' agenda in the West as an agent of our self-harm.<sup>64</sup>

Sir Richard's analysis suggests that it therefore makes eminent sense for Japan to rebuild its regional and blue-water capabilities, to build resilience to outlast 'peak Xi', and to re-enter basically the same alliances for the containment of Russia as it did a century ago. The example Japan sets to the leading European state, Great Britain, is therefore salutary and broader.

By its vivid contrast, it points to essential changes urgently needed to the over-mighty and no longer apolitical British Civil Service by cutting it down to size while restoring the primacy of lost intellectual quality. Nor is this a new challenge. Writing in *The English Constitution* in 1865 in terms directly transferable to the crises of legitimacy in modern administrative-led government whether in Brussels or London, Walter Bagehot crisply observed that, "It is an inevitable defect, that bureaucrats will care more for routine than for results... Not only does a bureaucracy thus tend to under-government, in point of quality; it tends to over-government, in point of quantity. The trained official hates the rude, untrained public. He thinks they are stupid, ignorant, and reckless: that they cannot tell their own interest. A bureaucracy is sure to think that its duty is to augment official power, official business, or official numbers rather than to leave free the energies of mankind..."<sup>65</sup>

62 Sir Richard Dearlove, "En 2023, Xi Jinping pourra-t-il continuer à diriger la Chine?" *Le Grand Continent*, 2 janv 2023 <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/01/02/xi-jinping-pourra-t-il-continuer-a-diriger-la-chine/>

63 R.Tylecot & Clark, R. *Inadvertently Arming China?: The Chinese military complex and its potential exploitation of scientific research at UK universities*, Civitas, February 2021; <https://www.civitas.org.uk/publications/inadvertently-arming-china/>

64 G.Prins, *The Worm in the Rose*, GWPF (2021) "Part III: the security threats of Net Zero", pp 22-34 give chapter and verse for the statement on the weaponisation of 'green' issues and activists. p 25 for source of Xi's quote about the UFWD. <https://www.netzerowatch.com/the-worm-in-the-rose/>

65 W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, (1865) in (ed) N St John-Stevas, *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, Volume Five, *The Economist*, (1974) pp 327-30

Nothing less than a reset back to the 1854 Northcote-Trevelyan principles is needed. Furthermore, by giving defence and security the priorities that Japan knows they should have for an island chain offshore to an unreliable and hostile continent, it also gives the officials currently revising the British defence and security strategy both benchmarks and a guide.

However, across the North Sea the prospect of Chinese trade blackmail seems to have elicited the same panicky fears and reflexes in Germany that have driven Chancellor Scholtz's Ukraine politics in 2022, alienating even the French and leading to serious deterioration in their bi-lateral relations. In some of his strongest language of the year, Daniel Johnson argued in October, after Schultz allowed Chinese investment into the port of Hamburg, that "... the free world will soon see that the country's combination of hypocrisy, irresponsibility and greed risks making Western civilisation hostage not just to the Kremlin, but to another evil empire, too: China".<sup>66</sup>

Fear of the economic - and hence political - damage that Xi could do to western supply chains both in blocking exports and in closing the South China Sea routes is reflexively rated as a high security risk by securocrats. This is a direct consequences of the unwise export of western manufacturing to China over two decades and especially during the 'golden decades,' so-called, premised on the false notion that allowing the PRC to enter the WTO in 2001 ("12/11") would in time make that country a normal law-abiding member of international society, freely accepting the carapace of the free market's rules. Instead the PRC used membership subversively.

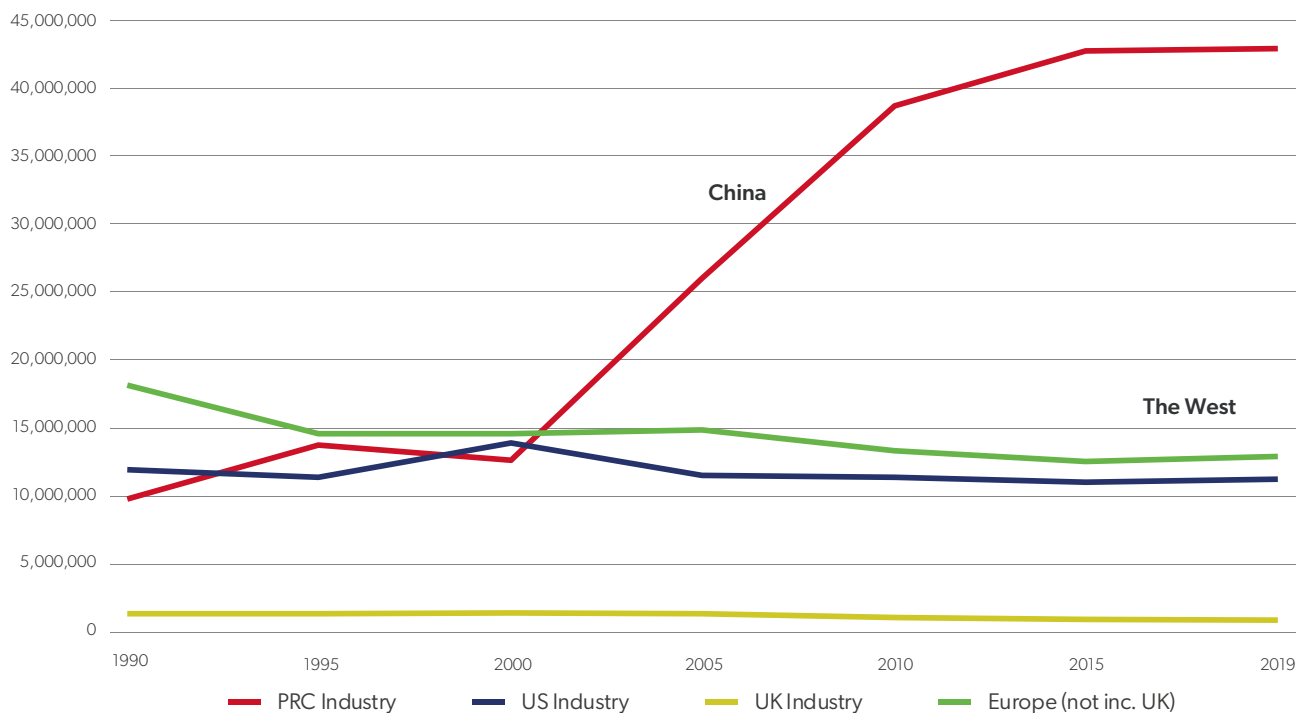
These critical vulnerabilities are compounded in a more fundamental way by the radical changes in western energy systems since the early 2000s. These changes have produced absolute declines in both primary energy use and in the critical carrier, electrification, in the USA, UK and EU. Contrary to 'green' simple-mindedness (which does not understand Jevons' Paradox - ie, increased efficiency results in increased usage), reductions in energy use are not signs of advance but of illness in an economy. It's rather like saying that the slimness induced by the illness of anorexia is a sign of health.

China, in contrast, has powered what has become in effect western hostage manufacturing with increasing coal use and barely token 'renewables', because the CCP has never bought into the western climate-catastrophist agenda. Adding insult to injury, having broken the wind and solar machine manufacturers elsewhere by anti-competitive practices, China now sells back to Europe the means to increase its own thermodynamic incompetence. One of Dr Constable's Denver slides summarises the main trends.

---

<sup>66</sup> D. Johnson, " 'Liberal' Germany is still a danger to the West: Not content with cosying up to the Kremlin, Berlin is still treating China as a close friend and partner" *Daily Telegraph*, 28 October 2022 ; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/10/28/liberal-germany-still-danger-west/>

## Industrial Energy Consumption (TJ) East and West 1990 - 2019



Source Data: International Energy Agency; Chart: John Constable.

China has also, for the moment, cornered the market on rare earths, which are so important to electrification, the mining of which seems to correlate with child labour and other human rights abuses whether in China, central Africa, or Bolivia. Congo Cobalt poses particularly acute dilemmas.<sup>67</sup> It's all enough to make the head of an 'Extinction Rebellion' virtue-signaller (or a credulous politician or official), hurt.

These may be facts on the ground; but understanding of the implications of them bifurcates radically, not only in the Free World but also within China.

In March 2022, well before Xi's present problems had surfaced to the extent that they now have, the vice-chairman of the Public Policy Research Office of the Counsellor's Office of the State Council and chairman of the Shanghai Public Policy Research Association submitted an article to the Chinese language edition of the US-China Perception Watch Monitor, an organ of the Carter Center. Hu Wei is a mainstream Party official and his article must have been authorised kite-flying. At the time, it was discounted by many sinologists for reasons that I am not qualified to judge; but in light of the derailment of Xi Jin Ping's plans as show-cased in the 20th Party Congress, it is worthwhile revisiting the face of the document, for it is in many ways extraordinary.

Hu Wei's case is entirely non-ideological. It is built squarely upon Lord Palmerston's principle that nations do not have permanent allies, only permanent interests: he actually cites it without attribution as "the law of international relations." His argument is fully Palmerstonian and proceeds in logical steps.

His foundation assumption is that Putin's war is the most severe geopolitical conflict since World War II and will have more far-reaching consequences than 9/11. Therefore China needs to think clearly and to act firmly in its own long term interest and in that interest alone.

67 J. Constable, "Western Energy and Climate policy: a bright green future or geopolitical self-harm?" Lecture delivered in Denver, Colorado, 1 December 2022. [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/chris-wright-b8370a17b\\_dr-john-constable-western-energy-climate-activity-7008120540875960320-MD4\\_?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_ios](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/chris-wright-b8370a17b_dr-john-constable-western-energy-climate-activity-7008120540875960320-MD4_?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios). Chart reproduced with permission; M.F. Lawson, "The DRC Mining Industry: Child Labor and Formalization of Small-Scale Mining" *Wilson Center*, 1 Sept 2021; <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/drc-mining-industry-child-labor-and-formalization-small-scale-mining>; S. Kara, *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers our Lives*, (forthcoming 2023)

Putin's invasion "constitutes an irreversible mistake." Had his original *blitzkrieg* plan worked, then China's interest would have been to hug him close as per the Sochi statements of eternal and special friendship uttered by Putin and Xi Jin Ping. But it failed completely and irretrievably. Once Russia is defeated, Hu Wei sees no outcome that does not result in a strengthening of the great democracies. "No matter how Russia achieves its political transformation, it will greatly weaken the anti-Western forces in the world."

He clearly is very impressed by the efficiency with which the market economies cratered the Russian economy and foresees a future in which China becomes isolated: "China will not only be militarily encircled by the US, NATO, the QUAD and AUKUS, but also be challenged by Western values and systems."

What to do? Choose the lesser of two evils, unload "... the burden of Russia as soon as possible" and "achieve the greatest possible strategic breakthrough and not by isolating the West... the bottom line is to prevent the US and the West from imposing joint sanctions on China.

Accordingly - a slightly breath-taking conclusion in its rigour - "To demonstrate China's role as a responsible major power, China not only cannot stand with Putin but should take concrete actions to prevent Putin's possible adventures. China is the only country in the world with this capability, and it must give full play to this unique advantage."<sup>68</sup>

In short, Hu Wei views the depth of western dependency on western manufacturing contracted out to China not as a source of power for the PRC but as *a serious strategic vulnerability*. His essay ends with a reminder of how much he has been impressed by the cratering of the Russian economy by the unique agility of market economics.

His essay repays reading in full not only for these points but for other predictions of consequences that have come to pass in 2022 already, for example, in relation to Sweden. Therefore, he makes a clear case for accepting the view that the war on Ukrainian identity as well as lands is intertwined with the prospect of Xi Jin Ping's ambition to extinguish Taiwanese Chinese identity as well as to invade their island. By extension it therefore validates the Japanese National Security Strategy threat hierarchy and the immense budgetary and physical consequences following from it.

The authors updating the British Integrated Strategic and Defence Review might be wise to pay more attention to Pacific than to continental European thinking and assessment methods in 2023.

---

68 Hu Wei, "Possible Outcomes of the Russo-Ukrainian War and China's Choice" *US-China Perception Monitor*, 5 March (in Chinese) 12 March (in English) <https://usc-npm.org/2022/03/12/hu-wei-russia-ukraine-war-china-choice/>



## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is no need to summarise what has been shown and argued above: it would be redundant. However, it is worthwhile to conclude on a different note. There have been times when historians have been attracted to the view that a certain concatenation of events amounts to a general crisis. I believe this may be an over-determined description of the present times although the inter-system contests of arms, of trade, of values and of ideas, combined with internal and self-harming cultures wars within the democracies, that are all boiling simultaneously, may soon come to deserve that title.

What is certainly the case, and has been illustrated here, is that Putin's War has, as wars always do, searched out fault-lines, exposed weaknesses and discovered strengths. The political and cultural assay of strength or weakness is not to be found in the wallow of moral relativism and of strong opinions, weakly held, that afflict much of the Free World and especially younger, more leisured age cohorts of the internet age who have never experienced the privations of the war-time generations now almost all passed from life. The assay is much older and more enduring. It is what constitutes legitimation of power and of belief in political society and cultural life. With good cause, Jean Jacques Rousseau once described the attainment and retention of such legitimation as the most difficult thing in all of politics.

The year of Putin's War has seen brutal but also heroic applications of this old test, which is why we have lived through similar times to the inter-war and wartime years from which our four couplets were drawn. Not only in Ukraine has the war burned deep. Once again we have seen supra-nationalism tested and found wanting and once again we have seen the enduring strength of the nation-state increasing under pressure as guarantor of security and recipient of loyalty within the informal contract between citizen and state. Once more the inherent dangers of bureaucratic government against which Bagehot warned during the promethean decade of the 1860s have been demonstrated in fact. For the British and in consequence for the Ukrainians who have depended so much upon them, the timeliness of 'Brexit' comes into focus. It was a narrow squeak. No wonder Putin and Xi fear the 'energies of mankind' which are liberated by such reclaimed freedoms. No wonder they would wish us voluntarily to reapply the manacles of bureaucratic rule. No wonder that, objectively, their interests are best served by sustainment of and entryism into the supra-national experiment of European federal union, even and perhaps especially at a time of its fading powers.

It is in this sense, therefore, that debt flows both ways: as between those who supply the Ukrainians with the means for their self-defence and further liberation and those who can only support them because they possess the sovereign powers to do so.

# ANNEX

## THE TEN YEARS' ASSUMPTION

### SIR MAURICE (LATER LORD) HANKEY'S APPENDIX TO THE 1932 REPORT OF THE CHIEFS OF STAFF SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

#### Historical Notes.

THE following examples illustrate the difficulties of forecasting peace: –

#### I.

Five months before the Spanish Armada sailed, Queen Elizabeth dismantled and laid up her fleet at Chatham, and, when the moment for action came, our cause was placed in jeopardy for lack of ammunition and supplies.

*See Froude, English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century.*

#### II.

In 1698, after the Peace of Ryswick, King William's Parliament reduced the army to a peace footing of 7,000 men at a time when the French army was at a strength of 180,000 men.

"Optimism and pacifism reigned at the festal boards of Englishmen in the Christmas of 1700. But with the New Year these sentiments received a series of rude shocks."

In January 1702, the army was recalled to the Colours. There followed the war of the Spanish Succession, lasting until 1713.

*G. M. Trevelyan, Blenheim*

#### III.

In 1774 "The British reduced the number of seamen in the Navy, and took no serious steps to strengthen their forces in America."

War broke out early in the following year. In 1775 Burgoyne wrote from Boston –

"After a fatal procrastination, not only of vigorous measures but of preparations for such, we took a step as decisive as the passage of the Rubicon, and now find ourselves plunged in a most serious war without a single requisition, gun-powder excepted, for carrying it on."

*G. M. Trevelyan, History of England, p. 553.*

#### IV.

Extract from a speech in Parliament by Mr. Pitt, on the 17th February, 1792, during a debate on *Public Income and Expenditure* : –

“I am not, indeed, presumptuous enough to suppose that when I name fifteen years I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach and which may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval; but, unquestionably, there never was a time in the history of this country when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace, than we may at the present moment.”

A year later began the War of the French Revolution and Empire, lasting, with one short interval, until 1815.

#### V.

The great Exhibition of 1851 was pervaded by “a sense of international goodwill and the brotherhood of the human race,” which was celebrated by the Poet Laureate in extravagant terms: –

“Breaking their mailed fist and armoured towers,” &c.

Three years later the Crimean War broke out, and many of our regiments were still armed with the Brown Bess of Waterloo days.

*G. M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century.*

#### VI.

On the 6th July, 1870, Lord Granville received the Seals of the Foreign Office in Mr. Gladstone’s first Government.

“The previous day, between 3 and 4 o’clock, Mr. Hammond, the experienced Under-Secretary of the Department, had told him that with the exception of the trouble caused by the recent murder in Greece of Mr. Vyner and his friends by brigands, he had never during his long experience known ‘so great a lull in foreign affairs,’ and that he was not aware of any pressing question which Lord Granville would have to deal with immediately. By the time Lord Granville was addressing the House next day for the first time as Foreign Minister, the sky had already grown dark and the sea of politics was streaked with foam.”

*Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, Life of Lord Granville.*

A fortnight later the Franco-German war broke out.

## VII.

On the 14th July, 1914, the Committee of Imperial Defence met and, among other routine business, approved the War Book, a new edition of which, by a coincidence, was just completed. There was no mention of any prospect of war. On the 22nd of July the Secretary to the Committee was directed by the Prime Minister, according to the custom then prevailing, to take the Minutes to the King. On the way to Buckingham Palace he called at the Foreign Office to ask the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who was also Chairman of the Sub-Committee that was responsible for the War-Book, whether there was any risk of its being put into operation. The news that day was reassuring, and Sir Arthur Nicolson considered that there was practically no prospect of the War Book being put into operation. On the following day the "Times" reported "optimism in Paris" and "Berlin more optimistic." M. Poincaré was in Petrograd; the Kaiser yachting in the Baltic. It was only on the 24th July, when the terms of the Austrian ultimatum were known, that the situation began to be regarded as serious, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> July that war was recognised as definitely on the horizon.

## VIII.

In a Memorandum dated the 13th March, 1917, on his visit to Russia, the late Lord Milner assured the British Government that –

"As far as the purely political aspect of the matter is concerned, I have formed the opinion that there is a great deal of exaggeration in the talk about revolution, and especially about the alleged disloyalty of the army."

The Russian Revolution broke out the same day.

(Signed)

M. P. A. HANKEY.

*2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W. 1, February 15, 1932.*





**CENTRE FOR BREXIT**  
POLICY

PUTIN'S WAR AT YEAR'S END: WHAT NEXT?  
Lessons Learned Through Four Historical Couplets

© Centre for Brexit Policy 2023

Published by the Centre for Brexit Policy  
34 South Molton Street  
London, W1K 5RG

[www.centreforbrexitpolicy.org.uk](http://www.centreforbrexitpolicy.org.uk)  
[@CentreBrexit](https://twitter.com/CentreBrexit)