



Should America Expend Blood and Treasure to Defend Ukraine from Russia and Taiwan from China?

No, the loss of those countries doesn't present a true national security threat to America justifying war. It is time to reset America's foreign policy to reflect Main Street America's Views.

It goes without saying that Americans support the freedom of the peoples of Ukraine and Taiwan. That sentiment applies no less to any free people opposing the hostile subjugation of their country by another country. As the world's leading democracy, America should always support freedom over tyranny. Equally important, however, that sentiment applies no more to Ukraine and Taiwan than it does to any other free country on Earth. Thus, with the temperature rising each week over Russia's aim in Ukraine and China's more transparent aim in Taiwan, it is imperative America's policymakers articulate clear, unmistakable positions to Russia and China that reflect reality.

The fundamental issue for America's policymakers is to decide whether defending Ukraine and Taiwan includes a military response in which our blood and treasure will be spilled. As that question is debated, a peak into the rearview mirror shows the tens of thousands of deaths and casualties suffered in Afghanistan and Iraq along with trillions of taxpayer funds spent to execute those wars. Keep in mind, both of those wars occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attack in which the argument for fighting those wars did rest on our national security. Neither Russia nor China is a shell of a country with a weak military like Afghanistan and Iraq were; yet, America failed to secure victories in either country.

Russia Wants Back More of Ukraine

Russian annexing more or all of Ukraine may impact Europe's national security, but it really doesn't impact America's national security. Frankly, Europe is doing more to undermine its national security vis-à-vis Russia by making itself more dependent on Russia for its supply of natural gas with the completion of the Nord Stream II pipeline. Russian reabsorbing Ukraine thirty years after the fall of the Soviet Union would just consolidate control of both Nord Stream lines, thereby ensuring Europe's total dependence on Russia.

There is little evidence that Russia has the capability or power to do much beyond reannexing Ukraine and perhaps a Baltic country or two. I don't make that statement lightly or in ignorance of its nuclear arsenal, but no serious person believe Russia will use that arsenal. I do make it reflective of whether any of those countries are worth fighting a war with Russia.

Many European leaders are trying to use NATO to push back on Russia, but Ukraine isn't a member of NATO so Europeans using NATO as a cudgel is really little more than yelling at the playground bully standing behind the strongest kid who goes to another school. There is little to gain for America by restarting the Cold War and wasting its resources against Russia, as Russia is merely a globally weak petrostate run by Vladimir Putin. If Europe wants to weaken Russia and incidentally strengthen Ukraine's security, it would immediately end its counterproductive climate change policies, restart exploration and production of natural gas, restart its nuclear reactors, and import more liquified natural gas from America by telling Joe Biden to knock off his domestic war on non-coal carbon energy. Europe's failure to do those things indicates a lack of seriousness re Russia. Every euro paid to Putin for natural gas makes him stronger and Ukraine weaker.

Plus, it is a bit repugnant that European countries that have failed to meet the 2% defense spending requirement of NATO and denigrated President Donald Trump's push for accountability on that requirement now want to largely use America's military and money to fight its war with Russia. Talk about chutzpah.

In 2019, U.S. trade with Ukraine [ranked 67th in the world](#) totaling just \$3.7 billion. That figure is little more than a rounding error in the \$3.9 trillion annual export and import trade of America. As a point of comparison, Russia represented \$24 billion, or six times as much trade as we did with Ukraine. Other than stirring up trouble in the Black Sea, Russia annexing more of Ukraine wouldn't impact America at all.

Beyond the fact most Americans can't locate Ukraine on a map, most likely wouldn't support going to war with Russia over it.

China Wants Taiwan Back

As for Taiwan, it is an island country of just under 24 million people which has been part of both China and Japan over the last 500 years. When the Chinese Communist Party took control of China in 1949, the Republic of China fled to Taiwan where it has governed ever since. Strategic ambiguity has governed U.S. policy on Taiwan in which we support Taiwan's current status and have provided arms to Taiwan, but haven't formerly recognized Taiwan as an independent country. China has pushed a one-China policy on Taiwan and made it clear it will go to war over Taiwan. And, by go to war, that means 1.1 billion people and China's entire military arsenal fully engaged, which are just 100 miles from Taiwan.

America certainly wants to keep trade lanes open in Asia and make sure our allies in Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines are protected from Chinese aggression both in the South China Sea and elsewhere in Asia. That doesn't mean, however, that going to war with China over Taiwan is worth it to Main Street America, especially given the historical ties between China and Taiwan.

The reality is America's interest vis-à-vis China is more about containing its aggressions in the South China Sea and ensuring the rest of Asia and the eastern hemisphere remains free, including trade lanes. While we should do all we can short of war to keep Taiwan free, if China decides to invade Taiwan as part of its one-China policy, most Americans won't support military deaths and injuries to free Taiwan. We'd be better off creating an open-ended asylum program for all Taiwanese people starting now who decide that they don't want to remain in Taiwan knowing what China's ultimate aim is.

Similarly, we should reshore as much of the Taiwanese semiconductor industry as we can as quickly as we can before China decides to act. Experts believe there is enormous uncertainty as to when China will act, but it clearly senses weakness from Joe Biden. Thus, it will be in China's interest to move against Taiwan before 2026 when it might face a stronger American president. America must be more thoughtful going forward about allowing itself to become dependent on countries at high risk of destabilization, as Taiwan always has been.

Make no mistake, China is America's top national security threat. The threat from China comes from its aggressive military rise globally and in space, its mercantilism and theft of technology and intellectual property, its continued role in producing fentanyl, and its bioweapons program that intentionally or accidentally released the Wuhan virus causing the global pandemic. America is nearing 1,000,000 opioid deaths with many involving fentanyl from China. Nearly 800,000 Americans have died from COVID. Keep in mind, as China shut-down domestic travel from Wuhan in 2019-2020, it allowed international travel to continue thereby ensuring the Wuhan virus would spread to the West. It has never accounted for why it didn't shut-down international travel at the same time it closed domestic travel from Wuhan.

To contain China, we need to create a NATO-like alliance in the eastern Hemisphere that sends the unmistakable message to China that aggression beyond its territorial waters won't go unchallenged. The Australia-United Kingdom-U.S. alliance is a good start, but it needs to be substantially expanded. Because there is no evidence that trading with China is rendering it more neighborly, we should take strong steps to economically disconnect from China and lessen our reliance on China for goods and services. Our allies must be willing to do the same, as we cannot keep China contained if our allies, as is occurring in Europe with Russia, maintain the status quo.

We must decide if China is an enemy or not, and see China with clear eyes not shaded by our trade with it.

It is time to reset America's foreign policy.

For too long, America's foreign policy has been developed in Washington, D.C., based on the premise that it is America's sole job to police the globe and that America's military could ensure the safety of democracies around the world. At times, the foreign policy establishment has failed to heed the lessons from the Cold War and the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Specifically, America's victory in the Cold War finally occurred because President Ronald Reagan's military buildup and Strategic Defense Initiative pushed the Soviet Union to the brink via his "peace through strength" philosophy. We did not trade goods and services with the Soviet Union as we do with China. We opposed it on all fronts.

As for the four wars in which America lost or fought to a draw, the lesson is that with modern media coverage, Americans will no longer tolerate the drumbeat of deaths and injuries unless the cause is existential and the goal is clear. A war with China may eventually occur because actions they have taken pose an existential threat to America's national security, but invading Taiwan is not that action—the Wuhan virus if ever shown to be an intentional release might be, as that would be an overt act of war.

In resetting America's foreign policy, it will be vital to be realistic about what threats exist that impact America's national security, what our allies in the region are willing and able to do, and what actions Main Street America will support once the bloodshed begins. Failing to consider these items will only result in America's leaders drawing red lines that will not be enforced and only undermine our credibility in the world. In many ways, we are in the pickle we find ourselves internationally because we have consistently failed to separate national security threats from the less vital defense of democracies pledges.

For example, Russian reabsorbing Ukraine doesn't significantly impact our national security; our allies in the region do more to strengthen Russia than weaken it; and Main Street America won't support our men and women dying to free Ukrainians, as harsh as that may sound. Yet, you will hear experts state we cannot "abandon" Ukraine for no other reason than because it will undermine our credibility and our word will mean less in the world. Yes, we gave our word to some countries, but that ignores the 800-pound elephant in the room of whether we should have given our word to those countries. It is precisely because of the importance of being able to keep our word that we should be more careful in drawing red lines around the globe going forward.

At some point, we can't keep a promise everyone knows we won't actually enforce with our blood and treasure.

Part of this reset should include ending NATO, especially given the fact that most of its members refuse to allocate resources to it and some of its members take actions that undermine it. Russia isn't the Soviet Union. America's military assets are no longer truly needed in Europe, as compared to the need in Asia to contain China and North Korea and in support of our allies in the Middle East to contain Iran.

Finally, we must recognize that supranational organizations will never help us when developing our foreign policy. On both Ukraine and Taiwan, the United Nations will be powerless to support any international effort for sanctions or more severe actions given the veto power

possessed by both Russia and China. When we act, it must be done with a clear sense of what Americans and our allies truly are prepared to do and support.

Many in the foreign policy establishment along the Acela Corridor will dismiss this view. They will declare unconditional support for Ukraine and Taiwan. There was a time when we could have secured both countries from the threats they face today, but our leaders failed to act when the threat of war was very low. Now, a sober assessment of both situations is called for knowing that Americans won't support fighting a war over either country. Yes, we should do what we can short of war to help Ukraine and Taiwan, but neither Russia nor China believe we will go to war should they seize those countries.

America's foreign policy must reflect how Main Street America feels about what threats are worth fighting and dying to extinguish. Failing to do so will only lead to promises being made that ultimately won't be kept.