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Errand War: An Observer's Perspective on Russian-Ukrainian War

Dapo Thomas

Senior Lecturer, Department of History and International Studies,
Lagos State University, Nigeria

Abstract:

This study traverses a new conceptual direction in war studies. It attempts to establish a simplex in the lexicon of international studies without de-establishing the signification of an extant phrase – proxy war. Errand war is not in competition with proxy war. Errand war, unlike proxy war, is a derivative construct from a leader's message couched and presented with swaggering egotism to the political leadership of an assumed 'subservient' state. Proxy war then remains proxy war. The paper, therefore, introduces with glitz popular elements in warfare and strategic studies such as propaganda psychology, tactical mobilization, collective strategization, intel politicization and multilateral armament syndication. The paper dramatizes the resonant interfaces of the system's actors, starting with the sender to the messenger and the recipients. These trilateral actors, by their adverse actions, are dragging the system to the precipice of war and/or by their propitious traction, they are moving it away from the fringe of war. For now, the war goes on without a clear picture of the outcome.

Keywords: Errand war, propaganda psychology, strategization, masters, errand state

1. Introduction

I want the Kyiv authorities and their real masters in the West to hear me so that everyone remembers this: People living in Luhansk and Donesk, Kherson and Zaporizhia become our citizens forever.

Vladimir Putin

Errand war is a war between a small state whose independence is threatened existentially and a major power with an expansionist agenda. The small state fights the war on the instructions and directions of its 'Masters,' who are watching the war from a distance or from the sidelines. The 'masters,' in this context, must include a global power and some other brand powers. It becomes an obligatory routine for the small state to regularly brief its 'Masters' on the course of the war via dispatch and unheralded shuttles. In the process of doing this, required materials, weapons, and military equipment are inventoried and presented as a demand and as an entreaty. Having been properly briefed, the 'Masters' hold expeditious strategic meetings to discuss technical and intelligence matters relating to the war for the purpose of collective strategization. In errand war, supplies of military weapons and equipment are done audaciously in the open, with the supplying states disclosing the inventories of their supplies to the international community. To strengthen the military capability of the errand state, the 'Masters' must ensure that the military equipment supplied is sophisticated and modern. The Masters should also guarantee adequate training of the new equipment given to the errand state's military to achieve the goal of the war. In a proxy war, the 'Masters' may never be known or intervene in the war directly. However, in errand war, the 'Masters' are not only known, but they can also intervene militarily and decisively in the war as soon as the superpower fighting the errand state crosses the red lines or attacks the territory of any of the 'Masters.'

The reference to Kyiv authorities and their real masters made by Putin in his speech on the annexation of four of Ukraine's regions, namely: Donesk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia and Kherson, was not only contemptuous of the Ukrainian political and military leadership, but it also opened a new vista in warfighting. The insinuation that the Kyiv authorities have some 'real masters' somewhere suggests that without the 'masters' prodding Ukraine, the country's leaders would not dare to challenge Russia, a major power with a veto power by virtue of its membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Putin's disdain for Ukraine's effort to confront a superpower was palpable in the confidence with which he invaded Ukraine. He thought the war would be over in a matter of weeks without many casualties to Russia. Unfortunately, the war, which started more than a year ago, is still being fought without any sign of victory in sight for Russia. Putin's naivety about the unpredictability of the outcome of the war was responsible for his dismissive attitude towards the Ukrainians, who put up a formidable resistance that exposed the inadequacies of the Russian military. If Putin was not guided by the failure of the US in Vietnam, how about the Soviet's disastrous outing in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989? Sending the Kyiv authorities to their 'real masters' was Putin's way of saying that he was ready for the intervention of the 'Masters' should they venture to enter the war in support of Ukraine. Calling the bluff of the 'Masters' and daring them to join the war showed how much confidence Putin has in Russia's military infrastructure and nuclear capabilities.

Ukraine, on the other hand, is a small state that has the misfortune of being Russia's neighbour and sharing some history with Russia. As Russia's neighbour, Ukraine had experienced serial cocktails of degradations and deprivations from Russia. In 1783, the Russian Empire annexed Crimean Kharnate. In 1920, the Bolsheviks also established control over Eastern Ukraine before the Holodomor of 1932-1933 under Joseph Stalin.¹ Between 1939 and 1945. The Soviet Union annexed the remaining Ukrainian regions from its western neighbours. In 1991, Ukraine was one of the Republics that proclaimed their independence when the Soviet Union collapsed. Consequent to this break-up, Ukraine became the inheritor of many of the Soviet Union's nuclear armaments, which made it (Ukraine) the world's third-largest power for a very brief period.

At this time in question, Ukraine was in possession of 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with 1,240 nuclear warheads, as well as 42 nuclear bombers with hundreds of nuclear cruise missiles and bombs stockpiled for them and some 3000 tactical nuclear weapons. Though the operational control of the weapons remained in Moscow's hands, Ukraine had physical custody.²

On December 5, 1994, the United States, Russia and Britain signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, which France and China also endorsed in separate official statements. In recognition of Ukraine's voluntary surrender of its nuclear weapons, the five major nuclear powers promised to "respect Ukraine's independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine"³

Regrettably, it is this same Ukraine that Putin has invaded its territory. It is this same Ukraine that Putin desecrated its sovereignty. It is this same Ukraine that Putin is killing its citizens. It is this same Ukraine that Putin is annexing its territory with unparalleled impunity. It is this same Ukraine that Putin is threatening its independence. It is this same Ukraine that Putin has turned to an 'errand state' that he can send to its 'Masters.' Where was Putin when Boris Yeltsin and the 'Masters' were signing the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in 1994, where they pledged to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and existing borders?

2. Roll Call of Ukraine's Masters

When Putin sent Kyiv authorities to their 'real Maters' in the West, these are the institutional entities and countries he had in mind:

3. The United States

The name 'America' was first used on a map of the New World created by German cartographer Martin Waldseemuller in 1507, reportedly in recognition of the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci who had made a series of voyages to the region in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Today, this country is the World's second-largest economy. It occupied this position for a century until 2014, when China took over. The Stateman's Year Book 2021 puts America's population at 331 million for the year 2020 and its GNI per capita at 56,140 ppp dollars (2018). As of 2021, this has risen to 70,480 ppp dollars.⁴ As the nation with the highest military spending in the World, the US, in its fiscal 2023 National Defence Authorization Act recently signed into law by President Joe Biden, allotted \$816.7 billion to the Defence Department. Russia's official 2022 military budget is put at \$75 billion and is expected to rise to \$84 billion in the year 2023. Combat vehicles of the US Army are the tanks, armoured personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles and armoured command vehicles. This Army's main battle tank is the M1 A2 Abrams, while its standard infantry fighting vehicle is the M2 A3 Bradley. The Army has nearly 4900 aircraft, all but about 300 of them helicopters, including AH-1 Cobra and AH-64 Apache attack helicopters.⁵ The US Navy, rated as the best in the world, has in its fleet Aircraft carriers, cruisers, Destroyers, frigates, littoral combat ships, surface warships, attack submarines, Ballistic Missile -carrying submarines (SSBNs), Guided Missile Submarines (SSGNs), Mini Warfare, Amphibious, Auxillary, etc. The US air force can also boast of Air Force Bombers, including B-1B Lancer, the B-2A Spirit and the B-52H Stratofortress, the primary manned strategic bomber for 50 years. In the fighter category are the F-22A Raptor, F15 Eagle and Strike Eagle and the F-16 Fighting Falcon.⁶

4. US and the Messiah's Mantle

Savouring the euphoria of their victory against Great Britain in the Revolutionary War of (1775-83), American founding fathers felt that after such an exhausting war, what was needed was a long rest from the "perilous machinations" of the Europeans.⁷ They also considered giving themselves breathing space, at least, to sort out its unique "rules of governance, so starkly different from other regimes of the time, with an emphasis on free and open elections (Blacks and women excluded, a stain on the ledger that would take many decades to remove): the dispersal of powers among three departments of government (the executive, legislative, and judicial); freedom of speech and religion; and a constitutional framework that promised to ensure and protect the preeminence of the people over their rulers."⁸ During this time, their preoccupation, both leaders and citizens, was with their own survival. They showed no interest, at least for now, in being a beacon of hope for anyone overseas, however downtrodden or oppressed. As George Washington put it memorably in his Farewell Address:

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our consensus. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise for us to implicate ourselves with artificial ties in the ordinary combinations and collisions of friendships or enmities.⁹

Thomas Jefferson, America's third President, echoed a similar sentiment in his inaugural address when he advocated "peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."

This 'introverted' policy which the Americans lauded as deserving isolationism, was disrupted by some zealous expansionists who felt that for a country like America, surrounded by a restless, adventurous and tempestuous Europe, a

foreign policy was imperative. This group was led by Witt Seward, America's Secretary of State. In 1867, Seward purchased the Alaskan territory from the Russians for \$7.2 million – about two cents per acre. What some Americans called "Seward's Folly" then "lunged the country into the future at breakneck speed"¹⁰ This purchase and American intervention in the Spanish – Cuban crisis of 1898, which later resulted in the Spanish-American War, changed the dynamic of US domestic policy from self-protection to the issue of human rights abroad. This background has become necessary to let Putin know that the US has a direct strategic interest in the war in Ukraine, knowing that the justification Putin has given for his aggression against Ukraine may come back to haunt them if not nipped in the bud now. If Putin said his reason for attacking Georgia and annexing Crimea was to defend and protect the Russian citizens in both countries from becoming victims of genocide, the next action of Putin could be a revisit of the Alaskan Territory transaction of 1867 between Seward and Russia.

Considering the trend in Putin's regular justifications for his serial aggressions, the defence and protection of the Russians in Alaskan territory would become an excuse to attack the US at a later date. At a moment when Putin feels so hurt about US interference in his affairs, he can also re-open the transaction by questioning the ridiculous price – about two cents an acre – Seward paid for the territory. With Putin, nothing is impossible.

5. European Union

The European Union is founded on the existing European communities set up by the treaties of Paris (1951) and Rome (1957), supplemented by revisions, the single European Act in 1986, and the Maastricht Treaty on European Union in 1992. The Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, the Treaty of Nice in 2000 and the Treaty of Lisbon in 9/11. Members of the European Union include Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Austria, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta, Lithuania. Three membership applications from Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are being processed.

The idea of a United Europe dates back several centuries, but in the years following the Second World War, it acquired a greater urgency.¹² The need for a United Europe became imperative in view of the emergence of the US and the USSR as the two superpowers in the international system. So, the idea was to ensure that Europe did not experience any war like the two world wars that previously tore Europe apart. France, Germany and the Benelux countries¹³ came up with the initiative realizing that with the emergence of the two superpowers, only a United Europe could be relevant at an international level.¹⁴ The values of the EU, according to Article 2 of the Union constitutional Treaty, include "human dignity, fundamental rights, democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, respect for obligations and for international law." Article 3 of the same Constitutional Treaty spells out the objectives of the EU-as: protection of the common values, interests and independence of the Union, promotion of economic and social cohesion; strengthening of the internal market and of economic and monetary cohesion; development of a common foreign and security policy, and a common defence to defend and promote the Union's values in the wider World."¹⁵

In view of its aim to avert any more wars in Europe or among European countries and the "existential" threat posed by Russia, particularly in Eastern Europe, a defence policy was made one of the aims of the European integration process. At the Helsinki European Conference in 1999, there were plans for the formation of a rapid response capability that could be deployed at short notice.¹⁵ Before the success recorded by Operation Artemis in 2003, when the France-led peacekeeping force intervened in the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, the UK and the Benelux had already signed the Treaty of Brussels in 1948, which provided for a system of mutual assistance in the event of attack.¹⁶ The character of the peacekeeping force metamorphosed the moment the EU countries joined the USA, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Iceland to form NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in 1949.¹⁷

6. NATO

Divergent views abound on what NATO stands for and why it was formed. Some see the Organisation as a collective security organization, whereas others argue that the original concept behind the formation was for it to be a military Alliance of independent countries in accordance with the terms of the UN Charter.¹⁹ On April 4, 1949, Foreign Ministers of Denmark, France, Iceland, Belgium, Canada, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States signed the North Atlantic Treaty establishing the North Atlantic Alliance. Greece and Turkey joined in 1952, the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined the Organization, while Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined in 2004, with the memberships of Albania and Croatia (2009) and Montenegro in 2017. Before then, North Macedonia had joined in 2020.¹⁸ This brings the number to 30. However, the number rose to 31 on April 4, 2023, with the official ascension of Finland into NATO. The major role of the Alliance is to complement the UN in peacekeeping operations and activities. Therefore, NATO is a defense arrangement and, like the Warsaw Pact of 1955, an ideological Alliance.¹⁹ NATO promotes democratic values and is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Alliance possesses the military capacity and capability to undertake crisis-management operations alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organizations. NATO represents a grouping of like-minded states operating similar political and economic systems. This ideological difference which epitomizes the philosophy behind the Cold War and the policy of containment of Soviet power and influence in Europe, was fundamentally the reason for the formation of NATO. It can also be argued that the approximate cause for NATO was the Berlin crisis of 1948-9.²⁰ The anticipation that Russia was going to be an existential threat to members of the Organization had been there since its formation. The British and the French believed that the Organization would be the answer to the Soviet Union's conventional military capability if Western Europe were to have peace. As a military alliance, NATO was to serve as a deterrence to potential adversaries and this is captured in the Article Five of the Organization, which

states that: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in the exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed forces, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area".²¹

Despite Washington's and Jefferson's warning to America's future leaders not to get too involved in the affairs of Europe, they could not tolerate the attempts and efforts of the Europeans to play a dominant role in the affairs of Latin America and Canada. The US was thus seen and regarded by Western Europe as playing a defender's role rather than being a liberator. Consequently, upon their unwillingness to shoulder Europe's burden alone, the US expected that Europeans would be ready and willing to play their part. There are two distinct characteristics that have remained permanent features of NATO. A non-European nation with very massive military capability has turned out to be the most powerful and dominant member of the Alliance. Another essential feature is the fact that the Alliance would be strong in those military capabilities in which the United States was strong: air power and nuclear weapons.²²

NATO's support for Ukraine in the ongoing war is not just from the blue. A process was already in place as far back as 1997. There was a meeting in Sintra, Portugal, in May of that year where a NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership was drawn up and signed in Madrid in July, establishing the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC). Effective dialogue and cooperation had been well established with NATO and individual allies supporting Ukraine in defence and security sectors.²³ These various interfaces between NATO as a body and European allies and Ukraine were responsible for the cancellation of NATO-Russia Council in 2014 when Moscow was sanctioned for the annexation of Crimea following the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich.²⁴

Currently, NATO enjoys a strategic partnership with the European Union. This was necessitated by the events of 1990s that threw up the realization of the need for European countries to further develop defence capabilities and to assume greater responsibility for their common security.²⁵ Putin's miscalculation was that he thought it would be practically impossible for all the European Allies to give moral and military support to Ukraine when it had not become a full-fledged member of both NATO and EU.

7. Dangerous Shuttles and Weapons Diplomacy

War is not won solely on the basis of the collection of sophisticated weapons and armaments. It is true that contemporary warfare is bolstered by technology, but this must be complemented by a very strong leadership that exudes confidence, courage and humility. Since the war started on February 24, 2022, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky has exemplified each of these traits with conviction. First was his trip to Bakhmut, a frontline city in the Eastern Donetsk region where the war has been most ferocious, on December 20, 2020, a day before his unannounced trip to the United States. For strategic purposes, leaders who play the role of war commanders rarely go to the frontlines or move around when the war still rages. However, Zelensky has defied this uncommon practice by going to the frontlines, moving around Kyiv, and undertaking trips within and outside Ukraine. This is a dangerous adventure that could claim the life of the leader. This was what happened to the Chadian leader Idriss Deby who was killed while undertaking a solidarity trip to the frontline, but Zelensky has been fortunate. Deby was shot and injured on April 19, 2021, while commanding troops on the frontline fighting the FACT rebels.²⁶ Deby later died on April 20 from the injuries he sustained while at the frontline. During his visit to the troops in Bakhmut, Zelensky gave out awards to the soldiers in a symbolic appreciation of their resilience in defending the city against Russia's onslaught. Bakhmut is strategic to both Russia and Ukraine. The Ukrainian forces have shown strong resistance to Russia's bombardment, knowing that a retreat from the city would signal that Kyiv might be losing the initiative after some months of steady advances. It would also make it harder for Ukraine to pursue offensives in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.²⁷ On the other hand, the Russians need Bakhmut to set up their forces for assaults on larger nearby towns in Donetsk, like Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. Zelensky's visit on December 20, 2022, therefore, underscored the strategic importance of Bakhmut to Ukraine and a window-shopping swagger to Putin, who had some days earlier made a very rare visit to Belarus. It was a kind of "I can also move around" parade by Zelensky.

The Bakhmut swagger was not the only stunt Zelensky performed. His trip to the US was a greater exploit. That also had its own risk going by what happened to a commercial flight in Ukraine air space in 2014. On July 17, 2014, all 283 passengers and 15 crew members aboard a Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17/MAS17) were killed when their plane was shot down by Russian-controlled forces while flying over eastern Ukraine during the war in Donbass in 2014.²⁸ Daring Putin and his Kremlin "forces, Zelensky undertook his first trip abroad on December 21, 2022. It was his first since the beginning of the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. His mission was to show appreciation to the American government, the Congress and the American citizens for the egregious support given to Ukraine since the commencement of the war. It was also an opportunity for him to brief the US on how well the war was going, what they needed to counter Russia's offensive and how they planned to win the war.

Employing 'strategic emotionalism' while addressing Congress, Zelensky swanked that Ukraine had defeated Russia in the battle for the minds of the world. His words: "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."²⁹ In what appeared to be an allusion to what Frank Church said in the 1970s when speaking on the floor of the Senate, Zelensky eulogized the US: "Americans gained the victory and that's why you have succeeded in uniting the global community to protect freedom and international law". Church, a prominent member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had canvassed that America's belief in freedom and popular government once made us a beacon of hope for the downtrodden and oppressed throughout the world.³⁰ Appealing to the consciences of the Russians and goading them to wake up, Zelensky was of the view that Russians could

only become free and liberated culturally, politically and psychologically if only they could “defeat the Krenilin in their minds.” Zelensky did not spare Iran in his expressive and eloquent speech. He accused Iran of supplying the hundreds of deadly drones that Russia used in destroying their critical infrastructure.

Iran denied this accusation maintaining that it had always exercised a “clear policy of active neutrality in the war in Ukraine.”³¹ It will be very difficult for Ukraine to believe this, considering the fact that a key driver behind Iranian economic decision-making was its undying interest in technology. Some of Iran’s key programmes included drone programmes. It expanded the programme for use in both military applications and environmental monitoring.³² Iran’s denial did not appeal to Zelensky, who said in his speech: “That is how one terrorist has found the other.”³³

Assuring the Congress, the American people and the US government of Ukraine’s determination to ensure that Russia is defeated, Zelensky referred to the words of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt: “The American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory.” He submitted that the Ukrainian people would win, too, absolutely. Excited by the US’s generosity towards the war, Zelensky impressed Congress with his immeasurable appreciation and gratitude. This was a necessary genu-flection expected from the leader of a country that had received almost \$50 billion from the lead ‘Master’ as of the time of his visit to the US in December 2022.

The scaffolding of emotions was raised when Zelensky ended his speech on this sobering note:

...I would like to thank you very much for both the financial packages you have already provided us with and the ones you may be willing to decide on. Your money is not charity. It is an investment in global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way.

Zelensky’s next shuttle was to the European ‘Masters.’ It came three months after his trip to the US. It was time to brief the other partners, whom Putin prefers to call Ukraine’s ‘Masters.’ On February 8, 2023, the Ukrainian leader arrived in London to meet with the British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. Zelensky came with a bag full of gratitude for Britain for its support in the ongoing war. It was also obvious that he had come to ask for advanced system weapons which would be used against Russia as it prepared to launch a major offensive against Ukraine. The UK is one of the major military backers of Ukraine, as it has spent more than 2 billion pounds (\$2.5 billion) on weapons and equipment. Before addressing the European Parliament on Thursday, February 9, 2023, Zelensky briefly met with the French and German leaders Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz in France. As usual, it was both a thank you and a weapons shopping shuttle. At the end of the visit, he was assured by Macron that “Russia cannot win this war. As long as Russia continues to attack, we will continue to adapt and moderate the necessary military support to preserve Ukraine and its future.”³⁴

The interventions of Britain and France in the current war in Ukraine were reminiscent of what happened in July 1853 when Russian troops occupied the Danubian principalities under Ottoman Suzerainty.³⁵ Immediately, the European powers received reports that Russia had ordered the hospodars of Moldavia and Wallachia to break off relations with the Porte and to pay tribute to the Tsars, Austria, Britain and France quickly mobilized troops to stop Russia. In this current war with Russia, Britain and France have restrained from joining the war, but they have supported Ukraine in so many ways between February 2022 and January 2023. Britain has made military donations worth £565 million. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has promised to spend about \$2.63 billion for the war in Ukraine in 2023. In the case of France, the full extent of its military aid in the context of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is unknown as many specifics are neither shared by France nor Ukraine. However, it should be noted that France was the largest arms exporter to Ukraine between 2014 and 2020, with over £16 billion worth of weapons provided. Some of the arms and equipment provided by France included helicopters, reconnaissance drones, navy-related weapons and equipment targeting systems, ammunition of various calibers and fire control system.³⁶

From France, Zelensky went to Brussels, Belgium, to address a special plenary session of the European Parliament and a special session of the European Council. He was full of gratitude and appreciation to both the Parliament and the Council. Attesting to the collective will of Europe to overcome this Demon called Putin, Zelensky thanked Europe for their integrity and energy, two qualities he believed they needed in the current struggle for Europe and “whose combination is always a prerequisite for progress.” Venerating the European values before the Parliament and the Council, Zelensky explained why Ukraine is excited to be associated with Europe: “When states strive to be social and societies strive to be open. When diversity is a value and the values of the different are united by fair equality. When borders are inviolable, crossing is not felt. This is our Europe. These are our rules. This is our way of life.”³⁷ In an obvious reference to how Putin and the Kremlin have diminished the dignity and quality of life in Russia, Zelensky surmised that the sacred value of human life has been completely destroyed in Russia. According to him, no one matters to the authorities there except those inside the Kremlin walls, their relatives and their wallets. He further submitted: “The Russian regime not only hates everything, any sociality and any diversity but also deliberately invests in xenophobia and tries to make all the in-human things that happened in the 1930s and 1940s part of the norm on our continent.” The reference to the “inhuman things’ that happened in the 1930s and 1940s was deliberate. The Ukrainian leader wanted the present European leaders and lawmakers to prevent another Holodomor. What was the Holodomor?

In the mid-1920s, the Bolshevik Party decided to bridge the gap between its primarily Russian and Jewish Urbanite membership and the Ukrainian peasant masses. It was part of their indigenization policy which the Party adopted in 1923. It had a twofold aim of making Soviet power less alien to the Ukrainian peasantry and presenting Soviet Ukraine as a cultural beacon for the ‘oppressed’ Ukrainians in Poland and other Eastern European countries.³⁸

As one of the Soviet Union’s main grain-producing areas, the Ukrainian SSR suffered badly during the forced collectivization campaign of 1929-1932. In particular, the Holodomor (meaning hunger extermination) was crucial for the nation’s identification. More than 2 million died in the famine of 1932-1933 in the wake of Stalin’s vicious collectivization campaign. Even as food production collapsed, provoked by a severe drought, the Soviet regime continued to export grain to

buy machine tools and equipment to push forward the campaign of accelerated industrialization.³⁹ The controversy that surrounds Holodomor to date is whether or not it was a genocide. In 2010, when he assumed the presidency in Ukraine, Yanukovich, a Russian stooge, told the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) that the Holodomor was not genocide. "Recognizing the Holodomor as an act of genocide, we think will be incorrect, unjust. It was a tragedy, a common tragedy of the states that made up the Soviet Union."⁴⁰ Yanukovich's view did not represent the position of most Ukrainians. According to Timothy Snyder, this catastrophe of almost unimaginable proportions affected Ukraine most deeply and is today represented by nationalists as the Holodomor, the deliberate genocide of the Ukrainian people.⁴¹

Acknowledging the fact that Russia's military-industrial complex is still very vibrant even as the war in Ukraine rages, Zelensky suggested more sanctions to be imposed on the Russian missile and drone industry, which, if not dealt with now, will continue to be a threat until the source of the threat is destroyed. He dropped the hint that Ukraine was defending Europe in this war, and as such, the whole of Europe must have the determination to stop Russia. Without this determination, he said, "the kind of Europe we are defending is impossible."

Now, it is time for weapons shopping: "I am grateful to all of you who understand how much Ukraine needs capabilities, artillery and ammunition, modern tanks, long-range missiles and modern aircraft... we must strengthen the dynamics of our cooperation more than the aggressor can mobilize its potential" Unwittingly insinuating that Ukraine is like an errand state of Europe in this war, Zelensky concludes, "We, my friends are protecting Europe from a regime that has proven that it has only one ambition: to destroy Europe's freedom and to be an authoritarian master on the continent".⁴²

8. Dividends of Gratitude

Three days after his December 21, 2022, impassioned speech before a joint meeting of Congress, the US House of Representatives approved the sum of \$45 billion and package for Ukraine. This was part of a \$1.66 trillion funding bill approved by the Senate. In his usual 'Thank You' element, Zelensky was full of appreciation to the United States and he showed this in a tweet saying that it was 'crucial' that Americans are 'side-by-side' with Ukrainians in 'this struggle.' This new military and economic assistance was an addition to some \$50 billion in aid already given to Ukraine in the year 2022. Also thanking the Congress for its support and cooperation since the war started, President Biden said: "I am grateful to Congress for continuing to provide this increased drawdown authority, most recently under the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 that was signed into law by the President in December 2022." Ukraine and the Biden administrations were worried about the complications that took control of Congress in 2023. Some rightwing Republicans had spoken openly and vehemently against the aid while others had called for tighter oversight. However, surprisingly, Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican Senator representing South Carolina, led two other Democratic Senators, Richard Blumenthal (Connecticut) and Sheldon Whitehouse (Rhode Island), to Kyiv on January 20, 2023. His remarks during the visit assuaged whatever fear Zelensky might have had about bipartisan support for Ukraine in the US Congress. He said: "All three of us, one Republican and two democrats, share the same goal – for Ukraine to drive the Russians out of Ukraine."

Peeved by the delay in sending tanks to Ukraine and the unnecessary controversy around the tanks, Senator Graham exclaimed that to achieve that goal, the Ukraine military needs tanks which must be sent to them without further delay if they were to stop Putin from rewriting the map of Europe by force of arms. He threw a challenge to both Germany and the US. He told the Germans: "Send tanks to Ukraine because they need them. It is in your own national interest that Putin loses in Ukraine." To the Biden administration, he retorted: "Send American tanks so that others will follow our lead."

Spurred by this rare cooperation and support from an influential GOP Senator like Graham, President Biden, five days after Graham's advice on tanks, announced on January 25, 2023, that the US would be sending 31 M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine to defend their territory. According to Biden, these tanks would enable the Ukrainian army the ability to maneuver in open terrain. White House officials stated that the Ukrainians need an enduring capability to deter and defend against Russian aggression over the long term. Extolling the efficiency of Abrams tanks, possibly for marketing purposes, Biden boasted that the tanks are the most capable tanks in the world. Aside from sending Abrams tanks to Ukraine, "the US will be giving Ukraine the parts and equipment necessary to effectively repair and maintain the tanks on the battlefield." Convinced that Russia had been rattled by the level of cooperation and understanding among Ukraine's 'Masters,' Biden mocked Putin: "The expectation on the part of Russia is we are going to break up, we are not going to stay united. However, we are fully, thoroughly, totally united." This reference was in respect of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group. In addition to US 31 Abrams tanks, Germany is also sending 14 Leopards 2 tanks to Ukraine. The UK is providing 14 Challenger 2 tanks, while Spain is also providing six Leopard 2 tanks. Other European countries would also be supplying assorted military equipment and several aid defence systems. These were military equipment supplied to Ukraine after Zelensky's trips to the US, Britain, France and Brussels. A whole lot had been provided since the commencement of the war on February 24, 2022. Despite all these supplies, Ukraine is still imploring its 'Masters' to send MIG fighter jets to have more protection for their sky. However, according to some analysts, this may escalate the war. Definitely, Russia would consider this as crossing the red lines by Ukraine's 'Masters.' While US and others are unwilling to send fighter jets to Ukraine so as not to escalate the war, Poland, Ukraine's neighbor, said it was willing to send MIG 29 fighter jets to Ukraine. However, for proper coordination, the US still has to be carried along in the final decision. NATO is also not interested in risking a war with a country like Russia which poses an existential threat to the West through an enormous arsenal of nuclear warheads.

Having resolved the dispute over the supply of tanks to Ukraine with other European allies, President Biden undertook an unannounced trip to Kyiv on February 20, 2023. The trip was to bolster the confidence, courage and morale of the Ukrainian military leadership. Expressing his country's fondest appreciation over the visit, Zelensky described it as "the most important visit" of the whole history of the Ukraine – US relationship." This visit, Zelensky said, is historical, timely, and

brave. To erase any doubt about America's readiness and willingness to support Ukraine till the end of the war, Biden, whose country just gave \$45 billion dollars to Ukraine in December 2022 and a security assistance package that totals \$2.5 billion in January 2023, announced additional military aid of \$500 million to Ukraine. Needless to add that the US, to date, is the largest contributor to Ukraine in terms of money spent.⁴⁴ Congress appropriated more than \$112 billion (£92.47 billion) in 2022 alone.⁴⁵ Before leaving for Poland, Biden teased Putin: "Russia's aim was to wipe Ukraine off the map. Putin thought Ukraine was weak and the West was divided... He thought he could outcast us. I don't think he is thinking that right now." President Zelensky was elated when Biden hinted that a new round of sanctions would soon be announced and the targets would be "elites and companies that are trying to evade sanctions and backfill Russia's war machines."⁴⁶

In addition to the 10th package of sanctions announced and published by EU against Russia on February 25, 2023, the G7 also came up with fresh sanctions against Russia at its 49th meeting in Tokyo on May 19 to May 21, 2023. While the former was targeted at some Russian nationals and entities, the latter was targeted at Russian exports. EU, according to the 10th package of sanctions, banned Russian nationals from holding any position in the governing bodies of EU critical infrastructures and entities. It also banned the export of products and technology that contribute to Russia's military and technological enhancement or the development of the defence and security sectors and those that could contribute to the enhancement of Russia's industrial capacities. Some of the newly introduced entities to the sanctions include Alfa Bank, Rosbank, Tinkoff Bank, the National wealth fund of the Russian Federation and the Russian National Reinsurance company⁴⁷.

Some of the main sanctions announced during the G7 summit in Japan include those imposed by the US Treasury Department on 22 People and 104 entities with touchpoints in over 20 countries or jurisdictions. As a way of constraining Kremlin's ability to evade sanctions, the Treasury Department took action aimed at preventing Russia's attempt to acquire goods needed by its military-industrial complex, including targeting a Liechtenstein-based Russian intelligence services procurement network and Netherlands-based procurement agent and a procurement network tied to US sanctioned Radioautomatika LLC.

On its own part, the British government banned imports of Russian diamonds, copper, aluminum and nickel. It also targeted companies connected to the alleged theft of Ukrainian grain. The British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak provided the rationale for his government's action: "We want to ensure that 'Russia pays a price' for the war in Ukraine." He further disclosed that more than 60% of Putin's war chest has been 'immobilized' – worth about £275bn.

Canada and the European Council also took some punitive measures and actions against Russia. While Canada announced sanctions on 17 individuals and 18 entities linked to Russian companies that provide military technology and know-how to Russia's armed forces, the European Council, on its part, decided to restrict trade in Russian diamonds—a measure, it believed would further isolate Moscow.

The zenith of Zelensky's diplomacy was when he received the news about US' willingness to train Ukraine's pilots on the long-requested F-16 fighter planes during the G7 summit in Japan. Prior to this time, the US had rejected all entreaties by Ukraine and some of its allies to give F-16 fighter planes to Ukraine. Its fear was that such a gesture was capable of escalating the war. President Joe Biden made the announcement to the Ukrainian President, who joined the G7 meeting after an exhaustive trip to Jeddah to attend the Arab Summit on May 19, where he had gone to present Ukraine's position to Arab leaders who have been neutral in the war. Though President Biden was non-committal to the US sending F-16s directly to Ukraine, he was, however, categorical that the United States would not block its allies wishing to send F-16 jets to Ukraine. Some of the US allies have a supply of US-made F-16s, including the Netherlands, which has signaled a willingness to export some of them to Ukraine. However, the US would have to approve that third-party transfer because of the jets' sensitive US technology. There is no doubt that Zelensky's trips to the US, Britain, France, Brussels and Tokyo were very rewarding.

9. And the War Goes On

It was a Russian error that got the international order into its present systemic disorder. In the midst of this war cacophony, a principal actor in the war, Vladimir Putin, has been slammed with a warrant arrest by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for a war crime – overseeing the abduction of Ukrainian children. The international order is under a very serious threat. In the Ukrainian war, two superpowers, four members of the Security Council, namely Russia, the U.S., Britain and France and almost the whole of Europe, are involved. Ukraine and its 'Masters,' as Putin will love to call the US and the EU, are a formidable group loaded with Nuclear weapons and a lethal arsenal. Russia, China and Iran, that form the Triple Axis, are also a redoubtable trilateral triumvirate in the international system. They are equally endowed with nuclear capabilities and lethal weapons. Though the Russian-Ukraine war is still being fought with 'first-course' weapons, the signs of escalation into a full-blown war with the superpowers using nuclear weapons are all over the skies. Hear Dimitry Medvedev on what Russia should do when ICC issued the warrant arrest on Putin: "I'm afraid, gentlemen, everyone is answerable to GOD and missiles; it's quite possible to imagine how a hypersonic Oniks fired from a Russian warship in the North Sea strikes the Court building in the Hague. It can't be shot down, I'm afraid."

There are signs all over to reinforce the concept or theory of errands. When the war first started, the West and its allies promised to restrict the supplies of weapons to Ukraine to only defensive material and also advised Ukraine to avoid escalation by not attacking Moscow. This admonition was complied with until late last year when Ukraine started receiving offensive material from the US and its allies. Though the US released an intel suggesting that Ukraine sent the drone that attacked Kremlin in May this year, there was no condemnation of the action and there were no sanctions of any kind against Ukraine. Instead, attacks on Russian territory had increased in number and intensity, with Ukrainian soldiers acting in cahoots with anti-Putin elements operating along Ukraine-Russia borders. The impression is now that Ukraine was used by

the West to look for Russia's trouble so that the West could have the opportunity to slow down Russia's economic and armament development in the region, as it was becoming a serious threat to most of the countries in Eastern Europe.

To Russia, this war has become a 'Must-Win' going to Putin's demeanour. Putin will not allow Russian weapons to be defeated, nor will he allow himself to be disgraced as well. The US and its EU allies, on the other hand, have vowed not to allow Russia to win the war. Both divides are now fighting for pride. Both camps keep building up tension in the system as they remain stuck to their invariable positions. The position of China, the only superpower not yet involved in the war militarily, is suspect. It is yet to offer assistance or support to Russia. Though some reports claimed it has been doing so covertly, the US intel is yet to confirm this. During his state visit to Moscow on March 20, 2023, the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, spoke from both sides of his mouth without a definitive stance on the war. Though China came up with a peace proposal that the US and Ukraine had rejected for inherent flaws and contradictions, nothing was said, as a way of advice, to Russia on the need to withdraw from Ukraine before any negotiation could commence. Russia was unwavering in its belief that it was going to win the war. Ukraine has solid-rock trust and confidence in the West and NATO to continue supplying the weapons, without which it would be difficult to defend Europe effectively. These two scenarios are not conducive to the realization or workability of any negotiations.

The United Nations Security Council is embroiled in its own contradictions as veto power paralyzes decision-making mechanisms. All international institutions established for a day like this have become ineffectual because it is difficult to separate two fighting elephants. A possible escalation was averted on July 6, 2023, when two Russian fighter jets intercepted an American drone on the Black Sea and forced it down under pressure. The Errand State is desperate for the preservation of its own sovereignty. The Masters are preoccupied with the expansion of their own military-industrial complexes. The system is drained of its own vitality. Everything is drifting towards insanity.

The World, including those who started this war, has the responsibility to halt this war before it consumes us all.

Dr. Dapo Thomas: Dr. Thomas is a senior lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria. He is the author of the book: *The Political Economy of Nigeria-United States Relations*. The book, published in 2018, explores the economics and politics of power.

Dr. Thomas specializes in relations between the United States and the Global South countries, particularly Nigeria. He has authored incisive and engaging articles in some reputable local and international journals. Some of these articles include: *The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970): A Theoretical Resurrection*, *Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970): New Theories, Old Problem, Fresh Crisis*, *The Evolution of the Electoral Process and the Dramatics of Bene-Clientelism in Nigeria*, *When the Past is dead, what is History doing alive?*, *A road metaphor on Nigeria's foreign policy and Corruption war*, *Trial Carnivals and Molebi Theory*, etc.

Dr. Thomas is a fellow of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, a member of the Association of Foreign Relations Practitioners of Nigeria, and also a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of International Relations, International Law and Diplomacy*.

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