

Grand Strategy

April 2022

Grand Strategy is a nation-state (or alliance) strategy of how [ways] and [means] can be used to advance and achieve critical interests [ends]. There is no limit to the breadth, depth, and scope of such consideration.

Some Ideas And Thoughts For The Reader's Consideration – Nothing More



© Ukrainian Presidency/Handout/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images ; RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP via Getty Images President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine on **February 22** and **April 4**. Ukrainian Presidency/Handout/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images ; RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP via Getty Images

4/5/2022

UNCLASSIFIED -- PRIVATE ANALYTIC PAPER

Ukrainians attempting to push back Russians

Institute for the Study of War Map from 3 April 2022

The changing battlescape and claims and counterclaims by the warring parties make any portrayal of the current situation at any given time highly speculative and debatable.

With that in mind, the map shown here was quite different last week than it is now. Change will continue.



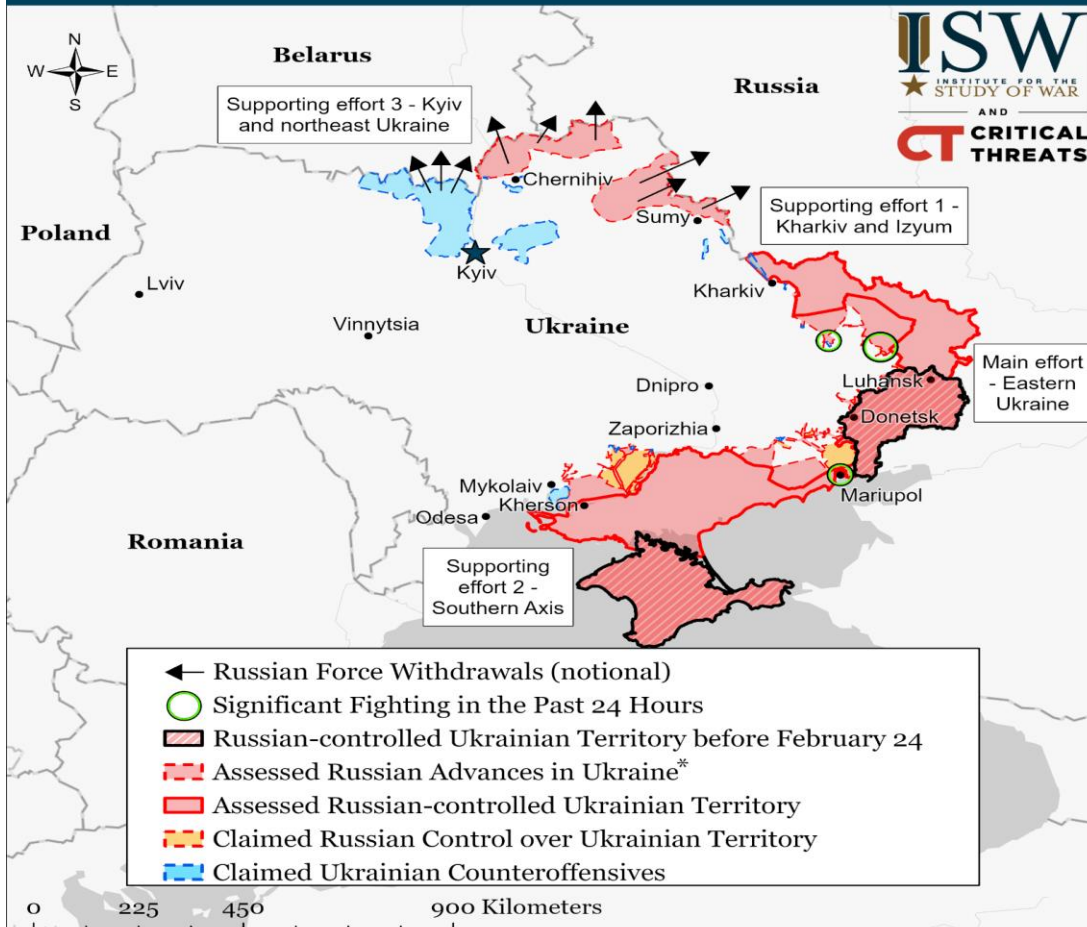
4/5/2022

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Source: Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 3 April)



Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 04, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, and Thomas Bergeron
© 2022 Institute for the Study of War and AET's Critical Threats Project

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

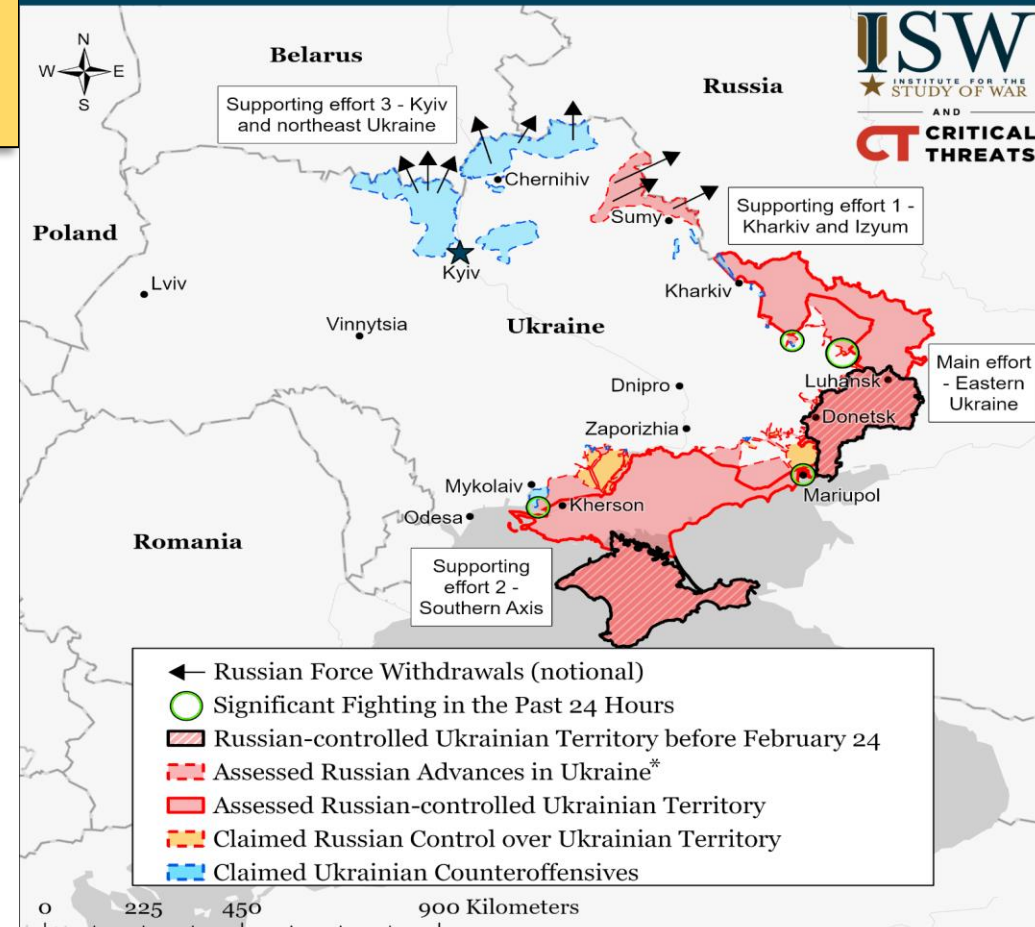
Note: The disorderly withdrawal of Russian forces from around Kyiv makes precise mapping of the situation in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy oblasts difficult. There are likely no organized Russian defensive positions in those oblasts, but Ukrainian forces are conducting operations to clear "lost orcs"--Russians left behind in the withdrawal. We will not attempt to map those clearing operations. Ukrainian forces may already have regained control of more of Chernihiv and Sumy oblasts than we depict, but we do not yet have sufficient evidence to adjust our assessed areas of advance beyond those shown here. The situation will likely clarify over the next few days, and we will adjust the advance and / or control lines accordingly.

Institute for the Study of War Maps from 4 & 5 April 2022

NOTE: The maps and explanations from the Institute for the Study of War are used with their approval and my thanks. They are perhaps the best authoritative source about the course of the conflict that I am familiar with.

PMCA

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of April 05, 2022, 3:00 PM ET



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Notional map of partition areas in East and Southeast Ukraine – what the Russian Federation would like to achieve.

Grand Strategy Questions in 2022

- What will be an acceptable outcome in Ukraine following the invasion and *conduct of warfare* in that nation by the Russian Federation?
- What will be an acceptable outcome in the context of NATO and its security posture in the coming months?
- What will be an acceptable outcome in Russia (and Belarus) in the aftermath of the War in Ukraine?
- What will be the nature of international relationships in the aftermath of the War in Ukraine?
- What other considerations are there in regard to the near-term future (2022 – 2025) of global order and international relationships?

What will be an acceptable outcome in Ukraine following the invasion and *conduct of warfare* in that nation by the Russian Federation?

• Possible Outcomes:

- (1) **A partition** where areas in Eastern and Southeastern Ukraine are occupied by Russia, excluding the city area of Mariupol.
- (2) **An occupied area** of Eastern Ukraine (the Donbass) and Crimea and a narrow land bridge between the two, including the city area of Mariupol.
- (3) **An occupied area of Eastern Ukraine** (the Donbass) which also includes some limited occupied areas in the Northeast near Kharkiv, and a land bridge to Crimea which remains occupied by Russia.
- (4) **Partial withdrawal from Ukraine** by Russian forces to the boundaries existing following the 2014 so-called 'separatist uprising' and the annexation of Crimea.
- (5) **Complete withdrawal from Ukraine** and restoration of boundaries to the 2014 period before the so-called 'separatist uprising' and the annexation of Crimea.
- (6) **Continued conflict** devolving into localized warfare in both urban and rural terrain without an agreement to end warfare.

Note: In every possible case many of the major city areas and key military hubs throughout Ukraine will have sustained significant (disastrous) damage to the infrastructure and significant displacement of the population. This cannot be undone nor can it be recovered from in a short period. Rather, those who make such estimates should measure future progress in years – not merely months – and at great cost.

What will be an acceptable outcome in the context of NATO and its security posture in the coming months?

- **Given the ‘POSSIBLE’ outcome(s) – there are some POSSIBLE conditions that can be listed now:**
 - (1) **NATO forces remain within NATO boundaries** but provide significant continuing support and aid to Ukraine.
 - (2) **NATO restricts support** in the interest of furthering improved conditions with the Russian Federation.
 - (3) **NATO forces enter Ukraine and provide on-the-ground direct assistance** [short of direct combat] to Ukraine.
 - (4) **NATO forces enter Ukraine and engage in direct combat** against invading forces.
 - (5) **Some variation on the themes above may be possible** given selective special operations support, intelligence support, and air defense support.

Note: In every possible outcome and the resulting NATO security posture there will be both political and military risk, the nexus of which would likely be a perception by the Russian Federation that NATO was now a warring party against them. The chance for escalation would exist. On the other hand, a variety of moral, societal, and geopolitical conditions might drive NATO to make risky decisions. Key to any evolution of the NATO security posture will be the presence in Moscow of a dependable interlocutor who can speak for Russia and its interests – and a decision-maker who is clearly in charge.

What will be an acceptable outcome in Russia (and Belarus) in the aftermath of the War in Ukraine?

- **There may be an “acceptable” outcome for Russia (and for Belarus) – but it may be different for each nation.**
 - (1) **Russia may opt to continue a state of conflict without resolution.** Belarus may not stay that course.
 - (2) **Russia may opt to achieve ‘some form of [partial] victory,’** likely a partition and continued presence of some kind in Ukraine. Belarus may or may not follow suit.
 - (3) **Russia may widen the conflict in the face of NATO opposition.** Belarus may not wish to participate but would have little choice.
 - (4) **Russia may wish to withdraw into its borders** (including whatever partition and annexation it can achieve) and then rebuild and reconstitute itself – a years-long prospect.
 - (5) **Russia may decide to change internally** – including its national leadership. Part of that change would ostensibly include the cessation of hostilities. This would also affect Belarus.

Note: The ‘outcome’ from such a radical change may be – on balance – positive, but we should be wary of unintended consequences and ‘great power’ dynamics which may involve numerous other nations and condition. Foremost among them would be the relationship between Russia and China (and aligned nations) who may wish to involve themselves in the upheaval in the world order that could come from such changes.

What will be the nature of international relationships in the aftermath of the War in Ukraine?

- International relationships will have to be carefully crafted by nearly every nation, independently, although alliances like NATO may indeed maintain some cohesion in regard to relationships with Russia (and Belarus), with Ukraine, and with other nation-state entities who in one way or another have a stake in the conduct and the evolution of the War and its outcome.
- Economic and societal needs will become predominant determiners of how a given nation or alliance approaches the future.
- Moral and philosophical judgements will be present in nearly every decision-making endeavor, but different weight will be given to those elements of whatever future relationships are formed.
- In the end state – whatever that turns out to be – the realities of energy availability, specific commerce, and essential interaction will have to be considered and decided upon in the complicated crucible of public opinion and national social need. This consideration will happen quickly after some culminating or tipping point in the course of ending the conflict occurs.
- We cannot assume that even if the conflict does end with some form of agreement, that the actions of Russia and its forces (and of its ally, Belarus), will simply be forgiven. That is not the only dimension of any future international relationship. We should not be surprised if relationships with Russia – perhaps new or revitalized relationships – begin to emerge. They have some things many in the world need – energy and some other resources come to mind.
- The characterization of Russia (and Belarus) in the aftermath of this conflict will be harsh and unforgiving but that will not be the absolute end of relationships with these nations. This probability requires statecraft and strategy now.

What ‘other considerations’ are there in regard to the near-term future (2022 – 2025) of global order and international relationships?

- **There are several key international and transnational relationships that can and should be anticipated now so that we are not surprised.**

(1) Whither goes China and other aligned nations (Belarus, North Korea, Iran, Syria, and others) in their forming relationship with Russia?

(2) What are the key elements of (a) economic cooperation, (b) military cooperation, (c) diplomatic cooperation and interaction, and (d) inter-nation cooperation in many different forms and features found across the global condition? Together how do these key elements affect global security?

(3) What are the barriers to cooperation and positive relations and how can those impediments be made to work for our interest? When those impediments work against us how do we change that condition to our advantage?

(4) What changes might occur in the ‘global order’ as an outgrowth of some end-state to the War in Ukraine? Changes may include **(a)** the diminishment of the role, place and power of Russia in the community of nations, **(b)** the rise of China in a way different from its past arc of rising prominence, in which China may assert itself as THE LEADER of the opposing community of nations against the ‘West,’ **(c)** shifts away from and toward cooperation with the US and our allies, and **(d)** fundamental change in the global order brought about by evolving conditions – not just the War in Ukraine, but also energy demands, competition for key resources and necessities, environmental changes, biosphere challenges, and a rising perception of global issues which compel different approaches and arrangements.

People's Republic of China

- **The People's Republic of China has [so far] 'tacitly' sided with Russia in their invasion of Ukraine.**
- The PRC may not support all of the events and circumstances in the day-to-day conduct of the conflict by Russian forces. However, they have not condemned important events fully nor have they provided much assistance to any opposing views or against untoward conditions that have developed.
- The bottom line – so far – is that the PRC likely knew fully about Russia's intent, supported it at the outset, and continue to provide support in a variety of ways. If this is accurate, the implications of such support deserve our full attention.
- How the relationship between the PRC and Russia evolves is a key question. The future US and allied relationship with China hinges on their assistance and their relationship with Russia in the coming weeks and months.
- At the time of this report – Western avoidance of the issue of PRC's developing stance in regard to the numerous issues of the time, including the War in Ukraine, seems to be the course we are on. That cannot continue without significant adverse effects.

North Korea

[North Korea defends Russia in highest-level statement on Ukraine crisis so far | NK News](#)

- **Throughout the evolution of the War in Ukraine, North Korea has supported Russia.**

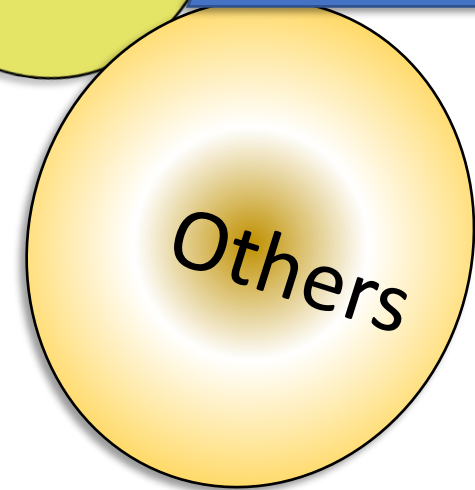
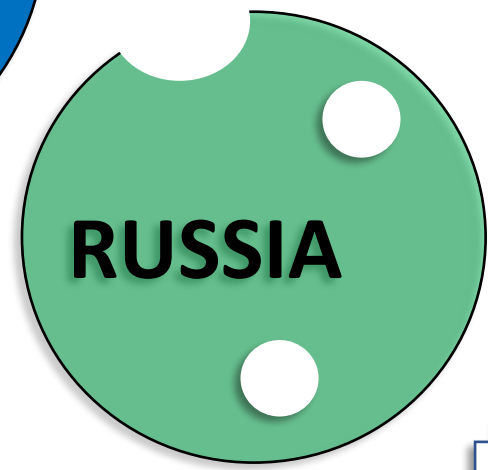
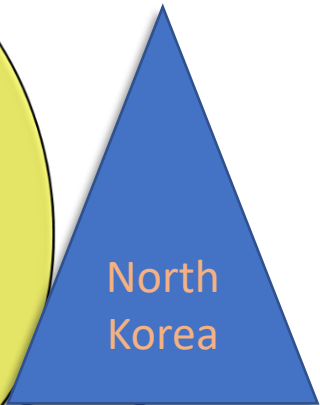
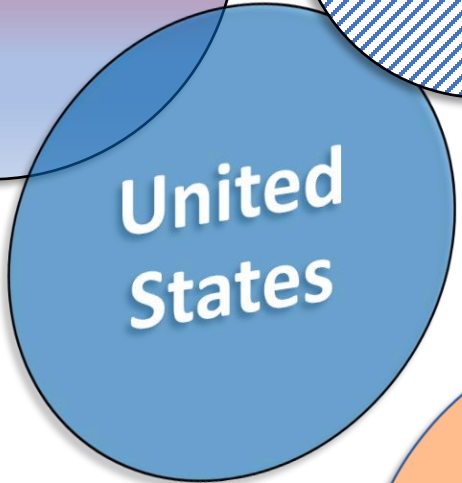
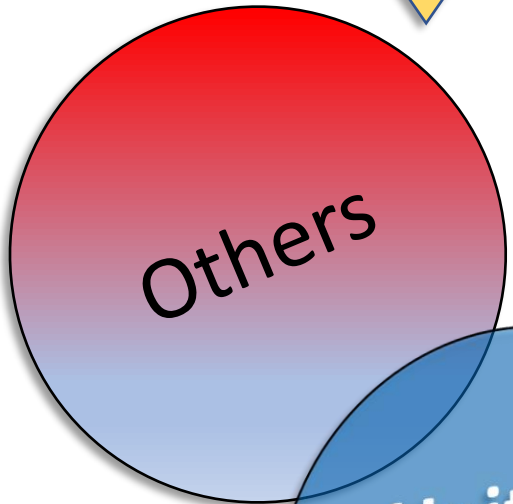
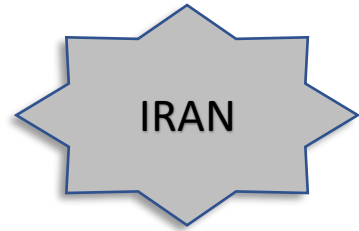
North Korea defends Russia in highest-level statement on Ukraine crisis so far DPRK foreign ministry dismisses concerns about 'respect for sovereignty' as it blames US for NATO expansion

"The U.S. and the West have "systematically undermined" European security by pursuing NATO expansion, a North Korean foreign ministry spokesperson said Monday, rejecting concerns about "respect for sovereignty" in the country's highest-level statement on the war in Ukraine so far." [Jiangmen Kim](#) March 1, 2022

- While this and other statements signal support, there has not been open reporting in North Korea of conditions in Ukraine. Open reporting is of course not expected.
- During the past few months North Korea has engaged in an unprecedented number and type of missile launches, renewed activity at nuclear sites, and they have issued bellicose statements of anti-West sentiment, threatening War. By any measure, their actions and words signal continued belligerence.
- Given the insulation of North Korea and its close relationship with China and other nations, the net effect of any change in the global order growing out of an end to the conflict in Ukraine may be minimal.
- The direction China goes in may be the most important indicator of how things will evolve with North Korea.

Iran

- **Iran has expressed general ‘anti-NATO’ support for Russia in its actions in Ukraine.**
- **“Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was one of the first world leaders to pick up the phone and call Putin to pledge allegiance as soon as the news of the war flashed over TV screens on Feb. 24. In the [phone conversation](#), Raisi told Putin that “the expansion of the NATO is a serious threat to the stability and security of independent countries in different regions” and expressed his hope that “what is happening” ends up benefiting the “nations and the region,” according to a readout of the call.” [Iran’s Support for Russia’s War in Ukraine Undermines Its Anti-Imperialist Narrative \(foreignpolicy.com\)](#)**
- **“Tehran, Iran – While Iran says it is opposed to war in Ukraine, it will not outright denounce Russia’s military operation, instead blaming the West for NATO’s presence in the region.” [‘Rooted in NATO’: Iran responds to Russia’s Ukraine attack www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/24/rooted-in-nato-insid...](#)**
- **Iran continues to have a substantial interest in cooperation with Russia including a variety of trade and support relationships. Just how those relationships may evolve will be part of the sorting out of global conditions in the aftermath of an end to the conflict.**



Tactical and Operational Notes with Strategic Implications

- The requirements for opposed occupation of territory should be a calculation (what it takes to succeed), that a modern military organization can make and advise leadership about. This does not seem to have been the case with Russia in its invasion of Ukraine.
- An alternative answer is that the Russian military made the right calculations about land force occupation requirements but failed to appreciate the will and the capabilities of the Ukrainians.
- Yet another possible answer to the obvious failing of the Russians is that the professional military did make the right calculations and gave the right advice but that information was rejected by leadership.
- Another possible answer is that the Russian military is a corrupt and flawed organization.
- Armed drones and top-attack missiles of various kinds have had such an effect on Russian armored vehicles of all kinds that a reconsideration of land warfare – notably in urban terrain – undertaken by such forces, seems vital. This is especially cogent if one is conducting military operations in someone else's homeland.
- Modern anti-aircraft missiles are deadly. That too may be cause for reconsideration about how close air support aircraft, and aircraft in general, are used in modern conflict.
- The much vaunted “cyber” warfare capabilities of Russia are not much in evidence. What does this mean?
- The hints of weapons with mass and complex effects (WMCE) – for example the reported intent to use chemical weapons and the possibility of escalation to nuclear weapons – are cause for concern since they were made by a WMCE-capable nation in a contemporary period and setting. That they have not been used begs the question – why not?
- In the context of the War in Ukraine – from the period leading up to the invasion until now – the concept of deterrence seems to be worth rethinking. One can ask the question: What is required for deterrence to be viable? Among other elements of the answer(s) to this question, one would have to explore the constructs of perception and will.

Synopsis

- The active 2022 War in Ukraine will likely come to an inconclusive end when the Russian Federation believes it has achieved as much of a defacto partition in East & Southeast Ukraine as it can.
- Geography and policy dictate that Ukraine will continue to be beset by Russian forces and interests. Similar to the time between the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 'separatist' uprising in the Donbass, and now, there could be a long period of time between end-of-conflict in 2022 and the next incursion / invasion by reconstituted Russian forces.
- The likelihood is that Russia will return to Ukraine -- with force -- at some point. This may not be a function of a single leader so much as a Russian imperative regarding its perception of security in the 'near abroad.' Much has been made of Mr. Putin's leadership but he has not been alone in his beliefs or decisions. Stability in the region may not be possible in the near term.
- A moderating / restricting condition for a stable eventuality is that regime change in Russia could signal a marked and positive change in global relationships and a decision to abandon forced change in Ukraine. This may seem like a hopeful possibility -- it is -- but unintended consequences linger in the shadows of momentous change. Thus the need for the United States and our allies to strategize about possible outcomes.
- Ukraine's and NATO's decisions in the coming months will shape perceptions and decisions in Moscow and elsewhere. For example, declared neutrality and no NATO membership may go a long way toward softening Russian concerns. Conversely, greater NATO involvement and non-neutral changes in the relationship with Ukraine may propel Russia and others in a less desirable direction.
- This is not an argument for appeasement of Russia nor is it a harbinger of doom if Ukraine decides to join -- in full membership or in robust association -- with NATO. It is merely the stating of possibilities that need strategic attention by the United States and our allies.
- China and its associated nations may hold the key to longer-term changes in the global order. That dynamic also requires "grand strategy" focus and action.
- In the end -- Ukraine will have been greatly affected by the death and injury of its people, the generation of a vast refugee cohort, disastrous property damage of broad and deep proportion, the exhaustion of military capability, severe economic instability, and a vengeful relationship with two neighboring nations. It will need time, money, and inspired governance to recover. What has happened cannot be undone nor should it be minimized. Now is the time to begin strategic planning for the future of this beleaguered nation.
- **A change in leadership seems possible. What are the implications of an unstable and adrift Russia?**