

The Gathering Storm

By Col Douglas Macgregor, 17 April 2023

The crisis of American national power has begun. America's economy is tipping over, and Western financial markets are quietly panicking. Imperiled by rising interest rates, mortgage-backed securities and U.S. Treasuries are losing their value. The market's proverbial "vibes"—feelings, emotions, beliefs, and psychological penchants—suggest a dark turn is underway inside the American economy.

American national power is measured as much by American military capability as by economic potential and performance. The growing realization that American and European military-industrial capacity cannot keep up with Ukrainian demands for ammunition and equipment is an ominous signal to send during a proxy war that Washington insists its Ukrainian surrogate is winning.

Russian economy-of-force operations in southern Ukraine appear to have successfully ground down attacking Ukrainian forces with the minimal expenditure of Russian lives and resources. While Russia's implementation of attrition warfare worked brilliantly, Russia mobilized its reserves of men and equipment to field a force that is several magnitudes larger and significantly more lethal than it was a year ago.

Russia's massive arsenal of artillery systems including rockets, missiles, and drones linked to overhead surveillance platforms converted Ukrainian soldiers fighting to retain the northern edge of the Donbas into pop-up targets. How many Ukrainian soldiers have died is unknown, but one recent estimate wagers between 150,000-200,000 Ukrainians have been killed in action since the war began, while another estimates about 250,000.

Given the glaring weakness of NATO members' ground, air, and air defense forces, an unwanted war with Russia could easily bring hundreds of thousands of Russian Troops to the Polish border, NATO's Eastern Frontier. This is not an outcome Washington promised its European allies, but it's now a real possibility.

In contrast to the Soviet Union's hamfisted and ideologically driven foreign policymaking and execution, contemporary Russia has skillfully cultivated support for its cause in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. The fact that the West's economic sanctions damaged the U.S. and European economies while turning the Russian ruble into one of the international system's strongest currencies has hardly enhanced Washington's global standing.

Biden's policy of forcibly pushing NATO to Russia's borders forged a strong commonality of security and trade interests between Moscow and Beijing that is attracting strategic partners in South Asia like India, and partners like Brazil in Latin America. The global economic implications for the emerging Russo-Chinese axis and their planned industrial revolution for some 3.9 billion people in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are profound.

In sum, Washington's military strategy to weaken, isolate, or even destroy Russia is a colossal failure and the failure puts Washington's proxy war with Russia on a truly dangerous path. To press on, undeterred in the face of Ukraine's descent into oblivion, ignores three metastasizing threats: 1. Persistently [high inflation and rising interest rates](#) that signal economic weakness. (The first [American bank failure](#) since 2020 is a reminder of U.S. financial fragility.) 2. The threat to stability and prosperity inside European societies already reeling from several waves of [unwanted refugees/migrants](#). 3. The threat of a [wider European war](#).

Inside presidential administrations, there are always competing factions urging the president to adopt a particular course of action. Observers on the outside seldom know with certainty which faction exerts the most influence, but there are figures in the Biden administration seeking an off-ramp from involvement in Ukraine. Even [Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a rabid supporter](#) of the proxy war with Moscow, recognizes that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's demand that the West help him recapture Crimea is a red line for Putin that might lead to a dramatic escalation from Moscow.

Backing down from the Biden administration's malignant and asinine demands for a humiliating Russian withdrawal from eastern Ukraine before peace talks can convene is a step Washington refuses to take. Yet it must be taken. The higher [interest rates rise](#), and the more Washington spends at home and abroad [to prosecute the war](#) in Ukraine, the closer American society moves toward internal political and social turmoil. These are [dangerous conditions](#) for any republic.

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From all the wreckage and confusion of the last two years, there emerges one undeniable truth. [Most Americans are](#) right to be distrustful of and dissatisfied with their government. President Biden comes across as a cardboard cut-out, a stand-in for ideological fanatics in his administration, people that see executive power as the means to [silence political opposition](#) and retain permanent control of the federal government.

Americans are not fools. They know that members of Congress [flagrantly trade stocks](#) based on inside information, creating conflicts of interest that would land most citizens in jail. They also know that since 1965 Washington led them into a series of failed military interventions that severely [weakened American](#) political, economic, and military power.

Far too many Americans believe they have had no real national leadership since January 21, 2021. It is high time the Biden administration found an off-ramp designed to extricate Washington, D.C., from its proxy Ukrainian war against Russia. It will not be easy. Liberal internationalism or, in its modern guise, "moralizing globalism," makes prudent diplomacy arduous, but now is the time. In Eastern Europe, the spring rains present both Russian and Ukrainian ground forces with [a sea of mud](#) that severely impedes movement. But the Russian High Command is preparing to ensure that when the ground dries and Russian ground forces

attack, the operations will achieve an unambiguous decision, making it clear that Washington and its supporters have no chance to rescue the dying regime in Kiev. From then on, negotiations will be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

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