

**What happens in Ukraine will not stay in Ukraine**

BY Dr. Sergiy Korsunsky

***Dr. Sergiy Korsunsky*** *is the Ambassador of Ukraine to Japan.*

Russia’s recent [ultimatum](https://www.rbc.ru/politics/17/12/2021/61bc677a9a794774aa95d5bd) to both the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on Ukraine and European security could set a dangerous precedent, with effects that reach far beyond Europe.

The ultimatum, issued in two draft agreements (one between Russia and the United States, one between Russia and NATO) follows an unprecedented Russian military buildup along the Ukrainian-Russian border. In them, Moscow demands US and NATO guarantees that Ukraine and Georgia will never join NATO.

Moscow wants to resolve an issue, pertaining to European security, by concluding an agreement with the United States, without Europeans and other powers in the room. This mentality is reminiscent of the Cold War, when global affairs were managed by just two countries: the United States and the Soviet Union.

The world has changed, however. Today, we live in a globalized, interconnected world, and what happens in Europe will not stay there. There can no longer be just “European” security. For instance, some 40% of European trade traffic [transits](https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/the-eus-south-china-sea-challenge/) through the South China Sea, and cross-Strait relations have direct implications for the economic security of the United States and Europe, as well as [Japan](https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3138682/taiwan-security-directly-linked-japan-defence-minister-kishi) and the Republic of Korea.

What’s more, the world is connected by vast networks of underwater communication cables serving as the nerves and blood vessels of the digital age-world economy. There is also a net of free trade agreements, logistic highways, and energy supply routes going beyond the oceans and the continents.

Significantly, more than half of the world’s nuclear powers are in the Indo-Pacific. Security concerns include the long list of territorial claims between states in the Indo-Pacific, not to mention the regular testing of ballistic missiles in this region.

So, how can security issues in Europe be addressed in isolation of developments in Asia?

If Russia gets its way, and the United States and its partners honor Moscow’s demands, there will be consequences for the Indo-Pacific security environment that the United States and its regional partners have been busy reshaping. The [Quad](https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-43-the-quads-growing-unity-in-rhetoric-and-goals), [AUKUS](https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-46-after-aukus-present-at-the-creation-in-the-21st-century), and recent bilateral agreements between Japan and Australia exemplify these efforts. Strengthened US security guarantees to several key states in the region serve as a backbone of regional security.

So, if Moscow is serious about obtaining security guarantees, then the scope and format of negotiations must be extended. At minimum, the countries of the G7, plus Russia, China, India, and Australia should be involved in such talks; these countries, after all, cover 70% of the world’s GDP and half of its population. All cards should be on a table, including territorial claims, maritime issues, and the security of logistic networks and communication lanes. This may be ambitious, but the time is right to shape a new world order. A good first step would be to compare notes; no disease can be cured without proper diagnosis.

Until then, there must be agreement that Russia’s demand—that European security be decided on a purely bilateral basis—is unacceptable.

Accepting this would signal that countries can get away with blackmail, intimidation, and even force to achieve their goals. China would likely be emboldened to proceed with its own goals—and not just vis-a-vis [Taiwan](https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-60-aukus-short-and-long-term-implications-for-taiwan), but also in the East and South China Seas.

The nations of the world, therefore, must unite and reject the idea that major powers are entitled to spheres of influence. No major power should have the right to rule over smaller states they deem to be in “their” sphere. While we in Ukraine busily study possible routes of Russian invasion, major powers should realize that the real distinction should be between states which want to live in peace and those which seek illegal advantages over others in their neighborhood. Rules should matter more than power.

Neither of the two biggest knots of tension in world politics—[Ukraine and Taiwan](https://cc.pacforum.org/2022/01/not-so-quiet-in-the-western-pacific/)—should be resolved by force, and if they are, expect the international order to change significantly as it would open the floodgates to more aggressive actions.

PacNet *commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. Alternative viewpoints are always welcomed and encouraged. Click*[*here*](https://www.pacforum.org/pacnet-commentary-subscription-request)*to request a* PacNet *subscription.*