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On the moral significance of military operations:

A response to Hans-Herbert Kögler

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Introduction

In the early hours of 24 February 2022, Russian forces marched into Ukraine to initiate the largest war in Europe since 1945. President Putin believed his 'special military operation' would last three days and, within ten, the Zelensky government and his armed forces would have collapsed. Most western commentators and intelligence agencies agreed. They could see no prospect for Ukraine and assumed that at least half the country, including Kyiv was about to be annexed with ease. In the event, Volodymr Zelensky displayed remarkable courage. His government endured. The Ukrainian armed forces did not simply resist; they inflicted a series of defeats on Russia, forcing Putin to revise his strategy. The fortitude of Ukraine has been remarkable but it has also led to an intense and bitter war, whose end is distant. The invasion surprised Europe and it has demanded an unprecedented response from the west, if Ukraine were not to be subjected to an aggressive, authoritarian power. NATO and EU members have sought to sustain Ukraine with massive military and economic aid and unwavering political and diplomatic support. In his fine article, Hans-Herbert Kögler affirms the moral imperative to support Ukraine.

Why does he feel minded to do this? There is significant scepticism about the policy of supporting Ukraine militarily which, in Europe, is most pronounced in Germany. The pacificist arguments are founded on the principle of the intrinsic immorality of war. On this account, whatever the *jus ad bellum*, there can be no *jus in bello*. In a war, even the most justified belligerent – and their supporters – must necessarily commit acts of violence and atrocity. Therefore, it is always wrong to be party to armed conflict.

Kögler challenges this moral argument: ‘what now needs addressing is the assertive position that a peace—or at least an unconditional ceasefire under the existing circumstances—is to be brought about *at almost any cost’* (Kögler 2023). For him, the pacifist argument demands an unreasonable sacrifice from the Ukrainians: ‘Based on the detailed fivefold syndrome of Putin’s biopolitical matrix, we can now clearly see that it demands *the acceptance of peace solely in the name of naked life*’ (Kögler 2023). Indeed, ‘the demand of an unconditional peace now amounts to the morally obscene request to accept life under conditions of a bio-politically operating and culturally oppressive regime’. Since imperialistic Russian culture, exemplified by the works of Alexander Dugin, essentialises and stigmatises Ukraine, Kögler argues that it is the moral duty of the west, including Germany, to defend Ukrainian independence from Muscovite hegemony: ‘the deniers of *effective solidarity* with the Ukraine, i.e., those that reject military assistance, are the Western complement to Putin’s own denial of Ukrainian citizenship’ (Kögler 2023).

The argument is perceptive and important. Kögler is attempting a transvaluation of European political values. The article is well taken. It is an important philosophical statement. However, Kögler does not discuss the war itself. At the opening of his argument, he cites the famous quotation from Clausewitz that war is a politics by other means. He uses this sentence, not as a cue to discuss the character of this war, nor to analyse the war’s influence upon politics, but only as a way of opening up his moral arguments. Kögler plausibly claims that there is a close connection between politics and morality; both are an expression of collective responsibility and duty. Politics identifies and seeks to achieve the collective goals of a community. Consequently, the political aims which any state adopts in war, necessarily have moral implications. Kögler’s is correct. However, I want to develop Kögler’s argument in an alternative direction. While Kögler remains at the level of

philosophical argumentation - he is concerned with a moral principles; my response grounds that the moral requirement to support Ukraine in military practicalities.

Philosophical discussions of morality have often attempted to establish universal principles of morality, be they deontic or utilitarian. However, whatever universal principles underpin morality, in reality, they have to be applied. As Wittgenstein showed, the application of rules is not secondary; it is a fundamental element of practice and, therefore, practical morality. Of course, here context becomes morally decisive. The realities of a situation and how it is interpreted collectively, inform, influence, even determine, how a morality might be practically applied to a specific case; and, therefore, what morality ultimately is. Kögler has established the fact that the west is morally obliged to support Ukraine in principle. I want to explore what that moral commitment involves in practice. To do that, we need beyond philosophical discussion. We need to analyse the war itself since the character of this war defines the west's moral obligation to Ukraine.

Consequently, I want to ask: What is the character of the Russo-Ukraine war? Given its character, to what kind of support is the west morally obliged – and for how long? To answer these questions, the article begins with an analysis of Clausewitz to establish the connection between concrete military operations on the ground, and higher political and ultimately moral questions. It then goes on to discuss the combat in Ukraine to identify the commitment which comes with it. Finally, it offers an appreciation of the scale and character of the West's moral commitment.

Clausewitz and the Russo-Ukraine War

On War was published posthumously in 1832. As Kögler noted, in Chapter 1, Book One, Clausewitz proposed his famous claim about war; 'War is merely the continuation of policy by other means' (Clausewitz 1989: 87). It was a profound statement from which much of

Clausewitz's subsequent analysis flowed. Nevertheless, Clausewitz's understanding of the relationship between war and politics was more complex and subtle than this famous aphorism. War had to be political for Clausewitz; it could not simply be mindless, disorganised brutality. Some collective, political purpose always animated it. Yet, it was improper to believe that war in all its diverse manifestations could be understood merely as a state policy.

War was political, for Clauswitz. However, because violent conflict which was at the heart of war, it could not be reduced just to politics. It was not unilineal. It was not a simple political – still less a moral – endeavour. It was a continuation of politics *by other means*; not just a continuation of politics. The violence – the other means - mattered.

> War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will; his immediate aim is to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance. War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will. (Clausewitz 1989: 75).

War was a physical battle of wills in which states sought to impose themselves on their rivals – to compel them to submit- through sheer force of arms. As a result of this mutual violence, it assumed a distinctive, multi-dimensionality for Clausewitz.

Clausewitz claimed that war consisted of a 'wondrous trinity'. He fully intended his concept to have religious connotations. For him, like the Holy Trinity, war consisted of three discrete but indivisible elements. Each element had to be acknowledged, but none of these elements were independent; they were, like Christian theology, both separate and one. The concept has been the subject of intense discussion in the literature (see Gat 2001: 27-256; Howard 1983; Aron 1976; Palmgren 2014; Paret 2007; Heuser 2002). What was Clausewitz's Trinity? He described it in a famous passage in Book One:

> War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity--composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone. (Clausewitz 1989: 89)

War not a single, unified being which only modified its colour a little in different situations; it was not a chameleon. On the contrary, war was a multiple, infinite phenomenon. Each war was different and had to be understood in its own terms. War was a malleable, changeable organism because it consisted not of one thing – policy – but three: hatred, chance and policy.

War certainly consisted of policy; it was subjected to reason. Political leaders directed war. It was one of its defining features. However, in this passage about the Trinity, politics – taken by so many to be Clausewitz's defining feature of war - was in fact only one element. Indeed, it is perhaps significant that in this passage, policy was the last element in the Trinity. Equally important – and indeed even prioritised here- were two other elements: firstly, passion. In stark contrast to military scientists in the Age of Reason, Clausewitz insisted that war was not reasonable, reasoned, or limited. War erupted not from rational calculation, but from hatred and enmity. Polities did not fight simply because they sought material advantage – there were surely less wasteful ways to achieve those ends - but because their peoples loathed and feared each other. Because its basis was visceral, there was no logical limit to war. Although it could never reach it, war naturally tended towards an Absolute of untrammelled violence and aggression, when peoples and states sought to eliminate their enemies, whatever the cost.

Finally, and much overlooked, war necessarily consisted of chance and probability. War was not a single act of violence; Clausewitz explicitly claimed that wars were not like

mines, placed under fortress walls, to explode with a single, decisive retort. Because they involved states and peoples, wars necessarily involved long and involved campaigns. States mobilised their armies; they deployed them to fight their enemies. Armies marched out and eventually met in the field. Neither policy – no matter how rational – nor hatred – no matter how passionate - determined the outcome of military operations. However rational the policy, however much a peoples hated their enemy, war involved organisation, planning and execution. In short, commanders needed to design their military operations so that they could subordinate their enemies and achieve the rational aims of their political masters, and fulfil the desires of the people. Military operations themselves were an indispensable and unignorable part of war. The size, weaponry, cohesiveness, and constitution of military forces, the landscape over which they fought, all had a determinate influence of the character of any specific war. Generals managed chance and risk. They knew their own forces and their capabilities; they had to factor in 'fog' and 'friction' into their equations. They inferred what their enemy might be able to do and, on that basis, calculated the probability that their own actions might succeed. Commanders calculated the ratios of time, space and force.

Clausewitz associated his Trinity with three actual constituencies: the state, the people, and the generals.

> The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government. The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army; but the political aims are the business of government alone. (Clausewitz 1989: 89)

Clausewitz certainly believed that the elements of his Trinity correlated with the three poles of political and military action, the state, the people and the commanders, but this correlation

was not absolute. A state – or indeed military commanders – might be animated by hatred for instance; people might be rational.

Nevertheless, while the Trinity was only associated with the three agents, Clausewitz related the domain of chance and probability principally to military commanders. They were the experts in warfare. It was their special duty to conduct campaigns in accordance with the goals of the people and the state. Clearly, Clausewitz believed that all three elements of his Trinity were vital. Nevertheless, since military campaigns were so complex, and their outcomes so uncertain, it seems likely that he saw the domain of chance and probability as paramount; the art of war – not just the rational or irrational motivations for fighting - was crucial to its outcomes. Indeed, although it might famously begin with politics, *On War* is a disquisition on the art of warfare. It is a manual of military operations and, above all, a treatise on command. Book One includes a famous chapter called, 'Military Genius', which is an appreciation of Napoleon's skill as a commander. *On War* is addressed to commanders-in-chief; it explains how to conduct campaigns successfully within the political framework, created by the other two elements of the Trinity. As a professional military officer, chance and probability were unignorable. Indeed, Clausewitz dismissed the work of his predecessors, such as Hans von Bulow, and his contemporary, Antoine-Henri Jomini, because their understanding of military operations was so artificial.

It was not simply that the art of war was important in and of itself to political outcomes. Military operations were never isolated from politics. Once a war had begun, the play of chance – the trajectory of the military campaigns themselves – resonated directly back into the domain of politics. Among contemporary commentators, Hew Strachan, the military historian, has been one of the most influential commentators here. He has argued that the 'liberal' interpretation of Clausewitz which emphasises the political character of war, above the military scientist. Strachan objects in particular to the translation of Clausewitz's

word *Politik* as “policy” rather than use the equally acceptable alternative of “politics” (Strachan 2013: 52). For Strachan, this is significant: ‘This is not just a matter of semantics. “Policy” conveys an impression of direction and clear intent; politics, like war, is an adversarial business, whose implementation is, like war, messy and confused’ (Strachan 2013: 52). Above all, as wars are initiated, the actual fighting influences and changes their political character. Policy changes in the face of operational realities. Strachan therefore argues

> Once war has broken out, two sides clash, and their policies conflict: that reciprocity generates its own dynamic, feeding on hatred, on chance and on the play of military probabilities. War has its own nature, and can have consequences very different from the policies that are meant to be guiding it. In other words war itself shapes and changes policy. (Strachan 2013: 54-5)

States fight wars to achieve political goals but war necessarily changes those goals. The mechanics of campaigning, the judgements which commanders have to make about their chances, must feature immediately in any assessment of the true character of war. In this way, military operations took on a moral dimension. The military technicalities of campaigning were always internally related to the moral goals of fighting in the first place. There was a dialectic between war and the art of war.

This is a long detour into the technicalities of Clausewitz’s writing. It seems a remote from Kögler’s concerns with morality. In what ways might Clauswitz’s trinity be relevant to debates about the morality of the Ukraine War and the west’s support for Ukraine? In fact, the military realities of the Ukraine War – the domain of chance and probability as Clausewitz would have called it – are immediately relevant to thinking about the morality of this war. The situation on the ground has a direct bearing on what moral position it is appropriate for the west to adopt. The military situation has moral relevance.

For instance, most observers expected that Ukraine would be overwhelmed very quickly by the massive Russian onslaught in February 2002. If Putin's invasion had been successful a year ago, the moral question of whether the West should support Ukraine would have been entirely different from the one the west now confronts, even though the invasion stemmed from precisely the same Russian cultural imperative. Today, the West is being asked to support a long inter-state war, because the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been successful. If they had collapsed, the West would instead have been called on to support a government in exile and, perhaps, to aid a nationalist insurgency in the country. Such a situation would have raised distinctive moral questions: Is it right to support an armed civil resistance which might expose civilians to retribution? Is it right to support resistance movements which Russia would have described as terrorists? Consequently, although they seem mundane, in practice, the realities of military operations have a determinate effect on moral questions. Moral principles may be universal, but the military situation constitutes the way those principles will actually be applied. Accordingly, it is useful to consider the current character of this war and its likely trajectory over the coming months- and probably years.

The Russo-Ukraine War

The Russian invasion was meant to be quick. In practice, a Russian coup de main has become a gruelling military campaign, in which the Russians have probably taken 180,000 casualties, with perhaps 44,000 killed; other estimates are higher. The Ukrainian casualties are less but they are still considerable: probably 15,000-20,000 soldiers killed and a further 80,000 wounded. The initial invasion having failed, this war has consisted of four identifiable phases; the invasion (24 February to 1 April), the Russian concentration on the Donbas and the south (2 April to 29 August), the Kharkiv counter-offensive (30 August to 9 November

when Kherson was retaken), and the current winter stasis. We are about to enter a fifth phase; a renewed offensive by Ukraine and counter-actions by the Russians.

Each of the four phases have been distinctive but they have been defined by a signature urban battle. The major battles in this war have all taken place in or around towns or cities. Phase 1 was defined by the Battle of Kyiv: a monumental and decisive victory for Ukraine in which they repulsed Russian forces, inflicting heavy losses on them, and denied Putin his strategic goals. The Battles of Mariupol and Severdonetsk dominated Phase 2. In Phase 3 Kharkiv was relieved, Izyum and, eventually Kherson fell, as Russian troops abandoned these vital urban objectives. Throughout the winter, the Battle of Bakhmut has raged.

In each of its phases, the Russo-Ukraine War has been characterised by urbanised warfare. Although many strikes have taken place in the field, most of the close combat has taken place in, around, and for urban objectives. Since the 1990s, many scholars have argued that warfare was bound to urbanise since an increasingly large part of the human population was living in cities (Ashworth 1991; Glenn 1996, Hills 2004; Graham 2004; Kilcullen 2013). In 1960, there were 3 billion humans on the planet, of whom 0.5 billion lived in cities. In 2020, 3.5 billion humans – half the world's population - lived in urban areas. In her work on new wars, Mary Kaldor (1998) described the emergence of ethnic conflict as states failed, but she also claimed that these conflicts were becoming increasingly urbanised, partially for demographic reasons. In her most recent work with Saskia Sassen, for instance, she has affirmed this claim. She has argued that 'so-called old wars – the wars of the modern period from the late eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century (both interstate and civil wars) – largely took place in the countryside' (Kaldor and Sassen 2020: 8). With massive urban growth, 'there is a proliferation of forms of violence that find in cities a conducive (Kaldor and Sassen 2020: 5), not least because 'new identity politics is being

nurtured in cities' (Kaldor and Sassen 2020: 7). The explosion of the urban population and increased ethno-political tensions, which have followed it, have precipitated urban conflict.

Persuasive though these arguments are for civil conflicts, they are less relevant to the Russo-Ukraine War. The mere increase in urban populations and intensified ethnic divisions between them has less purchase in Ukraine. Though it has several large cities, Ukraine is not highly urbanised country, nor were its cities ethnically divided in 2022; on the contrary, citizens, whether Ukrainian or Russian speaking, overwhelmingly unified against the invasion. By contrast, there are more immediate military reasons why Russian and Ukrainian forces have congregated on cities and towns in 2022. In 1943-44, when the Red Army drove the Wehrmacht out of Ukraine, it deployed over 3 million soldiers in twenty armies. This force was so massive, it formed a dense front right across the country. Significant battles took place in towns and cities during this campaign, but most of the fighting took place in the field, because that was where combat forces were deployed.

In 2022, the campaign geometries were quite different. The Russians did not have enough troops to advance on broad fronts. The invaded with a force of 190,000, but the combat element was much smaller; about 120,000 or so troops. The Russians therefore attacked not along a front, but on axes in the north, south and east. They converged on urban centres. The Russians recognised the strategic significance of Kyiv; it was the seat of government and the capital. Its seizure would have been decisive. In February and March, they sought to take the city, initially taking Hostomel Airport and then mounting a thrust from the north. In the south, cities were no less a focus of Russian efforts. The Russians needed to clear the Black Sea coast and had to take Mariupol as an important port. In the east, they could not advance further without taking Kharkiv or securing Severodonetsk and its road system. Russian operations relied on the seizure of key urban areas, sometimes because they were politically or economically important, but more often because they were operationally

significant; in order to prosecute their campaign, they needed to secure the road and rail-lines and the bridges which ran through urban areas. They could not bypass these towns as they risked being attacked in their rear.

The Ukrainians were also drawn to urban areas. The Ukrainian Army was also about 120,000 although the principal combat force consisted of five brigades of about 30,000 troops. The Ukrainians could not, therefore, defend all their territory. They did not have enough troops to protect their borders by creating a front. Instead, Ukraine concentrated their forces. Initially, they planned to defend in the east, in the Joint Forces Operating Area, which they thought Russia was most likely to attack. However, in response to the Russian assault on Kyiv, they redeployed some forces to the capital. They repelled Russian in a series of urban battles in and around Kyiv. In the south and east, they defended from towns which they recurrently turned into urban fortresses. The current Battle of Bakhmut is an excellent example of this process. Russian and Ukrainian forces have converged on urban areas. So, the war has coagulated into a series of gruelling urban sieges.

Up until the battle of Bakhmut, the Siege of Mariupol was one of the most terrible illustrations of the sieges which have characterised this war. During the invasion, Mariupol, a city of 100,000, had become a prime strategic objective, critical to the Russian attempt to link the Donbas to the Crimea. Russian troops began to encircle and bombard Mariupol at the outset of the war. On 12 March, the Russians committed to a full scale assault of the city. For eight weeks, three Russian regiments (14,000 troops) fought their way into the city against 3000 defenders, consisting of an Azov armoured battalion, a marine battalion, and an assortment of other Ukrainian forces.[1] By 20 April, Russian forces finally surrounded the Azovstahl Steel Works still held by a few hundred Ukrainians, who had turned the factory

[1] https://twitter.com/JominiW/status/1509745733418762241/photo/1; https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-24

into fortress.[2] Eventually, on 20 May, the city finally fell. In the course of the siege, the Ukrainian defenders inflicted severe casualties on Russian forces; 6000 were killed, according to Ukraine.[3] In each case, the Russians have resorted to massive artillery bombardments to reduce Ukrainian defences. Forces have necessarily converged on key objectives, almost inevitably located in urban areas. In Ukraine, both sides have been compelled to fight for and in urban areas, where a series of inner-urban micro-sieges have developed. The combat has localised into and around urban centres.

The Moral Implications of Military Operations

The Russo-Ukraine War has displayed a highly distinctive anatomy. It has involved a series of urban battles. What is the significance of this urbanization for the morality of the war? At first glance, it does not seem obvious. In the face of cultural imperialism, the west would still be obliged to support Ukraine.

However, once we consider Clausewitz's trinity, the operational conditions of this war become materially relevant to the west's policy and the morality of that policy, as Kögler argued. The war has stagnated into a series of attritional sieges; the fighting around Bakhmut over the last sixth months has been typical. Consequently, it has required increasingly heavy military support to sustain the Ukrainian effort in these intense battles. The moral debate about the provision of tanks was not inevitable or intrinsic: it was a result of this military exigency. Moral debates have been stimulated by the very character of operations.

It is morally significant that the prognosis for the war is not good. If the urbanised pattern of the first four phases persists, then it is difficult to be optimistic. The Ukrainians seek to re-take their sovereign territory. A second counter-offensive is inevitable in the

[2] https://mwi.usma.edu/a-firsthand-account-of-the-battle-of-mariupol/

[3] https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-ukraine-conflict-mariupol-hostages-b2043195.html; https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/21/ukraine-mariupol-azovstal-siege-timeline/

coming months. The Russians know this. Russians forces may indeed be poor; their commanders have been incompetent. Yet, they have had months to prepare defensive positions in Luhansk around Svatove and Kreminna, and in Zaporizhzhia. They have created extensive field fortifications. It seems very likely that they have fortified urban strongholds too, in order to avoid any repeat of Izyum or Kherson. General Gerasimov has tried to create a more integrated command system to orchestrate this defence. A collapse is always possible.

Yet, it seems more likely that just as the Russians struggled to reduce Ukraine’s urban fortresses in 2022, as they attacked, the Ukrainians will similarly toil to re-take towns and cities in 2023. For all the supersonic weaponry and cyber capabilities working at the speed of light, this war is likely to glaciate into a series of long siege operations, ‘inner urban micro-sieges’ (King 2021); the next battles will probably around Melitopol, Berdyansk, or Mariupol. The war is likely to continue throughout this year and into next. Perhaps in late 2024, or early 2025, mutual exhaustion may descend and the parties might be willing to reach some angry and unsatisfactory settlement.

Ukraine’s western supporters need to be morally ready for this eventuality. It is likely that this war will be long. The long-term military support, which Ukraine will therefore require, demands a very high level of moral commitment; pacifist voices are likely to get stronger. The west will have to consider even more military supplies, of ever greater sophistication, sensitivity, and cost. They need to be prepared for the moral aspects of the debates about that equipment, and whether their provision risks an escalation which would itself have moral implications. A long, urbanised Ukraine War will pose a different, more difficult moral question to short conflict. How is it possible to support Ukraine will also fulfilling the moral obligation to avoid military escalation?

There are even more complex moral conundrums. Urban warfare in the twenty-first century has a highly distinctive anatomy. On the one hand, it has involved intense localised

sieges of and, indeed, inside urban areas in Ukraine. Yet, this is not its only feature. Kaldor and Sassen noticed that transnationalisation was also feature of urbanised new wars. For instance, they observed that during the Syrian civil war ‘the explosion of house prices in London can be explained partly in terms of the money-laundering activities of Syrian warlords’ (Kaldor and Sasses 2020: 7). Aleppo and London were connected. A similar process has been at work during the Russo-Ukraine War. Even as their troops have been fighting in and for Ukrainian towns and cities, the combatants have sought to address, engage, mobilise and recruit support from across a global urban archipelago. Russian and Ukraine have engaged in information operations in each other’s countries, across Europe and, indeed, the wider world to promote their goals. They have actively sought to engage with ethnic diasporas in other cities. The Ukrainian government, armed forces and people have been notably successful in these operations. From the very beginning of the war, they have conducted a sophisticated information operation on social media, mobile phones and official outlets, seeking to generate and sustain western support, while undermining and discrediting Russian narratives. The Ukrainians have been clever about releasing footage of Russian defeats and atrocities, while carefully concealing their own casualties. The result is that cities and towns across Europe have been actively recruited into the War. It was noticeable, for instance, that even as Ukrainians soldiers fought for Severodonetsk last spring, the Russian oligarch and Putin supporter, Roman Abramovich was forced to sell Chelsea Football Club on 30 May, as part of a wider policy of sanctioning Russia. London has been implicated in the battles in Ukraine as a subsidiary urban theatre. The transnationalisation of the urban battles in Ukraine complicates the moral questions of how to support Ukraine because these operations now raise delicate civil-politico issues in western cities. How does one align the moral imperative to support Ukraine with the requirement to maintain civil cohesion in the

west, and to operate legally against foreign nationals even if they are Russian? It is not obvious.

The war's likely end also has moral implications. The current urban conditions of this war suggest that the most likely outcome of this war is a division of Ukraine. Eventually in late 2024 or 2025, it is likely that both sides, exhausted from the fighting, will accept some kind of unsatisfactory settlement. Russia is likely to occupy some of the country, including Crimea. The west might need to be pragmatically prepared to accept and indeed to recommend that de facto division, even though it is morally abhorrent at the abstract level. Indeed, at this point, and against those who advocate that only total victory for Ukraine is acceptable, it may be more morally defensible to encourage Ukraine to agree to a loss of some its sovereign territory. In particular, it is likely Ukraine will have to accept the annexation of Crimea, and some of Luhansk and Donetsk. However, in order to ensure its future security, the west may also be obliged to accept Ukraine into NATO as a full member. Without future NATO guarantees, independent Ukraine is unlikely to feel secure with Russia occupying some of its territory and potentially able to mount another invasion in the future. This is not optimal for NATO, extending its immediate border with Russia into a highly sensitive geographic region, and bringing its forces close to Russia's Black Sea Fleet port at Sevastapol. Yet, it seems likely that when this war finally grinds to an end, the west will find itself committed in ways which might have seemed inconceivable on February 23 2022.

The west has a moral obligation to Ukraine. As Kögler argues, there is an imperative to assist a country which has aligned itself with western Europe, especially since the EU and NATO have actively encouraged it. As a de facto member of its political community, Europe has an obligation to Ukraine. Yet, the west also has a moral obligation to itself. If the west were to fail to support Ukraine in the long hard war into which that country has been forced, it would also betray itself as a moral actor. It would deny the very collective commitments

and moral principles on which its own unity is founded. It would subvert itself. Hans-Herbert Kögler's fine article ensures that Europe – that we - cannot forget that moral obligation.

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