

# Global Security Disorder

**Kay Bailey Hutchison**

The first half of 2022 had a profound effect on the global security order and set the stage for the discussions of foreign policy thinkers and practitioners at the Aspen Security Forum and the Aspen Strategy Group Summer Workshop.

In February, Russia invaded Ukraine, the largest hostile land invasion of a sovereign nation in Europe since World War II. In June, NATO adopted its once-in-a-decade Strategic Concept that recognized major power competition and a potential for conflict that must be addressed.

For the near term, the U.S. and our European allies must contain Vladimir Putin's ambitions to expand Russia's borders through hostile land grabs.

What did Putin expect when he invaded the sovereign nation of Ukraine, and what did he get? His stated goal when his forces advanced on the capital Kyiv was to take over the city and topple the government. He has long professed that the breakup of the Soviet Union was the worst event in the history of Russia. He intended to recreate the Russian domination of now democratic republics. This started in 2008 with the invasion of Georgia, where Russians have cracked down on two provinces hardening the border separating Georgia from its two provinces, Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>1</sup> It continued in 2014 with the takeover and now militarization of Crimea in Ukraine. Putin set up Russian separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region escalating the use of guerilla tactics for several years.<sup>2</sup>

After each of these transgressions, there have been sanctions and NATO allies and partners have denounced the actions. But the sanctions did not deter Putin's march. He has continued to build on his ill-gotten gains. He has maintained a steady stream of rhetoric, misinformation, and cyberattacks on NATO allies, attempting to divide countries within their own populations.<sup>3</sup>

It is presumed that Putin thought NATO would be divided over his further invasion of Ukraine—a side benefit of taking Ukraine's territory based on his stated premise that it had never left Russia, ignoring the democratically-elected government of now over thirty years.

So, what did Putin get? His tanks rolling toward Kyiv ran out of fuel; his troops hastily retreated back to the Donbas region leaving their tanks; and he magnified a leader, Volodymyr Zelensky, who has inspired his people and the world by fighting to keep his nation whole and free.<sup>4</sup> Rather than divide NATO, Putin significantly strengthened the alliance and prompted its expansion given the application of two new allies, Finland and Sweden, partners that add significant military capabilities and resilient democracies.

But Putin's miscalculation has more importantly had a more long-term impact on the reset of global security. The expansion of NATO now has become an important message to Chinese President Xi Jinping, and the unity isn't limited to European partnerships.

At NATO's heads-of-state summit in June in Madrid, Spain, four major Asian partners were invited: Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Japan. NATO is becoming the convener for like-minded nations that prioritize human rights, free press, and rules-based competition for trade. The purpose is to expand the security umbrella for self-governing countries. NATO allies are transatlantic countries, but NATO has long included strong Pacific democracies as valued partners. In the NATO mission in Afghanistan, many of NATO's forty partner countries participated with allies.<sup>5</sup> Because of the current malign activities of both Russia and China, those partnerships will grow in interoperability.

The Strategic Concept adopted at the Madrid summit is a bold plan to build defenses against further Russian aggression and deterrence for China's pressure on its Asian neighbors.<sup>6</sup> President Xi's aggressive efforts to establish land and water infrastructure throughout Europe, Africa, and South America has been dubbed the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

NATO is now increasing its military presence in Europe from 40,000 to 300,000.<sup>8</sup> The plan would prioritize interoperability of these forces through more joint training exercises.

The acceptance of Finland and Sweden into the alliance will add economic and military strength as joint security measures increase to deal with Russian aggression and focus turns to relations with China.

In my view, economic trade is the different factor in relations with China compared to Russia and is the most potent leverage against their aggressive tactics. China's economy depends on manufacturing exports. Trade fuels their military buildup and domestic stability.

A united coalition of European and Asian democracies, adding like-minded Middle Eastern oil-rich countries, could cripple the Chinese economy if China goes too far outside the rules-based order of free and fair trade and overuses economic leverage as a tool to retaliate against countries that stand up to them. The most stark recent example is China's trade embargo on Australia based on its perceived discrimination against allowing government-owned Huawei into the Australian secure communications networks.<sup>9</sup>

President Xi's strategy has been affected by President Putin's missteps. The unity of the world's most competitive economies could raise a dilemma for China. If President Xi tries to double-down on Taiwan, as he has on Hong Kong, violating agreements on "One Country, Two Systems," he risks losing vital trade requirements for China's domestic viability.

The U.S. and its NATO allies face choices, too. How do we deal with tensions in the South China Sea, with Taiwan, and along the coast of Japan without jeopardizing trade and its importance to us? What would deter Chinese aggression without starting a costly confrontation?

Any strategy starts with unity of purpose and commitment by the world's largest economies. While we must continue to build modern defense capabilities, the best leverage for our common security may be economic interdependence.

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**Kay Bailey Hutchison** stepped down from her term as U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO in Brussels, Belgium in 2021. During 3.5 years, she focused on the importance of U.S. leadership in the alliance and strengthening the trans-Atlantic bond that provides the security umbrella for Europe and North America. From 1993-2013, she was the U.S. Senator representing Texas. There, she was elected by her peers to Chair the Republican Policy Committee, the fourth highest leadership position. She was Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce Committee and Chairman of the Military Construction Committee on Appropriations. She served two terms as Chairman of the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Significant legislation included reauthorization and reform of NASA with Senator Bill Nelson and the Hutchison-Mikulski legislation establishing a new retirement vehicle, the Kay Bailey Hutchison Spousal IRA. As Texas State Treasurer, 1991-1993, she proposed limits on state debt which the state legislature adopted and lead the successful defeat of a state income tax. Ambassador Hutchison is the author of three books, including the bestseller *American Heroines*. The Dallas City Council named the city's convention center in her honor in 2013. She earned a B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin and a J.D. from the UT law school. She is a member of NASA's Advisory Council, Senior Advisor at CSIS, and a member of the Aspen Strategy Group.

<sup>1</sup> Jack Detsch, "12 Years After Russian Invasion, Georgia Sees No End in Sight," *Foreign Policy*, August 10, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/10/russia-invasion-georgia-12-years-no-end-ambassador-david-bakradze-interview/>.

<sup>2</sup> Becky Sullivan, "Russia's at War with Ukraine. Here's How We Got Here," NPR, February 24, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/02/12/1080205477/history-ukraine-russia>.

<sup>3</sup> Brad Smith, "Defending Ukraine: Early Lessons from the Cyber War," Microsoft Corporation, June 22, 2022, <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2022/06/22/defending-ukraine-early-lessons-from-the-cyber-war/>.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew E. Kramer and Neil MacFarquhar, "Russia in Broad Retreat from Kyiv, Seeking to Regroup from Battering," *The New York Times*, April 2, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/02/world/europe/ukraine-russia-kyiv.html>.

<sup>5</sup> "The U.S. War in Afghanistan." Council on Foreign Relations, accessed September 22, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

<sup>6</sup> "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 29, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," Council on Foreign Relations, January 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

<sup>8</sup> Sabine Siebold, Marine Strauss, and Mark Heinrich, "NATO to Boost Troops on High Alert to Over 300,000-Stoltenberg," *Reuters*, June 27, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nato-massively-increase-high-readiness-forces-300000-stoltenberg-2022-06-27/>.

<sup>9</sup> Chelsea Mes, "Albanese Calls for China to End Trade Sanctions on Australia," *Bloomberg*, July 23, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-23/albanese-calls-for-china-to-end-trade-sanctions-on-australia>.