Frontlines and Fault Lines: Russia, Ukraine, and Beyond
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GuC5SUi-Vs&list=PL7fuyfNu8jfP8TWSJzPCsyScNGwbW6xbQ&index=24

Speakers

- Condoleezza Rice, Co-Chair, Aspen Strategy Group; Tad and Dianne Taube Director and Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow on Public Policy, Hoover Institution, Stanford University; 66th U.S. Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State
- Pasi Rajala, Political State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, Finland
- Halyna Yanchenko, Member, Supreme Council of Ukraine; Head of Investment Taskforce for Defense Industry
- Susan Glasser, Staff Writer and Columnist, The New Yorker
- **Moderator:** Andrea Mitchell, NBC News

Mitchell

Thank you so much. Ambassador Nick Burns, it is my honor to be here having covered Nick Burns at the NSC, at the State Department, NATO and then in China. And of course, Secretary of State, former Secretary of State, former National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, and the honor of having covered President George Bush 41 and the transformational period at the end of the Cold War, and to be with our fellow panelists, I'm incredibly honored and pleased to be back here in Aspen. So thank all of you, and it is a pivotal moment. Just a note, a personal note, when I'm in Aspen and elsewhere. Now, I never come on a stage without my telephone. Some of you may remember that I was without my cell phone a number of years ago with the DNI when a lot of news happened involving Vladimir Putin and President Trump in the first term, and my producer had to crawl below the cameras and pass me a note and the rest sort of made a little bit of history. So I always have myself in case anything were to happen. Secretary Rice, let me start with you. A lot has been happening in Russia this week. Last week has been escalating its attacks against Ukraine. All reports are that Moscow is not backing off, that Putin is not moved by President Trump's announcement about the 50 day ultimatum and the threat of secondary sanctions. And we can discuss that, because they would be very hard to enforce. What could be done to get Vladimir Putin to agree to a ceasefire?

Rice
Well first of all, it's a pleasure to be with you, Andrea. Andrea actually covered me at the State Department, and always I will say fairly but with a certain edge. So we're not expecting any edge today, right? Andrea, yes, right. So this, I just want to say first to Ukrainian people that their bravery and their toughness and their perseverance and their determination to see a free Ukraine has inspired the world. And I hope you know that**.** Now I've known Vladimir Putin for a long time. I got to know him pretty well, and so I think the first thing to recognize is that his

aspiration is one that is not going to be easily met, and that is an aspiration to re-establish the Russian Empire. And I say the Russian Empire, not the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire. He actually once told me, Condi, you know us, Russia has only been great when it's been ruled by great men like Peter the Great and Alexander the second. So that lets you know where he is.

Mitchell
He didn't mention Catherine the Great.

Rice
She was a woman. That didn't count. But he also didn't mention Stalin or Lenin. And so this is about the Russian Empire, and that cannot be a Russian Empire if there is an independent Ukraine. And we have to understand that that is a very difficult aspiration through which you to break through. But I do think that we are going to see over the next several months exactly how much Vladimir Putin can continue to expend on this war. We're in the fighting season now. They are throwing millions of young men at the front. They have had 1 million casualties. The British estimate that they had 100,000 deaths this year. I just want you to understand, these are not the blonde boys from St Petersburg and Moscow. These are poor kids from Dagestan and from Khabarovsk. And if you think he cares one iota about loss of life, when he talked to a mother in Dagestan and said, “well, at least he didn't die of alcohol, and you're going to get an apartment,” that tells you something about the callousness of Vladimir Putin. So it's not loss of life that will stop him. They are at the same time that they're grinding on the front, and it's very slow, because the Ukrainians are very tough. At the same time they're grinding at the front in a kind of World War I style they have adopted now-terrorist attacks against the Ukrainian people, and that's all that you can call these drone attacks and these missile attacks against cities, against kindergartens, against hospitals. These are pure and civil terrorist attacks. Now in the fighting season, which is only another three or four months, we will see how far they've advanced. But I think the best news that we could possibly give to the Ukrainian people is that the United States and Europe have finally aligned around the idea that Vladimir Putin will not be stopped with words. He will only be stopped if he believes that he can go no further, he can win no further, and then maybe he decides that he's done enough and he can claim victory, but without continually arming the Ukrainian people, without showing Vladimir Putin that you're not going to leave Ukraine exposed, I think he will keep going. So my answer to how do you stop him is that you show strength, you show resolve, and you back Ukraine. And I do believe that this last week was a turning point. It was a turning point because the President is angry with Putin because he has, in effect, made the President look bad. I think the Europeans have been quite brilliant. And please give my best to Alex Stubb, who helped me tremendously on Georgia. And the Europeans have pulled this together in a way that America can accept it. And so I'm more optimistic now that we have at least alignment between the United States and Europe. We just have to keep pushing to keep that alignment over the next several months.

Mitchell
And given the President's past affinity for Putin, do you think this can last?

Rice

Well, I've been so sure about the affinity for Putin. You know, I think there's a lot of complication there. It has to do with the Russia hoax. Part of it, it has to do with Ukraine and the phone call that was the impeachment charge. So I don't think there's, I'm not going to go to the "Putin is my buddy" side. But whatever that personal relationship was, it is no more. And I think we just have to keep and I'm quite sure there are people around the President, very experienced people around the President, who are continually pointing out that Vladimir Putin doesn't react to words. He reacts to strength.

Mitchell
Halyna, do you think this is real and that the President of the United States will keep his commitment to President Zelenskyy?

Yanchenko
Well, this is what all Ukrainians hope for, because I should tell you, this is not a lot of fun to live in war for three and a half years. This is not fun to wake up at 2 AM at night, to go away from your bedroom to the corridor or bathroom, to send your children to the back to sleep in the bathtub literally, so they are protected with two walls if the head actually attacks the home they live. This is not fun, and that's why Ukrainians want to the end of this war like no one else in the world. I believe that President Trump gave so many have created so many opportunities for Vladimir Putin to stop this war over the past six months, he opened so many windows of opportunities, but Putin has simply jumped out of those windows like reckless political suicide, because he does not really want to establish friendship or friendly relations with West he feels himself much more comfortable in the companies of authoritarian regimes like North Korea or like Iran, because they they simply speak the same language, a language of disrespect to human rights, a language of repressions to their own society. And actually even more, they, over the past three years, they created a very solid coalition, a coalition of war. And now it's not only a problem for Ukraine, but actually a problem, problem for the whole world, because we are talking about the growing threat to the whole security architecture. So yes, I really hope that what President Trump is saying now is for real, and it will sustain because I'm also a huge fan of US. I believe that the only country which can actually end the war, the unprovoked Russian war in Ukraine, is United States. The United States has the greatest tool to stop this war, and the tool is US dollars. About 70% of all global trade and global wireless are being made with US dollars. So basically, when we are talking about secondary sanctions, if countries, like, around the globe, will be given a choice whether they want to work with US dollar system and be a part of global trade and global economics, or they want to work with Russia. It will probably turn the Russian economy into a fish food, and that will force Putin to stop the war. Putin can be Putin does not understand the language of negotiations. He showed it so many times. He was breaking his words and showing disrespect, not only to President Trump, but also to the whole United States. So the only way to actually negotiate with him or get something from him is to apply force, and that's why I really keep my fingers crossed for what is going on. Because over the past six years, Ukrainians went through the whole spectrum of emotions from the times when all military assistance was suspended and about 40% of military assistance of all weapons in Ukraine were from us to this week, when we hear the negotiations about somehow and stuff and stuff like that. So yeah, let's hope for better and less trust in us.

Mitchell
Pasi, you share, Finland shares, an 800 mile border, and you've joined NATO, which infuriated Vladimir Putin and he threatened reprisals. What are your concerns about Russia expanding the war, if, if it escalates and expanding it to frontline states?

Rajala
Well, first of all, I want to say that I shared the slight optimism of Professor Rice. I mean, a couple of reasons. One is the incredible resilience and bravery of the Ukrainian people. They have indeed earned our support, full support. Number two, things are not going that great for Vladimir Putin at the moment. I mean, the situation in the front is dire. We know that, but Putin is not able to, he's barely able to replace the casualties he's taking on the front lines, so he's not in no position to build up a strategic reserve, military reserve, to shift the balance in the front lines. So all the gradual, incremental success comes at an extremely high price. And another cause for optimism is the weakness of the Russian economy. They're really suffering right now because everything evolves around the military complex, and the military complex is producing, well, we have to give him that. But beyond that, the Russian economy is swamped out of investment component from overseas. Interest rates are high. Inflation is 10% and one key element with one handicap, both for the military and economies, lack of manpower. The demographics are awful. 500,000 Russians are still outside the country, and also globally, the news from Syria and Iran, they're not good news for Putin and now the latest commitment by the United States and Europe to deliver more weapons to Ukrainians and to exert more economic pressure on Russia. So I'm slightly optimistic.

Mitchell
Halyna referred to the halt, the suspension when Congress had not approved the supplemental, and then we had another brief suspension from the Pentagon just last week. Susan, from your deep experience in your reporting, was that just Colby and Secretary Hegseth have that the Pentagon without notifying the White House, the State Department, the National Security Advisor, which is one and the same?

Glasser
Well, it's a great question Andrea, especially, because either way, it raises a whole host of interesting questions for us. Either the president of the United States wasn't informed about such an important national security move, or, on the other hand, he hasn't changed his mind about it. Now I know the majority of people in this room, they're cheering for that optimistic scenario. They're cheering for the idea that this is actually a turning point. I think something Secretary Rice said is very important for Vladimir Putin. It's not so much about the words. He's seen five American presidents come and go at this point, and he is much more interested in actions. He's defined the invasion of Ukraine that he launched as essentially an existential conflict. He said that Ukraine does not have the right to exist as a country. And you know, in many ways, it strikes me that what's happened over the first few months of this second Trump administration is to underscore almost the impossibility that words or offers of any kind are really going to dissuade Putin from continuing to wage this war. I think it's an extremely important point

that Donald Trump has already tried showering Putin with concessions, and what happened Putin did not accept those concessions. Remember this, what we're talking about is what a lot of the smart foreign policy types thought would happen at the beginning of the Trump administration. They thought Trump might come back in and he might look to increase some weapons to Ukraine. He might join hands with the Europeans in order to gain leverage in negotiations. That's not what Trump did. In fact, he did the opposite, and he went over the top in praising Putin, in saying, essentially, we will give you concessions that for Ukraine might have actually been devastating. Might have been including the United States, pressuring Ukraine to make territorial concessions to Russia of territory that Putin hadn't even conquered militarily, and yet, even that wasn't enough for Putin to accept the deal. So I find that we're at a moment here where a new realism has to kick in. And I think it's a great question. I don't know the answer to it. I don't think any of us know the answer to it. What is it that would cause Putin to stop the war? Because I think we can say pretty persuasively that it hasn't been even what we would consider to be significant concessions. Number one, it hasn't been the United States and Europe linking arms or sending weapons capabilities, because, in fact, that's actually what we had in the last few years in the Biden administration, billions and billions of dollars of military assistance, an enormous consensus between the United States and our European partners, if it were a matter of sending Patriot missiles and attack them to Ukraine, that that would be enough to cause Putin to end the war, then the war would have already ended, because the United States has already sent Patriot missiles and ATACMS to Ukraine, and unfortunately and tragically, it hasn't resulted In dissuading Putin at all.

Mitchell
You wanted to say something?

Rajala
Yeah, if I may. Susan has a good point. I mean, please take it from me. We Finns are not the ones for false optimism. Absolutely not, I mean.

Glasser
Let’s get back to the Finnish brand here.

Rajala
Exactly, yeah. But the point is, Ukraine is extremely important for Vladimir Putin, for whatever reasons, but the ultimate goal of Vladimir Putin is to say this regime, and if the economy behind it is going to crumble, he will have to redo his cost benefit analysis, and maybe, maybe with our pressure, he can come to another conclusion.

Rice
I just want to say I agree that we were aligned. I do think there was a kind of strategic decision early on, we kept giving Ukraine weapons in a rather incremental way. And you know, I think had… the Russians were really on their back foot early on. They thought this war was going to be five days. They were stuck in that convoy, because they don't know how to move forward. And I mean literally as a strategic problem.

Mitchell
And delivery was slow.

Rice
Delivery was slow, but it was also we'll, maybe we'll give them tanks. Well, we'll debate tanks. Now we'll give them tanks. Maybe we'll give him ATACMS. So now we'll debate ATACMS. If you'd given them everything at the beginning of the war, the Russians were on their back foot, they could have won this war out. So let's admit that. You know, the early stages of this look different. The second point I want to make is very much in the line with what you're saying. I do think there's a chance. I wouldn't give it a big chance, but Vladimir Putin does want to save his regime. Vladimir Putin may at some point decide, all right, I will declare, you know, he can make up things. I will declare myself victorious, because I've taken this and I've taken that, and I have Crimea and so forth and so on. And I want to add one point to the Russian economic woes, the oil and gas industry, which is the source of both Russia's power and Vladimir Putin's personal wealth, is in very bad shape. And it's in very bad shape because they are harvesting the you know, first of all, they're selling discounted oil, but they're harvesting the proceeds from oil and gas to run the war. They are not investing in the oil and gas infrastructure. They're having breakdowns. They're having trouble manufacturing, and they will never develop Sakhalin and those far reaching islands, because the only technology exists in the four super majors: Exxon, BP, Shell, and maybe Total, so if he looks out all of that, and you know, things are starting to happen. That Transport Minister apparently decided he had enough. He killed himself. People in his administration are falling out of windows. They must be clumsy people, somehow. And we know that the GAZPROM released, leaked, a memo that they will not be profitable again until 2035. There is a lot of churning inside of the oligarchy that I don't think will necessarily change Putin's mind. But might he finally decide that he's quote, “won enough.” I think that's the thing that we have to hope for. And if he realizes that the Trump pause is not coming, that might contribute to his sense that maybe it's time to cut your losses here.

Mitchell
Well, let me ask you this, because secondary sanctions threatened after 50 days, they would be really hard to enforce. Would they not? Just today, the US briefed the UN for the first time on a multilateral report about North Korea's arming of Russia. There's no way to sanction North Korea more than it's sanctioned already, and ignoring us on the nuclear front, which is another whole issue. So, but you would have to sanction China on oil purchases and India massively on oil purchases, and I guess ultimately go to the SWIFT regime on dollar transactions. I don't know how vulnerable it would be to that.

Rice
Well, you're right. It would be very hard to enforce. Look, we were stuck with oil for food in Iraq, and to call it leaky after 10 years was very clear. But look, I think the threat of secondary sanctions, and I do believe that one reason the administration has not fully backed the **[Lindsey]** Graham Bill is they would actually like some kind of waiver so that they can make decisions about what to do. If you just have blanket, and they're forced to do things, it doesn't

give the President much negotiating leverage. Now, if you're China, however, with an economy that's not in great states, or you are India, which really doesn't want to be on the wrong side of this, maybe you start thinking about whether that discounted Russian oil is really worth it under the threat of secondary sanctions. So perhaps you never even impose them. You just use the threat of them. And I think that may be a bit of what is emerging.

Mitchell
Halyna, I want to about the shake up in the Ukrainian cabinet. The Financial Times reported that it was the result of pressure from President Trump in the phone call on July 4, including replacement of the US ambassador, the Ukrainian ambassador to the US, whose term, after four years, arguably expired, but she was a particular irritant, and the Speaker of the House had complained about her, among others in that world. But what is the take inside Ukraine about the changes in the cabinet?

Yanchenko
Well, these changes are still ongoing, so I guess we will still have some use for me personally, as a person who is leading a task force on investment in defense industry in Parliament, the main, basically sector is Ministry of Defense, and I feel kind of sorry that Ministry of Strategic Industries was basically now not a separate body, but under Ministry of Defense well, but we'll see. But the former Prime Minister is appointed for this position, so he's like, really a great politician - experienced. He is very smart, so I'm optimistic about that, and I really hope that Ukrainian defense industry will have a great partner in Ukrainian government, because actually we, actually we sustain, and we are still resilient as a country because of the passion of our people, but also a passion of those who invested in defense industry. I'll give you some examples, and you will be amazed, just as I am amazed every day when I'm meeting people from defense industry. Over the past three years, our defense industry have grown 35 times. So in 2021 we've been able to produce about weapon and dual use products for about worth $1 billion a year. Now we can produce weapon and dual use products worth $35 billion a year. The problem is that we don't have that much money in Ukraine to actually put Europe, and that's why we are very thankful to our European partners who jumped in with so called Danish and Swedish model, but with with more resources, and also with, if the politics on expert band will be changed, which I really hope it will be changed, and I'm searching for allies here in US. So raise your hand if you want to be in, but with this we can, we can actually support our resilience even more. Now, 40% of all weapons that our defenders use on the front line are being produced in Ukraine. It’s great. It's fantastic. Now, only one Ukrainian company produces more artillery systems than all European companies altogether on a monthly basis. This is amazing, and this is something that really helps us to sustain. So also my job here in Ukraine, but also in US, to make sure that defense cooperation is taking place. We are not here to play, to appeal for aid. Aid is needed to weak ones. Ukrainians are not weak. I mean, otherwise we won't be able to, you know, to fight back for three and a half years. We are strong, and we are seeking for cooperation. We are seeking for assistance. We are seeking for more, actually, horizontal ties between defense industry, private defense industry in US and Ukraine. Now, about 80% of all Ukrainian defense industry are private companies, fantastic one, one that actually provides and produce innovations. The innovation cycle in Ukraine is three to six months. I spent some time

in Stanford two years ago enjoying some, you know, conversations with IT startups. Well, in Bay Area, IT startup will actually innovate within three years. And in Ukraine, defense innovators, it only takes three months. So this is something that can be interesting, and this is something that we should actually consider, not only now during the war, but also after the end of the war. And my final thought, once again, to add to our discussion, you probably all want to know, what are the chances to end the war? I believe there are all chances to end the war this year, once again, if US takes decisions and implemented to two components. First, secondary sanctions, as I mentioned, India or China, they will not think who to cooperate with if they are given this basically choice, either global trade or Russia. And secondary, keep supporting Ukrainian defense industry and military assistance to Ukraine. This is a very simple recite.

Mitchell
Secretary Rice?

Rice
I just want to underscore the point about Ukraine's defense industry, because, such as the defense industry, it is the extreme elegance of the way that the war is being fought. And I mean it in that way I read Telegram and the kind of, Russian kind of influencers, quite a bit. And the attacks on Russian strategic bases were a shock to the Russians. They were a shock to me. I mean, you know, a bridge under Crimea, yes, but Siberia, really, how do you do that? And so a part of the this is to give Ukraine time to with help, but also with its own ingenuity, to be able to do what Finland was able to do for decades, which is to hold at risk enough of what Russia cares about, so that you can, in effect, defend yourself as a part of a coalition, but, but Ukraine's ability to defend itself is growing. They need time, and that is the time that can be bought, I think, with the sorts of ideas that you…

Glasser
Well, and I just to the point of time, I think that's why we're, you know, sort of maybe there's optimism, but it's inconclusive. And the answer is, because what really happened this week was a 50-day clock, and that happens to coincide with Russia's summer offensive. We have to see, and we don't know the outcome of it. You know, you're talking about something like 160,000 Russian troops right now, reportedly being amassed on the borders. More importantly, and interestingly, you know, you've seen a shift in rhetoric, which I'm sure there's probably not a person in this room who is unhappy about the President's shift in rhetoric. That's a better place to be in than where we were just a couple of weeks ago. But actions haven't yet been taken. And I think that's what's interesting to me. First of all, the final package of US security assistance to Ukraine, the last trend of which was $1.25 billion approved the final days of Biden's presidency that runs out this summer. And the politics in the US, and in particular the politics in the Republican Party are such that no one is even discussing the possibility of a new package of US security assistance. Europeans have agreed to step in, however, and this is a big however, because neither Ukraine's defense industry as it exists right now, nor Europe's defense industry, is capable of supplying the capacities that the United States has supplied over the last several years to Ukraine, and without which it would not have been able to maintain the fight against Russia. And that's just a sort of a political reality that I think a lot of our

conversations right now kind of dance around. You know, we've been in a world in which there have been an enormous shift, but in a short amount of time. There's no one who says that the US Congress is positioned now, or three months from now under Republican control, to pass any more assistance to Ukraine after having been, at times, the largest supplier of it. And I think that's the question mark I have, is what happened at the end of this 50-day clock? Because we've heard a 24-hour clock, we've heard 100-day clock, we've heard a two week clock. And you know, I go back to this great question at the beginning of this discussion, which is, those don't seem to be the kind of incentives that are actually changing the calculus for Russia.

Mitchell
And Secretary Rice, the President did mention on a call with Zelenskyy this week, going deep into Russia with long range weapons. Now he says he was just raising it theoretically, hypothetically, they can reach Moscow with drones, 300 miles; St Petersburg, 530 miles. But they need missiles. The drones can be shot down, and we are the only ones who can provide those long range missiles and we are not.

Rice
Well, we'll see what happens with we'll see what happens with long range attacking. I think probably the rhetoric isn't and I think this is probably what was recognized. Let me just say I think it's probably not that wise for the President of the United States to consider or to say, “How about attacking Moscow?” and I think they probably figured that out, and he decided to back off. And I think it was absolutely right to do so.

Mitchell
What about providing the weapons though?

Rice
Well, no, no, no, I don't think the President of the United States wants to say, you can attack Moscow. That's my point, not whether the weapons are there or not. I just think there's a certain rhetoric that you don't want to hear. Now, whether or not long range ATACMS are part of the package. We will see what happens with long range ATACMS. But the main thing right now is to deal with the terrorist attacks that are bedeviling Kyiv, and that's where Patriot matters. And so if you take this, let's take this one step at a time. Let's get the Patriots there as fast as we can. Let's give the Ukrainian people some protection. The Russian front, yes, they're mobilizing 160,000 people. They haven't been so great on the offensive, because, you know, I used to study the Soviet military and the Russian military, this is not a military that moves well on the offense. They're actually very good at digging in, mining things, and sitting static. Russia on the offensive, it will be interesting and let's remember, too, as you would know, in Finland, they've got two, two and a half months at most in the fighting season. So, but that's how I read the change in rhetoric about Moscow.

Mitchell
Let me just ask you also, you were a national security advisor for President George W Bush before you were Secretary of State, and you also worked on the NSC staff previously under

Bush 41 so you know the systems. I know that Henry Kissinger did both roles in a previous era, but how realistic is it to now, in this era, have a National Security Advisor also be the Secretary of State?

Rice
You know what? I don't mind it for this point in time, for this administration. I think there is some value. The President's his own action officer, right? But so he, he, he does, without, they don't have the same kind of bottom up process that perhaps we're most accustomed to. And so to have Marco Rubio, who I have a lot of confidence in, in the White House next to the Oval Office, which is where the National Security Advisor is, as opposed to down in Foggy Bottom where the Secretary of State is, I don't think it's a bad thing, right now.

Mitchell
But more to the point, I guess the lack of a deputies process…

rice
No, no, he has very, let me be careful. He has two very good deputies at the National Security Council. I mean, the lack of more vigorous NSC process. Now I know that it was bloated. NSC process has to work for the President. I don't think you can stand outside and prescribe an NSC process. It depends a lot on the president. The one for George HW Bush was a lot different than the one for George W Bush because they were very different. The challenges were very different. George W Bush was at war. George HW Bush was ending the Cold War. Those processes were very different, so I'm not going to stand and try to prescribe a process for them, but I do have some comfort that Marco Rubio is down the hall from the Oval Office. I like that.

Mitchell
Pasi, I wanted to ask you about the long-range weapons, which would infuriate Vladimir Putin. Clearly. Do you think that that would endanger Finland and other neighboring states if NATO, for instance, would pass through from the United States, if the attack ends were provided?

Rajala
Well, first of all, I want to go back to the, I mean, Susan is about right about the urgency of things. We need to act fast. But this 50-day wait period does not apply to the weapons deliveries. We're working on the weapons deliveries as we speak, and focusing on the Patriots, as Secretary Rice said, so this work is ongoing. What comes to Finland? I mean, we have been free democracy for 100 years living next to Russia, interruptedly free, and we plan to be free for the next 100 years. No doubt about that, unless AI comes and takes over and nation states lose their significance, with all due respect to the tech companies here. So we're not concerned about Finland, but we are concerned about Ukraine in the first instance, and talking about the fault lines. The fault lines go beyond Ukraine. There are other parts of Europe. Moldova, the Russians tried to interfere with elections in Romania. They're meddling in Africa, and they're also trying to hurt the United States. So this is a global competition, because they not only want to take over Ukraine, they want to change the world order, no less.

Rice
I just want to add, you know, but the addition of Finland and Sweden to NATO is something that is an extraordinary step forward. And I want to note that the Arctic is now a place of competition between China, Russia and the United States. The Chinese are all over it. The United States, our icebreakers are in dried off, and so the addition of Finland and Sweden, along with the Baltic states, gives us purchase on this very important part of the world, which I will fully admit as Secretary of State, I did not pay enough attention to what was happening in the Arctic, and I think it's at our peril that we don't pay that attention. So I'm very glad to have a northern flank that I think gives us some purchase there too. So that's one of the outcomes of Vladimir Putin's policies, is that he actually strengthened NATO on the northern flank.

Glasser
Yeah, I think this geopolitical theme is one that doesn't get enough attention right now. Obviously Putin has rewritten kind of the conversation and the debate around European security, but he's also reoriented geopolitical alliances in a positive sense. For NATO, there's the joining of Finland and Sweden, but there's also, I think, the fusion and the acceleration of the actual connections between China, Iran, North Korea and Russia, in a way that had we said even five or 10 years ago that these ties would be what they are right now. For example, North Korea has sent not just a handful, but I believe it's over 30,000 troops to fight against Russia. And as was previously noted, it's not entirely clear what levers we have at all to influence on China. There is a persistent hope, aspiration, goal, I understand it, that somehow Putin can be pried apart from Xi Jinping. And you know, I go back to the beginning of this conflict, when, right before Putin launched the invasion, he and Xi signed a quote, unquote, “no limits partnership” between the two countries. And I think that you know, as you think, not just about the end of the war, but what comes after the end of the war Russia is very unlikely, if it, you know, however, it emerges for its economy to be anything other than highly dependent on China's. You know, there are some Russians who are not fans of Putin, with whom I've spoken in recent years, who their great fear for their country is not a conflict with NATO, but it's becoming a vassal state, in effect, to China. And, you know, I just think we're in early days of reckoning with that piece of this as well.

Rice
I just want to add, look, I think my view has been, instead of trying to separate the four, slam them together, they actually have very little in common, and they've got a lot of problems between them. You mentioned the vassal state. There was a report that the Russian military, Russian security services, are worried about Chinese penetration.

Glasser
That one, that's a New York Times guy, right?

Rice
And remember, Central Asia is becoming China's sphere of influence. It was part of the Soviet Union, and nobody could feel very good in their alliance right now about the Iranian situation. I noticed that when the Iranian foreign minister went to Moscow the day after the attack, Putin

said, “Oh no, he didn't ask for any military assistance.” Well, if you believe that… So I've thought this is actually this alliance is somewhat weaker than we sometimes give it credit for, and I'd slam them together and make them deal with their own internal contradictions.

Mitchell
I thought it was fascinating that Russia did not come to the defense of Iran.

Rice
Oh, not even close, and the Chinese are trying to keep their heads down.

Mitchell
I didn't let you go without asking you about one of the great legacies of your administration, which was PEPFAR. We went to Darfur together. You came to my defense in a memorable way. But yes, what you saw there with those

Rice
I just have to say that the security forces of Basheer decided to take on Andrea Mitchell, which was a mistake that they will probably never now forget.

Mitchell
They had not counted on the Secretary of State who defended the press corps. And what you saw in Darfur, and that was a genocide in 2005 and there was catastrophe now different combatants, but it's I was at the border two years ago with the UN Ambassador, and as the refugees were crossing through the desert and these women on foot with their children and go karts. All their men have been killed. The village is burned, and PEPFAR is now the Senate Republicans may rescue it in the rescission. Actually, it's on the cusp. But so much of foreign aid and whatever the waste is could be remit, you know, remediated, but just writ large, what do Americans need to know about the value of soft power? In the words of Joe Nye…

Rice
Our beloved Joe Nye. I told Joe once, though I don't even think of his self soft power, I think of his power. It's power. I always said, I like to walk into a room with the American military on one shoulder, the American economy on the other, and a hand of American compassion in front of me. And that made the complete package for the United States. I'm actually grateful, I do think PEPFAR is going to not only survive, I think it's going to be just fine. I think the Malaria Initiative, there will be some scaling back and it's probably worth it to take a look at focusing on what we really need to focus on. We've become pretty dispersed and diffuse in the kinds of programs that we were running. And again, you know, give the State Department some time. Marco Rubio is somebody who has, throughout his his career, championed an America that had a compassionate side. We also have been a place that provided humanitarian assistance in the most difficult of circumstances, with tsunami or whatever. Some reorganization of the State Department is probably long overdue. I might have done it myself if I hadn't been fighting two wars. So let's give it a little bit of time. But I do hope that when this all comes is said and done,

that we will remember that what makes America different as a great power is that we have not led just with power, but we've also led with principle.

Mitchell
We got a late start, but I want to at least have some questions so we have microphones that will be passed. We can take a couple of questions. Yes, sir, right there on the aisle. Thank you.

Audience Member
Hi. Quick question to the lady from Ukraine. Can you briefly speak to the manpower situation? Because weapons is one thing, but you also still need bodies to fight.

Yanchenko
You know, I think it was one of the first panel discussions at Aspen Security Forum when our European colleagues were thankful to Ukraine, that Ukraine brought some time to Europe. But I should tell you, this time is not endless, and Ukrainians are not endless, so we need to end this war as soon as possible. Putin continues investing in war machine. He keeps on boosting, basically, military industry of Russia. So we need to end this war, and we need to stop like, to stop this war, and we need to stop Putin before this bloc spreads further. Does Putin want to invade in other countries? Yes, they are talking about it quite freely. Will this invasion happen next year? Maybe not. But in five years, if Putin is not stopped now, pretty much possible.

Mitchell
Thank you. Ambassador Stu Bernstein.

Bernstein
Fantastic, so good to see Condi again. You were optimistic that something could be done by the end of the year. If there was a negotiation, do you believe Ukraine is going to have to give up some of the territory that Russia has already occupied? And where did the 50 days come from?

Rice
I can't speak to the 50 days. Maybe Susan can. I was an odd number from my point of view. Let me just say I actually don't know that there will be a negotiated settlement. I think it's more likely it's just kind of a ceasefire for people tp stop fighting. And if you, that you were talking about, maybe you get put into that place. I'm not saying this optimism before the end of the year, but we will know more in several months, because the fighting season will be over, and I think we will know where everybody stands. I do think it's likely to just stop. Let's remember sometimes in international politics, things do that, and you get these frozen conflicts. But the one thing I would say, if Russia continues after the cease fire, to occupy parts of Ukrainian territory, which is likely, unfortunately, we should never recognize Russian sovereignty over those territories. When I was the young Soviet specialist at the White House for George HW Bush, every time I wrote the words Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia, I had to stamp it. The United States does not recognize the forceful incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. We did that for 45 years, and when it was finally true that the Baltic states were no longer incorporated into the Soviet Union,

the Baltic people never forgot. And so I would just say, Whatever happens, don't recognize Russian sovereignty over what is conquered territory.

Glasser
And you know, I'm so glad Secretary Rice mentioned that, because actually, it's very interesting. But in Trump's first term, he actually issued what they called the Pompeo Declaration, which said that the United States would never recognize Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. And that was the policy of the Trump first term administration. And I think that's why so many people were left, you know, really, in a sort of head spinning sense, because it seemed at the beginning, at the beginning that Trump's second administration wasn't even aware of the policies of its first term administration, and it's already offered these territorial concessions that Trump, I'm sorry, that Putin has not accepted. I would just go back to the beginning of Putin's time in office, more than a quarter century ago. He came to power in the midst of a war. He's waged subsequent wars in Georgia, in Ukraine, in Crimea before this conflict, and he's never sat down at a peace table and had a signing this kind of a peace, by the way, would not be signable by Volodymyr Zelenskyy or any elected leader of Ukraine. And so, given all that, the best case scenario is the one that Secretary Rice is suggesting.

Mitchell
One more question up front here. Thank you.

Talia Gifford
Talia Gifford, Rising Leaders Program. The US and its allies and partners failed to deter Russia from invading Ukraine. And in addition, US intelligence and Russian intelligence falsely believed that the Russian military would vastly overwhelm the Ukrainian military if they did invade. I'm curious how and why US intelligence and strategy got so much wrong pre-invasion, and what lessons we can learn from that.

Rice
Well, first of all, it's hard, like when you're dealing with an opaque society, it's just really hard to know precisely what's going on. And so you, so intelligence agencies have to depend on kind of metrics to make an assessment like that. And if you looked at the size of the Russian military, if you looked at the sophistication of the American or the Russian military, if you looked at the fact that the Ukrainians hadn't really they were sort of fighting an insurgency war in the east, but they really weren't making much progress, you might have led that might have led you to the conclusion that the Ukrainians would be overrun in five days. So I don't blame them for that. It's the nature of the beast that. That's the kind of analysis that you would do. What they didn't probably count as two things. First of all, overestimating the Russians on the offense. And I would have said to them, but the Russians aren't very good on the offense. Would you think about that? The other is that the Ukrainians came together in nationhood more quickly than most would have imagined when Putin said, Ukraine is a made up country. What he meant was, Ukraine hasn't been independent very much in its history. And so why would you think that they would fight for this thing named Ukraine? So I would just say it's hard for intelligence agencies

because they have to deal with certain kinds of metrics. And if you'd read those metrics, you probably would have come to the same conclusions.

Mitchell
And in fairness Bill Burns did predict it, and warned Zelenskyy, about the invasion, who at first did not believe it. So there was some preparation, but nobody when I was in Munich, days before the war, a lot of the Europeans were not believing that it was going to happen. I just want to say this is also, as Nick Burns mentioned, co-sponsored by the Korbel school, and that is bringing to mind a great leader, Madeleine Korbel Albright and also, I think the beginnings of, you can see Condoleezza Rice's extraordinary knowledge about Vladimir Putin and the Soviet, the former Soviet Union, and the contemporary Russia and that's where you, it began.

Rice
All started in a class with Josef Korbel who rescued a failed music major who had made her decision to leave music because she was a student at the Aspen Music Festival school and met 12 year olds who could play from sight what it had taken her year, all year, to learn and decided she needed a plan B and Dr Korbel gave me a Plan B. Thanks Fritz for being here.

Mitchell
Can I just say I was a failed violin student at the Aspen Music Festival school, and that's what…

Rice
Gave you another career change.

Mitchell
Journalism, there you go. I can't thank this extraordinary panel enough. Halyna, you and the courage of Ukraine and Pasi extraordinary leadership of Finland and NATO. Susan, you're, the depth of your knowledge and the incomparable Condoleezza Rice. Thank you also.