



*And must have whiskey  
Oh, you know why*

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**July 25, 2023**

## Who Can Give Security Guarantees To Ukraine?

A main question for Ukraine since it became an independent state was who or what could potentially guarantee its security.

In the first years after 1991 the Ukrainian government thought that it could secure itself. It had inherited some Soviet nuclear weapons and it tried to bring those to use. But it failed to circumvent the security locks the Russian engineers had integrated into the nuclear warheads.

There was also pressure from the U.S. to get rid of those devices as the Ukraine at that time was prolific in selling its Soviet era weapons to various shady actors around the world.

Ukraine, together with Belarus and Kazakhstan, was pressed to enter the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In exchange it got the [Budapest Memorandum](#), a weak promise of non-interference:

The memoranda, signed in Patria Hall at the Budapest Convention Center with US Ambassador Donald M. Blinken amongst others in attendance, prohibited the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States from threatening or using military force or economic coercion against Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, "except in self-defence or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations." As a result of other agreements and the memorandum, between 1993 and 1996, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine gave up their nuclear weapons.

Two side notes are of interest:

1. Ambassador Donald M. Blinken is the father of the current Secretary of State Anthony Blinken.
2. Formally Russia has not broken the Budapest Memorandum. It recognized the People's Republics of Luhansk and Donetsk as independent states. It signed security agreements with them and then entered the war in Ukraine, which had been ongoing since 2014, under Article 51 - common self defense - of the Charter of the United Nations. Jurists will debate that argument for years but it is not dissimilar to the argument NATO used to justify the violent break-up Yugoslavia.

After the Budapest Memorandum was signed the Soviet nuclear weapons weapons Ukraine and others still had were sent back to Russia.

By mid of the first decade of the third millennium Russia had largely recuperated from the shocks that had followed the break up of the Soviet Union. The Ukraine had meanwhile fallen further apart. The population sharply decreased, its industries broke down and wide spread corruption was eating up what was left from its riches. Its own army, while on paper still well armed, was no longer able to defend the country. That was fine at that time as no one was really interested in threatening it.

But NATO, in breach of [promises given to Russia](#), expanded and crept nearer to the Ukrainian border. In 2008, and also in Budapest, the U.S. used a NATO summit to press other NATO countries to offer Ukraine a Membership Action Plan (MAP). There was however no future date attached to that promise.

In 2013 the European Union pressed the Ukraine to sign a free trade agreement with it. Russia, which was the biggest trading partner of Ukraine, made a counter offer that was financially better and had less political restrictions attached to it. Then President Victor Yanukovich of Ukraine had to reject the EU agreement. The U.S., together with the German secret service BND, had long standing ties with the right-wing groups in west-Ukraine which had previously cooperated with Nazi Germany and had been attached to the German Nazi-Wehrmacht. The CIA reactivated these groups and instigated [a violent color-revolution](#) in Kiev.

That revolution led to a civil war as large parts of the ethnic Russians in east Ukraine rejected the new regime that had been installed by a west Ukrainian minority.

While the ethnic Russians in Ukraine lost control over most of their original areas they also soon defeated what was left of the Ukraine army. They did so twice.

Since 2015 the conflict was stalled. The Minsk agreements, under which Ukraine was supposed to become federalized, were signed, but Ukraine stalled their implementation. Meanwhile the U.S. and Britain used the time to reinstate and rearm the Ukrainian army.

By 2021 the Ukraine was ready to attack the People's Republics of Luhansk and Donetsk. Russia activated its army and warned that it would have to interfere with such plans. The imminent launch of an Ukrainian attack was called off. In early 2022 the U.S. gave the Ukrainians a green light to launch their long planned attack. Russia intervened and the current war started.

The U.S. plans behind the war expected that the pre-coordinated western sanctions that immediately followed would ruin Russia, that Russia would be shunned by the rest of the world and that a military defeat of the Russian army would lead to regime change in Moscow.

The Ukraine expected that, after winning a war against its separatists, it would immediately become a member of NATO.

Neither of the (totally unrealistic) expectations was met.

The Ukraine is now obviously losing the war. It will soon need to sign a capitulation like ceasefire agreement with Russia.

But who or what can guarantee that any such agreement will be held up?

NATO membership is no longer an option.

On July 11 a summit of the North Atlantic Council in Vilnius **declared** that Ukraine would not have to follow the formal Membership Action Plan. But it then replaced the formal MAP conditions for membership with a way more vague formulation:

We will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when Allies agree and conditions are met.

The NATO Secretary General was even more explicit:

... unless Ukraine wins this war, there's no membership issue to be discussed at all.

There will be no NATO membership or NATO security guarantees for Ukraine, neither now nor ever.

A direct full security guarantee from Washington to Kiev is also impossible. It would create a high likelihood of a direct war between the U.S. and Russia which would soon become nuclear. The U.S. will not want to risk that.

So when, during the preparations of the Vilnius summit, it had become clear that allies would not agree to Ukraine's membership, U.S. President Biden **presented an alternative**:

The US is willing to offer Kiev a sort of security arrangement currently offered to Israel instead of membership in NATO, President Joe Biden told CNN in an interview previewed on Friday.

"I don't think it's ready for membership in NATO," Biden said of Ukraine. "I don't think there is unanimity in NATO about whether or not to bring Ukraine into the NATO family now, at this moment, in the middle of a war."

"And one of the things I indicated is, the United States would be ready to provide, while the process was going on, and that's gonna take a while, to provide security a la the security we provide for Israel: providing the weaponry they need, the capacity to defend themselves," Biden said, adding, "If there is an agreement, if there is a ceasefire, if there is a peace agreement."

That however is even more unrealistic than a NATO membership. As Geoffrey Aronson convincingly **argues**:

The relevance of the Israel model embraced by Biden to Ukraine's security is deeply flawed conceptually and practically.

...

In operational terms, the Israel model is barely relevant to the predicament that Ukraine finds itself in and hardly a good model upon which to build the desired security relationship between the United States, NATO, and Ukraine. In conceptual terms, there is little beyond a superficial comparison between Jerusalem and Kyiv to recommend the concept.

...

U.S.-Israel security ties were born out of three principal elements: (1) Cold War competition in the Middle East; (2) Israel's overwhelming victory in June 1967; and (3) Israel's surreptitious development of a nuclear weapons capability from the 1950s onward.

It is all but impossible that Ukraine will be able to exit its war with Russia with the kind of total territorial victory that provided the basis for U.S.-Israel ties after June 1967.

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In this context, there may well be those in Ukraine (but one hopes not in Washington) who see the Israel model—creating an integrated nuclear weapons option while maintaining nuclear ambiguity as long as the conventional weapons pipeline from Washington is open—as instructive.

But here too reality intrudes. The U.S. bargain with Israel aims explicitly at assuring Israel's superiority in conventional weapons against any combination of Arab/Iranian

enemies. To that end, through FY2020, the United States has provided Israel with \$146 billion in military, economic, and missile defense funding—\$236 billion in 2018 dollars.

In just the first year of the war, Ukraine received \$77 billion from Washington, about one-half of its total military, economic, and humanitarian assistance.

At best, the U.S. military support at current historic levels has won Kyiv a military stalemate. **Ukraine, certainly out of NATO and arguably even as a member, will never enjoy an Israeli-style Quality Military Edge (QME) over Moscow, or be able to command the region's strategic or security agenda as Israel has done in the Middle East.**

Russia's might makes even an attempt of an Israel like security guarantee for Ukraine too costly for the U.S. and thereby simply impossible.

There is only one country in the world that can guarantee peace in Ukraine and the security of its borders. That country is Russia!

But any such guarantee will of course come with conditions attached to it. Either Ukraine will accept those or it will never be secure from outer interference.

That is simply a fact of life Ukraine has had to, and will have to live with.

Posted by b on July 25, 2023 at 16:35 UTC | [Permalink](#)

## Comments

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For that matter, with the Western track record of sham agreements, what agreement can the West offer that Russia can rely upon?

Posted by: Feral Finster | Jul 25 2023 16:44 utc | [1](#)

This article should be posted in front of every foreign affairs correspondent. But truth was never in the equation then was it,?

Posted by: jpc | Jul 25 2023 16:47 utc | [2](#)

..... There is only one country in the world that can guarantee peace in Ukraine and the security of its borders. That country is Russia.....

Hear Hear

Posted by: Exile | Jul 25 2023 16:53 utc | [3](#)

Exactly. Well said. Thank you again, b, for your logical análisis.

Posted by: c | Jul 25 2023 16:53 utc | [4](#)

The genesis of this war is directly related to decisions made from 1917-1954.

A proper examination and history of Ukraine from 1917-1954 would make for a very interesting read.

Posted by: Julian | Jul 25 2023 16:59 utc | [5](#)

One thing that Ukraine does have in common with Israel is the existence of a politically powerful emigre based lobby in north America and, increasingly, western Europe. In the case of Ukraine this is bolstered by the fact that the Ukrainians are one among many diasporas organised as anti-