

BK, AF, YG, IS (Econ4UA.org): original [open letter](#) text in regular font.

NC: Comments below.

BK, AF, YG, IS (Econ4UA.org): See our reply below in blue.

NC: *latest responses in italic.*

Open Letter to Noam Chomsky (and other like-minded intellectuals) on the Russia-Ukraine war

Dear Professor Chomsky,

We are a group of Ukrainian academic economists who were grieved by a series of your recent interviews and commentaries on the Russian war on Ukraine. We believe that your public opinion on this matter is counter-productive to bringing an end to the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine and all the deaths and suffering it has brought into our home country.

Having familiarized ourselves with the [body](#) of [your interviews](#) on this matter, we noticed several recurring fallacies in your line of argument. In what follows, we wish to point out these patterns to you, alongside with our brief response:

Pattern #1: Denying Ukraine's sovereign integrity

In your interview to Jeremy Scahill at The Intercept from April 14, 2022 you claimed: "The fact of the matter is Crimea is off the table. We may not like it. Crimeans apparently do like it." We wish to bring to your attention several historical facts:

The historical facts below are correct, but have no relation to my comments. "Crimeans" here means people living in Ukraine, in accord with normal usage. Nothing is said above about the legitimacy of the elections. The fact that it is off the table for now – that's the topic of the interview – is recognized by virtually every specialist (Anatol Lieven, etc., virtually without exception), and by President Zelensky, who suggested exactly that. That "Crimeans apparently do like it" is the report of independent observers who condemned the referendum as illegitimate but concluded that it apparently fairly well reflected public opinion. Contrary to what you say here, it has no relation to the legitimacy of elections or anything else you mention.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #1

You misrepresent President Zelensky, who has stated on numerous occasions that Crimea is never "off the table" for Ukrainians, see, for instance <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news-2022-05-03/card/ukraineseeks-full-restoration-of-territory-including-crimea-zelensky-says-OhagEzR1JZ2B7T3kTlnz>

"The ultimate goal of Ukraine is to restore territorial integrity, including Crimea," President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday, as Russia pursued its offensive to seize territory in eastern Ukraine. "We hope that Crimea will be part of Ukraine," he said, in describing what he saw as victory in the war. The outcome will include restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Regarding your reference to unnamed “independent observers,” consider the following thought experiment: Assume that an “independent observer” interviews people in Kherson, a city close to Crimea that has been recently occupied by the Russian army, and reports that the respondents apparently support the occupation. Should we give credence to such a “survey” and further popularize its outcomes in our interviews? Or should we ask critically whether an interview in those conditions can be taken at face value?

Instead of condemning the annexation of Crimea, you declare it to be “off the table.” This not only denies Ukraine’s sovereign territorial integrity, but also weakens Ukraine’s position at the very negotiation table that you advocate for.

First, Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 has violated the [Budapest memorandum](#) (in which it promised to respect and protect Ukrainian borders, including Crimea), the [Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation](#) (which it signed with Ukraine in 1997 with the same promises), and, according to the [order](#) of the UN International Court of Justice, it violated the international law.

Second, “Crimeans” is not an ethnicity or a cohesive group of people – but Crimean Tatars are. These are the [indigenous](#) people of Crimea, who were [deported](#) by Stalin in 1944 (and were able to come back home only when the USSR was falling apart), and were forced to flee again in 2014 when Russia occupied Crimea. Of those who stayed, dozens have been [persecuted](#), [jailed](#) on false charges and missing, probably dead. Third, if by ‘liking’ you refer to the outcome of the Crimean “referendum” on March 16, 2014, please note that this “referendum” was held at gunpoint and [declared invalid](#) by the General Assembly of the United Nations. At the same time, the majority of voters in Crimea [supported](#) Ukraine’s independence in 1991.

*I don’t misrepresent Zelensky. Furthermore, that’s made very clear from your own citations. Note the words “ultimate” and “never.” Correct, but the interview was explicitly about “The fact that it is off the table **for now** – that’s the topic of the interview – is recognized by virtually every specialist (Anatol Lieven, etc., virtually without exception), and by President Zelensky, who suggested exactly that.”*

In short, what I said was correct, and your quotes from Zelensky simply underscore that fact. You are failing to distinguish “for now” from “ultimate.”

On the independent observers, you can easily check back and see that though they rejected the legitimacy of the election they regarded it as “apparently” reflecting opinion. Furthermore, a phrase mentioning this is hardly “popularizing” the outcome. And as you know, and mention in another connection, for a long time I have been calling for an internationally supervised referendum in Donbass, again undermining your charge.

On “Crimeans,” I was using it in the standard way: referring to people who live in Crimea. If you object to that, you should be writing to the world’s press and commentators.

On international law, you are giving a weak version of what I said far more strongly – as you know, since you quote it in another connection: that the invasion was the kind of war crime

for which Nazis were hanged at Nuremberg, a crime of aggression comparable to the US invasion of Iraq and the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland. Violating the UN Charter, as in Iraq and Ukraine, is a far more severe than those you describe. If I were to follow your method – which I won't – I could accuse you of apologetics for Putin by downgrading the severity of his crimes in comparison to my far stronger condemnation.

As for the rest, you are grasping at straws and the straws aren't there.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #1.

Pattern #2: Treating Ukraine as an American pawn on a geo-political chessboard Whether willingly or unwillingly, your interviews insinuate that Ukrainians are fighting with Russians because the U.S. instigated them to do so, that Euromaidan happened because the U.S. tried to detach Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence, etc. Such an attitude denies the agency of Ukraine and is a slap in the face to millions of Ukrainians who are risking their lives for the desire to live in a free country. Simply put, have you considered the possibility that Ukrainians would like to detach from the Russian sphere of influence due to a [history of genocide](#), cultural oppression, and constant denial of the right to self-determination?

Note that your charges have no citations. There's a good reason for that. There are none. They are all false. I neither stated nor "insinuated" anything of the sort. Others have, including leading scholars of the region, but I haven't. Perhaps you're confusing me with them.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #2

Please find below a few citations from your recent interview to Jeremy Scahill at The Intercept from April 14, 2022 (underscore added). If they do not suffice, we are happy to provide others:

["And basically, Lavrov's proposals \[of neutralization and demilitarization of Ukraine\] could plausibly be interpreted as saying: Let's turn Ukraine into Mexico. Well, that was an option that could have been pursued. Instead, the U.S. preferred to do what I just described as inconceivable for Mexico."](#)

["Well, something has to be done about Donbas, the proper reaction, which maybe the Russians would accept, would be a referendum, an internationally supervised referendum to see what the people of the region want. One possibility, which was available before the invasion, was implementation of the Minsk II agreements \[...\]. The U.S. refused to try; instead, insisted on a super-militant position, official position, which, as far as I know, the press has yet to report. \[...\] But the U.S. insisted on that position"](#)

Similarly, in your interview to C.J. Polychroniou at the Truthout from March 1, 2022, you say:

["One option is to pursue the policy we \[=the U.S., clarification added\] are now following, to quote Ambassador Freeman again, to fight Russia to the last Ukrainian. And yes, we](#)

can pursue that policy with the possibility of nuclear war. Or we can face the reality that the only alternative is a diplomatic settlement, which will be ugly—it will give Putin and his narrow circle an escape hatch.”

In our opinion, the above citations insinuate that Ukraine is merely an American pawn on a geopolitical chessboard.

Thanks for making it clear that you cannot find even a single source to support your charges. Plainly, none of these do. To say that Lavrov’s statement “could be plausibly interpreted” gives not the slightest support for any of your charges. Nor does my suggestion of an internationally supervised referendum. Your objection to that tells us all quite a lot about you. I will return to your rejection of diplomatic settlement (by evasion), the most shocking part of your stand, which crucial consequences that you again evade here.

Much of what you say is below correct, but as a matter of simple logic, has nothing at all to do with your false charges.

In contrast, here is a direct quote from President Zelensky, whom you reference several times and, we assume, view as a legitimate source of what Ukrainians actually want: “We have been left alone to defend our state.” (The quote can be accessed at this link, among many: <https://www.barrons.com/news/ukraine-s-president-says-137-dead-after-first-day-offighting-01645743907>)

This quote is from February 24, 2022—the very first day of the war, before any of the explicit U.S. support that you allude to. Before the bulk of the weapon delivery, before explicit international backing, Ukrainians made their position clear: they will fight for their independence and territorial integrity, whether with or without allies.

This is an existential war for Ukraine, and the only way Ukraine’s allies, including the United States, can help prevent Ukraine having to fight “to the last Ukrainian” is by providing Ukraine with enough weapons and resources to win their existential fight prior to extermination. This is the sentiment of the vast majority of Ukrainians, as evidenced by the polling results coming out today (May 24, 2022), where 82% of Ukrainians (and 77% of Ukrainians in Russia-occupied territory) reject the idea of appeasing Russia with territorial concessions: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eighty-two-percent-ukrainiansoppose-territorial-concessions-poll-2022-05-24/>

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #2

Pattern #3.

This is a long series of fabrications and irrelevancies. I’ll take the trouble to refute them one by one.

Suggesting that Russia was threatened by NATO

I never suggested that. That's why you can't find a citation. I never went beyond what was said by the high US officials I cited from Kennan on to the current CIA director, none of who claimed what you fabricate here. If you object to what they actually said, contact them.

In your interviews, you are eager to bring up the alleged promise by [US Secretary of State] James Baker and President George H.W. Bush to Gorbachev that, if he agreed to allow a unified Germany to rejoin NATO, the U.S. would ensure that NATO would move 'not one inch eastward.' First, please note that the historicity of this promise is [highly contested](#) among scholars, although Russia has been active in promoting it.

The promise is not "alleged." You already know that from my earlier response, which you include below. I will repeat, since you seem to have failed to understand the clear wording:

`Check the National Security Archives, which gives the exact wording: Baker tells Gorbachev: "The President and I have made clear that we seek no unilateral advantage in this process" of inevitable German unification. Baker goes on to say, "We understand the need for assurances to the countries in the East. If we maintain a presence in a Germany that is a part of NATO, there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east".'

No ambiguity, very clear and explicit. One of many from the US and Germany as you can discover by looking at the archives.

The premise is that NATO's eastward expansion left Putin with no other choice but to attack.

There is no such premise, nor any hint of that. Furthermore, this an even more severe gross misrepresentation of what I said than the others – no small trick. I have repeatedly discussed the alternatives that were open and Putin's stupidity as well as his criminality in rejecting them, and the consequences. In fact, that's been a major theme of what I've been writing. Impossible to miss, if you ever turn to reading the "series of [my] recent interviews and commentaries on the Russian war on Ukraine."

The rest surprises me. It has no relation to anything I said. If you "disagree with the notion..." than find someone who expressed the view you reject. Since I didn't – which is why you can't find a citation – it can't be addressed to me.

But the reality is different. Eastern European states joined, and Ukraine and Georgia aspired to join NATO, in order to defend themselves from Russian imperialism. They were right in their aspirations, given that Russia did attack Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. Moreover, current requests by Finland and Sweden to join NATO came in direct response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, consistent with NATO expansion being a consequence of Russian imperialism, and not vice versa. In addition, we disagree with the notion that sovereign nations shouldn't be making alliances based on the will of their people because of disputed verbal promises made by James Baker and George H.W. Bush to Gorbachev.

The few parts above that are relevant to what I said are incorrect. The promise is not “alleged”: it’s explicit. You can find the documents in the National Security Archive. E.g., “Repeating what Bush said at the Malta summit in December 1989, Baker tells Gorbachev: “The President and I have made clear that we seek no unilateral advantage in this process” of inevitable German unification. Baker goes on to say, “We understand the need for assurances to the countries in the East. If we maintain a presence in a Germany that is a part of NATO, there would be no extension of NATO’s jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east.”

The rest has no relation to anything I’ve said. Try to find a citation, and you will again fail.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #3

You misunderstood the point of pattern #3, which was not to challenge the historicity of the “no inch Eastward” promise to Gorbachev. Though we should reiterate that:

a) the historicity of this promise is contested among scholars, see:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01636600902773248>

b) Gorbachev himself denies such promise being given to him, see:

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/11/06/did-nato-promise-not-to-enlarge-gorbachev-says-no/>

Can’t be found, but I’ve seen his “denial.” He said that nothing was discussed about Eastern European countries and NATO. Naturally, because that was never considered. The discussions were about unification of Germany within NATO, based in the unambiguous promise that there would be no extension beyond.

However, our main point in pattern #3 was: Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that such a verbal promise was given by Baker and Bush to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Should we be denying sovereign nations the right to make alliances upon the will of their people because of such promise, as you do? (For instance, in your interview to George Eaton at the New Statesman:

<https://www.newstatesman.com/encounter/2022/04/noam-chomsky-were-approaching-the-most-dangerous-point-in-human-history>

Again, the page can’t be found. Please try to find one phrase where I deny “sovereign nations the right to make alliances upon the will of their people because of such promise, as you do” And when you fail once again, as you will, perhaps the time may have come when you begin to ask yourselves some questions.

We can therefore dispense with pattern #3

Pattern #4. Stating that the U.S. isn’t any better than Russia

While you admittedly call the Russian invasion of Ukraine a “war crime,” it appears to us that you cannot do so without naming in the same breath all of the past atrocities committed by the

U.S. abroad (e.g., in Iraq or Afghanistan) and, ultimately, spending most of your time discussing the latter.

That is more gross misrepresentation. Notice that I bring up Afghanistan and Iraq and show why they are relevant. Afghanistan because the “Afghan model” is what’s now being followed increasingly openly, as I discuss. That’s why it’s important to know what it was. I bring up Iraq in discussing the current US climate of opinion and its relevance to the current situation. Further disproving your claim, note that I don’t bring up much worse crimes that are irrelevant, like the US wars in Indochina.

As economists, we are not in a position to correct your historical metaphors

“metaphors”? If you look at the facts, the word tells us a lot about you.

and, needless to say, we condemn the unjustified killings of civilians by any power in the past. However, not bringing Putin up on war crime charges at the International Criminal Court in the Hague just because some past leader did not receive similar treatment would be the wrong conclusion to draw from any historical analogy.

Correct. It’s up to you to say why you are inventing this, as you plainly are. I never drew any such conclusion. Hence no citations, just more false charges.

In contrast, we argue that prosecuting Putin for the war crimes that are being deliberately committed in Ukraine would set an international precedent for the world leaders attempting to do the same in the future.

I compared Putin’s invasion to the US invasion of Iraq and the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland. It was correct to do so. Every apparatchik in Russia is eager to condemn US crimes, often correctly, but of course not mentioning Russian crimes. I refuse to adopt that model, as you suggest – not “insinuate,” explicitly suggest.

I’m glad you seem to agree that it would be fine if a war crimes trial of Putin set a precedent for bringing George W. Bush and numerous others for trial. But you know perfectly well that there is hint of that in any of the voluminous discourse on the subject, and there is no possibility of it. See if you can even find one comment anywhere in the mainstream referring to the invasion of Iraq as a war crime for which the perpetrators should be brought to trial.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #4

[We are glad to see that we are in agreement on the primary point here, and that you view Putin unambiguously as a war criminal comparable to Hitler and Stalin.](#)

More accurately, you now agree that your charges are without merit, and that my condemnations of Putin are far stronger than yours

However, we disagree with the premise that it is necessary to bring up other atrocities when talking about a specific (and ongoing) atrocity.

Since there is no such premise, apart from what you invented and falsely attribute to me without a pretense of evidence, there is nothing to discuss. We could reformulate your charge more accurately: you disagree with the premise that other atrocities should be brought up when they are clearly relevant, as I showed in every case you mention. That amounts to adopting the apparatchik model, very clearly.

We believe it is entirely appropriate to speak about the Holocaust and denounce Hitler without having to mention Holodomor and denounce Stalin in the same interview. The same applies to discussions of Putin's war crimes: it is not in any way necessary to preface them with unrelated misbehaviors by the United States.

Correct. That's why I never bring up what you call "misbehaviors" – that is, horrifying crimes" – that are unrelated. Only much lesser crimes that I show to be related, as you will discover if you look at my discussion of them.

I won't comment further on your apologetics for terrible US crimes. Do you also call Putin's invasion "misbehavior"?

As a linguist, we are sure that you are aware of what bringing up other atrocities while discussing a concrete case does: it diverts attention from the case at hand.

Which is why I have never once done it, as your failure to find an example reveals.

We hope that deliberate diversion of attention from Russia's atrocities and Ukraine's suffering is not the motivation behind your choice to persistently focus on "other cases."

You can easily determine that your "hope" is correct: by the simple device of reading. My occasional discussion of "other cases" is when I show them to be highly relevant.

We would therefore make the following request: please focus on Putin's war crimes in your interviews on Ukraine and on Bush's crimes in your interviews on Iraq. You have had (and used) plenty of opportunities to denounce U.S. imperialism and the war in Iraq in numerous other media interviews. There is no need for you to exploit Ukraine's plight to promote these unrelated goals. We promise to do the same: should any of us speak on the subject of U.S. imperialism and the war in Iraq, we will not dilute these important subjects by bringing up something as tangentially-related as Russian imperialism.

No need for further comment. Correcting your serious misrepresentations, we can dismiss Pattern #4

Pattern #5. Whitewashing Putin's goals for invading Ukraine

In your interviews, you go to great lengths to rationalize Putin’s goals of “demilitarization” and “neutralization” of Ukraine. Please note that, in his [TV address](#) from February 24, 2022, marking the beginning of the full-scale war, the verbatim goal declared by Putin for this “military operation” is to “denazify” Ukraine. This concept builds on his long pseudo-historical [article](#) from July 2021, denying Ukraine’s existence and claiming that Ukrainians were not a nation. As elaborated in the ‘[denazification manual](#)’ published by the Russian official press agency RIA Novosti, a “Nazi” is simply a human being who self-identifies as Ukrainian, the establishment of a Ukrainian state thirty years ago was the “Nazification of Ukraine,” and any attempt to build such a state has to be a “Nazi” act. According to this genocide handbook, denazification implies a military defeat, purging, and population-level “re-education”. ‘Demilitarization’ and ‘neutralization’ imply the same goal – without weapons Ukraine will not be able to defend itself, and Russia will reach its [long-term goal](#) of destroying Ukraine.

Again, you give no citations, for the simple reason that there are none. These charges are all flat false. I have never once “rationalized” the invasion or hinted at any such thing. In fact, I’ve condemned it in harsher terms than you have, to my knowledge, and I’ve emphasized the truism – repeat TRUISM – that presenting background is not justification. We can therefore dismiss Pattern #5

Please note that we have never accused you of “rationalizing” the invasion, but rather of “whitewashing the goals for invading Ukraine,” which you repeatedly do in your interviews. For instance, in the above-mentioned interview to Jeremy Scahill at the Intercept, you say:

“Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister, announced at the beginning of the invasion that Russia had two main goals — two main goals. Neutralization of Ukraine and demilitarization. Demilitarization doesn’t mean getting rid of all your arms. It means getting rid of heavy weapons connected to the interaction with NATO aimed at Russia. What his terms meant basically was to turn Ukraine into something like Mexico.”

This whitewashed version is meant to make an unaware reader wonder: “Why not?”

Sorry, the version is not whitewashed and it is meant to say exactly what it does, not your invention.

The rest is your interpretation of Putin’s goals. Even if they have some merit, they have no bearing on my one comment on Lavrov’s statement – what in your version becomes “going to great lengths.”

You might want to refer back to your accurate quote: “And basically, Lavrov’s proposals [of neutralization and demilitarization of Ukraine] could plausibly be interpreted as saying: Let’s turn Ukraine into Mexico.”

NB: “could plausibly be interpreted”

Turning Ukraine into something like Mexico sounds like a good idea.” But this is a false comparison. Putin’s goals for Ukraine are not to “turn it into something like Mexico”; his goals are destruction of the Ukrainian state and genocide of Ukrainians, as evidenced, for instance, by the quoted article “What Russia should do with Ukraine” from the Russian official press agency:

<https://ccl.org.ua/en/news/ria-novosti-has-clarified-russias-plans-vis-a-vis-ukraine-and-the-rest-of-the-free-world-in-a-program-like-article-what-russia-should-do-with-ukraine-2/>

If Russia’s stated goals are not enough to convince you, consider their realized actions. By now, Russia has deported more than 1.5 million people to its Asian parts, killed thousands of people (probably you have seen images from Bucha; other places are even worse), in the occupied territories people are abducted and tortured. In addition, Russia forces Ukrainian teachers to adopt Russian school programs in the occupied areas. How does this correspond to “turning Ukraine into Mexico”? The aims of the Russian war on Ukraine are outright invasion and occupation.

All plainly irrelevant to your charges.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #5

Pattern #6. Assuming that Putin is interested in a diplomatic solution

All of us very much hoped for a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement, which could have saved many human lives. Yet, we find it preposterous how you repeatedly assign the blame for not reaching this settlement to Ukraine (for not offering Putin some “escape hatch”) or the U.S. (for supposedly insisting on the military rather than diplomatic solution) instead of the actual aggressor, who has repeatedly and intentionally bombed civilians, maternity wards, hospitals, and humanitarian corridors during those very “negotiations”. Given the escalatory rhetoric (cited above) of the Russian state media, Russia’s goal is erasure and subjugation of Ukraine, not a “diplomatic solution.”

What you find “preposterous” is well-documented historical fact. If you actually look at what I wrote, you will see that it documents in detail how the US – repeat, the US, not Ukraine -- has undermined the possibility of negotiations and continues to do so right now. The rest is irrelevant to the question of negotiations as a matter of simple logic. We can therefore dismiss Pattern #6.

Given your interest in providing documentation and citations for quotes, we would appreciate it if you could provide some substantiation for these arguments beyond declaring them to be “historical fact.” Please give direct citations.

I have done so, extensively. If you would take the trouble to read before launching accusations you could easily find them. You can find a sufficient sample by googling “Truthout Chomsky.” If you take the trouble to read what I have written – the usual practice before launching accusations – you’ll find that it also refutes what you claim below.

A further point: someone who launches accusations has the responsibility to provide evidence. Someone who responds does NOT have that responsibility. That is elementary in academic or other discourse.

What follows again highlights your rejection of diplomacy, a matter of great significance. You are discussing negotiation tactics. The issue is a diplomatic settlement, plainly a totally different issue. As documented in which you are unwilling to read, the US has been undermining this option, and still does. Your apologetics for this are again instructive.

More importantly, do U.S. actions really undermine the possibility of negotiation or do they instead strengthen Ukraine’s position for negotiations? This is a critical distinction.

A strong position is extremely important in any negotiation—think of labor unions, with which you are well familiar. Suppose that an employer drives an extremely hard bargain with an individual employee A. A has the option of immediately entering a negotiated outcome— by accepting a significant wage cut that will put him well below the poverty line. Employee B, with more organizational experience, offers to organize a collective bargaining unit, which would increase employee A’s bargaining power and enable him to maintain his existing wage. The enraged employer threatens to immediately fire employee A, unless he denounces ever joining the union. In this situation, would you view employee B as “undermining the possibility of negotiations”? After all, without B’s union proposal, the employer and A could sign the contract immediately, with A taking the unfair wage cut; with B’s interference, there is now potential for escalation, including the threat of A’s firing. However, we expect that you will agree that employee B’s role was not to undermine the negotiation process, but to give employee A more bargaining power *within that process*.

This is how most Ukrainians, including us, view the role of the United States, the United Kingdom, and many members of the European Union in the current war. These allies’ assistance, whether economic or military, serves to strengthen Ukraine’s bargaining position. This does not undermine negotiation—it gives the victim (Ukraine) enough bargaining power to negotiate an outcome that might be acceptable, rather than subjugation.

More of your evasion of your rejection of a diplomatic settlement by keeping to negotiation tactics. More on this below

We can, again, eliminate Pattern #6

As for the rest, since I have never advocated “yielding to Russian demands” I need not respond at all.

Note that that covers all of your charges, without exception.

A final comment This war will either be ended by diplomacy or not. You say not a word in our letter about diplomacy, apart from falsehoods about the well-documented US record. By definition, diplomacy will offer Putin some kind of escape hatch. Your rejection of this option entails conducting a ghastly experiment with the lives of Ukrainians: Let's see whether Putin will slink away in complete defeat, or whether he will use the weapons that we all know he has to devastate Ukraine and possibly even worse.

I find it shocking to see advocacy of that ghastly experiment, which is the alternative to seeking a diplomatic settlement (as, incidentally, Zelensky has proposed, much along the lines that I and others have outlined). Or to be more accurate, it is the alternative to undermining the search for a diplomatic settlement as the US has been doing, as well-documented.

[We have absolutely no issue with diplomacy, but we do take issue with your definition of diplomacy. You say: "by definition, diplomacy will offer Putin some kind of escape hatch." Can you please point us to a single definition of diplomacy to back this statement?](#)

If you take issue with that definition, you are taking issue with diplomacy.

A diplomatic settlement differs from capitulation of one side precisely because both sides tolerate it. That's elementary.

in this case, look at the sources I cited, like Lieven, who spell it out carefully. All straightforward and well-known. Of course it means that Putin is offered some kind of escape hatch. The alternative is the "ghastly experiment" that you advocate. More below.

Below you are talking about the process of negotiation. The issue was diplomatic settlement, the outcome of negotiations. By evasion, you therefore continue to oppose a diplomatic settlement. The rest simply makes that more clear. It is your speculations about the possibility of negotiations. There's only one way to test them: Try. That's why I criticize China and the US for failure to help facilitate a diplomatic settlement, and the US further by its consistent undermining this option, as I document in detail in material that one might choose to look at before launching accusations.

The rest is plainly irrelevant, again as a matter of logic. You are discussing what the right negotiating strategy should be. Right or wrong, it has nothing to do with my criticism of the US for undermining negotiations.

If you bother to look at what I wrote, even things you refer to, you'll see that the reason I brought up the Afghan model that the US is by now coming closer to following is because of what it demonstrates about undermining negotiations. Highly relevant, very clearly, contrary to your objections.

In contrast, what you say below has no relevance to anything I said. Lack of citations is again telling.

We may not have your linguistic acuity with definitions, but as economists we do know how bargaining and negotiations processes work. First, as we discussed above, the goal in negotiation is not to reach “some” outcome, but to strengthen one’s bargaining position as much as possible and reach a *palatable* outcome. This is how we view the role of Ukraine’s allies: helping to strengthen Ukraine’s negotiating position as much as possible, so that Ukraine can come out with the best possible negotiated outcome. Focusing primarily on the necessity of offering *Putin* “an escape hatch” is counter-productive to this goal. It strengthens *Russia*’s negotiating position at the expense of Ukraine’s, undermining the possibility of an acceptable negotiated outcome.

Second, in order for diplomacy to work, two conditions are necessary: (1) *both* parties should be willing to reach some agreement and (2) *both* parties should be willing to respect this agreement. In the case of the Russia-Ukraine war, Russia’s only proposal is the unconditional capitulation of Ukraine, which is not an option for Ukrainians. Russia is already implementing a genocide in Ukraine, abducting, torturing, and killing Ukrainians in occupied territories. What makes you think that this will stop if Russia cements control over more Ukrainian territory? If any lessons from history should be drawn here, it is not a comparison to Mexico, but the lesson from Europe after 1945, when a number of European nations were left under nondemocratic rule (the so-called ‘Soviet sphere of influence’). This led to hundreds of thousands of people killed in labor camps and an economic gap between Eastern European countries and the rest of Europe, which they still struggle to overcome today.

Moreover, there is no sign that Russia intends to implement any commitments it might make. Russia broke all international agreements that ensured respect for Ukraine’s borders. Russia also broke ceasefire agreements reached since 2014 (specifically, it never implemented the first clause of the Minsk II agreement, which foresaw a ceasefire). Even while Ukraine was in negotiations with Russia since February 24th 2022, Russia never lowered the intensity of its shelling of Ukrainian cities and offensive on the ground. We believe it is pretty clear that Russia does not want any diplomatic solution other than Russia’s definition of diplomacy— Ukraine’s capitulation.

In sum: yes, wars end in settlement agreements—but that does not mean that all settlement agreements end wars. In our view, the kind of settlement agreement that you and some others advocate is akin to the Munich Agreement in World War II. Did ceding some of Czechoslovakian lands to Germany end the war? No, it led to the unfolding of the worst war in history.

Among the irrelevancies, this one is amusing. I’m probably the only living person who criticized the Munich agreement at the time, in print.

What makes you so confident that ceding Ukrainian lands to Russia will work out any better?

Let us end by reiterating our original appeal in more specific terms. When speaking on the subject of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, please consider whether your words serve to strengthen or weaken Ukraine’s position at the negotiating table and please refrain from doing the latter.

Already fully refuted.

We can therefore dismiss Pattern #6

Pattern #7. Advocating that yielding to Russian demands is the way to avert the nuclear war

Since the Russian invasion, Ukraine lives in a constant nuclear threat, not just due to being a prime target for Russian nuclear missiles but also due to the Russian occupation of Ukrainian nuclear power plants.

But what are the alternatives to fighting for freedom? Unconditional surrender and then elimination of Ukrainians off the face of the Earth (see above)? Have you ever wondered why President Zelenskyy, with the overwhelming support of the Ukrainian people, is pleading with Western leaders to provide heavy weapons despite the potential threat of nuclear escalation? The answer to this question is not “Because of Uncle Sam”, but rather due to the fact that Russian war crimes in [Bucha](#) and many other Ukrainian [cities](#) and [villages](#) have shown that living under Russian occupation is a tangible “hell on earth” happening right now, requiring immediate action. Arguably, any concessions to Russia will not reduce the probability of a nuclear war but lead to escalation. If Ukraine falls, Russia may attack other countries (Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Finland or Sweden) and can also use its nuclear blackmail to push the rest of Europe into submission. And Russia is not the only nuclear power in the world. Other countries, such as China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are watching. Just imagine what will happen if they learn that nuclear powers can get whatever they want using nuclear blackmail.

Professor Chomsky, we hope you will consider the facts and re-evaluate your conclusions. If you truly value Ukrainian lives as you claim to, we would like to kindly ask you to refrain from adding further fuel to the Russian war machine by spreading views very much akin to Russian propaganda.

Should you wish to engage further on any of the above-mentioned points, we are always open to discussion.

Kind regards,
Bohdan Kukharsky, City University of New York
Anastassia Fedyk, University of California, Berkeley
Yuriy Gorodnichenko, University of California, Berkeley
Iona Sologoub, VoxUkraine NGO Authors

As I wrote earlier, there’s no need to for me to respond to this because it has no relation to anything I’ve said. Again, the lack of citations is telling.

I will repeat the crucial point, which comes out even more clearly in this series of evasions and misrepresentations:

“Your rejection of this option entails conducting a ghastly experiment with the lives of Ukrainians: Let’s see whether Putin will slink away in complete defeat, or whether he will use the weapons that we all know he has to devastate Ukraine and possibly even worse. I find it

shocking to see advocacy of that ghastly experiment, which is the alternative to seeking a diplomatic settlement (as, incidentally, Zelensky has proposed, much along the lines that I and others have outlined). Or to be more accurate, it is the alternative to undermining the search for a diplomatic settlement as the US has been doing, as well-documented.”

To stress the main point again, you do reject diplomacy, evading the fact by keeping to negotiation strategy. And your apologetics for Washington’s undermining of diplomacy makes that even clearer.

We are left with your very clear advocacy of the “ghastly experiment,” which I do find shocking.

I hope you will reconsider your position, and think through the evasions and misrepresentations.

The proper reaction would be to publicly withdraw the accusations that you have widely circulated, but that’s your business.

And it’s far less important than publicly withdrawing your advocacy of the ghastly experiment. That reinforces the stand of others who are willing to gamble with the fate of Ukrainians, and far beyond.