

# Bear With Us: What Is To Be Done About Russia

## *Recommendations on resolving Russia's border disputes and reconstructing formerly occupied territories*

### BACKGROUND

From October 18-21, 2023, Salzburg Global Seminar hosted an off-the-record, high-level dialogue, "Bear With Us: What Is To Be Done About Russia?" to explore scenarios and questions about what to do about Russia in the mid- to long-term.

Russia's current war against Ukraine has made it plain that the hope for Russian liberalization and Europeanization after the Cold War has run aground. The war has dramatically changed the shape of Russian politics and likely the Russian state itself, with a future that is both uncertain and potentially more dangerous.

Post cold-war efforts to account for Russia in the existing transatlantic and European security architecture have broken down, and newer and even bigger threats might continue to emerge from a weakened and perhaps further disintegrated Russian Federation.

The Wagner Group mutiny in June 2023 also gave the impression that the power of President Vladimir Putin might fray, that his regime could be more fragile than many observers had assumed, and that events can unfold quickly once a fuse is lit.

In this context, all likely scenarios for the future of the Russian state are worrying. How to bolster Europe and the wider region against these acute and worsening threats, while continuing to engage and work with Russian youth, civil society, artists, scientists, and the private sector will present a significant and long-term challenge for the future of Europe.

Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need to think radically about present and future engagement with Russia.

Discussions focused on what options exist for managing and mitigating increasing uncertainty and danger exuding from Moscow. Fellows shared insights into political, economic, and security developments within and across Russia, as well as on the dynamics of other ongoing conflicts on Europe's periphery. Discussions also looked beyond the current war on Ukraine to other regions affected by Russian encroachment as well as other historical conflicts where lessons can be drawn.

At the end of the program, three working groups developed a number of recommendations. These recommendations do not necessarily represent consensus among participating Fellows, nor do they necessarily represent the positions of Fellows' respective organizations or institutions. However, Fellows wished to make these recommendations public with the goal of helping policy-makers develop new thinking and clearer approaches for dealing with the intractable problem: What is to be done about Russia?

## **WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO RESOLVE RUSSIA'S BORDER DISPUTES AND HOW CAN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS COORDINATE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR RECONSTRUCTION FOR TERRITORIES FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY RUSSIA?**

1. The precondition for any talks about these two topics is the victory of Ukraine over Russia and the evacuation of Russian troops from Ukraine's territory as defined in 1991.
2. We suggest a grand bargain in the form of a large peace conference for all main issues in line with the Vienna Congress of 1815 for territorial issues and war reparations and a parallel Nuremberg or International Criminal Court process for war crimes. A new Russian regime could be represented at the peace conference similar to how Talleyrand was at the Vienna Congress.
3. All the relevant territorial issues should be discussed at the peace conference and the idea should be that territories occupied by Russia should be returned. They are:
  - a. Ukraine, Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Moldova (Transnistria);
  - b. and Japan's claim on the four northern Kuril islands.
  - c. Finland is not interested in raising its potential border issues.
  - d. For Belarus, withdrawal of Russian troops and a regime change is on the table.
  - e. Potential Russian territorial issues, such as separatism in northern Caucasus or the status of Kaliningrad we leave aside, possibly left to Russia.
4. Major population moves are inevitable.
  - a. All deported Ukrainians, including children, must be allowed to come back.
  - b. A large emigration of Russians is to be expected from the territories occupied by Russia. Recent immigration should be subject to expulsion, while many Russians are likely to emigrate voluntarily.
5. Restitution of real estate and any other assets confiscated by Russia needs to be carried out. The most valuable assets might be in Crimea, but the principle must be general.
6. We discussed demilitarization of, for example, the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea and possible denuclearization of Russia, but we came to the conclusion that it is too early to discuss this because we know too little about the outcome of the war and the resulting balance of power.
7. We recommend the establishment of a broad Western-supported Ukraine Reconstruction Agency with a solid financial mechanism.
8. We recommend that Russia's Central Bank reserves that have been immobilized in the West (some \$300 billion) be seized and transferred to the Ukraine Reconstruction Agency as war reparations from Russia. Iraq was forced to pay \$52.4 billion in war reparations for its war of aggression on Kuwait, which serves as an excellent precedent. The UN General Assembly called for Russia to pay war reparations in a resolution on November 14, 2022, and for member countries to set up the relevant authority to handle this.
9. We suggest that the war reparations are paid out as insurance coverage to those who have suffered from Russian war damage, whether they are individuals, companies, municipalities, regions, or the central government. Everybody should receive compensation for the damage suffered without being instructed how to use the compensation. The aim should be to modernize Ukraine, not to return to the status quo ante.
10. We perceive that the cost, capacity and competence of the judicial system (both national and international) might be a major concern. Courts will have to handle war crimes, restitution, and many other issues. Serious consideration needs to be given to court capacity and to how the burden on the courts can be eased.