



This symposium will examine the Russo-Ukrainian War and what it tells us about the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary international system. It will explore war crimes, crimes against humanity and alleged genocide arising from the conflict. It will also revisit the enduring dichotomy between Russian authoritarian imperialism and Ukrainian democratic nationalism.

PROGRAM
Wednesday, April 26, 2023

8:45 Welcoming Remarks

9:00-11:15 Presentations

Moderator: Katherine Zubovich, Assistant Professor of History, University at Buffalo

“The Russo-Ukrainian War in Historical Perspective”

Serhii Plokhii, Mykhailo S. Hrushevs’kyi Professor of Ukrainian History; Director, Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University

Russia’s attack on Ukraine produced the largest European conflict since the end of World War II and plunged the world into a new Cold War. Putin’s de facto declaration of war on Ukraine was dubbed a history lecture, and few observers outside Russia could make sense of it. How important have been the misuse and abuse of history in the perpetration and justification of this war, and what are the actual historical causes of the conflict? Serhii Plokhii will provide answers to these and other related questions by demonstrating that Ukraine and Ukrainian history have remained central to Russia’s idea of itself. He will also trace the origins of the newest European war to the fall of the USSR and will explain the reasons for the return of the Cold War to the very same part of the world where it ended thirty years earlier.

Moderator: Katherine Zubovich, Assistant Professor of History, University at Buffalo

“The Protests that Were—and Weren’t: Russian Society and the War”

Willard Sunderland, Henry R. Winkler Professor of Modern History, University of Cincinnati

A small number of Russians have publicly protested the war. A larger minority outwardly support it. But what of the rest, the huge number of people who aren’t protesting but also aren’t rallying? Are they a silent majority whose silence means agreement or are they merely quiet for now?

Moderator: Michelle Benson-Saxton, Associate Professor of Political Science, University at Buffalo

“A Collision of Histories? NATO Expansion and the Russo-Ukrainian War”

Timothy Andrews Sayle, Associate Professor, Department of History; Director, International Relations Program, University of Toronto

How should we understand the relationship, if any, between enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022? The very idea of a connection between the post-war growth of the alliance and the Russian decision to launch a conventional war has been hotly disputed. The answer to the question has significant implications for the present and future of global security. Tim Sayle, a historian of NATO, considers the decisions to maintain and expand the alliance after the end of the Cold War, and seeks to identify how it shaped – and continues to shape – today’s international system.

11:15-12:15 Lunch

12:15-3:15 Presentations

Moderator: Collin Anderson, Clinical Assistant Professor of Political Science, University at Buffalo

“Globalised Oligarchs”

Marlies Glasius, Professor in International Relations, Department of Politics, University of Amsterdam

The sanctions against the Russian oligarchs are legally problematic, ineffective and counterintuitive. However, understanding the phenomenon of the oligarchs is important for the West in other ways. After discussing precisely how the sanctions work and what their effects have been to date, I will shift to examining the role oligarchs have played in the shifts away from democratization in the last decades, in Russia and elsewhere. Russia’s history in the 1990s holds up a ‘black mirror’ to us, demonstrating how oligarchs can capture electoral politics and erode accountability to the public. At the same time, globalization has given oligarchs the opportunity to put their assets beyond the reach of national taxation authorities in democratic states. What is needed, instead of sanctions against Russian oligarchs, is national and global initiatives to make all oligarchs more taxable and subject to democratic controls.

Moderator: Ryan Muldoon, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University at Buffalo

“As Autocracies Fail, How Should Democracies Respond?”

Ken Roth, Former Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

The Russian government has played a leading role in trying to undermine the global system for the defense of human rights, largely by attacking the fact-based analysis that is needed to enforce rights and by pursuing a strategy of whataboutism on steroids. The Kremlin’s motive is to deflect condemnation of its intensifying repression at home and its flouting of international humanitarian law in Chechnya, Syria, and now Ukraine. However, the international response to these efforts has been strong. Beyond the sanctions imposed by many nations and the arming of Ukrainian forces, key international institutions have stepped up. Russia’s veto has stymied U.N. Security Council action, but strong steps have been taken by the U.N. General Assembly, the U.N. Human Rights Council, and the International Criminal Court. Whether these steps will succeed in curbing Russian war crimes remains to be seen, but it is one of the strongest responses that we have seen.

Moderator: Ryan Muldoon, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University at Buffalo

“Russia and the New World Disorder”

Angela Stent, Director Emerita, Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies, Georgetown University; Senior Nonresident Fellow, The Brookings Institution

What kind of world order will emerge after the Russia-Ukraine war? Vladimir Putin’s pronouncements on world order have evolved during his 22 years in power, but he has consistently advocated for a post-West multipolar order. For years he praised both the nineteenth-century Concert of Power and the Yalta system as models for the future world order. The essence of both was a world divided into spheres of influence where sovereign

great powers ruled their smaller, less sovereign neighbors. In the twenty-first century this would be a tripolar world divided between Russia, the United States and China. Russia's attack on Ukraine has made this model obsolete. It is clear that Putin is promoting a Hobbesian, disruptive world order with few rules and little predictability. When the war ends, the collective West will redouble its efforts to constrain future Russian aggression. Much of the Global South will remain neutral while Russia will increasingly become China's junior partner. In the emerging multipolar world, the United States will remain the predominant power. The dual challenge that Russia and China pose individually and together may galvanize the U.S., Europe and Asia into even closer cooperation.

Moderator: Ryan Muldoon, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University at Buffalo

“What Does America Owe Ukraine?”

George Packer, Staff Writer, *The Atlantic*

George Packer will discuss his trip to Ukraine last year (see his piece in the October 2022 *Atlantic*) and will situate it in a larger context of geo-politics. He will try to answer a fundamental question: How can the U.S. and the West justify the extraordinary amount of support--military, economic, diplomatic--given to Ukraine, when much of the world, including major countries such as India, Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia, has taken a neutral stance or even sympathizes with Russia? And on what basis can the U.S. lead this effort when its own record over the two decades since 9/11 is so flawed?

3:15-3:30 Closing Remarks & Discussion

Sponsors: Alison Des Forges Memorial Committee; University at Buffalo: The Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy; Departments of Comparative Literature, History, Philosophy, and Political Science; Gender Institute; The Gordon and Gretchen Gross Professorship in Jewish Thought; Humanities Institute; James Agee Chair in American Culture; Office of the Vice Provost for International Education

This symposium honors the life and work of human rights activist Alison Des Forges (1942-2009), see www.alisondesforges.org.

SPEAKERS (in order of appearance)



Serhii Plokhii (Plokhyy) is the Mykhailo Hrushevsky Professor of Ukrainian History and director of the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University. A leading authority on Ukraine, Russia, and Eastern Europe, he has published extensively on the international history of World War II and the Cold War. His books have won numerous awards, including the Lionel Gelber Prize for the best English-language book on international relations and the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction (UK). His latest book, *The Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History* will be released by W.W. Norton in the U.S. and by Penguin in the UK in May 2023.



Willard Sunderland is the Henry Winkler Professor of Modern History at the University of Cincinnati. A specialist on the history of the Russian empire, he has lived and traveled extensively in the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, and the Caucasus for the last thirty years. His current research focuses on the history of Sino-Russian relations. His most recent book, published in Russian just before the outbreak of the war, is a study of Russian regional society, culture, and politics during the tsarist era.

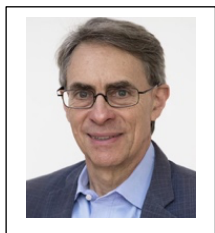


Timothy Andrews Sayle is Associate Professor of History and Director of the International Relations Program at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Cornell, 2019). He has co-edited three books: *NATO in the Cold War and After: Contested Histories and Future Directions* (with Sergey Radchenko and Christian Ostermann); *Nuclear North: Histories of Canada in the Atomic Age* (with Susan Colbourn); and *The Last Card: Inside George W. Bush's Decision to Surge in Iraq* (with Jeffrey A. Engel, Hal Brands, and William Inboden).



Marlies Glasius is Professor in International Relations in the Department of Politics, University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include authoritarianism, global civil society, international criminal justice and the global rise of the super-rich. She is the author of *Authoritarian Practices in a Global Age* (Oxford University Press, 2023) and *The International Criminal Court: A Global Civil Society Achievement* (Routledge, 2006), and lead author of *Research, Ethics and Risk in the Authoritarian Field* (Palgrave, 2018). She previously worked at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where she was a founding editor of the *Global Civil Society Yearbook*. She was also

an associate editor of the *European Journal of International Relations* (2018-2020).



Kenneth Roth served for nearly three decades as the executive director of Human Rights Watch, one of the world's leading international human rights organizations, which operates in some 100 countries. Before that, Roth was a federal prosecutor in New York and for the Iran-Contra investigation in Washington. A graduate of Yale Law School and Brown University, Roth has conducted numerous human rights investigations and missions around the world, meeting with dozens of heads of state and countless ministers. He is quoted widely in the media and has written hundreds of articles on a wide range of human rights issues, devoting special attention to the

world's most dire situations, the conduct of war, the foreign policies of the major powers, the work of the United Nations, and the global contest between autocracy and democracy. Roth is currently writing a book about the strategies used by Human Rights Watch to defend human rights, drawing on his years of experience.



Angela Stent is Senior Adviser to the Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies and Professor Emerita of Government and Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She is also a Senior Nonresident Fellow at the Brookings Institution and co-chairs its Hewett Forum on Post-Soviet Affairs. She serves on the Board of Visitors of the Marine Corps University. From 2004-2006 she served as National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council. From 1999 to 2001, she served in the Office of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State. Stent's primary research focus is Russian foreign policy, with special emphasis on the triangular U.S.-Europe-Russia relationship. Her publications include: *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West German-Soviet Relations, 1955-1980* (Cambridge University Press, 1981); *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, The Soviet Collapse and The New Europe* (Princeton University Press, 1999); *The Limits of Partnership: US-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton University Press, 2014), for which she won the American Academy of Diplomacy's Douglas Dillon prize for the best book on the practice of American Diplomacy. Her latest book is *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and With the Rest* (Twelve Books, 2019) for which she won the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy's prize for the best book on U.S-Russian Relations.



George Packer is a staff writer at *The Atlantic* and formerly at *The New Yorker*. He is the author of ten books: two novels, a play, and seven works of non-fiction, including *The Unwinding*, winner of the 2013 National Book Award; *Our Man*, winner of the 2019 Hitchens Prize and Los Angeles Times Book Prize; and *The Assassins' Gate*, a 2005 Pulitzer finalist, New York Times Book Review top ten book of the year, and winner of the Helen Bernstein New York Public Library Award. His work has also won four Overseas Press Club awards and, for his play *Betrayed*, the Lucille Lortel Award for best Off-Broadway play.