

How to end Russia's war on Ukraine

Safeguarding Europe's future, and the dangers of a false peace

As Ukraine continues to fight to liberate its occupied territories and eject Russian invaders, its Western backers debate the likely endgame for the war and its aftermath. The international response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, while impressive in many ways, remains inadequate to the task and dangerously wobbly. Russia's wider threat to the rules-based international order is also insufficiently acknowledged.

Many proposals have been put forward for how the conflict could, or should, be brought to a close. Some, though well-intentioned, involve concessions that would effectively appease Russia, betray Ukraine and endanger Europe.

This multi-author report takes nine commonly espoused ideas for quick fixes or objections to bolstering assistance to Ukraine, and weighs them against both current reality and their long-term consequences. The unanimous conclusion of the authors is that the only outcome to the war that can safeguard the future security of Europe is a convincing Ukrainian victory – hence, Western military support to Kyiv should be redoubled before it is too late.

Chapters:

Fallacy 1: 'Settle now: all wars end at the negotiating table'

Fallacy 2: 'Ukraine should concede territory in exchange for peace'

Fallacy 3: 'Ukraine should adopt neutrality'

Fallacy 4: 'Russian security concerns must be respected'

Fallacy 5: 'Russian defeat is more dangerous than Russian victory'

Fallacy 6: 'Russia's defeat in Ukraine will lead to greater instability in Russia'

Fallacy 7: 'This is costing too much, and the West needs to restore economic ties with Russia'

Fallacy 8: 'Ukraine's pursuit of justice hinders peace'

Fallacy 9: 'This war is not our fight, and there are more important global problems'

Summary of principles for Western policy on the war

— Ukraine must not be pressured, directly or indirectly, into a negotiated pause to the fighting. Instead, **Kyiv must be allowed to fight the war to a conclusion before a peace** is negotiated. Anything short of this grants Russia success and will encourage future Russian invasions.

— Ukraine's Western backers must recognize that **territorial concessions by Ukraine – including over Crimea – are not a workable solution**. Granting Russia its wishes will confirm for Moscow that the path of conflict is the right one.

— **Ukraine must be provided with genuine security guarantees** to provide for its future safety. 'Neutrality', Ukraine's status before 2014, provides no such guarantee. This war proves that real safety against Russia lies only within NATO, and with Ukraine's completed transformation from former Soviet republic to full and free partner within the transatlantic community. Ukrainian membership of NATO and the EU should be a priority.

— Ukraine's Western backers **must overcome their fear of inflicting a clear and decisive defeat on Russia**. The dangers of this defeat are far outweighed by those of Russian success or an ambiguous end to the conflict.

— The potential for **political instability within Russia should not be a deterrent to pressing home Ukraine's advantage**. Indeed, the attempted Wagner Group mutiny of 24 June 2023 showed that domestic tumult can offer a tactical edge to Ukraine. The war has shaken the Russian regime, as the rebellion showed, although state fragmentation is unlikely even in the event of Russia's defeat.

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- The financing of support for Ukraine must be recognized as an investment in Euro-Atlantic security, and one which is yielding enormous returns in neutralizing the most acute threat to that security. **Western governments should make it clearer to their electorates what this investment buys**, and if necessary adopt public communications strategies challenging narratives around the fiscal costs of supporting Ukraine. For example, governments should make clear that headline figures on the value of weapons and other equipment supplied to Ukraine mostly do not represent new costs, but materiel already purchased and on hand.
- **NATO must urgently increase production of munitions and weapons systems**, with the aim of matching rates of consumption in Ukraine. This is not only to sustain the Ukrainian armed forces in the current conflict, but also to replenish and augment stockpiles across NATO in readiness for an extended period of military tension, and the possibility of high-intensity warfare. NATO should facilitate international defence procurement collaboration and – in consultation with the EU – remove systemic obstacles such as protectionism impeding multinational defence orders.
- **The vital requirement for justice for Russia's war crimes and atrocities must not be disregarded for the sake of a settlement with Moscow.** Only accountability will prompt change in Russia. Most pressingly, Ukraine needs ongoing assistance with its vast caseload of war-related proceedings, as well as with the establishment of a special tribunal for Russia's crime of aggression. Ultimately, support to win the war is necessary to allow a prospect of justice being delivered.
- **Economic and financial sanctions must be constantly refined and honed to ensure they remain effective.** Policy in this area should be informed by an understanding that Russia is involved in a huge effort to get around sanctions. Sanctions remain important in imposing a cost on Russia. They will have an increasing role in constraining the ability of the Russian military-industrial complex to rebuild offensive military capability eroded in Ukraine.
- **The frozen assets of the Russian state and private individuals must be repurposed to finance reconstruction of Ukraine's society, infrastructure and economy.** Western government funding and private sector investment will not be enough on their own to meet Ukraine's needs. Asset seizures or some variation on them, quite apart from being the moral choice and a source of substantial additional finance, are also necessary to show Russia and the Russians that crime doesn't pay. In fact, they should be an essential part of the de-Putinization process that Russia must undergo if it is to join the civilized community of nations.
- Finally, **it is essential that Western countries – and partners further afield – recognize and accept that the outcome of Russia's war on Ukraine is a key determinant of their own future safety and security.** Any genuine, durable plan for peace can only be implemented after hostilities have ended in Ukraine's favour. And it must enshrine the principle of respect for the country's sovereign independence and pre-2014 territorial borders. Any other outcome will set a precedent that encourages aggressors worldwide and degrades the rules-based international order. Ongoing, long-term deterrence of Russia after this war is an essential condition for preserving peace.



Full version of the report

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