

# Policy Solutions

## Secure Ukraine (Rebecca Heinrichs)

***The West's ability to establish consequences for Russian brutality and lead Ukraine to victory is central to protecting American national security.***

Russian President Vladimir Putin seeks to destroy the U.S.'s post-World War II alliances and undermine the U.S.'s global standing. These international aims pose an acute, chronic, and global threat to the United States and its interests. Russia's vast nuclear weapons force, collaboration with authoritarian regimes like China and North Korea, and willingness to initiate unprovoked hostile actions make Russia an extremely dangerous adversary. To preserve the U.S.-led system that has enabled the safety and prosperity of Americans and U.S. allies, the United States must compel Russia to back down from its current aggression and deter future attacks. At the core of this strategy must be a swift end to Russia's brutality against Ukraine.

Russia has the means and explicit intent to undermine the United States. Despite decades of U.S. efforts across Republican and Democratic administrations to improve relations with the Russian government, Vladimir Putin has maintained and expanded an adversarial posture against the United States and its allies. Russia has challenged the U.S. military by illegally violating international airspace and waters and repeatedly engaging in cyber warfare, anti-U.S. propaganda campaigns, and espionage. If Ukraine's backers in the free world do not support its defense, Russia will be emboldened to think even bigger.

A U.S. policy toward Russia should first and foremost commit to the goal of a Ukrainian victory. Securing Ukraine's sovereignty is the only way to guarantee that Russia will cease military expansion into Europe and weaken its ability to undermine U.S. commercial and national security interests, to say nothing of its impact on Xi's calculation vis-à-vis Taiwan. While the exact parameters that constitute a victory should be defined by the Ukrainian people, America's direct interests in the negotiation at the very least require that Russia relinquish

territory occupied since the 2022 invasion and that Ukraine is given security guarantees to prevent future attacks on its sovereignty. As we have seen over the past two years, the U.S. and its allies have the capacity to support such a victory without risking the life of a single servicemember.

Second, the United States must lead its NATO allies to provide Ukraine with the necessary weapons to do more than merely defend against the Russian march. Thus far, weapons have been supplied too slowly to equip Ukrainians to win and have come with significant limitations on their use. The U.S. should be willing to provide advanced weaponry, including long-range strike systems and air defenses. If the U.S. takes the lead, its allies will make similar provisions.

When offered proactively, U.S. assistance can change the tide. The introduction of M142 HIMARS in 2022, for example, allowed Ukrainians to dismantle the Russian logistical network, taking out ammunition depots, key transportation infrastructure, air defense systems, and troop concentrations. Russian defenses quickly crumbled under the pressure of Ukraine's counter-offensive, and Ukraine liberated hundreds of square miles of territory in just a few days. For just 3% of our defense budget, we have helped Ukraine severely diminish one of our greatest adversaries. After two years of war, American intelligence estimated that Russia had lost 87 percent of the active duty troops it had before its full-scale invasion (over 300,000 killed or injured) and up to two-thirds of its tanks.<sup>48</sup> By dramatically shifting its assistance strategy to one of victory, the U.S. can ensure continued battlefield gains for Ukraine to prepare it to end the war on terms that favor Ukraine and NATO.

Third, the United States should stop publicly announcing what it will and will not do to support Ukraine. Telegraphing its support has the effect of assisting the Russians' military planning by simplifying the Russian government's calculation.

Fourth, the United States should quietly authorize the Ukrainians to strike Russian key military targets essential for its war of aggression where they are located. This means lifting current prohibitions on striking key nodes within Russian territory. This will complicate the Russian military planning, blunt its ability to supply the war effort, and shrink Russian morale by imposing real and visible costs to war. Only by increasing the pain, uncertainty, and loss of the

**48.** REUTERS. U.S. INTELLIGENCE ASSESSES UKRAINE WAR HAS COST RUSSIA 315,000 CASUALTIES - SOURCE. [REUTERS.COM/WORLD/US-INTELLIGENCE-ASSESSES-UKRAINE-WAR-HAS-COST-RUSSIA-315000-CASUALTIES-SOURCE-2023-12-12](https://www.reuters.com/world/us-intelligence-assesses-ukraine-war-has-cost-russia-315000-casualties-source-2023-12-12)

Russian forces will Putin and his advisors have an incentive to end his war of choice.

Fifth, the United States and its allies should bolster the security of NATO's Eastern front. This means leading initiatives to invest in the collective defense industrial bases, deploying more NATO troops in the Baltic countries and Poland, and recognizing that Russia has violated and therefore destroyed the NATO Founding Act. Permitting the NATO Founding Act to remain in place, even though Russia has completely undermined it, could have the effect of precluding NATO from adjusting its forces in ways necessary to preserve the peace and deter Russia from escalating horizontally by attacking a NATO nation, or by escalating vertically by possibly crossing the nuclear threshold however low the yield and regardless of location.

America has a key interest in preserving the U.S.-led alliance architecture, ensuring the defeat of an adversarial military, and protecting nuclear peace. A Ukrainian victory is thus a necessary part of any successful strategy toward Russia.