

## Ending the War in Ukraine

A responsible approach to ending the Russia–Ukraine war should defend Ukraine’s sovereignty, reduce the risk of a wider NATO–Russia war, and bring this devastating conflict to a close through realistic diplomacy. The United States should support Ukraine and deter further Russian aggression, but avoid open-ended escalation or a permanent proxy war with a nuclear power. Responsible policy requires balancing support for Ukraine with the need to reduce the risk of escalation and bring the conflict to an end.

 “Negotiations equal appeasement.”

 “Diplomacy backed by leverage is how wars end, and how lives are saved.”

### What interests are at stake in this war?

There is no clear American interest in an indefinite proxy war. There is a clear American interest in a stable Europe, a secure Ukraine, and avoiding escalation with a nuclear power. The most important US interest is preventing a wider NATO–Russia war, because a direct clash between two nuclear-armed powers could escalate rapidly and unpredictably.

 “If Ukraine doesn’t defeat Russia outright, America loses.”

 “America’s core interest is preventing a wider war and securing long-term stability, not chasing maximalist outcomes.”

### Is a negotiated settlement possible — and is Russia really ready to compromise?

Yes, but only if the United States leads a serious diplomatic effort. After years of attrition, neither Ukraine or Russia is positioned to achieve a decisive victory at an acceptable cost. However, many of the issues behind the war cannot be resolved on the battlefield alone. Russia has tied the conflict to broader European security concerns. Ukraine cannot negotiate over NATO policy or US military deployments in Europe, but Washington can. That is why US diplomacy is essential to reaching a durable settlement. There are political settlements available that would preserve Ukraine as a sovereign, independent state and provide it with the means to defend itself, while also reducing the risk of direct NATO–Russia war.

 “Ukraine must keep fighting for as long as it takes.”

 “The alternative to negotiations isn’t guaranteed victory. It is more war and destruction.”


 “Addressing NATO expansion means accepting Russia’s narrative.”

 “Acknowledging security concerns is not endorsing aggression — it’s recognizing that durable peace requires addressing root causes.”

## What leverage does the United States have?

The United States has real leverage to help shape how this war ends, through military, economic and diplomatic tools. The United States and its NATO allies remain far stronger militarily than Russia. Decisions about US troop levels, missile deployments, and future arms control agreements matter greatly to Moscow. Sanctions, along with hundreds of billions of dollars in frozen Russian assets, are powerful tools that can be used to achieve a framework deal. Any sanctions relief should be gradual, conditional, and reversible if Russia violates an agreement. Russia also wants relief from international isolation and recognition as a major power. The United States can use that interest as leverage, offering limited diplomatic and economic normalization only if Moscow follows through on a peace deal. US strength gives us tools beyond the battlefield, if we can use them strategically to help bring this war to a responsible end.

 "Give Ukraine the weapons it needs to win."

 "Support and diplomacy must go hand in hand. We need to strategically use all of our tools to help Ukraine reach a peace deal."


 "Negotiations mean giving up our leverage."

 "Negotiations are where we use our leverage to protect American interests and bring the war to an end."

## Would a settlement reward Putin's aggression?

Russia launched this war hoping to bring Ukraine back under its control and stop it from moving closer to the West. That didn't happen. Ukraine is still an independent country, its government is intact, and its ties to Europe are stronger than before the invasion. At the same time, Russia has paid a high price — with heavy military losses and far fewer gains than it expected. A settlement along today's front lines wouldn't be a clear victory for either side, but it would confirm that Russia failed to take over Ukraine. A deal that protects Ukraine's independence, helps it defend itself, and secures its future in Europe would not reward aggression. It would lock in the reality that Ukraine survived, while stopping the fighting and saving lives. Any realistic settlement is likely to leave some Ukrainian territory under Russian control, which is a difficult thing to come to terms with. But the alternative is not guaranteed victory for Ukraine. It is likely years more war, more lives lost, higher costs for the United States, and a continued risk of escalation between nuclear powers.

 "Talking to Russia rewards aggression."

 "Putin's larger war objectives have already failed. Ukraine remains independent and aligned with Europe. Territorial concessions reflect battlefield realities, but they do not change the fact that Russia failed to conquer Ukraine."

## How does the war in Iran impact the war in Ukraine?

The war in Iran is stretching US military resources and attention. The same air defense systems and precision missiles that Ukraine depends on are also being used at a rapid pace in the Middle East. When the United States is involved in multiple conflicts at once, it becomes harder to sustain support for any one of them. At the same time, conflict with Iran is pushing up global oil prices, which helps Russia finance its war in Ukraine. These factors make a prolonged war in Iran more dangerous and less likely to improve Ukraine's position, increasing the urgency of pursuing an end to these two conflicts.

 "Now that there's a war with Iran, Ukraine doesn't matter anymore."

 "The more global conflicts there are, the more important it is to end the ones we can responsibly resolve."