



Europe cannot afford Ukrainian defeat, so it must step up its support for Kyiv

The war in the Middle East is pushing Ukraine off the front pages, and some Western leaders, particularly in the US, are turning their attention away from Russia's continuing war of aggression against Ukraine. But Ukraine's success is vital to European security, and Europe must invest in achieving it, a new policy brief from the Centre for European Reform argues. [‘Ukraine fatigue: Bad for Kyiv, bad for the West’](#) sets out the case for the EU to adopt a long-term strategy for Ukraine's success, starting with a clearly-defined objective – Ukraine's recovery of all its territory and its integration into the EU. It analyses the military and economic challenges that Ukraine faces, as well as developments in Russian military and economic policy, and makes recommendations for policy responses.

The policy brief warns that Ukraine is going to need both short- and long-term military aid, for which Western and especially European production capacity is currently entirely inadequate. European countries need to rationalise the way they spend their defence budgets. That means reducing the number of different types of weapons systems they produce, and procuring more on a collaborative basis rather than nationally. But it also means increasing national defence budgets more than most European countries have so far done, and modifying EU rules that currently constrain defence spending, so that they reflect the security threats to Europe.

Ukraine's industries and its infrastructure have suffered enormous damage from Russian attacks – which continue, and seem likely to be redoubled this winter in an effort to inflict the maximum possible misery on Ukrainian civilians. The West is sitting on several hundred billion euros in Russian state assets, frozen by sanctions. Most of these assets are in institutions in EU countries, which have so far been reluctant even to divert the interest payments on them to helping Ukraine. Western governments should be less squeamish about confiscating Russian assets and using them to repair the damage that Russia has done.

Western leaders should not deceive themselves into thinking that Putin is looking for a compromise solution: he still believes he can win. If Ukraine does not prevail, the consequences for European security will be serious, because Putin has made clear that his ambition is to reconstitute more of the Russian empire. The cost of helping Ukraine is high; the cost of not helping it will be higher.

Ian Bond, the author of the policy brief, said: *“Western leaders who express ‘Ukraine fatigue’ need to remember that Ukrainians suffering as a result of Putin’s continuing aggression do not have the luxury of giving in to fatigue. They have no choice but to defend the independence of their country – and in doing so, they are defending the rest of Europe as well. We should be grateful to Ukrainians, and we should show our gratitude by giving them much more military and economic help”.*

Notes for editors:

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