
Arms alone won't win Ukraine

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| U.S. FOREIGN POLICY |

My reading of Moscow's intentions lately has been that it wanted to deescalate without losing face. This was difficult – if not impossible – given the international situation and low control of DNR/LNR. This option is now closed. The problem is Putin will find it easier to escalate than Washington, so there will be more difficult choices for the latter in the near future.

Although provision of Soviet weaponry is the most logical way to go, there are two interesting aspects that the report did not touch. First, these weapons will likely be replaced, meaning that East/Central European NATO members would get modern Western weapons instead. This is very compatible with recent pronouncements by the administration and perhaps one of the reasons why the proposal about military assistance was accepted.

Second, the effectiveness of that assistance will primarily depend on Kyiv's ability to use it. Unfortunately, the government is pretty dysfunctional, both in the way it fights the war and especially in the way it conducts economic and political reforms. In fact, it seems to me that war has been primarily used to fight for influence inside Kyiv instead of for any other purposes. Moreover, I am

shocked at how the strongest tool of consolidating the country around the government and pushing through necessary reforms – the external threat – has been largely wasted. The apparent failure of the ongoing mobilization indicates that the public is not supportive – perhaps not of war, but of the government definitely. Arms cannot win a war – it takes an army, high command, and government to do that.

The domestic politics part has been missing from the earlier debate, but in my mind this is the most important piece of the picture. One could expect confusion and inefficiency in the first few months, but not that late into the war.

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