

# War and Regrets in Ukraine

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Of the Vietnam War, Henry Kissinger, former national security advisor and secretary of State under Presidents Nixon and Ford, said, "[We should never have been there.](#)" Before long, Americans, even the politicians inside the Beltway, will reach the same conclusion about Washington's Ukrainian proxy war against Russia.

**No one in the White House, the Senate, or the House consciously set out to turn the proxy Ukrainian war with Moscow into a contest of "competitive societal collapse" between Russia and NATO. But here we are. No one imagined that the Biden administration and the bipartisan war party would drive Americans and Europeans into a political, military, and economic [valley of death](#), from which there is no easy escape. Yet that is precisely what is happening.**

For the moment, Washington remains blind to these developments. Whether in print, radio, television, or online, the narrative is clear: despite horrific losses — at least 400,000 Ukrainian battlefield casualties including [100,000 soldiers killed in action](#) — Ukrainian forces are winning. Moreover, the narrative says, America's financial and economic dominance will ultimately overwhelm the [deceptively weak Russian economy](#).

**The Ukrainian-victory narrative admittedly benefits hugely from Western media that actively "tune out" opposing views and depict Russia and its armed forces in the worst possible light. The fact that nearly half a century of the Cold War conditioned Americans to think the worst of Russians certainly helps.**

Yet there is also a measure of "true faith" at work, a condition of national narcissism, inside the Beltway that believes Washington can control what happens thousands of miles away in Eastern Ukraine. The message resonates in Congress because it rests on a critical strategic assumption that American citizens have yet to challenge: that American national power is limitless and unconstrained — as though a series of strategic failures, from Vietnam to Afghanistan, never happened.

Given that [American politicians](#) are always more preoccupied by domestic affairs than foreign policy, members of Congress are quick to adopt the "true faith." This faith explains why for the

last eight years members thought a future war with Russia was a low-risk affair. Ukrainians would provide the cannon fodder and Washington would provide the expensive weaponry and munitions.

Predictably, Washington's governing strategic principles are unchanged from previous U.S. interventions around the world. Muddle through: masses of soldiers — in this case Ukrainians advised by U.S. and allied officers — and huge infusions of cash, equipment, and technology can and will permanently alter strategic reality in America's favor.

**The stupefying air of self-righteousness the Biden administration assumes when it attacks erstwhile strategic partners such as [Saudi Arabia](#) or delivers moralizing lectures to Beijing's leadership, or when its media surrogates express contempt for the Russian state, is downright dangerous. Political figures in Washington are ready to indulge any transgression if it is committed in the [name of destroying Russia](#). They do not view U.S. foreign policy in the context of a larger strategy, nor do they comprehend Russia's capacity to hurt the United States, a bizarre judgment of Russia's actual military and economic potential.**

The result is a toxic climate of ideological hatred making it hard to imagine a contemporary U.S. secretary of State ever signing an international [agreement renouncing war](#) as an instrument of U.S. national policy, as Secretary of State Frank Kellogg did in 1928. But as one of Shakespeare's characters in the *Merchant of Venice* warned, "The truth will out."

**The ongoing buildup of 700,000 [Russian forces](#) with modern equipment in Western Russia, Eastern Ukraine and Belorussia is a direct consequence of Moscow's decision to adopt an elastic, strategic defense of the territories it seized in the opening months of the war. It was a wise, though [politically unpopular choice](#) in Russia. Yet, the strategy has succeeded. Ukrainian losses have been catastrophic and by November, Russian Forces will be in a position to strike a knockout blow.**

Today, there are rumors in the media that Kiev may be under pressure to launch more counterattacks against Russian defenses in Kherson (Southern Ukraine) before the midterm elections in November. At this point, expending what little remains of [Ukraine's life blood](#) to expel Russian forces from Ukraine is hardly synonymous with the preservation of the Ukrainian state. It's also doubtful that further sacrifices by Ukrainians will assist the Biden administration in the midterm elections.

**The truth is Moscow's redline concerning Ukrainian entry into NATO was always real. Eastern Ukraine and Crimea were always predominantly Russian in language, culture, history, and political orientation. Europe's descent into economic oblivion this winter is also real, as is support for Russia's cause in China and India and Moscow's rising military strength.**

**In retrospect, it is easy to see how Congress was beguiled by the denizens of think tanks, lobbyists, and retired generals, who are, with few exceptions, people with a cocktail level of familiarity with high-end conventional warfare. Members of the House and Senate were urged to support dubious strategies for the use of American military assistance, including reckless scenarios for limited nuclear war with Russia or China. For some reason, U.S. politicians have lost sight of the reality that any [use of nuclear weapons](#) would overwhelm the ends of all national policy.**

It is not the first time that American political leaders misjudged the true nature of a situation. In 1969, Kissinger advised President Nixon against de-escalation on the grounds that keeping U.S. troops fighting in Vietnam remained one of Washington's few bargaining weapons in its negotiations with Hanoi. Kissinger was wrong. Washington gained nothing at the negotiating

table with Hanoi by sacrificing more Americans in Vietnam after January 1969.

**In view of [Ukraine's bleak prospects](#) of ever regaining lost territory and its deteriorating strategic health, Ukraine's future now rests in Russian hands. For Washington, there is a morally responsible and practical answer: Kiev should stop the bloodletting and make the best possible peace with Moscow it can. Unfortunately, for Washington this solution is unthinkable.**

**As long as Washington delivers cash, military assistance, and equipment to Ukraine, Kiev will fight its unwinnable war, and Washington's ruling political class will profit from the transfer of cash to the Pentagon and the U.S. Defense Industrial Base. But Washington, its NATO allies, and Ukrainians will gain nothing of strategic value, while [Russia is likely to grow stronger](#). That is a development Washington will regret.**

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