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ABSTRACT: Now that Vladimir Putin has chosen a path of escalation in his unnecessary war of aggression against Ukraine, it is imperative Western policymakers know the consequences and how he might escalate further. This article examines recent events on the battlefield; the implications of the announced annexation of territory, mobilization of forces, and threats to employ “all means” to defend Russian territory; the domestic ramifications and Russian thinking on “hybrid warfare”; and the possible weaponization of food and energy as Putin determines future escalatory steps. It will assist American and European leaders in determining policies to deal with the ongoing crisis at this moment and prepare for an uncertain future.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine war, Putin, escalation, hybrid warfare, nuclear weapons

Vladimir Putin had a very bad September.¹ The Ukrainian counteroffensive in the northeast of the country has been a staggering success, and it continues. Kyiv liberated more territory in two weeks than Russia seized in the previous five months.² Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during their meetings with Putin in Uzbekistan were clearly unsupportive of Russia’s aggression.³

The strategy Putin had for this war of aggression is now in tatters. It was based on two false assumptions. First, he assumed his army would quickly defeat the Ukrainians, topple Volodymyr Zelensky’s administration, and occupy a sizable portion of the country. He grossly underestimated the Ukrainians’ ability to resist and overestimated his own forces. The vaunted Russian Army has suffered from poor morale, abysmal leadership, and an inability to provide the necessary logistical support for Putin’s invading force. Second, Putin believed the West would not be able to mount a unified response. He thought the West’s reaction would be similar to that of 2014 when he annexed Crimea and fomented a quasi-civil war using proxy forces in southeastern Ukraine. But Washington and its NATO allies have

1. Phil McCausland, “What Now for Putin? After Russian Retreat, the Kremlin Has Few Good Options in Ukraine,” *NBC News* (website), September 16, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-retreats-ukraine-what-will-putin-do-military-kremlin-rcna47514>.

2. Steve Hendrix, Serhii Korolchuk, and Robyn Dixon, “Amid Ukraine’s Startling Gains, Liberated Villages Describe Russian Troops Dropping Rifles and Fleeing,” *Washington Post* (website), September 11, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/11/kharkiv-liberated-retreat-izyum-russia/>.

3. Mukhammadsharif Mamatkulov, “India’s Modi Assails Putin over Ukraine War,” *Reuters* (website), September 16, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/putin-xi-speak-summit-uzbekistan-2022-09-16/>.

shown surprising unity in their support for Kyiv, and with the addition of Finland and Sweden the alliance may be stronger now than it was at the onset of this conflict.

Putin had two options in the aftermath of his most recent military and diplomatic reversals. He could have cranked up his propaganda machine and declared his “special military operation” a remarkable success.⁴ He could have argued Russia had “denazified” large portions of Ukraine, reduced the threat Kyiv posed, and sent a clear message to the West. He could have accompanied these arguments with the announcement of a cease-fire and a call for negotiations. These actions might have paused the war and offered him a chance to use the upcoming winter to reorganize his forces. His second option was escalation. With a speech to the Russian people on September 21, 2022, he chose the latter.⁵ It is critical to consider what this means and how he might escalate further.

Putin escalated the war in three ways. First, he announced a partial mobilization. The Kremlin claimed this mobilization would consist of 300,000 reservists or those with previous military experience.⁶ As the first Russian armed forces mobilization since World War II, it underscores the Russian Army’s desperate need for manpower—especially now: the Pentagon estimates the Kremlin has suffered around 80,000 casualties since this war began.⁷ This desperate gamble is, in part, a response to right-wing hardliners in the Russian media who have been openly critical after a string of recent defeats.⁸ But Putin risks greater social unrest and opposition to the war at home with the decision to escalate. Unrest and opposition are now occurring in many cities across Russia.⁹ A reported minimum of 1,300 people have been arrested following demonstrations, and thousands of young Russian men have fled the country.¹⁰ Up to this point, most Russians have been apathetic about the war, as Putin

4. Bloomberg News, “Transcript: Vladimir Putin’s Televised Address on Ukraine,” Bloomberg (website), February 24, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-24/full-transcript-vladimir-putin-s-televised-address-to-russia-on-ukraine-feb-24>.

5. Evan Gershkovich, Thomas Grove, and Alan Cullison, “Putin Orders Draft of Reservists for Ukraine War, Threatens Nuclear Response,” *Wall Street Journal* (website), September 21, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-orders-draft-of-reservists-for-war-in-ukraine-threatens-nuclear-response-11663742871>.

6. TASS, Russian News Agency, “Partial Mobilization Applies to Reservists with Military Experience, Specialty,” TASS, Russian News Agency (website), September 21, 2022, <https://tass.com/defense/1511049>.

7. Nancy A. Youssef and Evan Gershkovich, “As Many as 80,000 Russian Troops Hurt or Killed in Ukraine, Pentagon Says,” *Wall Street Journal* (website), August 8, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-many-as-80-000-russian-troops-hurt-or-killed-in-ukraine-pentagon-says-11659989514>.

8. Associated Press, “Vladimir Putin Vows to Send More Invaders. The West Should Arm Ukraine Faster,” *Economist* (website), September 21, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2022/09/21/vladimir-putin-vows-to-send-more-invaders-the-west-should-arm-ukraine-faster>; and Mary Ilyushina, “Faced with War Losses, Russian Propagandists Retreat to Anger and Patriotism,” *Washington Post* (website), September 12, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/12/russia-losses-propaganda-react-ukraine/>.

9. Evan Gershkovich, “Russians Seek to Mount Resistance to Putin as Mobilization Gears Up,” *Wall Street Journal* (website), September 24, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russians-seek-to-mount-resistance-to-putin-as-mobilization-gears-up-11664054571>.

10. Gershkovich, Grove, and Cullison, “Putin Orders Draft.”

sought to insulate the population from its ill effects: while the Ukrainian counteroffensive was gaining momentum, Putin was dedicating a Ferris wheel in Moscow and urging the Russian people to enjoy themselves.¹¹

The mobilization will test the loyalty of those born after the demise of the Soviet Union and those less fond of the Russian strongman. It will have little significant immediate effect on the battlefield, could backfire, and will likely fail. It will take weeks, if not months, to identify, organize, train (or retrain), equip, and deploy these new troops.¹² With the impending arrival of winter, these new forces are unlikely to appear in significant numbers until spring. There have also been reports that the Russian Army stripped troops from its training base as the military situation deteriorated, and this will further slow the training and deployment of new troops. Russia has lost thousands of tanks, armored vehicles, trucks, and aircraft.¹³ Consequently, it may be difficult to equip new units with modern weaponry.

Even from the onset, the Kremlin may intend for this “partial mobilization” to far exceed the stated goal of 300,000 and has also included many Russian men who have no prior military experience. The mobilization is also disproportionately aimed at minority groups, rural areas, and territories in the Far East rather than large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. This disparity has already resulted in unrest in these areas.¹⁴ Several experts have now suggested more Russians have fled the country since the mobilization announcement than have fought in Ukraine, and some of Putin’s strongest supporters have been less than enthusiastic. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has said recruitment will not be extended to Chechnya since it has already exceeded its targets for recruitment.¹⁵

The mobilization announcement included increased penalties for Russian soldiers who surrender or desert. It also involuntarily extends the contracts of soldiers currently serving in Ukraine.¹⁶ There were widespread reports of Russian soldiers fleeing the advance of Ukrainian forces around Kharkiv and

11. Amit Chaturvedi, ed., “Vladimir Putin Opens New Ferris Wheel as Russian Forces Receive Stunning Setback in Ukraine,” NDTV (website), September 12, 2022, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/russia-ukraine-war-vladimir-putin-opens-new-ferris-wheel-as-russian-forces-receive-stunning-setback-in-ukraine-3337891>.

12. Lawrence Freedman, “All the Tsar’s Men: Why Mobilization Can’t Save Putin’s War,” *Foreign Affairs* (website), September 23, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/all-tsars-men>.

13. David Axe, “The Russian Army Is Losing a Battalion Every Day as Ukrainian Counterattacks Accelerate,” *Forbes* (website), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2022/09/11/the-russian-army-is-losing-a-battalion-every-day-as-ukrainian-counterattacks-accelerate/>.

14. Anton Troianovski, “Russia’s Draft Is Drawing Criticism from Far-Flung Regions and Even Pro-War Hawks,” *New York Times* (website), September 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/europe/russias-draft-is-drawing-criticism-from-far-flung-regions-and-even-pro-war-hawks.html>.

15. Associated Press, “Chechnya Exempts Itself from Russia’s Draft,” *Moscow Times* (website), September 23, 2022, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/09/23/chechnya-exempts-itself-from-russias-draft-a78874>.

16. Youssef and Gershkovich, “80,000 Russian Troops Hurt.”

abandoning massive amounts of equipment.¹⁷ Some soldiers even stripped off their uniforms and attempted to escape in civilian clothes.¹⁸ Consequently, it is hard to believe Russia can succeed—with troops with already sagging morale and poor leadership, training, and equipment—by forcing more young Russians to fight in a war they do not support.

Second, Putin described this conflict as primarily between Russia and the West. He falsely claimed Western leaders threatened the very existence of the “Motherland.” Consequently, Putin warned he would “use all the means at [Russia’s] disposal to protect Russia and [its] people,” adding “[t]his is not a bluff.”¹⁹ This obvious threat to employ nuclear weapons comes at an ironic moment: the 60th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis, the last time the United States was involved in a crisis that threatened global nuclear catastrophe.

Putin’s decision to escalate is a blatant attempt to intimidate NATO, Ukraine, and Washington. But it also represents Putin’s effort to reshape the narrative. In this case, he appeals to Russian nationalism. Previously, he falsely described Russia’s very existence as imperiled by outside forces and called upon the nation to respond as their ancestors did against the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 or the Germans’ attack in World War II.

Third, he supported the annexation of four partially occupied Ukrainian provinces via sham referendums.²⁰ In their aftermath, Putin signed an annexation decree and delivered a fiery speech assailing the United States for “satanism.”²¹ He further argued the West was an “enemy” of Russia that sought to destroy the nation.²² The forcible seizure of these territories is the largest land grab in Europe since World War II. It makes a mockery of international law, and few nations, if any, are likely to accept Russian sovereignty over these provinces. Furthermore, it makes the possibility of negotiations even more

17. Alberto Nardelli, Jennifer Jacobs, and Samy Adghirni, “Ukraine Seizes Dozens of Russian Tanks Left by Fleeing Forces,” Bloomberg (website), September 21, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-21/ukraine-seizes-dozens-of-russian-tanks-left-by-fleeing-forces>.

18. Sophia Ankel, “They Were Afraid of Being Caught: Russian Soldiers Escaped in Civilian Clothes,” *Business Insider* (website), September 12, 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-troops-drop-guns-lee-ukraine-counteroffensive-reports-2022-9>.

19. Guy Faulconbridge, “Putin Escalates Ukraine War, Issues Nuclear Threat to West,” Reuters (website), September 21, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-signs-decree-mobilisation-says-west-wants-destroy-russia-2022-09-21/>.

20. Anton Troianovski, “Russia Signals Annexation of Parts of Ukraine, Raising Stakes in Fighting,” *New York Times* (website), September 20, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/20/world/europe/russia-annex-ukraine-referendum.html>.

21. Associated Press, “Russia-Ukraine War: Putin Frames Illegal Annexation as Part of Existential Battle with West,” *New York Times*, September 30, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/30/world/russia-ukraine-war-news>.

22. “[Signing of Agreements on the Admission of the DPR, LPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson Regions to Russia],” Kremlin (website), September 30, 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465>.

remote as Putin described this move as “irreversible.”²³ In the same speech, he called on the Zelensky administration to accept the permanent transfer of these territories, accept a cease-fire, and enter into talks. In response, the Kyiv government insisted negotiations will be impossible as long as Putin remains in power.²⁴

Putin’s speech also will heighten his attempt at nuclear extortion. Moscow can now claim these areas are Russian territory and use any attacks against them as a rationale to threaten the use of nuclear weapons in its defense. Still, it remains to be seen if Putin is willing to do so. Only a day after Putin’s speech, Ukrainian forces captured the strategic city of Lyman in the Donbas region and part of the territory that Moscow now claims is Russian territory.²⁵ It is reported many Russian soldiers fled the city in disorder while thousands may have been captured. This major setback for Putin could be followed in the coming weeks by further setbacks, including the possible loss of Kherson in southern Ukraine.

Since Putin has chosen a path of escalation, what might he do in the future? He has further escalatory options. He can threaten nuclear catastrophe with missile and artillery strikes to disable or damage a Ukrainian nuclear power plant and create a Chernobyl-like disaster. Recently, a missile struck less than 1,000 feet from the South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant.²⁶ External power to the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant—the largest in Europe—has been shut off several times, forcing the staff to use emergency power to cool the reactors. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency has described the Zaporizhzhya situation as “untenable” and “playing with fire.”²⁷ This is a classic example of “hybrid warfare,” the fusion of conventional and unconventional instruments of power and tools of subversion. Moscow has employed hybrid warfare in the past—with the invasion of Crimea in 2014, interference in Western elections or the Brexit vote, the assassination of Putin’s opponents, and the dissemination of misinformation. Putin can threaten nuclear facilities at times of his choosing, which provides him the intimidating effect of nuclear

23. Lawrence Freedman, “Putin’s Annexation and Lyman’s Encirclement,” *Comment is Freed* (blog), October 1, 2022, https://samf.substack.com/p/putins-annexation-and-lymans-encirclement?utm_source=twitter&sd=pf.

24. Mykhailo Podolyak (@Podolyak_M), “Negotiations are possible, but with the new president of Russia,” Twitter (website), October 1, 2022, 7:00 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ConanOBrien/status/590940792967016448>.

25. Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Andrew E. Kramer, Anton Troianovski, and Catherine Porter, “Ukraine Forces Retake Lyman, a Strategic City, as Russians Retreat,” *New York Times* (website), October 1, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/01/world/europe/lyman-ukraine-russia.html>.

26. Dan Ladden-Hall, “Russian Missile Strikes within 1,000 Feet of Ukrainian Nuclear Reactors,” *Daily Beast* (website), September 19, 2022, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-missile-strikes-within-1000-feet-of-ukrainian-nuclear-reactors>.

27. Joanne Liou, “Situation at Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant ‘Untenable,’ Protection Zone Needed, IAEA’s Grossi Tells Board,” International Atomic Energy Agency (website), September 12, 2022, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/situation-at-zaporizhzhya-nuclear-power-plant-untenable-protection-zone-needed-iaeas-grossi-tells-board>.

weapons without potential international blowback. Such threats are actually criminal, as they endanger the staff and innocent civilians in Ukraine and beyond. Finally, they also divert media attention away from reports on war crimes, Russian failures on the battlefield, and other setbacks.

Putin could also further employ his energy weapon. He has already ended the export of natural gas to Europe and could seek to do more damage.²⁸ The recent attacks on the Nord Stream pipeline are likely an example.²⁹ European and NATO leaders have described them as “sabotage,” but so far there has been no formal allegation that Moscow perpetrated them.³⁰ Still, these attacks are consistent with the Russian hybrid warfare thinking previously mentioned. Such attacks would require the Russian Navy to possess sophisticated capabilities such as divers or undersea drones. The attacks occurred in international waters and, consequently, could not be construed as attacks on a NATO member’s territory that might elicit an Article 5 response.

The attacks are also clouded in plausible deniability. As a result, the Kremlin has described any accusation against Russia as “stupid and absurd” and blamed the United States.³¹ The attacks are also an implicit threat against the new Baltic Pipeline connecting Poland and Norway, which opened at the same time the attacks occurred.³² Finally, the attacks clearly underscore the ongoing uncertainty around European energy supplies as winter approaches. Putin obviously hopes skyrocketing energy costs coupled with the arrival of winter energy demands will result in social unrest in Europe. Social unrest might force European leaders to reduce their support for Ukraine and put pressure on Kyiv to accept negotiations on Putin’s terms.

Putin’s expanded attacks on the Ukrainian civilian energy infrastructure and the closure of nuclear power plants already belong to this effort. His attacks have reduced the availability of energy to Ukraine and will likely result in more Ukrainian refugees as winter arrives. Putin’s action renews pressure on NATO

28. Sam Meredith, “Russia Has Cut Off Gas Supplies to Europe Indefinitely. Here’s What You Need to Know,” *CNBC* (website), September 6, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/09/06/energy-crisis-why-has-russia-cut-off-gas-supplies-to-europe.html>.

29. Jen Kirby, “The Nord Stream Pipeline Sabotage, Explained,” *Vox* (website), September 28, 2022, <https://www.vox.com/world/2022/9/28/23376356/nord-stream-pipeline-russia-explosions-sabotage>.

30. Merlyn Thompson and Elsa Maishman, “Nord Stream Leaks: Sabotage to Blame, Says EU,” *BBC News* (website), September 28, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63057966>.

31. Thompson and Maishman, “Sabotage to Blame”; and Reuters Staff, “Putin Says ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Powers Blew up Nord Stream Pipelines,” *Reuters* (website), September 30, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-putin-nordstream-idAFS8N2Z80FZ>.

32. Anna Włodarczak-Semczuk and Kirsten Donovan, “Gas Starts Flowing to Poland through New Baltic Pipe Pipeline,” *Reuters* (website), October 1, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/gas-starts-flowing-poland-through-new-baltic-pipe-pipeline-2022-10-01/>.

countries, discourages them from maintaining their existing nuclear facilities, and forces them to consider sharing limited supplies with Kyiv.

Moscow could use the “food weapon” and once again halt the export of Ukrainian grain from its Black Sea ports. In July 2022, an agreement signed by Russia, Türkiye, Ukraine, and the United Nations allowed for the export of millions of tons of Ukrainian and Russian grain and fertilizer.³³ Ukraine and Russia provide roughly 30 percent of the world’s grain, and the failure to deliver these commodities to global markets may well result in famine in many parts of the world.³⁴ Some have claimed Russia is waging a campaign of “theft and destruction” of Ukrainian agriculture reminiscent of the famines caused by Joseph Stalin in the 1930s.³⁵

Finally, Putin could escalate militarily through further force mobilizations, strikes on NATO locations important to the flow of military assistance to Ukraine, or expanded cyberattacks. The use of nuclear weapons, as Putin threatened, could also be an option. Graham T. Allison, author of the celebrated book on the Cuban missile crisis *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Little, Brown, 1971), observed that the possibility of Russian nuclear use clearly increases if Russia perceives a growing existential threat to itself or its rule. Allison recounted that in 1962 President John F. Kennedy believed the possible use of nuclear weapons became a “more plausible scenario if a leader is forced to choose between catastrophic humiliation and a roll of the dice that might yield success.”³⁶ Should Putin decide to use nuclear weapons, the system used would likely be a tactical nuclear weapon, of which Russia is believed to have 2,000. Tactical nuclear weapons are designed with a nuclear yield below 100 kilotons and delivered by short-range aircraft, artillery, or missiles.³⁷

While the West cannot ignore the possibility of expanded military threats, the probability of Putin using nuclear weapons appears low at this moment

33. Associated Press, “Ukraine, Russia Agree to Export Grain, Ending a Standoff That Threatened Food Supply,” NPR (website), July 22, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/07/22/1112880942/ukraine-grain-exports-deal>.

34. Heinz Strubenhoff, “The War in Ukraine Triggered a Global Food Shortage,” Brookings (website), June 14, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2022/06/14/the-war-in-ukraine-triggered-a-global-food-shortage/>.

35. Lyudmyla Pavlyuk, “Kennan Cable No. 79: Russia Is Looting Ukraine’s Breadbasket . . . Again,” *Kennan Cable 79* (September 2022), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no-79-russia-looting-ukraines-breadbasketagain>.

36. David E. Sanger, Anton Troianovski, and Julian E. Barnes, “In Washington, Putin’s Nuclear Threats Stir Growing Alarm,” *New York Times*, October 1, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/01/world/europe/washington-putin-nuclear-threats.html>.

37. “Reports & Multimedia/Explainer: What Are Tactical Nuclear Weapons?,” Union of Concerned Scientists (website), June 1, 2022, <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/tactical-nuclear-weapons>.

for several reasons.³⁸ First, Russian military doctrine calls for the use of such weapons primarily to create conditions on the battlefield that can then be rapidly exploited by conventional forces. But Moscow no longer has readily available forces to exploit opportunities any such employment might offer. Russia has failed to demonstrate the ability to conduct large-scale offensive operations effectively for the past seven months in a nonnuclear environment. It is hard to imagine how reinforcing Russian forces, in their state of degradation, with poorly trained conscripts could possibly allow for successful operations in a nuclear environment demanding a much more sophisticated level of training, equipment, and command and control.

Second, Putin would become even more of an international pariah. The tepid support he now receives from China, India, and other countries in the Global South would likely evaporate.³⁹ Third, he would have to consider the response by the West. This could include the imposition of a no-fly zone over Ukraine, expanded military assistance, and even the direct involvement of Western ground forces. Washington has already sent private warnings about the grave consequences to follow should Moscow cross the nuclear threshold.⁴⁰ Fourth, the employment of such weapons in eastern Ukraine would result in a radiation pattern that would threaten areas occupied by Putin's forces or existing Russian territory.

Putin's threats of escalation have not had the immediate effect he hoped for, and Western countries have announced their continued support for Ukraine.⁴¹ But there is no denying the world faces extreme danger at the moment. It is critical the West adopt policies to deter or respond to potential future escalation by Moscow. These policies must include several important considerations. Washington and its European allies' greatest strength against Russian aggression has been their unity of policy and effort in response to that aggression. Unity must continue, but it may grow more complicated in the aftermath of recent elections in Italy and Sweden, which seem likely to result in the far right's return to power.⁴² It may also become increasingly difficult

38. Mason Clark, Katherine Lawlor, and Kateryna Stepanenko, "SPECIAL REPORT: ASSESSING PUTIN'S IMPLICIT NUCLEAR THREATS AFTER ANNEXATION," Institute for the Study of War (website), September 30, 2022, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/special-report-assessing-putin%E2%80%99s-implicit-nuclear-threats-after-annexation>.

39. Happymon Jacob, "Russia Is Losing India: How Putin's Ukraine Gambit Doomed a Long Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* (website), September 22, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/india/russia-losing-india>.

40. Paul Sonne and John Hudson, "U.S. Has Sent Private Warnings to Russia against Using a Nuclear Weapon," *Washington Post* (website), September 22, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/09/22/russia-nuclear-threat-us-options/>.

41. Anton Troianovski and Valerie Hopkins, "Putin Raises Stakes in the War, with Direct Challenge to the West," *New York Times* (website), September 21, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/21/world/europe/putin-ukraine-russia-nuclear.html>.

42. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Return of Fascism in Italy," *Atlantic* (website), September 23, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/09/giorgia-meloni-italy-election-fascism-mussolini/671515/>.

to find alliance agreement on future policy with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán or Turkish President Recep Erdoğan as the war continues.

Military support for Ukraine must continue and expand. As the war has continued, NATO has created a sophisticated coordinating effort designed to meet changing requirements and avoid the duplication of efforts to ensure the delivery of equipment from donor nations to Kyiv.⁴³ The level of military assistance to Ukraine has been enormous. As of the end of September, the Biden-Harris administration has provided nearly \$17 billion in weapons, ammunition, and equipment.⁴⁴ Washington will need to increase its industrial capacity dramatically to produce artillery rounds, rockets, anti-tank weapons, and air defense needed to support Ukraine, refurbish wartime stocks, and prepare for future conflicts.⁴⁵

There is also a growing need to expand logistical and training assistance to Ukraine, which should include contractor support in the future. These efforts must be forward deployed to repair and maintain sophisticated military equipment for its rapid return to the battlefield. The West will also need to continue its economic and financial assistance to Ukraine to buttress its economy and deal with even larger requirements for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and NATO frontline states.

Ukraine can attribute its success in its recent counteroffensive to the acquisition of more sophisticated military hardware, such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, and to the integration of real-time intelligence from Washington and NATO, the latter of which has dramatically improved targeting, with devastating effects.⁴⁶ Washington and NATO must maintain and improve the provision of real-time intelligence, as it is essential to Ukraine's future military success on the battlefield.

Finally, the West's diplomatic and information efforts should be expanded. Putin's recent escalation of the war was roundly condemned by the vast majority of nations at the recent UN General Assembly meeting in New

43. Vivienne Machi, "Inside the Multinational Logistics Cell Coordinating Military Aid for Ukraine," *Defense News* (website), July 21, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2022/07/21/inside-the-multinational-logistics-cell-coordinating-military-aid-for-ukraine/>.

44. Department of Defense (DoD), "Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine," September 28, 2022, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Sep/28/2003087045/-1/-1/1/UKRAINE-FACT-SHEET-SEP-28.PDF>.

45. Caitlin M. Kenney, "Army Wants to Double or Triple Some Arms Production as Ukraine War Continues," *Defense One* (website), September 15, 2022, <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2022/09/army-wants-double-or-triple-some-arms-production-ukraine-war-continues/377225/>.

46. C. Todd Lopez, "U.S.-Provided HIMARS Effective in Ukraine," DoD (website), July 15, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3095394/us-provided-himars-effective-in-ukraine/>; and Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper, "Ukrainian Officials Drew on U.S. Intelligence to Plan Counteroffensive," *New York Times* (website), September 10, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/10/us/politics/ukraine-military-intelligence.html>.

York.⁴⁷ Evidence of war crimes should be vigorously pursued and the results of the investigations widely disseminated. Washington and its allies must seek to further isolate Moscow diplomatically and convince countries in the Global South to participate in economic sanctions.

The information tool of so-called soft power is also crucially important. Every effort should be made to use the Internet and traditional means, such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, to inform the people of Russia and Belarus of the lies Moscow continues to propagate about the conflict, war crimes, sham referendums, the flight of Russian youths, etc.

Fred C. Iklé observed in his book *Every War Must End* (Columbia University Press, 1971) that wars end when one side changes its objectives—by choice or by force. Putin’s objectives have changed multiple times. He initially sought to capture Kyiv and topple the Zelensky administration. He then pursued the capture of Odesa and the occupation of Ukraine’s Black Sea coastline. Putin has now settled on an attempt to annex the Donbas in southeastern Ukraine and portions of the coast.⁴⁸ All his efforts have failed, and his September 21, 2022, speech is a clear admission of failure. His continued description of his aggression as a “special military operation” is absurd in the aftermath of more than half a year of war and the deaths of thousands of young Russian soldiers.

Still, Putin believes the overlapping goals of the United States, NATO, and Ukraine are not necessarily coincident. Kyiv cannot accomplish its goal of driving Russian forces from its territory—including Crimea—if its Western allies are willing to accept a negotiated settlement that allows a return to the status quo ante. Consequently, Putin still believes he can win, so to speak, and his success will be defined by the shattering of the long-term unity of the West. He is convinced, at this moment, at least, that his willpower is superior to Western determination to resist.

Time will tell whether he is correct.

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