



[What Next for Ukraine?](#)

By Colin Bailey

Ukraine's General Valery Zaluzhny says the war with Russia is at a stalemate. His nation has appealed to the West for more weapons; and Congress is faced with the difficult choice of how to respond. The volatile Palestinian-Israeli conflict has not only taken the world's eyes off eastern Europe, but it also risks affecting the funding and resources to the beleaguered Ukrainian forces. Many Ukrainians fear that the country will not receive the backing it needs to continue its counteroffensive against the Russian military given that the United States government has committed significant resources to the Israelis and American politicians like Nikki Haley are keeping the pressure on to give them "whatever they need."

Press coverage of the war in Ukraine has declined drastically with headlines and talk shows immersed in the more recent Middle Eastern turmoil. While Western editorials and politicians had previously lionized the Ukrainian defensive war against Russian invaders, their attentions are now focused on the existential threat to Israelis. There is a stark contrast between social media platforms with a significant number of content creators expressing sympathy for the Palestinians, while the media has focused its efforts on highlighting allegations of militant terrorism and the Israeli right of self-defense. The dichotomy is equally evident in coverage of rallies and demonstrations with pro-Palestinian protestors often characterized as antisemitic and Hamas sympathizers.

Pressure from pro-Israeli organizations is evident in the high volume of sponsored campaigns that seek additional funding for the Israeli military, donations for families of hostages, and neutralizing the narrative on campus. For example, the Hillel Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is running a campaign stating, "Hillel International President CEO Adam Lehman and Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director of the ADL, call on university leaders to speak out and take the actions needed to ensure they are creating a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for their Jewish students." The Jewish Community Federation Council of Greater Washington also ran a sponsored campaign seeking support as they help "Jewish teens as they try to navigate difficult conversations with their peers while also facing repeated incidents of antisemitism and anti-Zionism."

The campaigning and political pressure prompted President Joe Biden to propose a deal providing the Israeli and Ukrainian governments with billions in federal aid. Biden's proposed plan encompasses \$106 billion total in funds distributed between Ukraine, Israel, bolstering defenses in the South China Sea, and continuing construction for a border wall along the US border with Mexico. The lion's share has been allocated to Ukraine at \$60 billion, a significant sum given that "[s]ince the war began, the Biden administration and the U.S. Congress have directed more than \$75 billion in assistance to Ukraine, which includes humanitarian, financial, and military support, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, a German research institute," as reported by the Council on Foreign Relations in September.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin addressed a congressional hearing on October 31st advocating for the bill. They stressed that funding for Ukraine and Israel was essential to the national defense of the United States. Although there is broad support for providing the Israelis with additional funds, many

members of Congress indicated that they were less enthusiastic about providing more aid to Ukraine. The Biden plan has been met with resistance by republican lawmakers who believe that the US has provided enough aid to Ukraine. Several of them have proposed to separate the large funding bill into smaller, manageable funding allocations. Republicans in the House of Representatives have passed an alternative plan that aims to defund the Internal Revenue Service and provide the Israelis with \$ 14.3 billion through a standalone bill. The standalone proposal ties aid to spending cuts; but the Senate appears to be on track for a bipartisan block of the bill. The debate has shifted the conversation further away from Ukraine, which reflects a public mood more concerned about the Middle East than Ukraine.

Polls conducted by NPR, PBS, and Marist in the United States report that 85% of Americans fear that the Israel-Hamas war will grow into a regional conflict. These fears have merit given the missile attacks by Houthi and Hezbollah forces. Support for the Ukrainian War had already begun to wane over the issue of funding; and will likely decline further as the Palestinian-Israeli war continues to evolve. A recent Gallup poll indicates the number of Americans who think too much aid is given to Ukraine has increased from 29% in June to 41% in October.

Ukraine has also taken a backseat to the Israeli war in Europe the public and parliamentarians divided over continued support the Balkan nation. Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico has threatened to veto the European Union's continued military aid to Ukraine. He stated, "[w]e are ready to help, but not militarily, because I do not believe in a military solution to this conflict in Ukraine" during the European Union summit in Brussels. Fico is not alone in his views. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared: "Today everybody knows but they do not dare to say it out loud, that this strategy [of sending money and military aid] has failed."

Hesitancy to support Ukraine comes as the Russian military continues a military offensive in Avdiivka. This campaign which began in early October has seen the largest loss of life in the Ukrainian War this year. Russia's major military push has begun ahead of winter during which they may lose any tactical leverage. Current projections indicate Russia will suffer heavy losses as it attempts to make gains during a season where ground conditions will bog down any advancing troops.

While it is premature to believe American backing of its Ukrainian ally will be significantly reduced, unfolding events in the Arab region may affect the scale and speed of commitment politicians and the public may now be willing to dedicate. The Ukraine-Russian stalemate will likely last until spring; but if Western support wavers significantly more by then, Putin may view the hesitation as an opportunity to implement an even more aggressive offensive. This may prompt renewed investment on the Ukrainian front but only insofar as there is public support for the effort as the nation nears a Presidential election. Regardless of a Ukrainian victory or defeat, however, Russia will not be a broken nemesis. Thomas Graham aptly notes in a Politico piece, "the challenge for the United States is not to defeat Russia, as much of the American foreign policy establishment would now have it, but rather to skillfully exploit relations with a rival to construct a new global equilibrium that advances American interests."