



What \$61 Billion for Ukraine Won't Do

Description

WORLD : On April 20, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the long-delayed \$61 billion aid package for Ukraine. The package quickly passed Tuesday night through the Senate on its way to President Joe Biden's desk, where it will quickly be signed.

House Speaker Mike Johnson reportedly reversed course and led the aid package through the House in part because, during intelligence briefings, he came to “believe the intel” that without the “lethal aid,” “Vladimir Putin would continue to march through Europe if he were allowed. I think he might go to the Baltics next. I think he might have a showdown with Poland or one of our NATO allies.”

That Ukraine is a stepping stone in Russia's march through Europe has long been a key argument in justifying continued aid for Ukraine. Johnson should not have so readily believed it.

Aside from the not unimportant question of whether Russia even has the ability to invade Europe and engage in a war with all of NATO, there is no evidence that this is Putin's intent. U.S. Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on April 2 that she “really want[s] to be clear” that “we do not have indicators or warnings right now that a Russian war is imminent on NATO territory.”

Nor does the historical record suggest waging war on NATO and conquering Europe has ever been Putin's intent. Putin's claim that the decision to go to war was motivated by the security necessity of keeping Ukraine out of NATO has been verified by NATO and Ukrainian officials.

Davyd Arakhamia, who led the Ukrainian negotiating team at the Istanbul talks, says that Russia was “prepared to end the war if we...committed that we would not join NATO.”

Ukrainian Volodymyr Zelensky called the promise not to join NATO “the first fundamental point for the Russian Federation” and said that “as far as I remember, they started a war because of this.”

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg recently conceded that a “promise [of] no more NATO enlargement... was a precondition for not invading Ukraine.”

When NATO refused to discuss such a promise, Putin “went to war to prevent NATO—more

NATO—close to his borders.” Stoltenberg concluded that “Putin invaded a European country to prevent more NATO.”

If Ukraine was a member state of NATO and tried to take back Crimea militarily, then Russia and NATO could find themselves at war.

If Putin went to war to prevent this scenario and avoid a war with NATO, as he has stated a number of times, then it would seemingly make little sense that he would launch a war against Ukraine as a stepping stone to war on NATO.

But aside from the question of whether Johnson should have been convinced of the need to aid Ukraine, there is the question of whether the \$61 billion will provide the aid it is intended to give.

There are five things the aid package will not do for Ukraine. It will not provide enough money. It will not provide the badly needed weapons, nor deliver them on time. It will not provide the even more badly needed troops. And it will not provide victory.

Though \$61 billion is a massive amount of money, it is not massive enough to defeat Russia. Ukraine accomplished little but the loss of life and the most advanced weapons during its centerpiece counteroffensive when it was receiving even more.

“\$61 billion will not change the outcome of this war,” Nicolai Petro, Professor of Political Science at the University of Rhodes and the author of *The Tragedy of Ukraine*, told *The American Conservative*.

In order to change the outcome, much, much more money is needed. Just how much more?

We know, because just talking about it is one of the things that got the head of the Ukrainian armed forces, Valery Zaluzhny, fired in February. In an interview in December 2023, Zaluzhny pointed out that a mere 61 billion USD would not suffice to liberate all of Ukraine.

That, he said, would require five to seven times that amount, or \$350-400 billion.” There is the additional danger that future aid packages might all be smaller.

Even if the money was sufficient, it would not provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs because the weapons are not available for purchase. Retired U.S. Army Colonel Daniel Davis, Senior Fellow at Defense Priorities, agrees that the \$61 billion “is fairly small in terms of the overall need.”

But Davis adds that “even if you get the money, you’re not going to have the number of artillery shells, interceptor missiles for air defense. You can’t make the artillery shells any faster than we are right now.

It’s a matter of physical capacity: we can’t do it.”

And even if the West could produce the weapons, there is the question of whether they could deliver them to Ukraine on time. Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Bruce Slawter, who served as attaché at the American Embassy in Moscow and spent 25 years working on government assignments in Russia and Ukraine, agrees that there is an “inability to produce weapons that have already been used up in the war” but adds that “any additional funding for Ukraine will take many months, if not a year or more, to have any effect on the battlefield.” And that may be too late if Russia launches a summer offensive as some expect.

Even if the West could provide Ukraine with the weapons on time, the “big problem for Ukraine,” Davis says, is not the provision of weapons, but the “manpower issue.”

Ukraine’s losses on the battlefield, to death and injury, have left Ukraine with a bigger manpower problem than artillery problem.

A close aide to President Zelensky told TIME magazine in an interview published in November 2023 that, even if the U.S. gave Ukraine all the weapons it needed, they “don’t have the men to use them.”

For all these reasons, the \$61 billion aid package will not provide the promised victory. The one thing it will do is prolong the war and continue the loss of Ukrainian life and land.

“The \$61 billion will not change the outcome of this war, which is now decisively turning in Russia’s favor,” Petro told TAC. The best the aid package can do, Anatol Lieven, Director of the Eurasia Program at the Quincy Institute, told TAC is “help Ukraine to defend its existing lines – though not ensure that it will be able to do so successfully.

What it will not do is to enable Ukraine to break through Russian lines and recover the territory that Ukraine has lost. Given the strength of Russian defenses and the imbalance of numbers and ammunition favouring Russia, that looks militarily impossible for the Ukrainians.”

Though the aid package “is extremely unlikely to have any meaningful impact on the eventual outcome of the war,” Alexander Hill, professor of military history at the University of Calgary, told TAC, it “will certainly prolong the bloodshed.”

Geoffrey Roberts, professor emeritus of history at University College Cork, agrees that the aid will just “prolong Ukraine’s agony.” He told TAC that “Ukraine will lose more people, more territory and its viability as an independent state.”

“This decision will only prolong the agony of Ukraine and Europe,” Richard Sakwa, Professor of Russian and European Politics at the University of Kent, told TAC. But, he added, “It also raises the stakes, and pushes the world one step further towards a cataclysm the likes of which we have never seen.

Now is the time to start de-escalating, and to outline what it would take to start a diplomatic process of some sort.”

Hill said that if the U.S. wants to help Ukraine “it would be pushing for meaningful negotiations that would include not only territory, but also the future nature of the Ukraine-NATO relationship, with the aim being to facilitate a lasting peace.”

Roberts agreed and added that the \$60 billion would be better spent on “aiding Ukraine’s postwar recovery, not its further unnecessary destruction in pursuit of the West’s proxy war with Russia.”

BY Ted Snider

Category

1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Crime-Justice-Terrorism-Corruption
3. Disasters-Crisis-Depopulation-Genocide
4. Economy-Business-Fin/Invest
5. Main
6. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

Date Created

04/24/2024