

The war in Ukraine: The challenge of shaping an endgame

The US must create a framework for a dialogue with Russia that can lead to an end to the war -- before the situation is completely out of control

Udi Dekel / Mar 20, 2022

The human tragedy in Ukraine is painful, and there is still no mechanism for ending the war. The United States and NATO have defined an objective – imposing a heavy cost on Russia in order to deter Putin from future aggression, while at the same time managing the conflict wisely in order to stop its sliding into a third world war. In view of the escalation in fighting, the US and its allies must examine the consequences of a continued war: mounting civilian casualties, the danger of expansion beyond Ukrainian borders, and the potential unconventional dimensions. Understanding that continuation of the war increases the risks of escalation to levels that none of the parties want, the United States will have to identify the critical point that if reached could expand the war arena. It will have to preempt this moment and agree to talk with Putin and even to show some flexibility, mainly by committing not to allow other countries bordering on Russia into the NATO alliance.

Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to launch a military attack against Ukraine when it became clear to him that he lacked political leverage to change the regime in Kiev, and after Western countries, led by the United States, rejected all his demands to divide influence in Eastern Europe and restrict the spread of NATO forces and capabilities in the area.

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