

Promising the Impossible: Blinken's Out of Tune Performance in Kyiv

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Things are looking dire for the Ukrainian war effort. Promises of victory are becoming even hollower than they were last summer, when US President Joe Biden could [state](#) with breathtaking obliviousness that Russia had "already lost the war". The worst offender in this regard remains the United States, which has been the most vocal proponent of fanciful victory over Russia, a message which reads increasingly as one of fighting to the last Ukrainian.

Such a victory is nigh fantasy, almost impossible to envisage. For one thing, domestic considerations about continued support for Kyiv have played a stalling part. In the US Congress, a large military aid package was stalled for six months. Among some Republicans, in particular, Ukraine was not a freedom loving despoiled figure needing props and crutches.

"From our perspective," [opines](#) Kentucky Republican Senator Rand Paul, "Ukraine should not and cannot be our problem to solve. It is not our place to defend them in a struggle with their longtime adversary, Russia."

The assessment, in this regard, was a matter of some clarity for Paul.

"There is no national security interest for the United States."

Despite this, the Washington foreign policy and military elite continue to make siren calls of seduction in Kyiv's direction. On April 23, the Senate finally [approved](#) a \$US95.3 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, with the lion's share – some US\$61 billion – intended for Ukraine's war effort.

On April 24, a press release from US Secretary State Antony Blinken [announced](#) a further US\$1 billion package packed with “urgently needed capabilities including air defense missiles, munitions for HIMARS, artillery rounds, armored vehicles, precision aerial munitions, anti-armor weapons, and small arms, equipment, and spare parts to help Ukraine defend its territory and protect its people.”

On May 14, in his [address](#) to the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Blinken described what could only be reasoned as a vast mirage.

“Today, I’m here in Kyiv to speak about Ukraine’s strategic success. And to set out how, with our support, the Ukrainian people can and will achieve their vision for the near future: a free, prosperous, secure democracy – fully integrated into the Euro-Atlantic community – and fully in control of its own destiny.”

This astonishingly irresponsible statement makes Washington’s security agenda clear and Kyiv’s fate bleak: Ukraine is to become a pro-US, anti-Russian bastion, with an open cheque book at the ready.

Russia’s President Vladimir Putin has made the prevention of that vision an article of faith. While Russian forces, in men and material, have suffered horrendous losses, the attritive nature of the conflict is starting to tell. While Blinken was gulling his audience, the military realities show significant Russian advances, including a threatening push towards Kharkiv, reversing Ukrainian gains made in 2022.

There are also wounding advances being made in other areas of the conflict. US and NATO artillery and drones supplied to Ukraine’s military forces have been countered by Russian electronic warfare methods. GPS receivers, for instance, have been sufficiently deceived to misdirect missiles shot from HIMARS launchers. In a number of cases, the Russian forces have also identified and destroyed the launchers.

Russian airpower has been brought to bear on critical infrastructure. Radar defying glide bombs have been used with considerable effect. On the production and deployment front, Colonel Ivan Pavlenko, chief of EW and cyber warfare at Ukraine’s general staff, [lamented](#) in February that Russia’s use of drones was also “becoming a huge threat”. Depleted stocks of weaponry are being replenished, and more soldiers are being called to the front.

Despite concerns, one need not scour far to find pundits who insist that such advances and gains can be neutralised. Michael Kofman of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [admits](#) to current Russian “material advantage” and holding “the strategic initiative,” though goes on to speculate that this “may not prove decisive”.

The gong of deceit and delusion must, however, go to Blinken. Americans, he [claimed](#), understood “that our support for Ukraine strengthens the security of the United States and our allies.” Were Putin to win – and here, that old nag of appeasement makes an undesirable appearance – “he won’t stop with Ukraine; he’ll keep going. For when in history has an autocrat been satisfied with carving off just part, or even all, of a single country?”

Towards that end, “we do have a plan,” he coyly insisted. This entailed ensuring Ukraine had “the military that it needs to succeed on the battlefield”. Biden was encouraged by Ukrainian mobilisation efforts, skipping around the logistical delays that had marred it. Washington’s “joint task” was to “secure Ukraine’s sustained and permanent strategic

advantage”, enabling it to win the current battles and “defend against future attacks. As President Biden said, we want Ukraine to win – and we’re committed to helping you do it.”

Even by the standards of US Secretaries of States, Blinken’s conduct in Kyiv proved brazen and shameless. A perfect illustration of this came with his [musical effort](#) alongside local band, 19.99, involving a rendition of Neil Young’s “Rockin’ in the Free World.”

Local indignation was quick to follow. “Six months of waiting for the decision of the American Congress” had, [fumed](#) Bohdan Yaremenko, legislator and former diplomat with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s party, “taken the lives of very, very many defenders of the free world”. What the US was performing “for the free world is not rock ‘n’ roll, but some other music similar to Russian chanson.”

As for the performance itself, the crowd at Barman Dictat witnessed yet another misreading – naturally by a US politician – of an anthem intended to excoriate American failings, from homelessness to “a kinder, gentler machine gun hand”. Appropriately, the guitar, much like the performer, was out of tune.

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Featured image: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on May 6, 2021. [State Department photo by Ron Przysucha]

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