

The Ukraine war

President Biden was unable to offer the President of Ukraine much money when he visited Washington this week. Instead of the \$60 billion the President asked Congress to approve, he made available just \$200 m . The amounts the previous Congress has approved are running out. The House elected at the mid terms with a narrow Republican majority is saying they want the President to give priority to strengthening US border defences to keep out more of the illegal migrants who turn up every day. House Republicans are cooling on more money for Ukraine anyway. They are asking for a clearer military plan of how the war will be conducted and what might be the results and timescales.

The West has been financing Ukraine on a large scale. Total EU aid since February 2022 totals Euro 85 billion and US Euro 71 bn. There is the military aid, often given free. There is the substantial financial aid to allow the government of Ukraine to function against a background of an economy impaired by war damage, loss of territory and the massive diversion of effort to military activity. There has also been a sharp loss of people as many have sought exile elsewhere. The EU has sent most money, followed by the US, for non military purposes. The US has been the main provider of weapons. The three small Baltic states and Norway have given the largest amount relative to their GDP, as they feel the Russian threat more closely than others.

President Biden says he is still keen to help Ukraine and to encourage Ukrainian resistance to the violent invasion by Russia of Ukraine's lands. However he may be forced to compromise over the money now he has lost control of the House, which in turn may affect his relationship with Ukraine. Meanwhile the Europeans struggle to meet the demand for weapons and ammunition from Ukraine as the conflict is using large quantities of both. The EU is also having budget disagreements of its own.

I think NATO was right not to be drawn into this conflict and not to offer membership of NATO to Ukraine. Instead NATO led by the US has been willing to offer substantial assistance in the form of weapons, money, training and ammunition. NATO countries have been keen to avoid direct conflict with Russia, and have laid conditions on weapons supply that they are only to be used within Ukraine.

So today two big questions loom. What should the rest of the West do if the US political system decides against further large contributions of military equipment and money from that source? What is the strategy for winning the war and what would Ukraine need from the west?

Some will propose a negotiated solution with compromises on both sides. Mr Putin is unlikely to want to compromise ahead of his re election as he places his country on a war footing and seeks to arouse strong Russian nationalist passions. Ukraine, having done so well in resisting the invader starting with a much less powerful military is in no mood to compromise either. What advice should the West be giving Ukraine?