

# Make Peace, You Fools! America's Proxy War with Russia Has Transformed Ukraine into a Graveyard.

By [Douglas Macgregor](#)

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*Incrementalism—the tendency to inch forward rather than to take bold steps—is usually preferred by political and military leaders in warfare, because the introduction of a few forces into action puts fewer personnel at risk, and, in theory, promises a series of improvements over time, often through attrition.*

In 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led by the then-chairman [General J. Lawton Collins](#), [recommended short envelopments](#) along the Korean coastline that were designed to gradually increase the size of the U.S. and Allied enclave known as the Pusan Perimeter. The idea was to buy time to assemble enough forces to launch a breakout on the Normandy model. But [General of the Army Douglas MacArthur disagreed](#). He argued for a daring, deep envelopment that promised to cut off the North Korean Forces south of the 38th Parallel that were encircling Pusan.

As it turned out, MacArthur was right. Today, we know that the short envelopments were exactly what the North Korean command was prepared to defeat. In retrospect, it is certain that along with their Chinese allies, the North Koreans were familiar with the operational employment of U.S. and Allied forces during WWII. Eisenhower's insistence on a [broad front strategy](#) that moved millions of troops in multiple armies in parallel across France and Germany to Central Europe conformed to the low-risk formula.

In light of this history, it was reasonable for the North Koreans to believe that MacArthur would never split his forces and launch an amphibious assault far behind North Korean lines. It was simply too risky. And the operational concept for Inchon was also inconsistent with the way U.S. forces were employed [during the Civil War](#) and World War I—[wars won through attrition](#), not maneuver.

In February 2022, Russian **President Vladimir Putin** opted for incrementalism in his

approach to the “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine. Putin committed fewer than 100,000 Russian troops to a shallow penetration attack on a broad front into a country the size of Texas. Having failed over a period of [nearly 15 years to persuade Washington](#) and the collective West of Moscow’s opposition to NATO’s advance to the east, Putin seems to have concluded that Washington and its NATO allies would prefer immediate negotiations to a destructive regional war with unknowable potential for escalation to the nuclear level.

Putin was wrong. He made a false assumption based on rational choice theory. Rational choice theory attempts to predict human behavior based on the assumption that individuals habitually make choices in economics, politics, and daily life that align with their personal best interest.

The problem with the theory is that human beings are not rational. In fact, [the human mind is like a black box](#). It is possible to observe what goes into the black box and the decisions that come out of it, but the actual decision-making process that unfolds inside the black box is opaque.

In international relations and war, the defining features of human identity—history, geography, culture, religion, language, race, or ethnicity—must also figure prominently in any strategic assessment. For reasons of culture, experience, and innate character, MacArthur was a risk-taker. As Peter Drucker reminds his readers, [culture is the foundation](#) for human capital. These realities routinely defeat the unrealistic expectations that rational choice theory creates.

Instead of approaching the negotiating table, Washington discarded the caution, given Russia’s nuclear arsenal, that had [guided previous American dealings](#) with Moscow. Washington’s political class, with no real understanding of Russia or Eastern Europe, subscribed to the late **Senator John McCain’s** notion that Russia was a “gas station with nuclear weapons.”

Putin is not a risk-taker. But he abandoned incrementalism, and rapidly reoriented Russian forces to the strategic defense, an economy of force measure designed to minimize Russian losses while maximizing Ukrainian losses until Russian Forces could return to offensive operations. The Russian change in strategy has worked. Despite the unprecedented infusion of modern weaponry, cash, foreign fighters, and critical intelligence to Ukrainian forces, [Washington’s proxy is shattered](#). Ukraine’s hospitals are brimming with broken human beings and Ukrainian dead litter the battlefield. [Kiev is a heart patient on life support](#).

Russia’s attrition strategy has achieved remarkable success, but the success is making the conflict currently more dangerous than at any point since it began in February 2022. Why? Defensive operations do not win wars, and Washington continues to believe Ukraine can win.

Washington [discounts Ukrainian losses](#) and exaggerates Russian losses. Officers present at meetings in the Pentagon tell me that minor Ukrainian battlefield successes (that are almost instantly reversed) loom large in the discussions held in four-star headquarters, the White House, and Foggy Bottom. These reports are treated as incontrovertible evidence of inevitable Ukrainian victory. In this climate, staff officers are reluctant to highlight effective Russian military performance or the [impact of Russia’s expanding military power](#).

The Western media reinforce these attitudes, arguing that the Russian generals and their

forces [are dysfunctional](#), mired in corruption and sloth, and that [Ukraine can win if it gets more support](#). As a result, it is a good bet that Washington and its allies will continue to provide equipment and ammunition, though probably not in the quantities and of the quality they did in the recent past.

Warsaw, whose leadership of NATO's anti-Russian crusade is prized in Washington, finds comfort in the Beltway's belief in Russian military weakness. So much so, that Warsaw seems willing to risk direct confrontation with Moscow. According to French sources in Warsaw, if Ukrainian forces are driven back, "[the Poles may introduce the first division](#) this year, which will include the Poles, the Balts, and a certain number of Ukrainians."

Now, Washington is misjudging Moscow. The Russian national command authorities may well think that Warsaw's actions align with Washington's intentions. President Biden's [executive order to extend hazard pay](#) to American soldiers currently serving in Ukraine (who are not supposed to be there) no doubt reinforces this opinion.

But it is far more likely that the Polish tail wants to wag the American dog. The Poles know their military intervention in [historic Galician Ukraine](#) will [provoke a military response from both Belarus and Russia](#), but Warsaw also reasons that Washington's air and ground forces in Europe are unlikely to sit quietly in Ukraine, Romania, and the Baltic littoral while Polish forces fight a losing battle.

America's proxy war with Russia has [transformed Ukraine into a graveyard](#). Indulging [Poland's passion for war with Russia](#) encourages Poland to follow the Ukrainian example. The very idea must leave Moscow no choice but to bring all of Russia's military power to bear simultaneously against Ukraine, before the collective West stumbles into regional war. Make peace, you fools, before it's too late.

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**Douglas Macgregor**, Col. (ret.) is a senior fellow with *The American Conservative*, the former advisor to the Secretary of Defense in the Trump administration, a decorated combat veteran, and the author of five books.

Featured image: "Plans love silence. There'll be no announcement of the start." Photo credit: Ukraine Defense Ministry

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Articles by: **Douglas  
Macgregor**

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