

UKRAINE

Punishing Russia, without Triggering WWIII

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Despite all Ukraine's difficulties, the latest the collapse of its ruling coalition, it looks as though the country is winning the war with Russia in terms of international community support. It's a challenging conflict, and the renewed internal political fight in Kyiv doesn't bode well for a smooth path to victory. After the downing of the Malaysian Airlines passenger plane on July 17th, Russian President Vladimir Putin is cornered between a rock and a hard place. Yet the current tenor is unlikely to change, unless Russia decides to pursue a major frontal attack.

Over the past month, the Ukrainian Army managed to pull off several successful maneuvers that freed a large part of occupied territory. Separatists' withdrawal from Slovyansk, which Russian media had turned into a symbol of "rebellion," dealt a serious psychological blow to pro-Russian separatists. Many retreated to Russia or Crimea – the development that led Moscow to reinforce separatists' attacks with squads from the regular army. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Army has continued to advance rapidly; almost every day now, the Ministry of Defense reports the liberation of more towns.

The tragedy over Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, downed by a missile that came from territory controlled by Russian separatists, appears to have been a catalyst for Ukraine to step up its military involvement>>>