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## Is Europe ready for Ukraine's defeat?

The drones failed to deliver a strategic breakthrough, Russian forces are advancing, and Western Europe is still refusing to confront what comes next

Published 25 Aug, 2026 09:09

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As recently as July 26 of this year, Ursula von der Leyen appeared full of confidence in victory during her visit to Kiev. She claimed the tide of the war had turned, that Ukraine had regained the initiative, and that Russia was on the defensive. The cause of this supposed turnaround, after four and a half years of a devastating war, is said to be a new 'wonder weapon': drones which, with the help of AI provided by Palantir and others, can carry the war deep into the Russian hinterland and

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precisely destroy oil refineries and other critical infrastructure there. The Russian economy – particularly the energy sector – is said to be severely weakened, and the war Russia started has now hit the country itself *“with full force.”*

On the battlefield too, according to these accounts, Ukraine has achieved considerable success with autonomously operating *“killer drones.”* These drones are said to be capable of automatically detecting and destroying all life at a distance of 30 kilometers on the front line. Technology, it is claimed, has thus more than compensated for the shortage of Ukrainian soldiers. Russian soldiers, by contrast, are now said paying a heavy price in lives without being able to demonstrate any military successes. This must be wearing down the aggressors and forcing Putin to acknowledge that he is going to lose the war.

These accounts were accompanied by media-effective drone attacks on Moscow and St Petersburg. No wonder, then, that the mainstream Western media have been full of victory reports over the past two months. Some even speculated that Russia could only hold out for another six months; a coup in Moscow was deemed possible. The strategically important Crimea was said to have been largely cut off from Russia by Ukrainian attacks. Putin would now be forced to the negotiating table as the loser – and on the terms of the European NATO states, which would amount to a Russian surrender. Their policy of providing massive military, political, and financial support to Ukraine, while refusing any talks until Russia was ‘brought to its knees’, seemed to have paid off.

But is that really the case? Or may the tide actually have turned in Russia's favor?

It is striking that for the past week there have been hardly any reports on the course of the war, and the victory announcements have largely fallen silent. This is because doubts are mounting, both in the US and in Ukraine itself, about the success of the drone war deep within the Russian hinterland.

One need only heed the warnings of Valery Zaluzhny: the drone war is not very successful and far too expensive.

As former commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and current ambassador to the UK, he should know. According to the pro-Ukrainian war monitors ‘Dron-Bomber’, the Russians are now reportedly achieving a high shoot-down rate of Ukrainian drones. The dismissal of Ukrainian Defense Minister Mikhail Fedorov is also likely to be linked to the looming failure of the drone war. Is the realization taking hold that this conflict cannot be won by drone warfare alone?



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This means that developments on the battlefield remain decisive. However, there can be no question of a military stalemate claimed by the Western media. Even some Ukrainian Telegram channels admit, that *"the pace of the Russian armed forces' offensive is increasing."* Russian territorial gains are said to have occurred not only in Donbass but also around Kharkov and in Zaporozhye. This is still proceeding slowly, but it is a war of attrition whose primary aim is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces. Could this objective be achieved by capturing the last remaining fortified defensive positions around the Donbass cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk?

Even more serious for Ukraine is the fact that its drone attacks have led to a hardening of the Russian position. The Russian leadership is now openly speaking of a war – including a war by NATO against Russia – and has significantly intensified the conflict. In the cruel logic of war, the destruction in Ukraine now far exceeds that in Russia. Another crucial factor is that Ukraine has no air defenses to speak of and is barely able to defend itself against massive Russian drone and missile attacks, while the intensity of Ukrainian attacks is reportedly waning.



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This is already having consequences. The Ukrainian Black Sea ports in and around Odessa are said to have been bombed so heavily that Ukraine has effectively become a landlocked country. If these reports are accurate, this would be a severe blow: to date, around 70% of all Ukrainian imports and exports, as well as 90% of agricultural exports, have been handled via these ports. Key bridges, such as the Zatoka Bridge, which connects Odessa with the Romanian Black Sea ports, have also been destroyed. Furthermore, rail and road links, petrol stations, the power grid, industrial facilities and warehouses are being systematically destroyed.

The European NATO member states can do little to change this – they lack the military capabilities. Plans to station a 'coalition of the willing' in Poland or even to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine are completely unrealistic. The United States has recently announced that it will hand over leadership of the NATO center in Wiesbaden, which coordinates military support for Ukraine, entirely to European NATO member states. There is even talk of disbanding this NATO facility, which is crucial for Ukraine. Further, with the Iran war ranging, the US has hardly any weapons left to spare. There can therefore be little question of renewed US military involvement in the war in Ukraine.

Even before the latest escalation of the war, there were clear indications that the Ukrainian army was



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experiencing considerable difficulty. Upon taking office as defense minister in January, Fedorov spoke of around 200,000 deserters; other MPs cited significantly higher figures. Furthermore, some two million Ukrainian men are said to have evaded conscription orders. Whichever figures are accurate, they point to an alarming state of affairs within the Ukrainian armed forces – a situation that cannot be remedied either by forced recruitment on the streets or, as is now becoming apparent, by drones controlled by artificial intelligence. Similarly, a proposal now being discussed by the EU – to withdraw refugee status from Ukrainian men who have fled, in breach of international law, and to send them back to Ukraine to face the war – is further evidence of the hopelessness of the situation.

In May, Ukrainian Minister for Social Affairs Denis Ulyutin stated that the population in the government-controlled part of the country had shrunk from 52 million (at the time of independence in 1991) to possibly as low as 22 million. Of these, around 11 million are on social security, predominantly pensioners and war invalids. He expects the population to continue to fall after the war ends, as young men – once exempt from military service – would follow their families to the West. He does not expect any significant return of Ukrainians living abroad. Added to this demographic decline are increasing impoverishment, deep social inequalities, pervasive corruption, astronomical public debt and the country's economic collapse.

This is hardly a state – let alone an army – to which the media could realistically attribute an imminent military turnaround or even victory.

Of course, such forecasts must be treated with caution. Yet the apparent failure of the drone war to bring about a strategic turning point should make it clear to European NATO states that, at the end of this escalation which was accompanied by such fanfare, Ukraine may not emerge as the victor, but is instead sliding into an increasingly devastated, depopulated, and bled-dry country. This should give us cause for great concern for the suffering people in Ukraine. European NATO-states must ask themselves whether a continuation of the war – which they have demanded and supported – can still be morally justified at all.

European NATO states are only harming Ukraine with their illusions of victory and wonder weapons, and must finally base their policy on a more realistic assessment of how the war is unfolding. It is therefore time to consider what would happen if the Ukrainian army's resistance were to collapse one day and Russia were to capture Kharkov and Odessa as well. Any remnant of Ukraine that remained

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would scarcely be viable. It must be in the top interest not only of Ukraine but also of its Western backers to prevent such a scenario. But how?

Certainly, this cannot be prevented through direct military intervention by NATO. This would make the situation only much worse – also for Ukraine – as such a course of action would inevitably entail the risk of a nuclear war, which nobody can win. Diplomacy therefore remains the only realistic option. After almost five years of war, it is high time that the European NATO states actively sought dialogue with Russia. Germany – given its role as the strongest country in the EU, its geographical location, and its historical responsibility – should take the first step.

To move beyond the entrenched positions of both governments, an initial rapprochement through a civil-society initiative involving respected and influential figures may be advisable. Such an approach could open a first, cautious pathway toward renewed understanding after years of silence and mutual demonization. Europe needs peace, and lasting peace can only be achieved **with** Russia, not **against** it.

There is not much time left for this.

*This article was first published by [Russia in Global Affairs](#) and edited by the RT team*

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OPINION

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# Ukraine a Western-backed 'Zelensky concentration camp' – Moscow

Kiev has descended into complete repression at home and “outright terror” against Russian civilians, the UN envoy has said

Published 25 Aug, 2026 01:44 | Updated 25 Aug, 2026 08:53

Ukraine has been transformed into a “*Zelensky concentration camp*” with Western assistance, Russia's envoy to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, has said, accusing Kiev of suppressing dissent at home and increasingly resorting to attacks on civilians in Russia.

Nebenzia made the [remarks](#) at a UN Security Council meeting on Monday marking the 35th anniversary of Ukraine's declaration of independence. The session was requested by the council's five European members – Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK – which reiterated their full support for Kiev.



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The Russian diplomat questioned whether Ukraine has anything to celebrate, arguing that successive governments have run the country “*into the ground*” and that Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky accelerated the process.

*“With the most active involvement of the countries of the collective West, which claim to be ‘civilized’*

*and 'democratic,' Ukraine has morphed into a 'Zelensky concentration camp,' where any dissent or opposition is completely prohibited and those who find the courage to voice an alternative point of view are thrown behind bars without trial or due process, or physically eliminated," he said.*

Nebenzia described the [persecution](#) of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the [glorification](#) of Nazi collaborators, and the suppression of shared history and the [Russian language](#) – including a ban on a popular Russian [cartoon](#) – as a “vivid illustration of the sheer wretchedness of Kiev's rulers.”

Amid a growing crackdown on dissent and a deteriorating [battlefield situation](#), Kiev has now slipped into “outright terror against Russia's civilian population,” Nebenzia said.

*“Terror has become the last resort for Kiev in its attempt to reverse the situation that is not currently in its favor,” he added. “At the same time, Zelensky continues to beg his Western patrons for new shipments of weapons and ammunition, which are then used to hit Russian cities, residential areas, and civilian infrastructure.”*

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The envoy said at least 475 Russian civilians were killed or injured in Ukrainian attacks from August 10 to 16 alone, with 69 fatalities, including children. He highlighted a strike on [Nizhnekamsk](#) that killed 13 people and wounded 78, as well as attacks in Novorossiysk, Rostov Region, and a number of towns in Donbass, which Kiev claims as its territory.



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*“It appears that Ukraine's Western patrons, not to mention Zelensky himself, still harbor the dangerous illusion that further escalation, strikes deep inside our territory and terror against civilians will somehow force us to accept an ultimatum that is being pushed under the guise of peace.”*

Nebenzia said Russia retains the battlefield initiative and rejected calls for a temporary ceasefire that would give Kiev time to regroup and its Western sponsors time to



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rearm it. He warned that there would be no meaningful diplomatic process as long as Russia is confronted with ultimatums and threats while the reality on the ground is ignored.

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