



By: *The Editorial Board*

# Reluctance to support Ukraine jeopardises the effectiveness of its defence



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was too far away from the leaders of his main allies—the US and the UK—when he called on them on Friday to be more decisive and approve the use of Western long-range weapons against Russian targets.

“Putin has no interest in ending the war. Putin and his inner circle haven’t faced the real consequences of this war – but they must,” **said** President Zelensky at the Yalta Forum in Kyiv on Friday.

On the same day, US President Joe Biden and British PM Keir Starmer had a two-hour meeting at the White House on the main topic of whether to approve Ukraine's use of long-range Western production missiles to strike targets deep in Russian territory.

Kyiv has not received any positive news from this meeting, which means that Washington will continue its strategy of restraint, which is primarily motivated by Moscow's threats to consider the use of these weapons as a direct conflict with NATO.

“There is no change to our view on the provision of long-range strike capabilities for Ukraine to use inside Russia, and I wouldn’t expect any sort of major announcement in that regard coming out of the discussions, certainly not from our side,” **said** John Kirby, the US National Security Spokesman, on the occasion of the meeting between President Biden and PM Starmer on Friday.

## Synchronisation with Berlin

Disappointing news also came from Berlin, as Chancellor Olaf Scholz **repeated** that Germany will not deliver long-range Taurus missiles to Kyiv for the same reason—fear of Russian escalation.

Thus, in one day, Kyiv received a very synchronised answer to a question that it considers crucial for its defence.

Regardless of the fact that German Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius does not link his

government's positions with those of partners in Washington and London (“Whatever they agree, it remains their business”), the outcome remains unfavourable for Ukraine.

By broadcasting a very firm, yet synchronised, refusal to answer to Kyiv's demands, Western capitals are seriously discouraging Ukraine, which is facing a wave of devastating attacks by Russian forces on its cities and infrastructure.

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The West's negative response is, in a way, an unfavourable reaction to the Ukrainian army's penetration into Russian territory in the Kursk border region. With this intervention, Kyiv wanted to transfer part of the war to Russian territory, force Moscow onto the defensive, and psychologically influence the Russian population.

However, for now, Western leaders remain adamant about such a concept and do not want to run the risk of drawing NATO into the Ukrainian conflict deeper than they are now, which is helping Ukraine to the point where it acts defensively.

But, despite everything, is there room left for Kyiv to expect a correction of Western hesitation? And more importantly, can the “breaking” of that hesitation in a shorter term, which is crucial for Ukrainian defence, be realistic? According to informed TA sources, there is a possibility of a shift starting at the end of September during meetings on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

## Russia's warnings have an effect

Ukrainian troops already have American ATACMS long-range missiles and British Storm Shadow, but their use has been limited on

shorter distances without jeopardising the depth of Russian territory.

A meeting at the White House on Friday confirmed the West's refusal of Kyiv's request to use these weapons against targets deep inside Russian territory, at weapons depots, fuel, and command centres, which Ukraine claims are the centre of daily murderous attacks on its cities and infrastructure.

It is impossible to separate the Western reluctance from Moscow's frequent warnings that it would understand the approval of the use of long-range weapons as direct participation of NATO in the conflict. Furthermore, Vladimir Putin consciously repeated this warning immediately before the meeting between Biden and Starmer.

"This will mean that NATO countries, the U.S. and European countries are at war with Russia. And if this is so, then, bearing in mind the change in the very essence of this conflict, we will make appropriate decisions based on the threats that will be created for us," **said** Putin.

**Biden and his administration do not want to make a move on a major foreign policy issue that could reflect badly on their presidential candidate's ratings**

President Biden is walking the line of not wanting to check whether Putin is bluffing or not. "I don't think much about Vladimir Putin," said Biden before the meeting with PM Starmer, but later decisions confirmed that his words were not particularly convincing.

With less than two months before the presidential election, Biden and his administration do not want to make a move on a major foreign policy issue that could reflect badly on their presidential candidate's ratings.

The situation is the same regarding German Chancellor Scholz's motives. He is facing a significant decline in support, a surge of the far right, and extreme caution leading up to federal parliamentary elections in a year.

## All that remains for Kyiv is to keep pressuring its allies

However, there has been too much evidence so far that Putin's warnings of some kind of decisive reaction towards the West are nothing more than self-encouragement.

Although it is by far the largest contributor to Ukraine's defence, the US has a long list of reluctances to supply Kyiv with the weapons it believes Ukraine needs to defend itself effectively.

Washington also opposed the delivery of the most modern Western tanks to Ukraine, followed by the HIMARS artillery systems, later ATACMS, and especially the F-16 aircraft.



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The reason for the hesitation has always been the fear that Russia will respond militarily to one of the NATO member states, perhaps even with nuclear weapons, which the Kremlin is threatening again today. However, each of those threats has so far turned out to be a bluff.

The former UK Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, **regrets** the West's hesitancy and believes that it "favours Russia and allows Putin to insert threats and new red lines and efforts to divide and rule the international community."

Given the impending winter and the

significant infrastructure damage caused by Russian bombing, Ukraine desperately needs a swift shift in the Western allies' decision on the use of long-range missile systems against Russia.

Having learned from past experiences in which it has repeatedly succeeded in overcoming the reluctance of the West, including the US, the only thing left for Kyiv is to remain adamant in its demands and to form alliances in order to exert joint pressure on Washington to fulfil them.

For many of Ukraine's allies, especially in Europe, political calculations surrounding pre-election ratings have not prevented them from seeking more decisive and faster support for Ukraine.

According to informed TA sources, the removal of some restrictions on the use of Western weapons in Ukraine is possible at the end of the month, when Ukrainian President Zelensky will meet with most Western leaders, including US President Biden, during the session of the UN General Assembly in New York.