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Will Ukraine remain a true priority for the West?



Ukraine is losing on the battlefield—but neither Ukrainians nor their Western partners dare to say it aloud. Despite successful Ukrainian strikes on military targets inside Russia, the fourth year of this brutal war is steadily consuming Ukraine's territory, economy, and human capital.

The pace of Russian advances has accelerated significantly. In May, Russian forces captured around 450 square kilometres of Ukrainian **territory**—the largest monthly gain of the year. In June, that record was broken again, with 556 square kilometres seized. With each passing month, Ukraine continues to lose more ground.

“The Ukrainian government emphasises successes in the Sumy region and portrays the recapture of a single village as the failure of a large-scale Russian offensive supposedly involving 50,000 soldiers. However, available imagery suggests a force closer to one-tenth of that number,” wrote military analyst Julian Röpcke. “The ongoing loss of the Donetsk region is barely being addressed—at least not in exchanges with Western partners. The cities of Toretsk and Chasiv Yar have effectively fallen to Russian forces, without this being openly communicated. Russia is now advancing on Kostiantynivka from three directions—a city that was still considered a central supply hub for the entire mid-front as recently as September 2024.”

To sustain the fragile morale of the civilian population and secure continued Western support, Ukrainian authorities continue to rely on victory-driven rhetoric. After all, who wants to back a losing side?

A stinging blow to Ukraine's future

Yet in just the past two months, Russian troops have entered the **Sumy** region in the north and pushed into **Dnipropetrovsk** in the east—making it the 10th out of 25 Ukrainian regions now partially or fully occupied—and, in early July, breached the border in a new

section of northeastern **Kharkiv**.

Ukraine has all but lost the Donbas, which consists of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and at least nine regions are now subjected to intense daily shelling.

April and May showed the highest number of overall civilian casualties since September last year.

In the first half of 2025, the number of civilian **casualties** rose by 37%, compared to the first six months of 2024, with at least 968 civilians killed and 4,807 wounded. Civilian casualties in Ukraine **remained** high in May, with at least 183 civilians killed and 836 injured.

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Meanwhile, Ukraine's economy is faltering: inflation has **climbed** steadily since November and reached 15.9% year-on-year in May—a stinging blow to household budgets and one of the reasons many are considering emigrating.

Investor confidence is wobbling too; just last week, **BlackRock** confirmed it has paused efforts to secure investors for a multibillion-dollar Ukraine recovery fund amid growing uncertainty over Ukraine's future.

Tactical victories with limited strategic value

Ukrainian **shelling** of oil refineries and military installations deep inside Russia has sparked both jubilation and outrage among politicians and across social media.

Yet these strikes are not much of a game-changer but rather a desperate attempt to slow the relentless Russian bombardment.

They represent tactical victories with limited strategic value—doing little to shift battlefield

dynamics or significantly undermine Russia's ability to advance.

And while Russia's economy continues to falter, so does Ukraine's—lacking the vast oil and gas reserves the Kremlin still uses to stay afloat.

President Donald Trump, who came into office promising to end the bloody Russian war in Ukraine, has since distanced himself from the conflict, opting to let both sides fight it out without direct U.S. involvement.

"Sometimes you see two young children fighting like crazy," Trump **said** in the Oval Office. "They hate each other, and they're fighting in a park, and you try and pull them apart. They don't want to be pulled. Sometimes you're better off letting them fight for a while and then pulling them apart."

My native Kherson feels a critical shortage of air defence, despite clear efforts by the Ukrainian army to protect it as best as they can

Last week, reports emerged that U.S. military aid—including long-range missiles Ukraine used to strike Russian targets—had been **suspended**. Trump now promises to **provide** Patriot air defence systems.

But let's be realistic: for a country the size of Ukraine—one of the largest in Europe—facing continuous aerial assault, this is far from sufficient.

The U.S. likely lacks both the quantity of launchers and the supply of interceptor missiles needed to protect such vast territory.

My native Kherson, a frontline city in the south, feels a critical shortage of air defence, despite clear efforts by the Ukrainian army to protect it as best as they can.

Can Ukraine withstand Russia's

onslaught?

In effect, the U.S. is stripping Ukraine of its ability to target Russian military infrastructure while offering only limited defensive support. Trump's business-oriented approach makes it clear—he prefers countries to finance their own wars of attrition. Ukraine simply does not have that capacity.

As far back as December 2023, a U.S. delegation warned President Zelenskyy and top Ukrainian officials that military aid might end within a year. Kyiv was told explicitly to prepare for that scenario.



Will Ukraine remain a true priority for the West in this new Cold War era? And if so, to what extent? - Donald Trump with Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Since then, Ukraine has turned to ramping up domestic arms production, with a focus on drones. President Zelenskyy has claimed the country could produce up to 8 million drones annually—but lacks the necessary funding to reach that scale.

A contract was recently signed with the U.S. firm **Swift Beat** for joint production of interceptor drones, and Denmark has enabled Ukraine to launch its military production on Danish soil.

Still, two critical questions remain.

First: can Ukraine produce enough weapons to withstand Russia's onslaught—and how realistic are those production targets, especially given the sharp reduction in U.S. aid?

Last year alone, Russia was reportedly on track to produce nearly three times more artillery munitions than the U.S. and Europe combined. “We simply lack the defence industrial base to produce the weapons we need to deter the Russians or the North Koreans or whoever might attack us,” said Secretary General of NATO **Mark Rutte**.

And second: will Ukraine remain a true priority for the West in this new Cold War era? And if so, to what extent—enough to help Ukraine win, or just enough to ensure it doesn’t lose completely?