Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

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Military assistance is more important for Kyiv than negotiations in Abu Dhabi



Although Moscow has agreed to hold peace talks in Abu Dhabi, it has shown no readiness to take concrete steps towards reaching an agreement.

This position has been made possible, to a considerable extent, by the policies pursued by the US administration over the past eighteen months.

US financial assistance to Ukraine has effectively come to a halt. More recently, problems have also emerged with the provision of intelligence to Ukraine and with access to Starlink and Starshield satellite communications services.

Washington has thus demonstrated its willingness to restrict various forms of support for Ukraine unless Kyiv agrees to the concessions demanded by the Kremlin.

Furthermore, Ukraine now finds itself in a particularly difficult position due to a shortage of missile defence capabilities.

The White House has refused Kyiv additional supplies of interceptor missiles for Patriot systems, while the US Department of Defense is currently delaying their transfer even under procurement arrangements financed by European partners.

The official explanation is uncertainty surrounding the situation in the Persian Gulf, although the relevant funds have already been transferred to US accounts.

In recent months, Vladimir Putin has actively exploited this situation by systematically targeting Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure.

Thermal power plants, electricity transmission facilities, heating systems and other elements of the country's energy infrastructure have come under attack.

Damage to infrastructure in the vicinity of nuclear power plants poses a serious nuclear and environmental threat.

In effect, Russia is acting in a way that could force Ukraine to shut down these two nuclear power plants for safety reasons. This raises the question of Russia's own nuclear power plants. Unlike Russia, Ukraine has not attacked them. Why, then, does the Kremlin believe it can act unilaterally?

Moscow's strategic objective is to deprive major Ukrainian cities of water, electricity, heating and sewage services, effectively turning them into something resembling Mariupol in spring 2022.

Such systematic attacks on critical civilian infrastructure bear the hallmarks of war crimes and may also constitute crimes against humanity.

No strategic breakthrough for Russia

On the battlefield, despite substantial human and material losses, Russia has failed to achieve a strategic breakthrough in its favour.

According to official assessments, Ukrainian forces are recapturing more territory in some sectors than Russian troops are able to seize.

Total Russian military personnel losses since the beginning of the full-scale invasion amount to 1,609,500.

Russian military equipment destroyed or damaged includes 38,100 tanks and armoured fighting vehicles, 52,100 artillery systems, 2,260 multiple-launch rocket systems, 1,750 air defence systems, 453 combat aircraft, 600,000 operational-tactical drones, 5,200 cruise missiles, 35 warships and two submarines.

US President Donald Trump has stated that the war in Ukraine is not his war. However, the scale of Russia's military losses and the combat potential accumulated by the Russian armed forces have direct implications for the security of Europe as a whole.

Had the forces and resources that Russia has

committed against Ukraine been deployed against Western European countries, the consequences for Europe's defence architecture could have been catastrophic.

> The incursion of Russian drones into Polish airspace has exposed vulnerabilities in Europe's air defence architecture

In such a scenario, US military contingents stationed in Europe would inevitably have been drawn into the confrontation.

European countries would have had to spend many times more on a direct war with Russia than on the assistance they have provided to Ukraine over the years.

This would also have entailed enormous costs resulting from Russian destruction.

Over the course of the full-scale war, Ukrainian forces have destroyed hundreds of thousands of Russian drones.

At the same time, the incursion of Russian drones into Polish airspace has exposed vulnerabilities in Europe's air defence architecture.

During one such incident, NATO air and missile defence assets, including F-35 fighter jets, were deployed alongside Polish air defence capabilities, including F-16 aircraft and the Patriot system.

However, of the 20 Russian drones that crossed the Polish border, only five were destroyed during eight hours of operations.

Military confrontation with Russia

The US president regularly refers to the allegedly $350 billion provided to Ukraine and claims that the United States has received nothing in return.

However, the actual volume of US assistance is substantially lower, amounting to approximately $150 billion.

At the same time, the strategic benefit to the United States lies in Ukraine's ability to contain Russian military expansion and prevent the war from spreading to other European countries.

Even political forces that previously considered meeting the Kremlin's territorial demands at Ukraine's expense are gradually recognising that Putin will not stop at the territories already occupied.

Neither Europe nor the United States is currently adequately prepared for a large-scale military confrontation with Russia.

A telling example is the US military campaign in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, during which the United States spent an extraordinary $1 trillion but ultimately failed to defeat the Taliban movement. Including indirect costs, total expenditure reached $2.2 trillion.

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The Taliban had neither a fully fledged air force nor a navy nor a modern missile arsenal.

The chaotic withdrawal of US troops in 2021 led to the almost immediate collapse of the Afghan government and the armed forces supported by Washington.

These events reinforced the Kremlin's belief that the United States has limited readiness for prolonged armed confrontation.

As for Europe's ability to repel possible Russian military aggression, European countries have yet to reach the necessary level of preparedness.

Over the past year, they have taken a number of steps to strengthen their defence

capabilities.

However, ending the war in Ukraine under the current circumstances could expose them to significant strategic risks.

Adapting to new technologies and tactics

Europe may ultimately have to confront a Russian army that has spent five years fighting the largest-scale war of the past 80 years, adapting to new technologies and tactics.

The results of NATO exercises involving Ukrainian drone operators are particularly concerning.

During winter manoeuvres in Estonia, ten Ukrainian drone operators simulated the destruction of most of a British tank brigade within two hours.

They could potentially have continued targeting other units, including those belonging to the Estonian Division.

> During NATO exercises in Germany in the summer, twelve Ukrainian drone operators simulated the destruction of a US tank brigade in just a few hours

The exercise organisers decided to withdraw the Ukrainian team after assessing the extent of its advantage under simulated modern warfare conditions.

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American units were unable even to identify in time the positions from which the attacks were being conducted.

These examples reveal a serious gap between the experience gained by Ukrainian military personnel in actual combat and the approaches still employed by certain NATO armed forces.

Altering the balance of capabilities

Despite Putin's attempts to break the morale of Ukrainian society through systematic attacks on civilian infrastructure, Ukraine continues to seek ways to strengthen its defence capabilities.

The Ukrainian leadership has reached an agreement with Germany on the joint production of anti-ballistic missile systems.

Italy has decided to transfer a substantial package of missiles for the European SAMP/T air defence system, jointly manufactured by Italy and France. These missiles are capable of intercepting Russian ballistic missiles.



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Several European countries have also agreed to supply Ukraine with Patriot missiles, with their own stocks to be replenished once further US deliveries to Ukraine arrive.

In addition, the US Congress is discussing the possibility of approving a new $15 billion assistance package for Ukraine using funds allocated by the previous administration but blocked after Donald Trump took office.

Ukraine is also working to develop its domestic production of ballistic and anti-ballistic missiles.

If these programmes are implemented according to schedule, they could significantly alter the balance of capabilities in the confrontation with Russia.

Additional supplies of Western cruise missiles could also enhance Ukraine's ability to strike military targets deep inside Russian territory.

At the same time, Russia's air and missile defence system has uneven geographical coverage.

A substantial proportion of its most effective capabilities is concentrated around Moscow and other strategically important regions.

This creates potential opportunities to strike military-industrial facilities in other parts of Russia.

Ukrainian drones have already demonstrated their ability to systematically attack Russian oil refineries.

However, their capacity to destroy large industrial structures remains limited compared with that of missile systems.

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