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Ukraine

Unwavering support for Ukraine

- IV Online magazine - 2025 - IVP609 - October 2025 -

Publication date: Saturday 11 October 2025

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Ukraine is still resisting heroically Russia's imperialist war of annexation. Hopes had been placed on the Trump-Putin summit in Alaska for a ceasefire. But in the run-up to the summit and since, Russia escalated its attacks on Ukraine with more drones and missiles targeting civilian housing and infrastructure while making only limited progress on the ground. Russia has now also sent drones over Poland and Romania.

The escalation of attacks on civilians in August prompted Trump to threaten harder sanctions on Russia if it did not agree to a ceasefire and enter into negotiations. The summit in Alaska turned out to be a big success for Putin. He conceded nothing while Trump gave him international legitimacy despite having arrest warrants against him issued by International Criminal Court for war crimes and genocide.

Trump turned against Ukraine by suggesting that it should exchange territories with Russia for peace deal, which means Ukraine accepting Russian annexation of the Donbass and Crimea. Trump now leaves it up to European countries to buy arms from the US for Ukraine's war effort. Tariffs of 50% by the US on countries such as India that are buying Russian oil is more about Trump's protectionism and his attempts to split the pro-Russia alliance of countries such as China than support for Ukraine. Having got no concessions from Putin, Trump now says that he is angry and has been "played" by him. But these words have not frightened Putin.

Putin has made it clear that his war objectives remain unchanged: recognition by Ukraine of the occupied territories; the removal of Zelensky; a veto on Ukraine's membership of NATO; and drastically reducing the size of Ukraine's armed forces. Putin has rejected any ceasefire as a pre-condition for peace talks. In fact, he does not want peace talks as he hopes to slowly grind down Ukrainian resistance. He even proposed that Zelensky should travel to Moscow for peace talks. Apart from being a huge threat to Zelensky's safety, it would be seen as a capitulation by Ukraine.

Russia believes that it can win the war with its bigger resources and it knows that the West is reluctant to wholeheartedly support Ukraine. The West is divided between countries that would like a rapid end to the war to normalise trade relations with Russia and those that want a longer war to weaken Russia. That's why Ukraine has not been receiving the military and other aid fast enough and in sufficient quantities.

The US is probably the country the keenest to normalise relations with Russia, not just because Trump admires Putin as a "strong leader" on the far right like him, but for the interests of US capital. Indeed, US envoy Kellogg recently visited Belarus, a key ally of Russia, to meet its authoritarian president Lukashenko. The outcome was the freeing of some political prisoners in exchange for the US allowing Boeing to supply spare parts for Belarus' airline.

After over three years of war, it is not surprising that many Ukrainians would like to negotiate a peace agreement, but Putin is not interested. The Ukrainians have no choice but to carry on resisting Russia's invasion, and while they do want peace they also don't want to capitulate to Russia. The fact that after more than three years of war Russia has not been able to achieve its original war aims, which it had hoped would occur within a few weeks, demonstrates that the Ukrainian population is still supporting the war effort.

Neoliberal attacks

But the people of Ukraine are not just resisting Russia's war of annexation, they are also resisting Zelensky's neoliberal attacks.

In May, the Rada of Ukraine voted for an agreement with the US for the extraction and supply of rare earth minerals, which gives the US new levers of influence over Ukraine's economic and political situation. The Zelensky government is attracting risky foreign capital rather than nationalising strategic industries, introducing a progressive tax and fighting against the shadow economy.

In June, demonstrators protested at the Trade Union House being seized by the private company KAMparitet, and demanded that it be returned to its rightful owner, the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine.

In July, mass protests erupted around the country against the Zelensky government rushing a law through the Rada that deprived the anti-corruption units National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO) of their independence. The protests were sustained until Zelensky was forced to retreat by introducing a new law which restored the independence of NABU and SAPO.

On 5 September, hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Kyiv's Independence Square to protest at parliamentary bills that would impose tougher criminal penalties on soldiers for disobedience. However, the experience of recent years proves the opposite: punitive measures not only do not solve problems, but also create new ones. Again, in the face of protests, the government backed down and removed some of the harshest measures.

The fact that these demonstrations and protests could and did take place in Ukraine, despite the fact that the country is at war, shows how different the situation is in Ukraine from the situation in the Russian Federation, where protests against the government are not tolerated.

In stark contrast to Russia and despite the conditions of war, there is a lively civil society in Ukraine. There is self-organisation providing mutual aid and support to other citizens when the state is absent, but there are also independent socialist, trade-union and feminist organisations providing an alternative to Zelensky's neoliberalism. Trade unionists and the youth are defending their wages, rights and working conditions against neoliberal reforms, corruption and oligarchs, while ensuring the defence of their homeland both on and behind the front line. The Ukrainians are not pawns of Western imperialism, despite its obvious cynical self-interest in backing Ukraine.

Western imperialism obviously wants a capitalist neoliberal reconstruction of Ukraine. That's why amongst other things, it is not cancelling Ukraine's debt. There are some immediate steps that Britain and other countries could take in support of Ukraine such as seizing Russian frozen assets; reversing cuts to foreign aid; imposing stronger sanctions against the Russian regime; punishing companies, such as UK-based Seapeak, that are evading existing sanctions; extending protection to Ukrainian refugees beyond 2026; and giving asylum to Russian and Belarusian opponents of the war. The latter may become increasingly necessary if Russian and Belarusian opponents of Putin who are currently living in the USA face threats of deportation.

The West is seizing the opportunity of war in Ukraine to push through a remilitarisation of Europe with the EU's ReArmEurope and the UK Defence Review. While Ukraine should receive all the arms and aid necessary to resist Russia, this does not have to entail a massive increase in military budgets. Arms sales should be immediately stopped to countries such as the brutal Saudi regime or the genocidal Israeli government. Opposing militarism and imperialist wars does not mean pacifism as countries should have the right to defend themselves against occupation and annexation including by military means.

The post-World War Two order is changing as we are entering a new multipolar world where US imperialism

confronts Russia and China increasingly directly. Some people – even on the left – celebrate these developments. They are rightfully critical of the history of western imperialism but they see the rise of Russia and China as economic and military powers as a progressive development. They operate on the mistaken principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Instead, the left has to root itself in internationalism and anti-imperialism, backing working class and democratic struggles globally. The priority has to be putting people first instead of reducing politics to geopolitical manoeuvres between governments.

Ukraine must receive all it needs to win a just peace

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- [Donate](#) to fund a vehicle for rapid response operations defending against Russian drone and missile strikes in the Sumy region.
- Follow solidarity news with Ukraine at the [European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine](#) and the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign \(Britain\)](#).

20 September 2025

Source: [Anti*capitalist Resistance](#).

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