

U.S. orders Ukrainian proxy forces to accept more casualties

written by Nahia Sanzo
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The idea that the West, primarily the United States, is ready to fight Russia to the last Ukrainian has been common in the Russian media since the start of what the

Kremlin continues to call a special military operation, a war in which it has already lost more soldiers than the Soviet Union lost in 10 years in Afghanistan.

The intensity of the war, the means used and the strength of both armies, one backed by a powerful military industry and the other by that of its NATO partners, make this a different war from those that the great powers have fought in recent decades.

The comparison with Afghanistan is also valid for the United States, not in terms of the war that it waged for two decades, but the one that it fought indirectly by arming groups linked to Ahmad Shah Massoud, Gulbiddin Hekmatyar or Yunnus Khalis, among whose followers are found the patriarch of what would eventually become the Haqqani network, the base of both the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Those were the tools with which Washington was willing to fight the Soviet Union down to the last Afghan.

The well-being of the population did not come into play in that equation, just as that of the Ukrainian people does not now. Moreover, the reality of proxy warfare is already widely accepted even in the Western press; the need to fight Russia to the last Ukrainian soldier starts to appear more and more, not only in the analysis of the situation, but even in the recipes for success.

The limited success of the Ukrainian counteroffensive, already in its third month, has provoked three kinds of rational reactions and one irrational, the denial of reality. In the latter are found both the fanatics who continue to claim that “everything is going according to plan,” such as Andriy Ermak, or those who want to exaggerate the Russian losses in order to give Ukraine a better position than their own authorities claim, as was the case of Evgeny Prigozhin, who in one of his few appearances in the last weeks before his death, stated that what is happening at the front “is a shame.”

Apart from these positions that are clearly far from reality, analysts and the media have been divided between those who believe that the Ukrainian offensive can be successful and those who seek to give their recipe to change the situation.

The former are, in turn, divided between those who claim that Ukraine has everything it needs to achieve its objectives and those who justify the lack of success by implicitly or explicitly criticizing the suppliers, mainly Joe Biden, for not having delivered the necessary weaponry to Kiev. The former are led by Antony Blinken, who has repeatedly stated that Ukraine already has the necessary material and has pinned his hopes on the introduction into the battlefield of brigades trained abroad specifically for the current offensive.

The group of the latter is clearly led by the most strident voices in the Ukrainian government, such as Mikhaïlo Podolyak and his most fanatical supporters, including those who are now campaigning to defend the use of cluster bombs, even using arguments in defense of human rights. Of course, this group not only demands speedy delivery of F-16 fighters, which several European countries have already promised Zelensky and which will arrive once the training of the pilots is complete, but also long-range missiles with which Ukraine has not hidden that it would attack the basic infrastructure of Crimea.

Benefits of proxy war

All of them have in common the defense of continuing to supply arms to Ukraine, something that is fundamentally done from economic arguments of cost and benefit. For example, Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate minority leader and a member of the Republican Party, reportedly less supportive of unlimited assistance to Ukraine, has recently asserted that “we haven’t lost a single American. Most of the Ukraine-linked money we spend is actually spent in the U.S., replenishing weapons and so on. So we’re really employing people here and upgrading our own military for what may come in the future.”

Without the need for many words, McConnell sums up some of the great benefits of proxy warfare for the world's leading military power, which not only views the war from a distance, but can even achieve some economic benefits. The idea that the war is cheap for Washington is another of the arguments on the rise as one of the benefits of proxy warfare.

There are many articles published in large media outlets that, in order to avoid losing hope in the possibility that Ukraine can achieve at least part of the objectives, have opted for the position of giving recipes on how the Kiev troops could improve their position and their performance. Perhaps the best example of this position is the article published [Aug. 22 by the New York Times](#) and promoted on social media, stating that "Ukraine's grinding counteroffensive is struggling to break through entrenched Russian defenses in large part because it has too many troops, including some of its best combat units, in the wrong places."

The report is not the first, and likely will not be the last, to point out actions that U.S. officials consider a mistake. The press had already reported, not without some concern, Ukraine's reluctance to continue with plans that had caused enormous casualties of people and loss of equipment. As it has been possible to read in big U.S. media, Kiev chose to modify its tactic to limit those casualties, even against the criteria of the United States. Casualties among the Ukrainian military as collateral damage are not only acceptable, but necessary.

Now, U.S. officials use the New York Times to deepen their message. In short, the U.S. plan is to convince - or coerce - Ukraine into opting for a strategy that emphasizes the initial target: Melitopol. Hence, the main criticism of the Ukrainian tactic is that it has not focused solely on the area of the front where it is suffering the most casualties. That is where Washington wants to see progress and not in other areas of the front, like Artyomovsk, that are irrelevant at the moment.

Ukraine, which in the past year has given enormous symbolic importance to the site

and has gone so far as to falsely claim that, in the event of a Russian capture, the rest of [Ukrainian-occupied areas of] Donbass would be within its reach – Russia captured Artyomovsk in May and has failed to advance towards Slavyansk and Kramatorsk – has continued to fight fiercely to regain ground in that sector. There they no longer face Wagner's troops, withdrawn after the capture of the city, but units of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and regular Russian troops.

It is likely that the Russian contingent is currently less numerous – not only because defense requires fewer troops than assault, but because those units do not have the recruiting capacity that Wagner enjoyed in the months in which it had the option to recruit soldiers in Russian prisons – which could give Ukrainian troops more likelihood to advance in that direction.

Azov and Artyomovsk

Aware that it is an area in which Russia has not had the time that it has had in Zaporozhye to prepare a defense, Ukraine has chosen the Artyomovsk sector to put pressure on the Russian troops and try to achieve a great success to present to its partners and its population. Kiev needs this good news to offset war fatigue, especially if, as is speculated, it is preparing to expand and speed up the mobilization [military draft]. In his press conference yesterday, Zelensky did not confirm those plans, although that is the proposal that he has received from his military authorities.

The recapture of Artyomovsk would not only have more impact than the capture of towns like Rabotino, which is currently being fought for, but it is more feasible than the approach to Melitopol. Zelensky has sent Andriy Biletsky and his unit created around the Azov movement to Artyomovsk to lead that sector of the front and not the units considered elite, reserved for the front that both Ukraine and the United States consider a priority.

As in Mariupol last year, the Azov troops are perfectly expendable. Zelensky has elevated the regiment enough to make any success his own, but also to glorify its fallen as martyrs for the fatherland. Those soldiers are useful both alive and dead.

Even so, the United States seems to consider that this quota is excessive and demands that Ukraine concentrate all its efforts in the directions of Melitopol and Berdyansk, two of the clearest objectives since the preparation of the offensive began, where Russia has concentrated its defensive efforts.

The Zaporozhye front not only entails heavy casualties because of the extensive minefields but also because Washington's proposed tactic involves reusing large numbers of armored columns, an easy target for Russian aircraft. This American demand, which, judging by the insistence in the Rabotino sector, has already been accepted by Zaluzhny, is not only a recipe that guarantees enormous casualties, but it is a tactic that, as even Ukrainian officers have criticized, Washington itself would never agree to use without air and artillery superiority.

However, the rules and demands are different for a proxy army, which must accept that, for its boss, they are only a tool that must continue with the plans, assuming both casualties and a strategy with no guarantee of success. Even so, The Wall Street Journal reported Aug. 24 that Ukraine has agreed to focus on the Orehovo front to please the United States, the main supplier of this war.

The subtext of all these articles, which admit the problems that Ukraine is suffering, is not to move towards a resolution of the conflict or a possible peace or ceasefire negotiation, but quite the opposite. The United States accepts that its own troops would never advance on minefields without first carrying out massive attrition work and bombardment of its enemy's rear. Ukraine lacks the missiles and aviation that the U.S. command would use to carry out this attack prior to the ground assault; hence the message behind the criticism and the proposals for change is to speed up the delivery of this material and follow the doctrine of Mikhaïlo Podoliak, who

describes the delivery of the F-16 as “de-escalation” and ends with “weapons, weapons, arms” messages about the military solution to the conflict as the only acceptable option.

To this end, the United States is willing to supply and finance the Ukrainian Armed Forces indefinitely as long as the Ukrainian proxy army follows orders and accepts an even higher level of casualties.

Translated by Melinda Butterfield

Source: [Slavyangrad.es](https://slavyangrad.es)

