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FOREIGN POLICY & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Russia Ignores Global Peace Developments to Focus on Putin's War

Pavel K. Baev

October 14, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Moscow's muted response to the October 10 announcement of Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado's Nobel Peace Prize win and the ceasefire in Gaza underline how Russia's war against Ukraine has come to dominate the Kremlin's attention.
- Recent independent polling by the Levada Center shows a desire for a conclusion to the war against Ukraine among the Russian public. Russian President Vladimir Putin, however, has shown no flexibility in curtailing his maximalist aims.
- U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently discussed the potential supply of Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine, which Moscow fears could force it to compromise on its war aims.



(Source: President of Russia)

Extraordinary international attention was focused on the Nobel Peace Prize announcement on October 10. Anxiety was palpable in Moscow, where official skepticism had dominated since the award of the 2022 prize to the Memorial Society—a Russian human rights organization that was branded as a “foreign agent” and forced to operate outside the country. Mainstream Russian commentators were eager to speculate about the potential awarding of the prize to U.S. President Donald Trump ([Izvestiya](#), October 8; [Kommersant](#), October 9). Russian President Vladimir Putin, while asserting that the Nobel Prize had lost its reputation, however, expressed the opinion that Trump deserved it, which earned him a word of gratitude from the U.S. president ([RBC](#), October 10).

The official announcement that the Nobel Prize was awarded to Maria Corina Machado, a leader of the Venezuelan opposition, was met in Moscow with indifference. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro may be Russia's strategic partner, but his support for the Kremlin's war against Ukraine is

worth very little ([Rossiiskaya Gazeta](#), October 3). Similarly, the breakthrough in stopping the war in Gaza is receiving only superficial coverage in the Russian media ([Izvestiya](#), October 10). Moscow has discontinued its attempts to form ties with the Hamas leadership, and after the fall of its key regional ally, the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, Russia's interest in the Middle East has somewhat dissipated (see EDM, [February 6](#), [June 16](#), [October 6](#); [Forbes.ru](#), October 9).

The Kremlin's war against Ukraine continues to dominate political and public attention in Russia. Independent opinion polls show a steady increase in support for its conclusion, particularly among the younger generations. For example, as many as 80 percent of respondents express readiness to support a hypothetical decision to stop hostilities within a week, according to a recent Levada Center poll ([Levada Center](#), October 7). Russia's commander-in-chief, however, demonstrates a resolve to stay the course of the war and shows no flexibility in curtailing his maximalist aims, despite deepening discontent and mounting economic costs (see EDM, [May 8](#), [September 26](#); [The Moscow Times](#), October 10). On October 7, Putin celebrated his 73rd birthday by holding a meeting with the top brass and instructing them to continue attacks on Ukraine that his military leaders have been reporting as exclusively successful ([RIA Novosti](#), October 7). In reality, Russia's modest tactical gains achieved in August and September have stalled in October, as Ukrainian forces have regained territory in the Sumy oblast and executed several counterattacks in the Donbas region ([The Insider](#), October 10). Even jingoist Russian commentators have expressed reservations about heavy losses and high costs of Moscow's long war against Ukraine. In the Russian public, worries about a new wave of mobilization are growing ([Levada Center](#), October 9; [Topwar.ru](#), October 10).

Russia's only measurable change in its conduct of the war is the increased intensity of combined drone and missile attacks on a wide range of civilian targets in Ukraine ([The New Voice of Ukraine](#), October 10). Ukrainian gas infrastructure that the Kremlin previously spared in air campaigns because Russian gas transit to Europe through Ukraine continued is now the priority target ([Novaya Gazeta Europe](#), October 8). Ukraine, nevertheless, is able to respond in kind by using drones to strike refineries as far away as Ufa, Bashkortostan, and oil depots in Feodosiya, Crimea, which continued to burn for five days last week ([Krim Realii](#), October 10; [Meduza](#), October 11). Repairs to the damaged refineries are complicated due to the sanctions regime, so the only way for Russia to alleviate the fuel shortage is to halt exports and resort to importing diesel from Belarus and the People's Republic of China ([Carnegie Politika](#), October 2; [Re: Russia](#), October 8).

Refineries make a fixed and large target, but to reach them, Ukrainian drones must overcome Russian air defenses, and for that, updated U.S. intelligence information is invaluable ([Izvestiya](#), October 12). The supply of U.S. BGM-109 Tomahawk missiles, which Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy discussed during phone calls on October 11 and 12, could significantly enhance the impact of Ukrainian strikes ([Meduza](#), October 12). In combination with swarms of

drones, even a few Tomahawk missiles can inflict devastating damage to Russian energy infrastructure and air bases ([Radio Svoboda](#), October 11).

The prospect of this escalation worries Moscow so much that patriotic pundits have resumed invectives against Trump and started again to argue for a tactical nuclear strike ([Topwar.ru](#), October 9). On October 8, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov announced that the momentum for a peace deal in Ukraine had been exhausted. The Kremlin rushed to disprove him, however, and Putin's aide, Yuri Ushakov, asserted the next day that the agreements allegedly reached at the Alaska summit continued to work ([RIA Novosti](#), October 8; [RIAC](#), October 10). Putin opted to confirm that the "spirit of Anchorage" was still going strong and added many warm words for Trump ([Argumenty i fakty](#), October 10). Putin was, however, apparently disappointed with Trump's lukewarm response to his initiative to maintain the ceilings on strategic armaments set by the New START Treaty (due to expire in February 2026) and pre-announced a forthcoming test of a new strategic weapons system ([Kommersant](#), October 7; [TASS](#), October 10).

Putin's confidence in the usefulness of his war against Ukraine for prolonging his autocratic regime is not as firm as he tries to project, and the expanding purges of the bureaucratic elite are just one sign of his concerns ([Carnegie Politika](#), October 9). New sanctions and tariffs cannot erode his desire to subjugate Ukraine, but a new surge in Western support for Ukrainian resilience could compel him to compromise. In Putin's mind, the U.S. president is the only leader of authority to strike a deal with. Trump has economic and military leverage in negotiations to end Russia's war, a process coordinated with Zelenskyy, but the point "I need ammunition, not a ride," which Zelenskyy uttered after the U.S. offered to evacuate him after Russia began its full-scale invasion, still stands.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

Georgian Government Intensifies Pressure on Western Diplomats

Khatia Shamanauri

October 14, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Western diplomats are coming under unprecedented pressure from the Georgian Dream government, with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze accusing EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczynski of backing an attempt to overthrow the constitutional order.
- The European Union has categorically rejected and condemned disinformation about its role in Georgia, as well as personal attacks against the EU ambassador.
- Many fear that under the Georgian Dream government, it will be difficult to establish positive relations with Western countries, leaving Georgia dependent on unreliable partners and increasing authoritarian influence in the region.



(Source: X/@Diplo_Peter)

Relations between representatives of Western countries in Georgia and the Georgian Dream government have long been strained, with tensions escalating in recent months. Foreign diplomats have increasingly become targets of the Georgian government amid the pre- and post-election protests in Tbilisi. Georgian Dream officials accused EU representatives of supporting attempts to destabilize the country, prompting the European Union to dismiss the allegations as disinformation and personal attacks (see [EDM](#), October 7).

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze held two briefings on October 4, hours after the police detained several people in connection with the attempted storming of the presidential palace following that day's municipal elections. During his first appearance, Kobakhidze alleged that EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczynski supported the "announced attempt to overthrow the constitutional order" in Georgia ([Radio Tavisupleba](#), October 5).

Later that night, during his second briefing, Kobakhidze reiterated his stance, claiming that "specific ambassadors, diplomats, and politicians bear direct responsibility to clearly distance themselves from the violence we witnessed yesterday" ([Radio Tavisupleba](#), October 5). Kobakhidze emphasized the same message again a few days later during the television program "Night

Courier.” “The public no longer follows the U.S. Ambassador or the EU ambassador blindly—and that is one of our main achievements,” said Kobakhidze ([ImediNews](#), October 6).

Kobakhidze’s statements came in response to the opposition boycott of and demonstrations against the Georgian municipal elections on October 4 (see [EDM](#), October 6). While the elections were taking place, a rally was held in the capital “to peacefully overthrow the authorities.” Citizens first gathered at Freedom Square before moving to Akhonteli Street, where the presidential palace is located. A few participants broke through an iron fence and entered the palace’s courtyard, but they were eventually expelled by police ([Radio Tavisupleba](#), October 6). The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs has since launched an investigation, arresting more than 20 individuals in connection with recent unrest. Georgian Dream officials have repeatedly accused Western countries of orchestrating the Tbilisi protests ([Al Jazeera](#), October 7). On October 8, Kobakhidze also urged the U.S. Department of State to condemn the protests in Georgia. His appeal to the U.S. State Department was an attempt to find support in “effectively demonstrat[ing] to the Georgian people that it is not in their interest to create disorder in the country” ([1TV](#), October 8).

In response to Georgian Dream’s accusations, the European External Action Service (EEAS) issued a statement on the evening of October 5, signed by European Commission Vice President Kaja Kallas and EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi. The statement established that the European Union “firmly rejects and condemns the disinformation regarding the EU’s role in Georgia and denounces the personal attacks against the Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia” ([EEAS](#), October 5).

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze was the first to respond to the EEAS statement when asked for comment. Kaladze said that “neither Kallas nor Várhelyi can help [the EU officials], because the Georgian people do not support [them]” ([Radio Tavisupleba](#), October 6). He also added that the European Union did not interest him, asserting that “the real masters of this country are ordinary citizens—the people you see here—not some Kallases, Malases, or others from abroad” ([Radio Tavisupleba](#), October 6).

This was not the first time EU officials had become targets of criticism from the Georgian government. Following the adoption of controversial laws that, according to Western partners, fail to meet EU standards and are aimed at suppressing dissent, Georgian Dream officials responded with increasingly aggressive rhetoric ([Euro News](#), April 19, 2024; [EU Neighbors East](#), April 3; [Civil Georgia](#), July 16).

Herczynski faced harsh criticism even before the elections. On September 14, Giorgi Volski, the First Deputy Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, accused Herczynski of having “a specific task from the

Euro-bureaucracy—to somehow support the activities of extremist groups and keep alive the fire that was recently ignited on Rustaveli Avenue” ([ImediNews](#), September 14).

On September 24, German Ambassador Peter Fischer was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—an unprecedented move in modern relations between Georgia and Germany. He was received by Giorgi Zurabashvili, the First Deputy of Maka Bochorishvili, and stayed at the ministry for more than an hour. Upon leaving, he made a brief comment and later wrote on X:

I refuted in detail baseless attacks on me & placed responsibility for a new low in Georgian-German relations on Govt of Georgia & GD reps who, by actions & rhetoric, caused it & block EU-path. I was not heard. I am not a radical. Germany remains a friend ([X/@Diplo_Peter](#), September 24).

The next day, on September 25, the head of the U.K. diplomatic mission in Georgia, Garrett Ward, received a similar summons. Following the summons, he made no comments to the media either before or after the meeting ([EuronewsGeorgia](#), September 25). Reacting to these events, Kaladze reiterated Georgian Dream’s position and claimed that the ambassadors “crossed all red lines.” He further said, “Look at the funds that, over the years, were channeled through so-called non-governmental organizations and were used to attempt to organize a revolution” ([Radio Tavisupleba](#), September 25).

Confrontations with Western diplomats underscore how Georgian Dream has moved Georgia further away from EU integration and closer to countries such as Iran and the People’s Republic of China (see [EDM](#), June 10). Many fear that under the Georgian Dream government, it will be difficult to establish positive relations with Western countries, leaving Georgia dependent on unreliable partners and increasing authoritarian influence in the region.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

Armenia Balances Between the TRIPP and Zangezur Corridor

Onnik James Krikorian

October 15, 2025

Executive Summary:

- The U.S.-brokered Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), which would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhchivan exclave through Armenia, has accelerated Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization but triggered domestic backlash in Armenia and concern from Iran and Russia.
- TRIPP sovereignty concerns and uncertainty over implementation threaten Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's domestic political standing, with parliamentary elections set for June 2026.
- Pashinyan continues to assert that the U.S.-managed TRIPP preserves full Armenian sovereignty, though border arrangements remain unclear following a public dispute with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev about the name during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA),
- Skepticism about the TRIPP is high, as some fear that a route to Nakhchivan could allow Azerbaijan or Russia to control Armenia's strategic border with Iran or provide a pretext for renewed military conflict. Pashinyan's critics charge that the U.S. involvement could do the same.



(Source: Prime Minister of Armenia)

Following the August 8 summit between the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders at the White House, momentum toward normalizing relations between Baku and Yerevan continues (see [EDM](#), August 13). Despite some media reports suggesting that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan established peace during the meeting, the leaders only signed a seven-point declaration, confirming their intention to pursue peace. The Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers initialed the prospective peace treaty, the 17-point Agreement On the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, which the two states finalized in March, committing to work toward formalizing the text (see EDM, [March 24](#), [August 12](#)).

The progress made during the August 8 summit was enough for the leaders, especially Pashinyan, to trumpet that peace has been effectively established ([Civil Net](#), August 28). Formal peace, however, remains contingent on Yerevan changing its constitution to remove what Azerbaijan and Türkiye perceive as territorial claims against them—Pashinyan says he will hold a referendum on constitutional reforms soon after the June 2026 parliamentary elections (see [EDM](#), June 25; [Azatutyun](#), September 22).

The August 8 meeting also yielded several other lower-profile memorandums ([U.S. Department of State](#), August 29). For Azerbaijan, a Strategic Partnership Charter will be developed with the United States. Armenia signed three documents, agreeing to U.S. involvement in the Crossroads of Peace Capacity Building Partnership, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) and semiconductor partnership, as U.S. tech giant Nvidia plans to establish an AI Factory in the country, and an energy security partnership, including Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), which would be essential if Armenia decides on U.S. technology to replace its Soviet-era Nuclear power station (see [EDM](#), July 22, 2024; [Turan Research Center](#), September 16).

The smaller memorandums were overshadowed by the flashiest outcome of the Washington D.C. summit—Armenia’s commitment to the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP). The route, previously referred to as the Zangezur Corridor by Azerbaijan and Türkiye, would connect Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhchivan through Armenia. Despite not being part of the 17-point peace treaty, the route has been controversial since 2001 and was included as the ninth point in the November 2020 trilateral ceasefire statement that ended the Second Karabakh War ([Haykakan Zhamanak](#), May 23, 2001; see [EDM](#), November 12, 2020). In July, U.S. Ambassador to Türkiye Thomas Barrack openly suggested that a U.S. company could manage the Armenian section of the route between Azerbaijan and its exclave (see [EDM](#), July 30). Under the TRIPP plan, the United States would lease the 44-kilometer (27.3-mile) route on Armenia’s border with Iran for 99 years and receive exclusive development rights, including on related infrastructure projects.

The establishment of a U.S.-led TRIPP has the potential to resolve conflicts over the naming and stewardship of the route, which resurfaced at the September United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on September 22–30. For those in Yerevan who oppose the name “Zangezur Corridor” and view its use as an opening for potential violations of Armenian sovereignty, there is fear that a route to Nakhchivan could allow Azerbaijan or Russia to control Armenia’s strategic border with Iran ([The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia](#), July 15). Pashinyan, however, is adamant that the TRIPP and U.S. involvement will ensure full Armenian sovereignty along the route, although it remains unclear how border control will be implemented ([ArmInfo](#), August 9). Armenia has suggested electronic scanning devices, an approach elaborated in a trilateral working

group chaired by the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian deputy prime ministers soon after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war ([Rossiyskaya Gazetta](#), September 30, 2022; [Jam-News](#), June 10).

At UNGA, Pashinyan again claimed that the Zangezur Corridor could be construed as territorial claims on Armenia in direct response to Aliyev's own use of the term at the podium ([Prime Minister of Armenia](#), September 27; [President of Azerbaijan](#), September 25; [Azatutyun](#), September 27). Ironically, both Aliyev and Pashinyan implied that TRIPP represents a compromise, facilitating a route that connects Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan without endangering Armenian territory.

There is very little that Yerevan can do about Aliyev's continued use of "Zangezur Corridor" to refer to the TRIPP, and government deputies in Armenia have since suggested that the remarks should no longer be discussed ([Azatutyun](#), October 8). Despite that, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan commented on the disagreement the following day, suggesting that Pashinyan and his allies' responses to Aliyev at UNGA are best understood as a response to Armenian critics who allege they have conceded part of Armenia to Azerbaijan and the United States by agreeing to the TRIPP ([Azatutyun](#), October 9). Pashinyan's critics can use these claims against him in next year's parliamentary elections, so he needs to distance himself and the TRIPP from the term "Zangezur Corridor," which is quite unpopular in Armenia ([Radar Armenia](#), October 5).

According to a post-Washington summit survey conducted by local pollster MPG Gallup International, 58.9 percent of respondents in Armenia also stated that they opposed TRIPP, even if Armenia had access to Iran via Nakhchivan ([FIP](#), May 24, 2019; [Groong](#), September 8). Just over 55 percent said they did not believe that the Washington Declaration would bring peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, demonstrating the significant negative press coverage surrounding the TRIPP.

In the Armenian National Assembly, an opposition parliamentarian sarcastically asked if Pashinyan had rung Trump about his problems, given how the U.S. president had, perhaps jokingly, instructed Pashinyan to let him know if any emerged ([ArmenPress](#), August 9; [News.am](#), September 29). Meanwhile, pro-Pashinyan commentators maintain that the Washington Declaration was a diplomatic victory over Azerbaijan ([Civilnet](#), August 21; [Azatutyun](#), August 27). Others, including Armenia's second president, Robert Kocharyan, whose political faction is the largest opposition to Pashinyan, and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James O'Brien, oppose the TRIPP ([News.am](#), October 10). Aliyev has warned Pashinyan to adhere to the agreement made in Washington, implying that Baku, at least, is content with the deal as is ([Civilnet](#), August 29). Following the recent Gaza Summit in Egypt, the opposition continues to allege that TRIPP was in essence an agreement between Trump and Aliyev, even if Armenia will determine the

modalities through a joint business venture with the United States ([Azatutyun](#), October 14; [Armenpress](#), October 14).

U.S. involvement in the route caused concern in Tehran and Russia. Iran opposes any development that could disrupt its own connection to Armenia, and Russia expected that its border guards, still stationed in Armenia since 1992, would oversee the Nakhchivan route (see [EDM](#), January 25, 2024). In reality, few details are known about TRIPP, and negotiations over its specifics have only recently begun. Russia says it plans to study the details of the TRIPP, given Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and the presence of Russian border guards in the area it is expected to pass through ([Azatutyun](#), October 15). At the beginning of 2025, Russian border guards were removed from the border checkpoint on the Armenia–Iran border, but remain at other parts of its width ([Azatutyun](#), December 10, 2024).

The same can be said about how U.S. involvement in the TRIPP may affect the Armenia–Iran border (see [EDM](#), September 11). The Iranian president has visited Armenia since the declaration for discussions, and the Iranian Embassy in Yerevan continues to be very active, including in the Syunik region through which the TRIPP will pass ([Caucasus Watch](#), September 29; [Tehran Times](#), September 30). Economic projects are still pursued, and Yerevan and Tehran have since expressed plans to upgrade their relations to a strategic partnership (Armenpress, [August 19](#), [October 10](#)).

The TRIPP is likely to have an overtly negative effect on Russia–Armenia relations, as Moscow views the agreement as a complete pivot toward the West. Pashinyan is pursuing a multi-vector foreign policy to reassure his sometimes conflicting international partners and demonstrate to the Kremlin that he is not prioritizing the European Union and the United States over Russia ([Mirror-Spectator](#), September 27). In September, Pashinyan went on record to say that Armenia might not become an EU member, but opened an EU integration department in the foreign ministry in October ([News.am](#), September 23; [Armenia Public TV](#), October 6). Balancing the West and Russia has long been a feature of Armenian politics—under the former president, Serzh Sargsyan, Armenia pulled out of an EU Association Agreement in 2013 under pressure from Moscow. Yerevan later signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union in 2017 (see [EDM](#), September 11, 2013; [Eurasianet](#), November 24).

Yerevan has also transformed its relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to a strategic partnership ([Prime Minister of Armenia](#), August 31; [Aravot](#), October 1). In September, Pashinyan's wife, Anna Hakobyan, began a two-year master's degree in Chinese Philosophy, while many of the My Step Foundation's beneficiaries have visited the PRC on educational and cultural trips (My Step Foundation, [June 10](#), [accessed October 9](#)). Pashinyan remains reliant on the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union and is bound by its economic and customs agreements ([Azatutyun](#),

June 27). Though the PRC seeks to invest in emerging projects in countries such as Armenia, and while the European Union can play an important investment role in TRIPP, Yerevan's stated preference in the Washington Declaration is a partnership with the United States ([Armenpress](#), July 16).

Pashinyan has promised the European Union and the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that the TRIPP will benefit them too ([Arka](#), October 10). Whether all these competing interests can co-exist or be accommodated remains to be seen, but flawed information has already filled a vacuum formed by the lack of any details or practical agreements about the TRIPP (Azatutyun, October 14 [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#)). With elections on the horizon, this confusion and lack of clarity could adversely affect Pashinyan's re-election chances in June 2026. Even so, the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty remains on track, and Yerevan claims that construction on TRIPP could start soon ([reOpen](#), October 3; [Azatutyun](#), October 9).

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

Kyiv Moving Toward More Direct Support of Non-Russian Movements within Russia

Paul Goble

October 16, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Kyiv is moving toward more openly backing non-Russian national movements within Russia. It is convinced that such efforts will help it defeat Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and that the decolonization of Russia will ensure Ukraine's future security.
- Such moves, which have their origins in earlier efforts by Ukraine and others to counter Moscow, have so far been largely limited to declarations about Russian colonialism and providing a haven for nationalist leaders. That appears set to change.
- The lengths that Ukraine will now go to, however, remain unclear, but its moves have already alarmed Moscow and prompted it to crack down, and are worrying some in Ukraine and the West that any such moves could prove counterproductive, at least in the short term.



(Source: Leon Neal/Getty Images)

Since gaining independence in 1991, Ukrainians have focused attention on the large Ukrainian communities inside the Russian Federation (see EDM, [January 18, 2023](#), [January 25](#), [July 30](#), 2024). Since Moscow launched its attacks on Ukrainian territory in 2014 and especially since 2022, Kyiv has also devoted more attention to non-Russian national movements within the current borders of the Russian Federation (see EDM, October 13, 2023). It has done so both in response to Moscow's efforts to play up the ethnic factor in Ukraine and because it is convinced that such moves will help Ukraine defeat Russian invaders now and ensure Ukraine's security over the longer term ([Politarena](#), October 6).

Many Ukrainian commentators and Verkhovna Rada deputies have long pressed for a more activist approach and have invoked the precedent of Poland's Promethean movement and Captive Nations Week resolutions in the United States and the actions flowing from both as precedent (see EDM, [October 8, 2013](#), [October 13, 2022](#), [July 18, 2023](#)). Kyiv's official steps, however, have been largely limited to declarations about Russian colonialism, the formation of some small non-Russian units to fight on the side of Ukraine against Russia, and the providing of a haven for non-Russian leaders under attack at home ([Window on Eurasia](#), June 7, 2023; see EDM, [July 28, 2022](#), [November](#)

[19, 2013, January 14](#)). Even these moves have been sufficient to alarm Moscow and prompt it to intensify repression against non-Russians in the Russian Federation, while presenting itself as the defender of Russia as a whole (see [EDM](#), August 10, 2023; [Window on Eurasia](#), October 10, 2023).

This fraught situation is now set to become even more so within the Ukrainian parliament. For many years, some Ukrainian deputies have unsuccessfully called for the adoption of legislation requiring Kyiv to take a far more activist approach (see EDM, [July 28, 2022, January 14](#); [Window on Eurasia](#), October 11). The lengths the Ukrainian authorities will go remains uncertain and will reflect both Kyiv's evaluation of Moscow's response and concerns among some Ukrainians and their supporters in the West that any expanded moves could prove counterproductive at least in the short term ([Window on Eurasia](#), July 21, 2024; [Politarena](#), October 6).

Recent weeks have seen two developments that are likely to further complicate this situation. First, on September 3, the Verkhovna Rada passed on first reading a bill submitted for consideration in July 2024, directing the Ukrainian government to increase its backing of non-Russian movements in the Russian Federation. (An informal translation of that draft is available at [Window on Eurasia](#), August 1, 2024.) The bill is now likely to pass in the next month or so, but much of it may be amended ([Window on Eurasia](#), October 11).

Supporters of the measure, including one of its authors, Volodymyr Viatrovich, who previously headed the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, are enthusiastic that the measure, once passed, will lead to a significant expansion in Ukrainian assistance to those who want to decolonize the Muscovite state. In a new interview, he emphasized that Ukraine has "a vital interest" in "the development of national movements among the peoples enslaved by Russia to lead to the decolonization of Russia" because "only when Russia ceases to be an empire will it cease to be a threat" to Ukraine and to others ([Politarena](#), October 6). Consequently, he says, "our duty is to develop a program of interaction with the movements of enslaved peoples," something which up to now, Ukraine has "unfortunately used very little." Such cooperation will "not only bring our victory in the war closer but also lay the foundation for friendly relations between Ukraine and those nation states that will arise." Under the bill's provisions, he continues, Ukraine has many ways to support them. It can continue to declare that it recognizes the right of these peoples to seek independence. It can work with these movements and their representatives both abroad and in their homelands. It can also provide training and other assistance to help them grow. Such efforts, he concludes, are "vital for our survival and victory as every hryvnia, competently invested in national movements, will save us tens and hundreds of hryvnias we would otherwise have to spend on war with a consolidated empire" now and in the future.

Second, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of the Platform for Dialogue with Russian Democratic Forces in Exile. This is a platform for Russian democratic forces to interact with each other and with parliamentarians in Europe, specifying that at least 30 percent of the participants in such a body should be from the non-Russian national movements ([PACE](#), October 1; see [EDM](#), October 15). That provision was inserted at the insistence of Ukraine. The leaders of the movements of peoples colonized by Russia

argue that any democratization of Russia will be impossible without the full decolonization of that country, a position the Kremlin views as anti-Russian, and which many Russian liberals argue will drive more Russians to back the Putin regime ([Echo FM](#), October 11).

A final decision on the composition and functioning of the platform will be made later this winter. The Ukrainian-backed call for setting aside a quota of 30 percent of the seats for non-Russian movements, however, is already sparking controversy. On the one hand, some Russian liberals, many of whom do not believe that the non-Russian movements deserve anything similar to that share of the members of the platform, had expected to dominate the platform completely. Many of these people are less than convinced that cooperating with the non-Russians will work to their advantage. On the other hand, some non-Russian activists are convinced that Russian liberals in many cases are just as committed as the Kremlin to maintaining the existing borders of the Russian Federation. Because of these differences, the debate about the platform and the roles of Russian liberals and non-Russian activists within it is likely to be intense and could undermine PACE's efforts to bring the two groups together (see [EDM](#), October 15).

That debate will undoubtedly highlight the many other problems Kyiv will face in trying to expand its work with non-Russians. Beyond question, the Ukrainian government can continue to work closely with non-Russian leaders in emigration, but not at the cost of the support of Russian liberals and at the risk of alienating non-Russians by provoking Muscovite repression. Verkhovna Rada deputies, such as Viatrovich, and officials in the Ukrainian government are naturally aware of these dangers, as well as the even greater risk of offending Western supporters fearful of any collapse of the Russian state ([Window on Eurasia](#), July 21, 2024). For the moment, under increasing pressure from Moscow, however, they appear to see no other option but to press ahead, an approach that is likely to trigger larger and potentially more dangerous political developments.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

POLITICS & SOCIETY

Putin's Degredation of Education Increasing Cynicism Among Young Russians

Paul Goble

October 14, 2025

Executive Summary:

- The effect of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Russian life is typically measured in terms of political opponents arrested, items in stores no longer available, or other "objective" figures. A more insidious and important metric, however, is its degradation of institutions.
- Nowhere is this degradation more apparent than in Russian schools, where Putin's policies since February 2022 have fundamentally transformed the education of Russian children in ways that deeply impact children as they grow to adulthood and will be difficult to correct.
- Changes inside the Russian school system are extremely difficult to track, but a new study by independent experts suggests that the Kremlin's insertion of propaganda in the curriculum may be having unintended results, producing increasingly cynical and alienated youths.



(Source: President of Russia)

The Kremlin's war against Ukraine's effect on Russian life is typically measured in terms of political opponents arrested, consumer goods no longer available, and other "objective" figures. Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has contributed to the degradation of Russian institutions, however, in far more insidious and important ways. Nowhere is this degradation more apparent than in Russian schools, where Putin's policies since February 2022 have transformed the education of Russian children, impacting youth development in long-lasting ways (see EDM, [September 9, 2024, April 2](#)). Changes to Russian schools are difficult to track, but a new study by independent, anonymous Russian experts highlights new education policies and suggests that Putin's efforts are likely to have unintended consequences ([Peremena School](#), September 2025).

The 16,000-word study, conducted over the last two years and focusing on changes from 2022 to 2025, is based on interviews with teachers and parents, as well as content analysis of online posts in a selected number of urban and rural settings ([Peremena School](#), September 2025). This is the first study of its size about Russian schools since Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began. The study also carefully distinguishes between longstanding trends, such as the consolidation of schools, low wages for teachers, and aging facilities—which the full-scale invasion may have exacerbated but did not cause—and newer trends that the full-scale invasion sparked, such as tighter central control and curriculum shifts. The anonymous authors note that there has been significant resistance to these recent changes, illustrating the reactions of teachers, students, and parents. The study is valuable for those tracking Moscow's goals and the sometimes unintended effects of its efforts to change the Russian education system.

The study's main conclusions are the following:

After 2022, the system of school education in Russia was subjected to rapid institutional rearrangement. The changes have touched the content of programs, academic materials, rituals, and the balance between instruction and education, and between the classroom and extra-curricular activities. Instead of the relative flexibility of educational work in the schools before, a single ideologized program has been introduced, *de jure* voluntary but *de facto* obligatory ... These measures were accompanied by a strengthening of control over the school as a space for the formation of attitudes and behaviors ([Peremena School](#), September 2025).

As a result of these changes, the study states, "the psychological climate in the schools has also continued to worsen: conflicts between parents and teachers have intensified," and both self-censorship and mechanical compliance in response to official demands have increased ([Peremena School](#), September 2025).

Moscow has imposed new rules via direct orders and through regional officials, including increasingly detailed directives concerning what is to be taught and how. The Kremlin's greater control over schools' curriculum has reduced the hours devoted to traditional subjects. Putin is encouraging regime-aligned discussions of current politics and his war against Ukraine, using veterans to make presentations to the pupils (see EDM, [August 18, 2023](#), [February 13, 2024](#), [February 20](#), [May 28](#), [September 24](#)). Children of veterans now have greater access to better schools, invariably at the expense of the children of non-veterans. There is every indication that these trends will persist as long as Putin remains in power, which would have a profound effect on the future of schools and Russian society as a whole.

The independent Posle Media outlet covered this study, featuring an interview with a Russian teacher whose comments about what has changed in Russian schools since 2022 provide useful context for evaluating the study's conclusions ([Posle](#), October 8). Olga (no last name was provided) has been a social studies teacher since 2021, is an opponent of the war, and is appalled by many of the steps Putin has taken with respect to the schools and their relationship to broader Russian society. She feels, however, that the Kremlin may be producing unintended results, a pattern that gives her both hope and fear about the future.

Olga agrees with the report's conclusion that "the war quickly affected the educational system" by "introducing essentially ideological 'lessons' and new patriotic rituals," centralizing school management and limiting autonomy, and putting ever greater pressures on teachers ([Posle](#), October 8). As Posle Media says, "learning about these changes from the media is quite different from experiencing this new reality firsthand" ([Posle](#), October 8). Olga points out that teachers, pupils, and parents have all adopted strategies to cope with the new reality, ranging from passive acceptance to opposition, including making it clear that they are only doing what is required and are increasingly indifferent to the messages that the Putin regime is trying to convey. Teachers, she says, overwhelmingly go through the motions, sometimes subverting them with their comments. Many parents are quite prepared to have the schools bear more of the burden for inculcating values. Olga claims, "some parents just want their children to be somewhere and they do not particularly care about educational outcomes" ([Posle](#), October 8). The pupils can see all this, Olga continues, generating an increasingly cynical and even alienated population.

"It seems to me," the Russian social studies teacher says, "that the only lesson students are learning from their teachers' behavior is that we must adapt to the situation and act as if we believe in everything. In other words, we simply must fake it" ([Posle](#), October 8). If Olga is right, the Kremlin's propagandized curriculum will produce an increasingly cynical and unengaged generation that will do what it must to survive but will not provide the kind of genuine support the regime would need in the event of a real crisis.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

Moscow Conducts Facistization of Russian Higher Education (Part One)

Richard Arnold

October 14, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Russia is reforming its higher education system to instill an ultra-patriotic ideology through new required courses, such as “Fundamentals of Russia’s Statehood,” designed by the presidential administration with the goal of cultivating a “patriotic intelligentsia.”
- Structural changes include replacing the bachelor’s/master’s model with a new system of basic and specialized education and a development app to gauge students’ acceptance of “traditional values,” forcing ideology on students as a measure of success.
- The state promotes Cossack universities, which combine patriotic indoctrination with paramilitary training, as a model for broader education, reflecting a long-term strategy to raise a generation prepared for conflict.



(Source: TASS)

Moscow is making changes to the Russian higher education system that lend support to the claim that modern Russia is “fascist” ([The Conversation](#), March 30, 2022; [The Globalist](#), July 5, 2022). The 2023 introduction of ultra-patriotic lessons at the primary and secondary school levels, known as “Conversations About Important Things,” is well-known and has attracted considerable attention. Education reforms, however, are also taking place at the tertiary level (see EDM, [September 9, 2024, February 4, September 24; Conversations About Important Things](#), accessed September 12). In 2023, the Russian Ministry of Education had already proposed a new course for freshmen students at universities called the “Fundamentals of Russia’s Statehood,” apparently designed by the presidential administration with the hope of cultivating a “patriotic intelligentsia” ([Meduza](#), May 25, 2023). Russia appears to have two primary objectives in mind with such moves. First, Moscow aims to mold pliant “patriots,” the future elites who will govern the country in the years to come. Second, it seeks to recruit those in the prime of youth to the military. Both goals track with Putin’s September 18 statement when speaking with leaders of the State Duma parliamentary groups that “we must search for, find, and nominate people who have no fear in serving the Motherland and have gone to risk their life and health” ([President of Russia](#), September 18).

New changes are being continually implemented in the education system as Russia begins its new academic year. The most notable was announced by Russian Minister for Science and Higher Education Valery Falkov, who claimed that Russia was transitioning to a “new model,” symbolizing its divergence from global standards. The new model rejects the traditional division between bachelor’s and master’s degrees and introduces two new levels: basic and specialized. Basic will last from four to six years, depending on specialism and direction. Specialized education, effectively a master’s degree taken after basic training, will last from one to three years. Doctoral education will continue as currently implemented. These changes, developed through a pilot project, were implemented at more regional universities this year and are expected to be applied to all universities by 2027 ([Gazeta.ru](#), June 15). At the same time, the ideological purpose of university education is demonstrated by the promise of a development app to gauge students’ acceptance of “traditional values,” thereby forcing ideology on students and measuring the success of their indoctrination ([Vedomosti](#), September 30).

Another initiative is the establishment of a higher learning center at the Russian State Humanitarian University, named after Ivan Ilyin ([Kommersant](#), April 16, 2024). Ilyin was a white Russian expelled from Bolshevik Russia in 1920 who said complementary things about Hitler and who is reputed to be one of Putin’s ideological influences ([Meduza](#), April 26, 2024). Naturally, the director of the institute is Aleksandr Dugin, one of the leading ideologues of the “Russian World” and an attendant of a recent international fascist conference in St. Petersburg ([BBC Russian Service](#), August 27, 2022; [Important Stories](#), September 23). Naming the institute for Ilyin prompted some resistance from students who feared it was rehabilitating a Nazi apologist. Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma, however, dismissed such claims, saying that the center’s focus was on thinking about the future of a united, strong, and sovereign Russia ([TASS](#), April 20, 2024). The defense of an academic institution from within the administration emphasizes the degree to which this is a state-directed move.

Dugin is at the center of a proposal to remake the discipline of political science in Russian universities. Describing the current teaching of the subject as “America-centric” and dismissing it as a “mechanism for embedding the principles of destructive neoliberal ideology in students’ minds.” Dugin instead proposes turning political science into a means for propaganda and installing “patriotism” in students. Key features of his new approach include revisiting Count Uvarov’s trinity of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” and asserting Moscow’s claims to be the Third Rome—a direct descendant of the Byzantine (Roman) Empire. The 1990s should be viewed in an “unequivocally negative” light, and the role of Putin in creating an assertive Russia should be applauded. Russia’s personalist dictatorship, ritually endorsed by a plebiscite masquerading as democracy, should be presented as the best form of government for the country,

and the state should be discussed in divine terms ([Meduza](#), February 25). It is unclear whether this new course will remain confined to the Ilyin Institute or apply to all Russian students more broadly.

The state is actively training future soldiers from those who are already patriots, such as the Cossacks. There are now 26 universities in the “league of Cossack universities,” and the Ataman of the All-Russian Cossack Society (VsKO), Vitaly Kuznetsov, is keen on being associated with them ([VsKO](#), accessed September 12). Given the remit of his office to work with youth, this is not surprising (see EDM, [August 10, 2022](#), [November 8, 2023](#), February [8, 27](#), 2024). For example, on September 1, the “Day of Knowledge,” marking the start of Russia’s academic year, Kuznetsov attended events at the Razumovsky First Cossack University in Moscow with members of the presidential administration. Members of the Synodal Committee for Connections with Cossacks were also in attendance. Metropolitan Kirill said, “For this unique educational institution, the First Cossack University, this day is filled with a special meaning because here the traditions of serving the Fatherland are organically intertwined with the power of modern science” ([VsKO](#), September 1). In many ways, the Cossacks seem to present a model for how Dugin envisions university education working throughout Russia.

The Cossacks symbolize and synthesize some of the changes occurring in Russian higher education, as reflected in the evolving forms of knowledge generated about this group. This year, university libraries were stocked with a new textbook, “The History of the Cossacks of Russia,” in a move that will also unfold at lower levels of education in the new year ([Kazachestvo.ru](#), July 22). This follows the opening of the central museum of the Russian Cossacks in Moscow, an example of state promotion of particular narratives (see [EDM](#), May 29). Aside from indoctrination, young people also learn paramilitary skills and pretend war simulations in Cossack education, both dimensions of raising a war-fighting generation of which Dugin would be proud. Changes in Russian higher education appear poised to shape the post-war landscape, underscoring the Kremlin’s perception of a prolonged struggle.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

Russian Opposition Lacks Unified Strategy

Vadim Shtepa

October 15, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Late-Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, calls for Europe to develop a united, long-term strategy toward Russia while preserving the country's territorial integrity.
- The Russian opposition remains fragmented, divided between Moscow-centric reformists such as Navalnaya's camp and ethno-national or regionalist forces advocating de-imperialization. This lack of consensus undermines the opposition's ability to present a cohesive alternative to Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime.
- This disunity hampers engagement with European institutions, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Platform for Dialogue with Russian Democratic Forces, and undermines prospects for coherent democratic reform.



(Source: Council of Europe)

Late-Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, who considers herself a successor to her late husband's policies, published a column in *The Economist* on September 24 arguing that Europe should have a united, long-term strategy toward Russia ([The Economist](#), September 24). The Russian opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime itself, however, lacks a unified approach (see [Promethean Liberation](#), May 30). Some oppositionists not only offer incompatible ideas about how to accomplish their goals but, at times, have also accused each other of working for the Kremlin ([DW](#), September 12, 2024). It is often challenging for foreign observers to determine which movements can be considered genuine representatives of the opposition.

In her article, Navalnaya advocates the principle of a united Russia while rejecting the policies of the ruling party of the same name. She has advised Western politicians not to threaten to divide Russia into many parts, as Putin has long accused his opponents of having such plans, in order to discredit those opposed to him and consolidate Russian society around his leadership ([The](#)

[Moscow Times](#), September 6, 2024). By this logic, if Putin accuses someone of something, the accused is guilty ([The Moscow Times](#), September 30). It is difficult to imagine any Western politician or political scientist speaking in the language of “threats of Russia’s division.” For example, Jamestown Senior Fellow Janusz Bugajski’s anthology of articles on Russian de-imperialization, published in 2025, is not a threat, as the Kremlin perceives other initiatives similar to this, but rather a free discussion about a possible future ([Free Nations, New States](#), accessed October 15). In Russia itself, such discussions are prohibited under real threat of criminal prosecution for calls to violate territorial integrity ([President of Russia](#), July 22, 2014).

The publication of her article in *The Economist* is not the first time Navalnaya has demonstrated heightened concern for Russia’s state integrity. Last year, she expressed similar ideas at the European Strategic Forum in Slovenia. At that time, she criticized political exile actors who advocated the need for Russia’s decolonization ([Radio Svoboda](#), September 6, 2024).

Navalnaya opposes Russia’s war against Ukraine. She fails to note, however, that this war is colonial in nature, continuing the imperial strategy of “gathering lands around Moscow” ([The Moscow Times](#), September 30). Navalnaya’s proposed strategy requires preserving today’s Russia as a unified state. In her view, aggressive Putinism, with its wars against neighbors and threats to the entire world, is some kind of random excess, not a logical return of Russian history to its imperial rut. Therefore, Navalnaya’s initiatives have not found common ground with representatives of the numerous movements for regional self-government in Russia.

Today, Navalnaya is calling for a campaign against the United Russia party in the 2026 State Duma elections ([Meduza](#), September 24). Such projects, however, were only somewhat successful in the 2000s, and in the era of full-scale war, they appear anachronistic. All the other Russian political parties allowed to participate in the elections support the war, so there is no real choice between them regarding the trajectory of Russia’s imperialistic path. The regional elections held in September 2025 demonstrated the lack of real competition between them. In that campaign, the United Russia party even ceded some electoral districts to its formal “opponents” to create the illusion of a multi-party system ([Ridl.io](#), September 27). Under these conditions, such a system is not politically legitimate, given that Putin has ruled the country single-handedly for 25 years and rewritten the Russian Constitution to suit his own needs (see EDM, July [2](#), [8](#), 2020). Playing by the rules of this system is pointless ([Idel Realii](#), October 2).

The Council of Europe expelled Russia back in 2022, immediately after the start of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine ([DW](#), March 15, 2022; [Council of Europe](#), March 16, 2022). Following Navalny’s death in a Russian penal colony in February 2024, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) declared its non-recognition of Putin’s legitimacy as President of Russia (see EDM,

February [20, 21](#), 2024). In the same resolution, PACE announced, “Decolonization of the Russian Federation is a necessary condition for the establishment of democracy” ([PACE](#), April 17, 2024).

In a recent resolution, PACE announced the creation of the Platform for Dialogue with Russian Democratic Forces in Exile ([PACE](#), October 2). Russian opposition figures are gaining the opportunity to participate in the work of European parliamentary structures in place of the official Russian representatives, who have been excluded from PACE. When this announcement was made, however, who would participate in this platform had not been finalized. The Assembly noted, “Russian democratic forces do not have a single, unified political structure.” Because of this, PACE “encouraged Russian groups and initiatives in exile to join forces to advocate for democratic change in Russia, expose the crimes of the Russian regime and support Ukrainians” ([PACE](#), October 2).

The Russian opposition has continuously demonstrated a lack of a unified strategy. First, Navalny’s political heirs refused to participate in the platform’s work, declaring, “PACE’s significance is extremely small” ([Telegram/@leonid_volkov](#), October 3). Although PACE does not make binding political decisions for specific countries, participation in its activities lends legitimacy to Russian opposition figures in Europe. The heads of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, founded by Navalny, however, consider their organization the undisputed leader of the Russian opposition. They follow the personalist tradition that has been dominant in Russian politics. Second, a fundamental dispute between Moscow-centrists and decolonizers continues within the Russian opposition. In February, representatives of various ethnic minorities from the Russian Federation appealed to PACE, asking that their voices be taken into account in decision-making ([Idel Realii](#), February 13). PACE heeded this request—a third of the seats in the newly created Platform for Dialogue with Russian Democratic Forces in Exile will be reserved for ethno-national movements. Many of the federal oppositionists who are expected to occupy two-thirds of the seats in this Platform, however, were previously representatives of the Russian authorities themselves, which has caused a mixed reaction among observers ([Radio Svoboda](#), October 6).

These disagreements have occurred because Putin’s Russia perceives itself as a continuation of the Russian Empire, rather than a genuine federation with a high degree of regional self-government. Consequently, today, the traditional imperial conflict between the metropolis and the colonies is inevitably reproduced. Many of Putin’s “radical” opponents in exile, however, also continue to echo a Moscow-centric, unitary mentality, making it challenging to work with opposition groups that operate outside of a Moscow-centric agenda ([Radio Svoboda](#), March 3, 2023; [Mostnews.org](#), September 19). The contradictions between the Russian opposition’s various movements are deeper than those between political parties in a single country. Many ethno-national and regionalist movements do not consider themselves “Russian” at all and prefer to

position themselves as “post-Russian” movements (see [EDM](#), August 10, 2022). The success of the Russian opposition’s battle against the Putin regime lies between the diverging ideals for Russia’s future trajectory.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

MILITARY & SECURITY

Ukraine Braces for Another Hard Winter

Yuri Lapaiev

October 16, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Ahead of winter, Russia launched another campaign of combined air strikes on Ukraine's critical infrastructure, including energy, gas production, and railway facilities.
- Russia is continually upgrading its missiles and strike drones, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of its air attacks. Several Ukrainian cities have already been severely affected by this, and in some areas, the situation is critical.
- Drones have become a key element of the attack, while Ukraine is actively developing interceptor drones as an effective and inexpensive means of countering massive UAV attacks by Russia.
- Long-range weapons, both domestic and, potentially, U.S.-supplied Tomahawk cruise missiles, could become a powerful means of deterrence or retaliation.



(Source: Denys Shmyhal/Ukrainian Ministry of Defense)

On the night of October 10, the Russian army launched a combined air strike on Ukraine. In total, the Ukrainian Air Force detected 497 air attack units, comprising 32 missiles (both ballistic and cruise) and 465 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) of various types ([Telegram/@ComAFUA](#), October 10). Russia's focus was on degrading critical infrastructure, primarily energy facilities. Damage to the Kyiv Thermal Power Plant (TPP-6) left several districts in Kyiv and the Kyiv oblast without power. Additionally, problems with electricity, gas, and water supplies were reported in the Zaporizhzhia, Sumy, Poltava, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts ([BBC Ukraine](#), October 10).

On October 7, during a meeting with the ambassadors of the Group of Seven (G7) countries, Ukrainian Energy Minister Svitlana Grinchuk stated that Russian troops had carried out 26 separate

strikes on Ukrainian energy facilities in one day ([Ministry of Energy of Ukraine](#), October 7). Later that evening, Russia attacked the DTEK thermal power plant, one of Ukraine's largest energy companies. According to the company, two power engineers were injured, and the attack caused significant damage to the plant's equipment. After the air strike ended, energy engineers quickly began to repair the damage ([DTEK](#), October 8). Due to Russian strikes, more than half of Ukrainian natural gas facilities were destroyed, significantly decreasing gas production ([Bloomberg; The Kyiv Independent](#), October 9). On October 16, the Russian army launched another combined strike on a gas production facility in the Poltava region. Due to the attack, the company was forced to suspend operations ([Telegram/@dtek_ua](#), October 16).

These are just a few episodes from a recent series of Russian air strikes on Ukraine's critical infrastructure. In recent weeks, Russia has significantly intensified its attacks on energy facilities, repeating a similar pattern to that observed in the fall and winter of 2022, 2023, and 2024. Blackouts are being reported in the Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. Some cities, such as Shostka in the Sumy oblast, have no electricity or water supply, with border areas suffering the most ([TSN](#), October 7; [RBC-Ukraine](#), October 8; [Ministry of Energy of Ukraine](#), October 9).

Earlier, Serhii Sternenko, a blogger and head of one of the biggest Ukrainian foundations that develops and supplies strike UAVs (including interceptor drones for air defense) to units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), sharply criticized the air defense system in the Chernihiv oblast. According to Sternenko, a significant gap exists in air defense capabilities in this region, and neither the military nor civilian leadership is interested in resolving the situation ([X/@sternenko](#), October 2). Later, he noted that contact had been established and work in this area had begun ([X/@sternenko](#), October 2).

One of the notable features of this year's Russian attacks is an increased focus on railway infrastructure, a vital element of Ukrainian military logistics. The Russian Federation is deliberately destroying both junction stations and rolling stock, in particular locomotives. According to Serhiy "Flash" Beskrestnov, a military expert in electronic warfare, if Ukrainian officials do not take urgent action, Russia will destroy a significant part of the country's railway capabilities ([Telegram/@serhii_flash](#), October 8).

Damage to gas production facilities leads to a shortage of gas needed to get through the winter. If the attacks continue, Ukraine will be forced to purchase approximately 4.4 billion cubic meters of natural gas, or around 20 percent of its annual consumption. According to Energy Minister Svitlana Grinchuk, the final volume will depend on the speed of repairs and the scale of further Russian attacks. The estimated cost of the needed fuel is \$2.3 billion, and Ukraine has already requested financial assistance from its international partners ([Economiczna Pravda](#), October 9).

The Russian military is constantly enhancing its air attack capabilities, including cruise and ballistic missiles, as well as strike drones. Vladyslav Vlasiuk, advisor and authorized representative of the President of Ukraine on Sanctions Policy, noted that the Kremlin is currently using four different types of Shahed/Geran strike UAVs, where critical elements are still composed of foreign components ([Facebook/vladyslav.vlasiuk](#), August 12; [X/@SergiyKyslytsya](#), October 8). Additionally, Russian engineers are continually working to improve them. Serhiy Beskrestnov emphasized that modern variations of the Shahed/Geran strike UAVs are equipped with a Chinese-made modem, which enables them to establish a distributed mesh network. With this, a group of drones can relay control signals to each other, making defense using electronic warfare more difficult ([X/@GrandpaRoy2](#), October 9). Recent videos of the attacks also show that drones can now be remotely controlled by operators in real-time, allowing them to attack moving targets such as locomotives ([Militarnyi](#), October 1).

Now, Russia is conducting local attacks on the frontline and border regions, primarily in the Sumy and Chernihiv oblasts. Russia often attacks with dozens of drones focused on a single target. Furthermore, instead of large simultaneous attacks across Ukraine mainly at night—as was the case in 2022–2024—Russia now conducts a series of round-the-clock attacks ([Ukrainska Pravda](#), October 16). This, in turn, decreases the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defense systems and leads to more devastating consequences from the Russian strikes.

This development requires an urgent response from the Ukrainian authorities. AFU Commander-in-Chief General Oleksandr Syrskyi announced the formation of an Air Defense Unmanned Systems Command within the Ukrainian Air Force. According to him, most Russian strike drones are currently being destroyed by interceptor drones. To this end, plans are underway to increase the number of crews and enhance their capabilities ([Telegram/@osirskiy](#), October 2). According to Sternenko, as of September 29, around 500 Shahed/Geran UAVs had already been destroyed using interceptor drones, which is a high indicator of their effectiveness ([X/@sternenko](#), September 29). During one of the recent attacks on the Chernihiv oblast, these drones were used for defense, and 22 out of 36 Russian Shahed-type drones were shot down ([Mezha](#), October 9).

The total cost of such systems, including the control station, software, and other associated expenses, is approximately \$35,000. The price of the drones can vary from \$2,500 to \$5,000, depending on the model. This remains low compared to the older traditional air defense assets, especially missiles ([Defense Express](#), October 2). These parameters make interceptor drones attractive not only to Ukraine. After a series of incidents involving drones of unknown origin in the European Union, and Denmark in particular, the Danish military became actively interested in Ukraine's experience in destroying UAVs. On October 4, a Ukrainian UAV crew, using a Ukrainian-

made Sting drone, successfully destroyed a Danish Banshee target drone during a NATO-observed demonstration in Denmark ([AFU](#), October 4).

Ukraine is also developing other types of countermeasures to take out enemy drones, in particular, attack helicopters and light aircraft. New crews are being introduced into service ([Telegram/@osirskiy](#), October 2). Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said during a joint press conference with Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof on October 6 that the country would prepare for all challenges in the energy sector, but acknowledged that it is difficult to predict how the situation would unfold. At the same time, Zelenskyy emphasized that work is underway to increase the production of long-range weapons so that Russia also “feels what we feel” ([Economichna Pravda](#), October 6). Earlier, the Ukrainian leader emphasized the tit for tat approach and threatened to organize a blackout in Moscow in case of electricity problems in Kyiv ([Radio Svoboda](#), September 27).

Ukraine’s possession of weapons capable of launching symmetrical strikes against energy facilities in Russia is another factor distinguishing the current winter from previous ones. In addition to regular strikes on oil facilities, Ukraine has begun attacks on Russia’s energy infrastructure. For example, after strikes on a TPP on the night of September 28, the Russian city of Belgorod suffered a power outage ([DW](#), September 28). On October 6, a partial blackout in Belgorod happened again after the strike on the power substation “Luch” ([TSN](#), October 6). In a comment to the press, Zelenskyy explained that Ukraine is focusing on striking targets in the Belgorod oblast because that is where Russia is launching most of its attacks on Kharkiv ([TSN](#), October 9). The attacks proved painful for Moscow, so it is not a coincidence that General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, named Ukrainian drone and missile production facilities as the highest priority targets for Russian strikes ([TASS](#), October 7).

On October 9, Zelenskyy confirmed the first successful use of the latest *Flamingo* cruise missiles in conjunction with the already well-known *Neptune* missiles. Without revealing specific details, he reported “the first tangible results” ([Ukrinform](#), October 9). Ukrainian long-range weapons, such as the *Neptune* and *Flamingo*, could become a key factor in retaliation or deterrence. Unlike relatively light drones, they can carry a much heavier payload and cause significant damage to the target. Anders Puck Nielsen, an officer and military analyst at the Danish Defense Academy, believes that Ukraine is likely stockpiling all of its missiles for a possible retaliatory strike against Russian critical infrastructure ([YouTube/@anderspuck](#), October 5). The exact role can be envisaged for U.S. *Tomahawk* cruise missiles if a positive decision is made on their transfer to Ukraine. If necessary, these long-range missiles can symmetrically target and destroy energy facilities deep within Russian territory. For example, according to the military expert Denys Popovich, they can attack the production of Shahed/Geran drones in the city of Elabuga, Tatarstan, to prevent massive

attacks against Ukraine ([Radio NV](#), August 19). Lieutenant General (Ret.) Ben Hodges, the former Commanding General of U.S. Army Europe, supported the idea of striking the drone production, writing that “killing the archer is always more effective than trying to intercept all the arrows” ([X/@general_ben](#), October 6).

Additionally, during his evening address on October 8, Zelenskyy shared details of his working meeting with General Vasyl Maliuk, the Head of the Security Service of Ukraine. He emphasized that he approved some plans for Ukraine’s asymmetric responses to Russia’s war. This could mean that, in addition to possible missile strikes, Russia may face other surprises ([President of Ukraine](#), October 8).

As winter approaches, Russia has intensified its campaign of coordinated air strikes on Ukraine’s critical infrastructure. This year, it is targeting primarily energy systems, gas production facilities, and railway networks. By continuously improving its missile and drone systems, Russia has increased the effectiveness of its attacks, resulting in significant damage and leaving some Ukrainian regions in critical condition, without power and water supply. The need to purchase additional natural gas and repair damaged infrastructure also poses serious economic challenges for Kyiv. In response, Ukraine is accelerating the development of interceptor drones—an affordable and effective solution to counter large-scale UAV attacks. Additionally, the potential deployment of long-range weapons, including domestically produced systems, such as the *Flamingo* and, potentially, U.S.-supplied *Tomahawk* cruise missiles, could play a key role in strengthening Ukraine’s deterrence and retaliation capabilities.

To read the article on the Jamestown website, click [here](#).

ENERGY & ECONOMICS

Uzbekistan Weighs Risks of Chabahar Investment

Nargiza Umarova

October 16, 2025

Executive Summary:

- Uzbekistan's plans to build infrastructure facilities at the Iranian Chabahar port to gain direct access to the Indian Ocean have not been implemented, indicating Tashkent's possibly cautious approach to this issue.
- New Delhi is strengthening its economic ties with Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) through ongoing negotiations to create a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union.
- Tashkent is pivoting toward an alternate Trans-Afghan railway corridor linking Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, aiming for a faster, more direct Eurasia-South Asia route and reduced dependence on Iranian infrastructure.



(Source: Iranian Embassy in New Delhi)

On September 29, the U.S. State Department's decision to reimpose sanctions on the Iranian port of Chabahar came into effect ([U.S. Department of State](#), September 16). This move reflects Washington's current maximum pressure policy to isolate the Iranian regime. Renewed sanctions will hinder the development of Chabahar, affecting the economic interests of Tehran and other countries, such as India and Russia, that participate in trade routes involving the port. India, Iran, and Russia are increasing mutual trade and are keen to establish fast transport links with each other. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is one such joint infrastructure project, and currently hinges on the deep-water port of Chabahar (see [EDM](#), April 18, 2022). Additionally, Iranian land transit can reduce the cost and time of transporting goods from India to Central Asia and back compared to sea routes through Europe or the People's Republic of China (PRC).

New Delhi is seeking closer economic ties with Russia (see [EDM](#), September 10). Indian negotiations on establishing a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) have

progressed, offering a promising boost to India's trade presence in Eurasia ([Trans.ru](#), August 25). The prospective free trade zone increases the need for interregional transport connectivity, which is the purpose of the INSTC and the Chabahar Agreement signed by India, Iran, and Afghanistan in 2016. In 2018, it was the Afghan factor at the time that helped New Delhi convince Washington to provide a sanctions waiver for Chabahar. The seaport serves as a trade gateway for Indian manufacturers to reach Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. In May 2024, India signed a 10-year contract with Iran to operate the port and pledged an additional \$370 million to transform the transport hub's infrastructure ([The Hindu](#), May 13, 2024).

In 2023, trade between India and the Central Asian countries amounted to \$1.7 billion ([Eurasian Development Bank/India Exim Bank](#), 2025). Kazakhstan accounted for over half of India's regional imports, which consisted mainly of mineral fuels and oil, and Uzbekistan was the primary Central Asian buyer of Indian exports.

In 2024, the value of trade between Uzbekistan and India approached **\$1 billion** ([National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan](#), January 21). Plans are in place to grow this trade through a new multimodal corridor between Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and India, utilizing the port of Chabahar (see [EDM](#), October 16, 2023). In the Central Asian segment, the new route could be extended to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for their access to the open seas.

Since 2020, Tashkent has been engaging in dialogue with New Delhi and Tehran within a special working group on the joint use of the deep-water port of Chabahar, which has direct access to the Indian Ocean. In 2023, the group reached an agreement to construct a logistics center, along with terminals and warehouses, at the Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar ([Spot](#), June 19, 2023; see [EDM](#), June 21, 2023). These plans have not yet been implemented, which may signal Uzbekistan's cautious approach to investing in the development of the Iranian Chabahar port. Renewed sanctions on Chabahar are likely to reinforce this caution, but Uzbekistan is unlikely ignore the port's transit potential—Tashkent needs to diversify its southern logistics routes to minimize security risks and optimize international transportation costs (see EDM, [May 7, 2024](#), [April 8](#), [May 21](#), [July 7](#)).

The first trilateral political consultation meeting between Iran, India, and Uzbekistan was held in Tehran on September 9, during which the countries discussed the effective use of Iran's port facilities and transport infrastructure to expand mutual trade ([Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), September 13). During the meeting, however, the Uzbek delegation did not mention the implementation of investment agreements in Chabahar.

Investing in the Iranian port is unlikely to be profitable for Tashkent, given that Uzbekistan is only involved in 5.5 percent of cargo traffic between Central Asia and India. Most Central Asian trade

with India occurs with Kazakhstan (61.1 percent) and Turkmenistan (29.4 percent). This is partly due to the composition of Kazakh and Turkmen exports to India, which consist mainly of hydrocarbon raw materials and inorganic chemical products ([Centermano.uz](#), July 9). Another reason is that Astana and Ashgabat participate in the flagship Indo-Russian-Iranian project INSTC, from which Uzbekistan was excluded due to the construction of the Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran railway in 2014 (see EDM, [October 3, 2014](#), [January 14](#), [December 4](#), 2015).

In 2022, Tashkent [proposed](#) an alternate land route connecting Russia and India via Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, bypassing Iran ([Uzbekistan Ministry of Transportation](#), November 25, 2022). A year later, as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States Transport Forum, the process of creating a 5,532-kilometer (3,440-mile) multimodal transport corridor between Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan was launched (see [EDM](#), January 15). This new logistics chain aims to enable cargo to be transported from northern Eurasia to South Asia in just 20 days—three times faster than by sea. Extending the corridor to Europe and India will create conditions for land transport connectivity between two major economic centers of world trade. If the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan railway (the Trans-Afghan or Kabul Corridor) is constructed, and if the transport systems of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries and the Indian subcontinent are integrated, the resulting land route would be monomodal, making it streamlined and more economically viable (see [EDM](#), July 7).

In this regard, Tashkent is accelerating the implementation of the Kabul Corridor project, which is estimated to cost around \$7 billion and follows the Termez–Naibabad–Maidanshahr–Logar–Kharlachi route. On July 17, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan signed an intergovernmental framework agreement for the feasibility study of the project ([Tolo News](#), July 17). According to one preliminary estimate, the potential cargo flow on the Trans-Afghan railway is expected to be 22 million tons per year by 2030, increasing to 34 million tons by 2040 ([YouTube/@ТранспортныекоридорыЦА](#), August 5). Most of this cargo will be in transit to farther-flung markets, including goods destined for India.

Tashkent may strengthen cooperation with New Delhi at the diplomatic and ministerial levels to secure its support to develop a railway corridor through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Investment in this alternative route has a different, though significant, risk profile compared to Chabahar, based on the international isolation of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. The Trans-Afghan Corridor could be realized through Uzbekistan’s initiative to form a unified SCO transport space, integrating the railway networks of the organization’s members ([Institute for Advanced International Studies](#), September 8).

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