

INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

№12 01.07.2024-15.07.2024

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Ukraine – European Union

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Intensification of Russia's disinformation campaign in the EU as part of Russia's war plan against the West*



Source: AP

For Russia, disinformation has long been an integral part of its foreign policy. It has become an important aspect of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which is a hybrid war.

But it is not only Ukraine that is a victim of Russian information attacks. Indeed, the threat of Russian disinformation is becoming increasingly relevant for European countries. While some states have already realised the seriousness of this danger, others remain in doubt as to whether it affects them or even allows for a Russian presence in Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe, many governmental and non-governmental initiatives are trying to identify, analyse and counter Russian propaganda.

The Czech project Kremlin Watch Monitor has classified EU countries according to their reaction to Kremlin propaganda, dividing them into *three groups*: from Moscow's allies to active fighters against disinformation. The leaders in countering Russian disinformation are the Baltic states, Sweden and the United Kingdom, while most European countries show only partial concern. Some countries, such as Greece and Cyprus, openly support Kremlin narratives.

Nevertheless, most European states are not ready to conduct comprehensive investigations into Russian influence networks. Aside from parliamentary initiatives in the UK, there have been no serious official investigations into Russia's ties to political parties or its interference in elections and referendums on the European continent.

According to the Kremlin Watch Monitor project, **many European governments are not doing enough to protect their democracies and do not inform citizens about these threats.** Although there is agreement on the necessary measures at the EU level, the lack of political will and unwillingness to fund effective steps leave the problem unresolved. Major

powers such as France, Germany, Spain and Italy are not doing enough to counter this threat. This is a big mistake, because modern Russian military doctrine considers information warfare to be a permanent element of 'war in peace'. Hybrid threats have become a key strategy of Russia, which uses reflexive control (RC) methods similar to the Chinese concept of 'stratagems' and the American 'perception management'.

Russian propaganda is aimed at disinformation and dissemination of information in order to destroy public trust and rational perception of news in the EU. It is important to note that Russia uses a comprehensive approach, combining technological and psychological attacks. These actions are aimed at disorganising governance structures, demoralising the population and disorienting military forces.

Russia's strategy is based on three main principles: complexity (a combination of different means of influence), unity (coordination between military and non-military actors) and continuity (constant information campaign in peacetime and wartime).

Russia also uses soft power, hiding elements of soft coercion under it. **Important elements of influence are pro-Russian elites, the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as mass culture and the media.** Non-state actors in Russia have played a key role in the conflict in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea, showing how the Kremlin can use existing social contradictions to achieve its goals.

The migration crisis and terrorist attacks in Europe have become a fertile ground for Russia to undermine the stability of the EU by promoting the idea of a 'strong Russia' against a 'weak West'. Russia's strategy to promote its interests in Europe includes several key **areas**:

1. ***Economic influence***: The Kremlin uses companies close to it to influence the policies of European countries through energy deals. Such agreements strengthen the dependence of these states on Russia, turning them into instruments of political blackmail.

2. ***Searching for political allies***: Russia is building relationships with European political leaders, supporting them financially or with information in exchange for loyalty. An example of such relations is cooperation with Czech President Milos Zeman or Marine Le Pen in France.

3. ***Support for radical movements***: In countries where Russia has failed to gain high-level support, it supports radical and extremist groups to undermine stability and democratic institutions from within.

4. ***Public diplomacy and NGOs***: Russian interests are often promoted through organisations that operate under the guise of non-governmental organisations but are in fact supported by the state. They influence European public opinion and legitimise Russian policies. One example is the Dialogue of Civilisations think tank in Berlin, headed by Vladimir Yakunin.

5. ***Media***: Russian media outlets, such as RT and Sputnik, spread anti-Western narratives and disinformation about international politics and Russia's foreign policy interests.

6. ***Exploitation of ethnic minorities and diasporas***: Russia sees Russian-speaking minorities in European countries as a base for its influence. The Kremlin claims to protect their rights, which allows it to interfere in the internal affairs of states such as the Baltic states, Germany and the Czech Republic.

The European response to Russian information threats is based on comprehensive measures to counter disinformation and strengthen information security. The EU is actively working to develop strategies to combat disinformation and strengthen its resilience to external influences. However, as noted, not all countries are ready to fully combat Russia on the information front.

Information threats from Russia pose a serious challenge to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which have become a testing ground for new methods of Russian propaganda. The Baltic States - Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia - have been particularly affected by these threats due to their strategic role in the European Union and NATO. Central European countries, in particular the Czech Republic, are also actively involved in the fight

against Russian information influence. Czech think tanks have launched programmes such as the Kremlin Watch Monitor and the Prague Security Studies Institute's Countering Russian Influence Initiative. They focus on studying and neutralising disinformation campaigns. Other Central European countries, such as Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, support information security through the weekly Infowar Monitor, a newsletter published by the region's largest think tanks.

To protect its information attacks, ***Russia often manipulates the notion of freedom of speech***. Russian state media, including RT and Sputnik, actively use the mechanisms of freedom of speech in Europe to legitimise propaganda. This is especially true in countries with significant **Russian-speaking populations**, such as Latvia and Estonia, where local media often cannot compete with Russian channels due to funding differences.

Only recently has the West begun to unite to combat Russian propaganda. The EUvsDisinfo project was created at the level of the European Union and NATO, which has become an important element of the European response to propaganda, exposing thousands of cases of manipulation by Russia. The Baltic states already have experience in blocking the broadcasts of Russian channels that violate the law, and this experience is being shared with other countries. Also important is the role of international journalistic initiatives such as Bellingcat, which use information from open sources to analyse events and expose disinformation.

Although Europe has begun to respond more actively to Russian information threats after several years of aggression, ***the challenges remain serious and the efforts insufficient***. It is important to continue cooperation between governments, think tanks and civic initiatives to strengthen information security and counter disinformation campaigns aimed at weakening Euro-Atlantic solidarity.

For example, Russia continues to intensify propaganda operations against Ukraine in the EU, particularly in Italy. According to Vadym Skibitskyi, a representative of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine, Russia uses its accomplices, including so-called journalists from the occupied territories, to disseminate propaganda materials aimed at discrediting Ukraine.¹

One of the main tools of Russian propaganda is the presentation of books describing Ukraine's alleged crimes in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In addition, Russia collects information on the occupied territories about Ukraine's military activities and disseminates it through its media and pro-Russian figures in Europe.

One of the key aspects of Russia's new propaganda operations is its attempts to ***manipulate the issue of Ukrainian children***, in particular, the parliamentary commission of the State Duma of the Russian Federation collected evidence for the international community to justify Russia's aggression. In addition, Russia is working with Ukrainian refugees, using various organisations, education, and the church to weaken their identity and prevent them from returning to Ukraine. Ukraine's military intelligence and foreign ministry are working to disrupt these operations, but Skibitsky stressed the importance of engaging Ukrainian communities abroad to counter Russian propaganda.

Moscow's information campaigns are also aimed at ***disinformation about the latest developments at the front***, and not only at the international level. For example, the Kremlin has launched a sophisticated information campaign for its domestic audience aimed at justifying its military actions in eastern Ukraine and trying to convince Russian society that the operation of Ukrainian forces in the Kursk region is the 'new normal'. This is stated in a report by the American Institute for the Study of War (ISW).² According to Medusa, the

¹ Представник ГУР: Росія готує інформаційні операції в країнах Європи, ціллю яких є українські біженці. 21.08.2024. https://lb.ua/society/2024/08/21/630584_predstavnik_gur_rosiya_gotuie.html

² ISW: Кремль запустив інформаційну кампанію для внутрішньої аудиторії щодо операції ЗСУ в Курській області. 22.08.2024. <https://detector.media/infospace/article/231185/2024-08-22-isw-kreml-zapustyv-informatsiyu-kampaniyu-dlya-vnutrishnoi-audytorii-shchodo-operatsii-zsu-v-kurskiy-oblasti/>

Kremlin is seeking to force the public to accept the limited operation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the Kursk region, while Russian media focuses on Russia's offensive in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Pokrovsk sector, presenting it as a great success. This is intended to reduce the importance of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' operations in the Kursk region. ISW analysts believe that the Kremlin is using this approach to buy time to respond to the actions of Ukrainian forces in Kursk. *The Kremlin has decided to focus on tactical victories in Ukraine rather than on restoring Russia's territorial integrity*, which undermines the narrative of Russia's *'red lines'*.

At the same time, the Centre for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine reports that Russia has stepped up its propaganda, spreading fakes about a split in Ukraine's leadership and staged videos about the situation in the Kursk region, trying to accuse the Ukrainian armed forces of war crimes. This information campaign is part of Russia's broader efforts to discredit Ukraine on the international stage and support its own population amid the protracted war. **And while Europe is not yet a direct participant in the fighting, it must take care to combat Russian disinformation that has long been deeply rooted in its media.**

Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine

- **THEME ANALYSIS:** For the first time in 33 years, India has paid attention to Ukraine as an independent state. Why?



Source: MFA of Ukraine

The visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Ukraine on 23 August 2024 was a real sensation and raised many questions about its potential results and motivations. This visit is particularly important because India has so far taken a neutral position on the Russian-Ukrainian war in Ukraine, **neither condemning Russia** nor supporting any UN resolutions against Russian aggression. With this in mind, Modi's visit could have **several aspects**.

Modi began his visit by paying tribute to the Ukrainian children who died as a result of Russian aggression. This underscores his personal and official support for Ukraine in its struggle. India also promised to provide humanitarian aid and actively supports the peace formula. V. Zelensky, in turn, stressed that India is a supporter of international law, and it is important that global leaders clearly express their position on fundamental norms of international law. An important point was the signing of four intergovernmental agreements in the medical, agricultural, humanitarian and cultural spheres, as well as an agreement on further military and technical cooperation. Special attention was paid to strengthening defence cooperation, including cooperation in the military-industrial complex. The second meeting of the Joint Ukrainian-Indian Working Group on Military-Technical Cooperation is due to take place soon.³

Modi's visit to Kyiv was an important step in the development of bilateral relations between Ukraine and India, especially against the backdrop of criticism of his previous visit to Moscow. In addition, during his visit to Poland, Modi also held important talks, which

³ Візит Моді: Україна та Індія погодили чотири документи про співпрацю. 23.08.2024.
<https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2024/08/23/7471571/>

confirms his active diplomatic engagement in the region. For Modi, this visit is an opportunity to demonstrate *global leadership*, especially to the international community, which expects India to be more active in global issues. India, as one of the world's largest democracies, may seek to position itself as a peacemaker, although its engagement with Russia has been criticised.⁴

For Ukraine, Modi's visit is important in terms of the opportunity to influence India's position. The Ukrainian leadership can use this moment to promote its point of view and draw attention to the consequences of Russian aggression, especially given the recent Russian attacks during Modi's visit to Moscow.

Narendra Modi's visit to Ukraine, together with his previous statements and India's position, *highlights the difficult balance that India is trying to maintain in its foreign policy*. Modi often repeats the rhetoric of peaceful conflict resolution and support for diplomacy, but India's actual actions do not always reflect these principles. Yes, Modi emphasises peaceful conflict resolution as an important part of Indian diplomacy. However, in reality, India maintains an ostensible 'neutral' position on Russia's aggression in Ukraine. This may be part of a strategy to preserve economic and strategic interests, particularly in the military and energy sectors.

India's refusal to condemn Russia's aggression and refusal to offer mediation may be part of a desire to maintain stable relations with Russia. India is likely avoiding open conflict with Moscow to maintain its strategic and economic cooperation, which includes military supplies and energy resources. Russia and India also have extensive economic ties. After the introduction of Western sanctions against Russia, India was able to buy Russian oil at significant discounts, which will have a positive impact on the country's economy, which needs cheap energy resources. Russia also remains a major supplier of military technology to India, which creates additional economic and strategic dependence. In addition, Russia is actively seeking rapprochement with China, which could be perceived by India as a strategic threat, especially against the backdrop of border disputes with China.

Given the statements about Putin's possible message to Zelenskyy, Modi may try to mediate diplomatic efforts to end the war. However, given India's warm relations with Russia and the lack of strong condemnation of the aggression, the Ukrainian side may view these attempts with caution. India may seek to maintain peaceful rhetoric while maintaining lucrative economic ties with both countries. In addition, India's idea is more about transferring information between the parties than direct mediation.

Modi's visit may be an attempt by India to demonstrate its willingness to support the diplomatic process, even if the actual actions do not yet confirm this. **India is trying to use this visit to score diplomatic points and raise its international profile as a country that supports peaceful conflict resolution.**

For Ukraine, Modi's visit is an opportunity to openly discuss the formats of negotiations and to put pressure on India to become more proactive in supporting Ukraine in the international arena. It is also important for Ukraine that India fully supports Ukraine's Peace Formula, as this would mean support from one of the largest countries in the Global South. However, given history, it is likely that concrete results will not be achieved without additional efforts on both sides.

In general, Modi's visit can be seen as a sign that *India is trying to find a balance between its international obligations and strategic interests, which are certainly related to the competition for leadership in the Global South, which is anti-Western. Therefore, it is futile to count on a strategic partnership with this country. India cannot be an ally of Ukraine a priori*. Modi saw this visit as part of his strategy to increase his diplomatic influence in the CEE region and to explore opportunities to improve India's relations with Russia.

⁴ Моді у Києві. Що Україні дасть візит прем'єра Індії. 21.08.2024.
<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c9wj15v2ez9o>



Source: Army FM

■ Changes at the front

Trend: *Russian forces break through Ukrainian defences at the Pokrovske direction and accelerate offensive actions on the flanks of the breakthrough.*

In the Kharkiv direction, the Defence Forces repelled Russian attacks near Pletenivka, Lyptsi and Vovchansk.

In the Kupyansk direction, the Russian military conducted offensive actions near Synkivka, Kolisnykivka, Novoosynove, Lozova, Andriivka, Stelmakhivka and Hlushkivka.

In the Liman direction, Russian proxies stormed the positions of the Defence Forces near Tverdokhlibove, Novosergiivka, Druzhelyubivka, Hrekivka, Cherneshchyna, Makiivka, Nevske and Novosadove.

In the Siverskyi direction, our defenders repelled Russians advance near Verkhnekamianske, Ivan-Daryivka and Vyymka.

In the Kramatorsk direction, fighting took place near Kalynivka, Chasovyi Yar, Stupochki, Ivanivske, Andriivka and Predtechyno. Ukrainian defence forces stopped all enemy attacks.

In the Toretsk direction, Russians stormed the positions of Ukrainian units near Toretsk and Nelipivka. Continuous enemy attacks continue.

In the Pokrovsk direction, fierce fighting took place in the areas of Zelene Pole, Vozdvyzhenka, Hrodivka, Karlivka, Novohrodivka, Marynivka, Myrolyubivka, Mykhailivka and Selydove. As a result, the Russian military captured some of these settlements.

In recent weeks, Russian troops have surrounded Ukrainian forces as they advanced towards the E-50 (Donetsk - Pokrovsk), and a tactical encirclement threat has emerged. The most intense fighting is taking place on the eastern outskirts of Hrodivka, further along the border of Kamianyi and Krasnyi Yar, directly in Novohrodivka, and lower down, in the area of the eastern outskirts of Mykhailivka, which is located in front of Selidove.

As noted by Ukrainian Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Syrskyi, ‘The fighting is extremely fierce. The enemy is throwing everything that can move and advance into the battle, trying to break through the defences of our troops. Our soldiers are showing courage and heroism in battles with superior enemy forces.’

In recent weeks, Russian troops have encircled Ukrainian forces as they advanced towards the E-50 (Donetsk - Pokrovsk), and a tactical encirclement threat has emerged. The most intense fighting is taking place on the eastern outskirts of Hrodivka, further along the border of Kamianyi and Krasnyi Yar, directly in Novohrodivka, and lower down, in the area of the eastern outskirts of Mykhailivka, which is located in front of Selidove.

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Russian offensives in the Pokrovsk sector forced the Ukrainian military to retreat from limited positions southeast of Pokrovsk, and Russian troops probably failed to achieve their obvious goal of tactically encircling Ukrainian forces in the area. The advance of Russian troops south and southwest of the T-0511 (Ocheretyne-Hrodivka) road has been levelling Russian positions east and southeast of Pokrovsk, rather than creating conditions for a tactical encirclement of Ukrainian forces.

However, in recent weeks, Russian forces have encircled Ukrainian forces as they have advanced towards the E-50 (Donetsk to Pokrovsk), and the threat of tactical encirclement has likely again prompted Ukrainian forces to retreat to re-align the front and save Ukrainian lives. However, this retreat of Ukrainian troops in the Pokrovske direction was not chaotic, and the lack of rapid tactical successes of the Russians in the area allowed Ukrainian troops to withdraw from the encircled positions

⁵ Бої на Покровському напрямку мають виключно жорсткий характер — Сирський. 29 серпня 2024. <https://hromadske.ua/viyna/230372-boyi-na-pokrovskomu-napriamku-maiut-vykliuchno-zorstkyi-kharakter-syrskyy>

■ *Military assistance*

The United States has provided the Ukrainian Defence Forces with a new military assistance package worth \$250 million, which includes the following weapons

- RIM-7 missiles and air defence assistance;
- Stinger and TOW missiles;
- ammunition for HIMARS, 155 mm and 105 mm artillery shells;
- Javelin and AT-4 anti-tank systems;
- Bradley infantry fighting vehicles;
- M113 armoured personnel carriers;
- Mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles (MRAP);
- ammunition for small arms;
- patrol boats and maritime training equipment;
- spare parts, auxiliary equipment, services, training and transport.

Since the beginning of the war, **the Netherlands** has sent 700 batches of weapons, equipment and ammunition. The Dutch government will purchase ammunition for Ukrainian F-16s worth €300 million.

Sweden has announced new aid to Ukraine worth \$440 million, which will include the following weapons: ammunition for infantry fighting vehicles, which have already been donated by this European country. 'We want to be able to donate Gripen to Ukraine at a later stage,' said the head of the Swedish Defence Ministry.⁶

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Trend: *Strategic actions in Kursk and Donbas: who will be the winner?*

For the past three weeks, Ukrainian troops have been on Russian territory, but the Kremlin pretends not to notice the problem. The AP explains that the Kremlin may not have enough resources to push Ukrainians out of the Kursk region, or *it may not be a priority*.

Tatiana Stanova of the Carnegie Center for Russia and Eurasia believes that **Putin is focused on destroying the Ukrainian state and believes that this will make control of the territories less important**. That is why Russia is not moving troops from Donbas to liberate Kursk region. Stanova also notes that propaganda diverts Russians' attention from the fact that the government is unable to regain control of the territories. Instead, the emphasis is on helping evacuees, which averts Russians' resentment over the failure to protect them. Observers note that in order to displace the roughly 10,000 Ukrainian troops, Putin would need to mobilise the same number of his own troops. Conscripts are not being used for fear of protests, and troops are not being redeployed from the Donbas because they are needed to capture the key city in the region, Pokrovsk.

The Ukrainian operation in the Kursk region has caused reputational damage to the Kremlin and may be temporary until the Russian leadership decides how to respond to this challenge. At the same time, former US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper comments that this operation can help Ukraine seize the initiative in a war that has long been stagnant. He believes that the Ukrainians aim not only to embarrass Putin, but also to use the territory for future negotiations with Russia.

⁶ Швеція оголосила нову допомогу Україні на \$440 млн: яка зброя увійде до пакета
<https://tsn.ua/svit/shveciya-ogolosila-novu-dopomogu-ukrayini-na-440-mln-yaka-zbroya-uviyde-do-paketa-2656323.html>

Foreign Policy's Stephen Walt believes that while the Ukrainian operation has been a short-term success, it could bring more problems for Kyiv in the long run. Walt believes that successes on the Kursk front should not distract from the need for serious ceasefire negotiations.⁷ Retired US General Ben Hodges believes that Ukrainian troops advancing into the Bryansk and Belgorod regions are only at the beginning of their operation. He emphasises that Ukrainians, while protecting their rear, are hitting important Russian targets, which has both economic and psychological effects. Hodges believes that the Ukrainians may be aiming to expand their foothold on Russian territory for further military purposes. Michal Baranowski, Managing Director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, believes that the main thing is that this operation showed that Putin and Russia can be taken by surprise. It turned out that parts of *Russian territory can be vulnerable*. According to Ukrainian leaders, Ukraine has the opportunity to return what Russia started on its soil, i.e. waging war.

However, despite Ukraine's successes in the Kursk region, **Russia continues its offensive in Donbas, approaching Pokrovsk, which is a major challenge for Ukraine**. It is losing territory in the Kursk region, but is trying to maintain momentum in the south, in Donbas. This is also a very important aspect of the war. Ukraine has decided to demonstrate Russia's weakness in the Kursk region. It will be seen how long Ukraine will be able to sustain the offensive, defending its southern flank. And similarly, is Russia able to defend the Kursk region without pulling troops from Donbas? 'It's too early to assess whether the Kursk operation is achieving its military objectives, other than political ones, and whether its success will force Russia to move some of its forces from Donbas to Kursk. At the moment, this is not happening, which creates a double situation. On the one hand, one side dominates one zone and the other dominates the other. This cannot go on forever, and both sides, Russia and Ukraine, must determine where to focus their military efforts,' Baranovsky said.⁸

The West is closely monitoring this operation. Russia has not yet moved to an escalation that would cause concern in the West. This may not lead to a significant increase in support for Ukraine. Rather, allies and partners will recognise Ukraine's right to self-defence, including attacks on Russian territory to divert forces away from areas under Russian attack. *The Kursk operation is not capable of ensuring Ukraine's strategic military success, but it has already taken a certain amount of the country's scarce resources and will continue to drain them as the active front line has now been extended.* This opinion was expressed in an interview with "Radio Liberty" by open data analyst Emil Kastehelmi of the Finnish project Black Bird Group. He noted that some of the Ukrainian Armed Forces troops who took part in the Kursk operation were moved from the frontline in Donbas, where the Russian offensive continues.⁹ 'In the current situation, it may not be worth it. At the moment, a larger front line has been created, about 70-90 kilometres of new front line, which Ukraine actually has to control. So, this will eat up more Ukrainian resources. They need more brigades to control what they have,' he says. Kastehelmi also calls for remembering that the Kursk offensive, despite its operational success, was also costly for Ukraine. Ukraine lost a certain amount of men and equipment there and will continue to lose them.

Analysts believe that **if the Kursk operation does not prompt the West to increase support and lift restrictions on the use of long-range missiles, potential strategic benefits**

⁷ Чому росіяни не воюють за Курськ і що це означає для української операції – аналіз.29.08.2024.
<https://www.holosameryky.com/a/analiz-kurskoji-operatsiji/7764124.html>

⁸ Курська «карта» за столом переговорів? Аналітик пояснює, як нею скористатися.23.08.2024.
<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/kurska-tema-za-stolom-perehovoriv/33089699.html>

⁹ Курська операція поглинула дефіцитні ресурси ЗСУ і поглинати їх надалі, - аналітик.29.08.2024.
<https://www.unian.ua/war/viyna-v-ukrajini-kurska-oblast-koshtuvala-ukrajini-nadto-dorogo-12741996.html>

may be lost. This was reported in a Bloomberg article. The article quotes Volodymyr Zelensky as saying that the Kursk operation would have been unnecessary if the allies had lifted restrictions on long-range missile fire.

They also discuss whether an offensive in Kursk region could force Putin to withdraw his troops from the frontline in eastern Ukraine.

‘So far, it hasn't worked. Russia continues to intensify its attacks in Donbas, while gathering forces from other regions to stop the Ukrainian offensive on Kursk. Perhaps the emphasis is wrong,’ the observer notes.

It is noted that all parties, including Zelensky, understand that **the conflict will end at the negotiating table, and the question is on whose terms**. It is emphasised that if the Kursk operation can mobilise allied support and arms supplies, as well as convince Western leaders to lift restrictions on the use of long-range missiles, it could bring significant results.

Meanwhile, **Russian troops continue to advance in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the area of Pokrovsk, creating an increasingly critical situation for Ukrainian forces.** According to Forbes analyst David Axe, Ukraine is facing a lack of reserves in this area, as many brigades have been redeployed to participate in the Kursk operation. Pokrovsk is a key point in Ukraine's defence in the east, and its capture by Russian forces could have serious consequences for the entire eastern front line. It could increase pressure on other towns and create conditions for a broader Russian offensive. As David Axe notes, *the loss of Pokrovsk could significantly weaken the Ukrainian defence and create opportunities for a larger Russian offensive, possibly even for the complete occupation of the Donetsk region.*

Given the critical situation near Pokrovsk, **the Ukrainian leadership has limited options to stabilise the frontline**. Frontelligence Insight analysts note that possible measures could include the redeployment of forces from other regions, such as Kursk or Kharkiv, or the deployment of new brigades.

The best option, according to the experts, would be to concentrate additional forces to strengthen the defences near Pokrovsk in order to deplete the Russian brigades and regiments, which is what the Ukrainian command is doing.

The situation in the east remains very difficult. Russian troops continue to advance, threatening important facilities and logistical routes of the Ukrainian army. The occupiers already control key positions in several settlements, which poses additional threats to Ukrainian forces. Military expert Pavlo Narozhnyi emphasises that the main goal of the Russians is not only Pokrovsk, but also further movement to Kostiantynivka, which opens a new front and threatens other strategic points of Ukraine's defence.¹⁰

Thus, **the Kursk operation was a shock to Russia and delayed its plans for an offensive on NATO's eastern flank, protecting the Baltic states and Poland from an imminent war, but at the same time showed that the Russian-Ukrainian war is reaching a critical peak and a decisive phase.**

¹⁰ Курська операція провалилася – Forbes.29.08.2024. https://nenka.info/kurska-operacziya-provalylasya-forbes/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=kurska-operacziya-provalylasya-forbes