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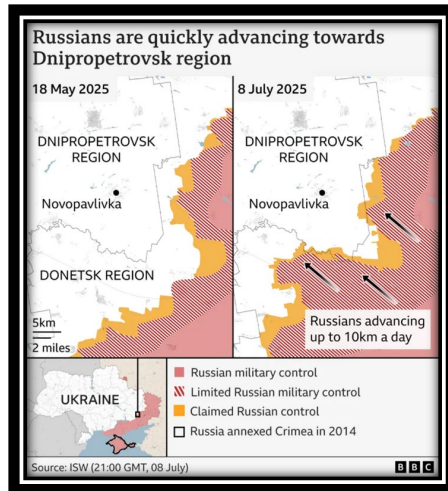
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Russia-Ukraine War – Another Summer Offensive but Stalemate Continues

The Russian Summer Offensive of 2025 represents a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. After a period of relative stagnation during the winter and early spring months, Russia launched a comprehensive and multi-faceted offensive beginning in late May and continuing into July. Bolstered by steady arms production, increased manpower, and evolving battlefield tactics—



especially in drone and missile warfare—Moscow sought to exploit perceived vulnerabilities in Ukraine's manpower, logistics, and defensive cohesion. The offensive has unfolded across several fronts, with key advances in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions, as well as increased pressure on the northeastern front in Sumy Oblast.

Russia's main effort has focused on pushing westward from the Donetsk region into the Zaporizhzhia frontline. Between mid-June and mid-July, Russian forces advanced over 20 kilometers west of Bahatyr toward Novokhatske, attempting to outflank Ukrainian fortifications and move closer to the strategic city of Zaporizhzhia. This corridor remains one of the most heavily contested sectors due to its strategic and symbolic importance as a potential gateway to southern Ukraine.

In the aftermath of the capture of Avdiivka earlier in 2025, Russian forces redirected attention to the high ground around Chasiv Yar—a critical defensive position protecting Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. Intense urban combat has raged for weeks, with incremental Russian advances but no decisive breakthrough as of mid-July. The Ukrainian army has reinforced this sector significantly to prevent a collapse of its eastern defensive line.

In early June, Russian forces launched a sudden thrust into northeastern Ukraine, capturing Kostiantynivka and establishing control over roughly 125 square kilometers. This move served both to exploit a relatively under-defended region and to pull Ukrainian reserves away from the Donbas front. Though the advance slowed in July, it demonstrated Russia's capacity to reopen dormant fronts to destabilize Ukraine's overall defensive posture.

Alongside ground operations, Russia intensified its aerial campaign. Throughout June and early July, Moscow launched record-breaking barrages of cruise missiles, glide bombs, and Shahed drones targeting Ukrainian recruitment centers, energy infrastructure, and weapons depots. One such week in July alone saw over 500 drones and missiles launched, underscoring the offensive's hybrid nature.

While Russia has made measurable tactical gains, it has not achieved a strategic breakthrough. Ukrainian defenses—though under strain—have largely held in critical regions, especially around Chasiv Yar and Zaporizhzhia. Ukraine is still putting up a mighty defence against a far bigger power. Despite the summer push

and delays to weapon shipments from America, Russia has little to show for its advances. As per the assessment by the Economist, the current offensive still works out at just 15 square kilometres per day. Even at the quicker pace of the past 30 days, it would take another 89 years to conquer all of Ukraine. Seizing the unoccupied parts of the four regions—Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhia—would take until February 2029.

At the end of June 2025, the Pentagon paused deliveries of critical weaponry to Ukraine, including Patriot missiles, precision artillery, and Hellfires, citing concerns over U.S. stockpiles. While Pentagon argued that the interruption as a limited and temporary action, this was perceived by Ukraine as more concerted effort by the Trump administration to squeeze political concessions out of Ukraine, as it did in early March when it briefly stopped arms deliveries and intelligence co-operation after an infamous televised bust-up between Donald Trump and Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky.

In a surprising reversal, US President Donald Trump announced significant and rapid military aid supplies to Ukraine through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), along with the possibility of imposing secondary tariffs against Russia in the future. During a meeting with NATO General Secretary Mark Rutte on July 14, Trump declared that the United States would impose "severe" 100 percent secondary tariffs on Russia's trade partners if a peace settlement to end the war in Ukraine was not reached within 50 days.

When Trump took office, he promised to end Russia's war on Ukraine within 24 hours and sought to improve relations with Moscow, engaging in several conversations with President Vladimir Putin. However, his administration had previously backed away from pro-Ukrainian policies, such as supporting Ukraine's membership in NATO and insisting that Russia withdraw from all Ukrainian territory. Despite this, Russia has not accepted Trump's proposal for an unconditional ceasefire, a proposal that Kyiv quickly endorsed.

Trump appears to have understood that successful US efforts to bring Putin to the negotiating table necessitate combining economic measures with Western military support. This approach would enable Ukraine to exert more pressure on Russia in the ongoing conflict.

French President's Visit to the United Kingdom

The French President, Emmanuel Macron, at the invitation of King Charles III of the United Kingdom, embarked on a trip to the United Kingdom from July 8 to 10, 2025. This was the first visit by a European state leader to the UK since the UK's departure from the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit. President Macron met with the Royal Family, including King Charles and Queen Camilla, as well as



the British Prime Minister, Kier Starmer. He also addressed both houses of the British Parliament and co-chaired alongside the British PM the 37th Franco-British Summit.

During his visit, he emphasised that the two nations could collaborate to form a strong partnership, noting that they could serve as a beacon for other European countries. He believes that France and the United Kingdom can protect the ethos of democracy, law, and the international order in the current world by working together. The French President stressed that the two nations need to diversify and reduce their dependencies on global players. He then highlighted the importance of close cooperation, which could improve the lives of students, researchers, and artists in both countries, and also foster collaboration on artificial intelligence.

The most significant outcome of the visit on the bilateral front was the migration deal. The deal states that the two nations will follow a one-in, one-out return scheme. The British would deport individuals coming from France and, in return, accept an equal number from the French side. Importantly, the British mention that migrants arriving in the UK through small island boats would be returned to France, while migrants from France would arrive via legal routes. The main goal of the deal is to prevent illegal migration and to disrupt the business model of gangs that profit from illegal movement.

On the bilateral front, the Northwood Declaration was issued as a joint nuclear statement, emphasizing the two nations' strong commitment to nuclear cooperation. Additionally, the UK and France agreed to establish a Nuclear Steering Group to further enhance their collaboration and coordination on nuclear matters.

During his address to British Parliament, President Macron highlighted two major conflicts that have affected the international arena: the Russia-Ukraine war and the conflict in Gaza. France has been a strong supporter of Ukraine. He emphasized that Europeans should not withdraw their support for Ukraine.

On the Gaza conflict, he brought up the idea of an unconditional ceasefire to bring hostilities to an end. He also requested that the British put efforts towards the recognition of the Palestinian state. He emphasised that recognition of the Palestinian state was crucial for long-term peace and stability in the region.

The visit is important because, to a large extent, it demonstrates France's attempt to establish long-term solidarity with the UK. The UK, too, in its efforts to reset the European bloc after Brexit, has reached out to France as the first step towards reconciliation and long-term cooperation. The two nations, which have been ardent supporters of Ukraine, could unite to ensure that European support does not falter, as the United States' leadership has not maintained a consistent stance on the issue.

The inconsistency of the Americans towards larger Transatlantic cooperation could also be a catalyst for the two nuclear power nations to unite and form a more collaborative and cooperative European defence cooperation. The presence of the two nations in the Coalition of the Willing is a positive aspect that could serve as a springboard for further collaboration on Ukraine.

The two nations' cooperation on the long-standing issue of migration has seen positive development, with both countries forging an agreement. This could be seen as a significant achievement for both governments, as they address migrant issues. This issue was a point of contention between the two nations for some time and could mark a new phase of cooperation.

The divergences may lie in the Gaza conflict, with France and Britain having different understandings and approaches towards the issue. Macron's attempts to bridge the gap between the two nations, but it is likely that the nations will continue to find certain issues while trying to create a common understanding of the conflict.

Overall, the visit by the French President can be seen as a positive attempt at outreach, collaboration, and settling issues, while also aiming to forge a common understanding on various issues that continue to dominate the international arena.

The 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting: Key Outcomes



The 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), chaired by Malaysia, took place on July 9, 2025, in Kuala Lumpur. In response to the evolving political, security, and economic landscape, the meeting produced a comprehensive 32-page Joint Communiqué consisting of 160 paragraphs that addressed a wide range of issues, from trade tensions to

regional conflicts. In light of an increasingly volatile international environment, the 58th AMM and subsequent meetings aimed to chart a way forward. ASEAN's theme for 2025, "Inclusivity and Sustainability," focuses on deepening regional cooperation and integration.

To build future resilience and foster a people-centered community, the ministers reaffirmed their commitment to "ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future." The Joint Communiqué stressed the importance of maintaining ASEAN Centrality and Unity, which are important for fostering peace, security, and economic growth. Additionally, the meeting adopted guidelines to facilitate Timor-Leste's membership in ASEAN, with plans for its admission at the 47th ASEAN Summit in October 2025.

Amid global disruptions and trade tensions resulting from U.S. tariff policies, economic cooperation was a priority at the 58th AMM. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged Southeast Asia to "act with purpose" and to strengthen intra-regional trade through greater integration. The ASEAN Geo-economics Task Force (AGTF) highlighted the urgent need for ASEAN to respond strategically to the complex global geo-economic landscape. Based on the AGTF's recommendations, discussions focused on deepening regional economic integration and fully implementing trade agreements, particularly the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which accounts for approximately 30% of global

GDP. ASEAN reaffirmed its commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system centered on the WTO. The ministers agreed to accelerate the upgrading of ASEAN's free trade agreements with its partners, including the early implementation of the fully concluded ASEAN-China FTA 3.0, the substantial conclusion of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Review Negotiations by 2025, and the full and effective ratification of the Second Protocol to Amend the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) on April 21, 2025. ASEAN is also exploring the expansion of trade relations by initiating negotiations on the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Area (AKFTA). To build a resilient economy, ASEAN aims to fast-track new initiatives, such as the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement and the Framework for Integrated Semiconductor Supply Chains, to enhance cooperation among member states.

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), a cornerstone for regional stability, saw the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay join, increasing the number of High Contracting Parties to 57. The ministers expressed concerns about the risks of nuclear conflict and emphasized ASEAN's role in addressing these challenges, including arms control and disarmament. ASEAN presented a united front by reaffirming its commitment to international law and declaring the region a nuclear weapon-free zone, as well as supporting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. A breakthrough was achieved with China and Russia indicating their willingness to sign the 1995 treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.

The Joint Communiqué addressed concerns regarding land reclamation and activities in the South China Sea (SCS), welcoming progress made on the Code of Conduct for the SCS and pushing for an agreement to ease tensions in these contested waters. The ministers jointly condemned the escalation of conflict and the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, urging the military junta to cease violence against civilians and engage in peaceful dialogue. They reaffirmed their united stance that the ASEAN Leaders' Five-Point Consensus (5PC) remains the principal reference for addressing the ongoing political crisis. ASEAN also expressed concerns over tensions on the Korean Peninsula and emphasized the need for peaceful dialogue. Additionally, ASEAN reiterated its statement on Ukraine, calling for compliance with the UN Charter and international law. With ongoing tensions in the Middle East, ASEAN expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza and called for an immediate ceasefire.

Given the shifting power dynamics, economic uncertainty, and climate obligations, ASEAN's relevance will depend not only on managing dialogues but also on achieving tangible results. The 58th AMM marks a significant step forward in preserving the global economic order. Emphasizing partnerships that focus on building resilience by upgrading trade agreements and launching new initiatives is a crucial response to current challenges. However, ASEAN's commitments must also be matched by concrete actions, ensuring that promises lead to effective outcomes.