



WASTED LIVES: New Map Shows Just How Bad Ukraine War Is Going

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): The history of wars in the United States over the last 70 years is virtually identical, starting from Vietnam through Iraq and Afghanistan and Libya and Syria. And now Ukraine: which is that propaganda is extremely intense at the start of the war. The media unites with the political class to rain down upon the population, all kinds of emotionally stirring propaganda about why this war is different from all the others. This is really the war. We're on the right side. We're protecting the South Vietnamese from Communist repression, and we're freeing the Iraqis from the repression of Saddam Hussein. And who would be possibly against bringing democracy and freedom to the Iraqi people? And then we're doing the same for the Libyans at the hands of this dictator who wants to murder them all in Benghazi. And why would you be against our going there to protect the Libyan people? We're just going to go there and remove the leader and everything's going to be great. And we're going to do the same in Syria. We're going to liberate and emancipate the Syrians from the brutal tyranny of Bashar al Assad. And at the beginning, everyone's very excited by this. Sounds so fun, sounds so purposeful and noble. But yeah, we're going to go and use our military to help people this time, we're going to be on the side of the good this time, we don't have to be embarrassed and feel ashamed. And then six months goes by and a year goes by or two years goes by, and every time public opinion starts eroding because people start realising that the promises they were made end up not being realised and the predictions that were issued end up being false. And that's exactly what's happening in the war in Ukraine.

And so over the last year, it's not sudden, this support for the war in Ukraine that was at 65-70% across political lines at the start has been gradually receding, gradually eroding. And so the standard propagandists who know how to manipulate American public opinion have

come out over the last year, the same people who always do and assured us that, yes, it seems like this war is going nowhere. But don't worry, we have this amazing thing coming. In Iraq it was called the surge that was going to change everything. That was a speciality of the Kagan family, Kimberly Kagan and Robert Kagan and all the Victoria Nuland relatives. In Bill Kristol's Weekly Standard he promised that the surge was going to change the Iraq war and make you proud to have supported it, it was going to finally liberate everything and end this war. And we started hearing the same thing about this vaunted counteroffensive that all year we've been told this coming in, was going to radically transform this war, allow Ukraine to seize huge portions back from the Russians of Ukrainian territory that the Russians have seized since the beginning of the war. Here for example you see The Washington Post June 9th an article by Max Boot, the neoconservative warmonger. And there he is promoting David Petraeus, the general who was found guilty though didn't serve any jail time, for very serious national security crimes. He passed the most sensitive documents the government has to his mistress to enable her to write a glowing hagiography of him. And here he is back, assuring everybody, as the headline says, the Ukrainian offensive is beginning, David Petraeus is optimistic. This was in June, so almost four months ago. And this is what I've been told all year. The Ukrainian counter-offensive is coming. They have tanks, they are going to have fighter jets. They have more sophisticated weaponry than ever, and they're gearing up to go and crash through those Russian defensive positions and take back Ukrainian territory. Now, anyone who's been following this and we've obviously been reporting on it a lot knows that the counteroffensive was a gigantic failure. Huge numbers of Ukrainians, and they're basically not fighting any longer with volunteers. They're fighting with conscripts, people who have tried fleeing the country only to find the borders are closed. They risk their lives on very treacherous tracks to get to Romania or Russia or anywhere out of Ukraine. A lot of them die, a lot of them are arrested. Zelensky's repeatedly impose greater and greater penalties on deserters because there are so many now. These are not the trained fighters from Azov. These are the ordinary citizens, students and teenagers who don't want to go to the front lines knowing they're being sent into these frontlines, these Russian positions and to be dismantled like meat, like cannon fodder. That's exactly what they're being used as. And a huge number and unspeakably tragic number of young Ukrainian men have died this year, including ones who've never wanted to fight in this war but were forced to.

And here in The New York Times today is a very useful, and I've had nothing but positive things to say about the reporting The New York Times did here although it's been obvious to have The New York Times come out and say it, illustration in graphic form. I think it's very helpful. There you see the report from today, the Ukraine war. Who's gaining ground in Ukraine? This year, no one. This year. We're in late September now, two nine full months into the war this year alone. All those deaths, those useless deaths of young lives extinguished. Hundreds of billions of dollars from Europe, from the US that could have been used to improve the lives of the citizens of those countries, but instead were used to fuel this war. Not one inch of meaningful ground has been gained in Ukraine. Who's gaining ground in Ukraine? Says the New York Times, asks The New York Times and the answer right here,

this year, no one. Although both sides have launched ambitious offensives, the front line has barely shifted. Frontline has barely shifted after 18 months of war. A breakthrough looks more difficult than ever. So what is the point at this point? Of continuing to send these young Ukrainian men to these front lines to be gunned down, to be destroyed by manless drones and missiles and artillery. For not even there to be a slight shift in the front line if you look at a map as we're about to do.

Here The New York Times says, quote, "Less territory changed hands in August than any other month of the war", according to a New York Times analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War. When both sides' gains are added up Russia now controls nearly 200 square miles more territory in Ukraine compared with the start of the war. So not only didn't this counteroffensive work to gain huge amounts of ground like we were promised, the side that has gained ground net is Russia? Not much, nearly 200 square miles. It's not trivial, but it's not a lot. But still, this counter-offensive resulted in Russia gaining ground, gaining territory and control over Ukraine, not losing it. Russia's forces outnumber Ukraine nearly 3 to 1 on the battlefield and with a larger population to replenish its ranks, Russia could see a prolonged defence as in its interests. Russia controls about 18% of Ukraine, a swath of land larger than Switzerland that includes Crimea and part of eastern Ukraine, which it has occupied since 2014. The slowdown comes with huge risks for Ukraine. If it looks unlikely to recapture large areas of the country, Western support could wane either through lack of political will or unwillingness to donate more weapons, especially given the years-long wait for deliveries of replacement equipment.

And here you see the graphic, and it is graphic in both senses of the term. So this pink here is Ukrainian land held by Russia. And this is all starting on January 1st of 2023, so nine months ago. This is the swath of territory of Ukraine. All of eastern Ukraine and southern Ukraine and then into Crimea that the Russians have been holding since January 2023 and still hold. The only land that Ukraine has gained in the last nine months of fighting, with hundreds of millions of dollars from the West and thousands and thousands of lives lost is represented by these tiny little blue dots. So here, here, here. Barely anything. A completely trivial amount. Just to show you here, so you see a little bit of gain here, a little bit of gain here, a little bit of gain here, a tiny bit of gain here. Just talking about feet and yards. Here is the Russian front line and it's barely moved since the start of the war. Hundreds of miles of deeply entrenched Russian positions, layers and layers of defensive, entrenched positions. Trenches and dragon's teeth and all sorts of things that just eat up Ukrainians and Ukrainian military equipment and Western military equipment. And the red parts here, which are slightly bigger though again, they're not very large, are the parts that Russia has gained. So you can see the swaths of territory Russia has gained since January of 2023 is bigger than the land that Ukraine has gained on that. But in general, it's been nine months of nothingness. This frontline is not moving.

And as The New York Times says, if anyone has an advantage, it's the Russians, because the Ukrainians have this gigantic disadvantage that is built in to the two countries that has been

there from the start of the war, which is Russia is just a much bigger country, a much bigger population, and therefore can have a much bigger source of young men to replenish the troops than Ukraine has. Ukraine is going to run out of soldiers. President Zelensky, that's the reason, issued a plea at the start of the war for young Western men who support the Ukrainian cause to please come to Ukraine. Don't sit on Twitter and online posting emojis of our flag. Come and help us fight, we'll give you free weapons. We need men, we need bodies to fight. He knew that would be the problem. And yet most Western people, Western men, including all the ones who have spent the last 18 months beating their chest and feeling powerful and strong because they're cheerleaders for the war decided it was nowhere near worth risking their own life for this war. They wanted to risk the lives of other people, of Ukrainians so that they could sit online and feel powerful and strong and accuse other people who didn't think this war was going to produce anything good of being weaklings and traitors. That's the point of this work: it gives purpose and meaning to people who cheerlead for it from a safe distance. And now you're at the point where the people who are fighting and dying in this war are no longer the gung ho volunteers, but are the people in Ukraine who just aren't fighters. And so the question becomes, what do you do?

And the answer is obvious, you sit down at the table with diplomats from around the world and you create a solution because no matter what you want to happen, no matter how much you wish that this swath of territory here that the Russians control would be back in the hands of Ukraine. It's not happening, It's just a fantasy. You have to live in reality. And this swath of land is not going anywhere, if anything it's likely to expand inward the longer this war goes on. So even though you might be angry and feel it's so unjust that the Russians now control 20% or 18% of Ukrainian territory, it's the reality. Russia's a much bigger and more powerful country than Ukraine is. And for as long as the West continues to be unwilling to fight in this war, and my guess is that will continue to be the case for good reason, not even the deranged fanatics in the West, outside of people like Timothy Snyder at Yale, think it's worth pursuing a nuclear war with Russia over who governs this part of Eastern Ukraine. Putin or warlords in Eastern Ukraine, or Zelensky in Kiev. As long as the West isn't willing to go fight this war, this war is lost from the perspective of Ukraine. That's the reality.

And for all the talk now, knowing that the only way to convince Americans is to say oh we're getting all these benefits, we're degrading the Russian army for a tiny price. We're just sending a bunch of Ukrainians to die. Who cares about them? Just let them keep dying. We're getting the benefits, we're degrading the Russian military from here. First of all, does it look like the Russian military is degraded to you having looked at that map? Because to me, it looks like they've been strengthened. They've learned from their mistakes. They understand how to fight. They have all the artillery they need. They're getting weapons from Iran and North Korea and everywhere else they need it from. They're manufacturing weapons and ammunition at a gigantic rate, far greater than we're capable of matching them. They have advantages on every level. Here from Le Monde you see the headline, Russia plans to increase its military budget by 70% in 2024. But classified government spending, which also

covers the exceptional compensation, is paid out to the families of dead soldiers, could also double. The time you hear about a Russian military that is not weakening at all, that was a lie.

It's a pleasant lie, it's nice to believe. It feels good to believe it, that we at least got something. But it's not true. The Russian military is stronger and more powerful than it was at the start of the war. That's what happens when countries militarise in a war that they regard as existential. They're willing to send their own soldiers to die in this war because they regard ensuring that Eastern Ukraine is free of NATO troops, NATO presence and Western operatives existential to their security. And they're willing to do anything to fight that war, and we are not. Because this war has never been of a vital interest to the West, which is why we should never have been fuelling it and fighting it in the first place. Just making it prolong, making it worse instead of trying to diplomatically pursue it and to now admit that the reason we're doing it is because we get all the benefits is grotesque. But at least there's finally candour. But the purpose of this war is not to defend Ukraine and protect Ukrainians. It's to sacrifice Ukraine and Ukrainians at the altar of our geostrategic interests that for whatever reason we've decided we have of destroying the Russian army. And that's not even working. Even though it's a sociopathic rationale for a war to send people to die. Yeah we're going to just send the Ukrainians to die in their country and it gets destroyed. At some point, we'll send in JP Morgan and Black Rock to rebuild it and profiteer off it. But until then, we'll just keep sending young Ukrainian men to die because we want to weaken the Russian army more when in fact the Russian army is strengthening.

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