

Zelensky Paranoid About the Military and Warns Commanders to Stay Out of Politics

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that military commanders and the political arena are not in the same space, demonstrating that his power is under threat, and not by Moscow, but from within his own ranks. This issue is only amplified by the fact that Zelensky's Western partners have slowly begun abandoning him, especially since the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7.

Ukraine's commander-in-chief of the General Staff, Valeriy Zaluzhny, has no war plan for 2024 and, therefore, must resign, said Verkhovna Rada deputy Maryana Bezuglaya, deputy head of the National Security Committee of the Verkhovna Rada. According to her, the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces could not provide a plan for 2024, stating only that the army should be replenished with at least 20,000 recruits per month, an impossible number.

"The current situation is that if the military leadership fails to present any ideas for 2024, and all its mobilisation proposals boil down to the fact that it is more people without the slightest proposal for change in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, then such leadership must leave," Bezuglaya said.

Her comments were preceded by statements Zelensky gave British tabloid The Sun on November 20, warning for Zaluzhny to stay out of politics.

"If a military man decided to do politics, it is his right, then he should enter politics and then he can't deal with war. If you manage war keeping in mind that tomorrow you will do politics or elections, then in your words and on the front line you behave as a politician and not as a military man, and I think that is a huge mistake," the Ukrainian president told the outlet.

According to The Sun, there are rumours that Zaluzhny will be a potential rival to Zelensky if he decides to pursue a political career.

“With all the respect to General Zaluzhny and to all the commanders who are on the battlefield, there is an absolute understanding of the hierarchy and that is it, and there can’t be two, three, four, five. It is one, in accordance with the law and in times of war this can’t even be discussed. That does not lead to the unity of the nation,” said the Ukrainian president.

Still, in Zelensky’s view, military personnel entering politics has been taking place in the country since 2014:

“Various political forces are pushing the military into politics. It was after 2014 when each political party wanted some military personnel and war stars, and I believe this was a big mistake.”

General Zaluzhny stated earlier this month that the conflict with Russia was at an impasse and that a breakthrough was unlikely.

He wrote [in the Economist](#) on November 1 that “the war is now moving to a new stage” and that “what we in the military call ‘positional’ warfare or static and attritional fighting, as in the First World War, in contrast to the ‘maneuver’ warfare of movement and speed” is now the norm and admitted that “There will most likely be no breakthrough.”

Zelensky, in the Sun, responded to Zaluzhny by saying,

“In the morale, there is no stalemate. We are at our home. Russians are on our land. Therefore there is no stalemate.”

The general enjoys widespread popularity in Ukraine – his supporters even stencilled his portrait in cities that the Ukrainian military recaptured from Russia last year. His words have influence. For this reason, Zelensky fears the repercussions of Zaluzhny revealing the actual situation in the conflict and, even more dangerously, pursuing a political career and taking complete state power.

Zelensky has recently sacked one of Zaluzhny’s deputies in charge of special forces, showing that the Ukrainian president is slowly trying to weaken the general’s power and influence.

Ukraine’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SZRU) announced on November 17 the sacking of Oleksandr Tarasovsky as deputy head of the Foreign Intelligence Service. The reasons for his dismissal were not specified in Decree No. 757/2023. It cannot be overlooked that Tarasovsky’s sacking came only one day after Zelensky told journalists that several intelligence agencies had informed him about campaigns to destabilise his government.

In recent weeks, the Ukrainian president’s clashes with other authorities in Kiev have become public. It was reported that Zelensky fears a civil uprising against his government along the lines of the Maidan protests that ousted one of his predecessors, Viktor Yanukovich.

Effectively, Zelensky is battling to stay in power in the face of internal and external pressure

to end the war with Russia, which will mean acknowledging the loss of territory. Zelensky even cancelled the 2024 presidential elections despite protests from Washington, which sees the democratic process as a condition to continue selling its financial support for Ukraine to the American public.

It is recalled that the Biden administration's latest request to send \$61.4 billion in aid to Ukraine has not yet been approved. [An NBC poll](#) released on November 19 showed that US President Joe Biden's approval rating has declined to 40%, the lowest level of his presidency, with most voters disapproving of his handling of foreign policy. These US domestic concerns will naturally have an impact on support for Ukraine, which is already being seen through the 30% drop in US artillery shell deliveries to Ukraine since October 7, the day Hamas unleashed its brutal attack on Israel, as revealed by a Ukrainian official to ABC News on November 21.

The Ukrainian president is desperately trying to maintain power in the face of threats and pressures domestically and abroad. With US support for Ukraine slowly diminishing in favour of Israel and mounting domestic backlash, it will only naturally reverberate badly on Zelensky's ability to continue a costly and futile war against Russia. Although diminished US support weakens Ukraine's ability to wage war, it will strengthen Zelensky's potential detractors, including Zaluzhny.

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Featured image: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky delivers an address in Kiev, Ukraine, April 15, 2022. (Credit: Ukrainian Presidency)

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