

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Ricardo Martins

25.04.2025

Victory Day Is Coming: Will Europe Celebrate?

Eighty years after Nazi Germany's defeat, Europe faces a dilemma: how — and where — to commemorate Victory Day without distorting history. As Moscow prepares its parade, the EU warns allies to stay away — but does this stance risk rewriting the past?



As 9 May 2025 approaches, the world marks the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany and the liberation of Europe. But this year's Victory Day, traditionally celebrated in Moscow with grand military parades, has become a diplomatic fault line.

For the European Union, remembering history is no longer just about the past — it's about present choices and future consequences. Should Europe mark the defeat of fascism alongside Russia? Or does attending Moscow's celebration today amount to legitimising a regime waging war in Ukraine?

What Is Victory Day — and Why Does It Matter?

Rather than rewriting or suppressing history, Europe should embrace its complexity

Victory Day commemorates the end of World War II in Europe, when Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally late at night on 8 May 1945. For Europeans, it symbolises liberation from one of the darkest chapters of the 20th century — genocide, dictatorship, and mass destruction. The memory of this event remains a foundational pillar of European post-war identity, intertwined with the lessons of anti-fascism, reconciliation, and multilateralism. Remembering Victory Day is not just about historical reflection; it's a civic and moral act. As the generation of survivors disappears, public memory is all that remains to remind societies of the dangers of ideological extremism, state terror, and militarism.

The Soviet Union played a decisive role in defeating the Nazi regime, with its troops entering Berlin and seizing the Nazi headquarters on 2 May 1945. The Soviets bore the brunt of Nazi aggression. Roughly 27 million Soviet citizens died during WWII — military and civilian — far more than any other Allied nation. The Eastern Front was the bloodiest theatre of the war, and the Red Army played a decisive role in defeating Hitler.

Why 8 May in Europe and 9 May in Russia?

Germany's unconditional surrender was signed late on 8 May 1945. Due to the time difference, it was already 9 May in Moscow, which is why Russia and many post-Soviet states mark Victory Day a day later than Western countries. For Russians, it is a sacred national holiday — a day of mourning and pride for the 27 million Soviet citizens who perished during the war.

In contrast, 8 May in Western Europe is a more subdued day of remembrance. In France, the UK, and elsewhere, ceremonies are often solemn, lacking the military grandeur associated with Moscow's parades. In recent decades, the EU has also placed increasing symbolic weight on 6 June — D-Day — to emphasise the Western Allies' role in liberating Europe.

Why Is the EU Warning Against Celebrating in Moscow?

On 14 April, during a press conference following the meeting of EU foreign ministers and representatives of aspiring member states, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas issued a stern message: EU candidate countries should **not attend** Russia's Victory Day celebrations in Moscow. "We made it very clear that we don't want any [EU] candidate country to participate in these events on 9 May in Moscow," Kallas stated, warning that doing so would not be "taken lightly" by the bloc.

The message was aimed particularly at the Western Balkan countries in EU accession talks, as well as Serbia and Slovakia. Ukrainian diplomats, meanwhile, have urged European leaders to celebrate the day in Kyiv instead, positioning Ukraine as the modern defender of European values against Russia's aggression.

Is the EU Rewriting History by Avoiding Victory Day?

This is where the debate intensifies. Critics argue that by boycotting Moscow's Victory Day, the EU risks sanitising or even erasing the role the Soviet Union played in defeating Nazi Germany. The Red Army was instrumental in the liberation of Auschwitz, the siege of Berlin, and much of Eastern Europe, often at a devastating human cost.

The EU's increasingly cautious approach to commemorating Soviet contributions has been further politicised by its 2019 resolution equating Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia as co-responsible for the outbreak of WWII due to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. While factually grounded, the resolution was viewed by some historians as overly simplistic and politically motivated, undermining the USSR's role as a liberator and conflating it with its role as an aggressor.

In January 2024, the European Parliament went further by adopting a resolution calling for a new “shared culture of remembrance,” prioritising European over national historical narratives. Critics say this dilutes historical complexity and risks turning history into a political tool.

Does This Benefit Far-Right Revisionism?

Some commentators argue that distancing from the memory of the Soviet victory over Nazism may inadvertently empower extremist narratives. In parts of Eastern Europe, monuments honouring Soviet soldiers have been dismantled; in Ukraine, Russia accuses nationalist battalions, such as Azov, of glorifying nazi collaborators from the WWII era, such as Stepan Bandera.

By prohibiting EU member-states and candidate countries from attending Moscow's celebration, is the EU aligning itself with a selective memory that overlooks uncomfortable truths? Or is it making a moral stand against Russia's war in Ukraine?

The answer is far from simple. On one hand, the Kremlin's rhetoric about “denazifying Ukraine” has been rejected in the West. On the other hand, Europe must avoid whitewashing its own complex past, including the collaborationist regimes in France, Hungary, Croatia, and elsewhere, and the immense Soviet contribution to defeating fascism.

It is not D-Day, but Victory Day that marks the final collapse of the Third Reich. The capture of Berlin by Soviet troops was the conclusive military event leading to Nazi Germany's surrender.

What Do Europeans Think?

Public opinion appears divided. Some citizens argue, like academic YB, that the Red Army's contribution deserves recognition “first and foremost,” regardless of Russia's current policies.

Others, like a British commentator, caution that celebrating alongside Putin would be morally inconsistent, given his authoritarian regime and military actions in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, voices from both ends of the political spectrum accuse the West of historical hypocrisy — either for overlooking Soviet sacrifices or for using history selectively to maintain geopolitical dominance.

What Are the Dangers and the Way Forward?

The biggest risk is not just historical amnesia, but the instrumentalisation of history — using it as a tool for political validation or exclusion. When shared memory fragments into national myths or geopolitical agendas, Europe risks losing its moral compass and its unity.

Rather than rewriting or suppressing history, Europe should embrace its complexity: honour both the Red Army — which captured the Nazi German capital and suffered the highest human losses — and the Western Allies; confront uncomfortable truths; and reaffirm opposition to all forms of totalitarianism, past and present.

As Europe commemorates 80 years since the end of the Nazi regime, the real question is not **where** we celebrate, but **how** we remember — and whether we do so with honesty, humility, and historical integrity.

Recognising Victory Day, even in Moscow, could be a gesture of historical balance and reconciliation, especially when avoiding Cold War-era ideological biases.

[Ricardo Martins](#), April 24, 2025

Ricardo Martins –PhD in Sociology, specializing in policies, European and world politics and geopolitics