

# INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

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## Topics:

- Ukraine – European Union
- Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine
- The course of the Russian-Ukrainian war



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(15.03 – 31.03.2023)

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■ **THEME ANALYSIS: Europe is re-arming realizing the Russian military threat**



*Photo: War criminal V. Putin's speech to the participants of Munich Security Conference 2007  
Source: POLITICO*

On March 17, 2023, the Pre-Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights. The President of the Russian Federation and the Russian President's Commissioner for Children's Rights allegedly responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population (children) and that of unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

This decision has a number of consequences for the head of the Kremlin. **First**, the **delegitimization of Putin's regime** is taking place. The President of the Russian Federation was officially suspected of committing war crimes. This, in turn, should affect his position in the international arena. First of all, Putin's reputation will affect his contacts with liberal democracies. The leaders of Germany and France have been pushing Ukraine to negotiate with the Russian Federation for years. After the full-scale invasion and crimes committed by the Russian occupation forces, Olaf Scholz and Emmanuel Macron kept hope for future peace with Russia. Now, calls for negotiations with the war criminal may hit the image of the leaders of democratic countries, and therefore, the option of returning to relations with European states may be closed for Putin. **The second consequence** follows from the first one – the decision of the ICC is a signal to the Russian elites. **Russia has no future with Vladimir Putin** and if Russia wants to return to the community of civilized states, the war criminal Vladimir Putin must be extradited to face punishment. **The third consequence** is the

continuation of the process of *bringing to justice persons involved in war crimes committed in Ukraine*. Ukrainian diplomacy is doing large-scale work with the aim of bringing Russian servicemen and the Russian leadership to justice. One of the latest initiatives in this direction was the Bucha Summit, an event aimed at reminding the world of Russian crimes and sending a signal that all those involved in the murders of Ukrainians will be punished. Likewise, *the ICC warrant is a reminder to Vladimir Putin that his decision to launch a full-scale invasion against Ukraine will not be forgotten and he will no longer be able to avoid responsibility for his crime*.

Now Vladimir Putin should be arrested upon arrival in one of the 123 countries of the world that have ratified the Rome Statute. Obviously, not all countries will dare to take such a step. After the statement of the ICC representatives, even Russia's partner countries, such as South Africa and Brazil, did not give a clear answer as to whether they would arrest Vladimir Putin in the event of his arrival. They probably won't do it, especially if the topic of the Russian president's responsibility will not be further actively covered in the information space. However, the leaders of these countries will now be less willing to consider the possibility of meeting with the war criminal Putin.

**China, on the contrary, may even positively consider the decision of the ICC.** First, the PRC is not a signatory of the Rome Statute, and this did not affect China's attitude toward the Russian president. **Secondly**, the CCP leadership can once again claim double standards on the part of Western structures and play on anti-American sentiments. **Third**, and most importantly, a weakened, isolated and more controlled Vladimir Putin is beneficial to Xi Jinping. Officially, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China stated that when issuing warrants for the arrest of heads of state, the ICC must adhere to an objective and impartial position, respect the immunity of heads of state from jurisdiction under international law, prudently perform its functions, properly interpret and apply international - legal norms, avoid politicization and double standards. Thus, the PRC has traditionally condemned the "West" and supported the war criminal Vladimir Putin.

*The United States of America did not express an unambiguous position.* Joe Biden emphasized that the ICC warrant for Putin's arrest makes a strong point and is a justified step, which does not confirm the intention to arrest Putin. Anthony Blinken answered a journalist's question that in his opinion, everyone who is a member of the International Criminal Court and has certain obligations should fulfill their obligations, while reminding that the USA is not a member of the ICC.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators are urging Biden to support the ICC's investigation into Russia's war crimes in Ukraine. That means, in the United States there are political groups inclined to a tougher approach to the Russian president. The Biden administration, however, is taking a more cautious approach.

*European countries took a more decisive position.* In addition to the traditionally determined pro-Ukrainian Eastern European states, Germany expressed its intention to detain the president of the Russian Federation in the event of his arrival. The Federal Minister of Justice of Germany, Marko Buschmann, confirmed that Germany will execute an arrest warrant for Russian dictator.

A significant point is that the conclusion of the International Criminal Court indicated that Putin is suspected of committing a war crime in the form of illegal deportation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Блінкен сказав, чи заарештують Путіна в США, 22.03.2023, URL: <https://hromadske.radio/news/2023/03/22/blinken-skazav-chy-zareshtuiut-putina-v-ssha>

population (children) and illegal transfer of the population (children) from the occupied territories of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.<sup>2</sup> Such actions violate the provisions of the 1948 Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide. At the same time, on March 16, 2023, the UN Independent International Commission to Investigate Violations in Ukraine published a report that indicated numerous war crimes committed by the Russians, but not genocide. The commission indicated that they found no evidence of genocide.

Thus, the International Criminal Court is starting a case against Putin because of actions that the so-called UN independent commission has not seen. This is a demonstrative example of the ineffectiveness and corruption of major international organizations, as well as the incompetence of many employees of these structures. **The commission's conclusion demonstrates the moral decline of Western institutions.** Such a situation is certainly unfavorable for Ukraine. Where the non-governmental sector could contribute to ensuring human rights, there are currently attempts to take a stand of an artificial "neutrality" and ***equates the victim with the aggressor.*** "Whataboutism" has become extremely popular, when representatives of international organizations accuse Ukraine's partners of supporting the country and try to change the focus of their attention to other international problems. A vivid example was the situation with Amnesty International, which repeatedly accused Ukrainian defenders of self-defense and Ukraine's international partners for "double standards" due to allegedly insufficient attention to the problems of the Middle East, Africa and Asia. In such conditions, ***one of the tasks of Ukrainian diplomacy became dispelling the negative narratives of international organizations that position themselves as "human rights defenders", as well as countering their attempts to divert the attention of the international community from Ukraine.***

In general, according to the Office of the Prosecutor General, the deportation of more than 16,000 Ukrainian children from the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions was recorded. At the same time, it is noted that the real figure may be much higher.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the terrible crimes committed by the Russian occupiers during the full-scale invasion. The decision of the ICC demonstrates the irreversibility of the punishment for Vladimir Putin, sends a signal to the Russian elites about the impossibility of restoring ties under the conditions of Putin's rule, and increases the isolation of the Russian dictator. This is another step towards the restoration of justice, which is one of the conditions for ending the war and achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the country. At the same time, ***the ICJ's decision is only an intermediate stage.*** Firstly, bringing Putin to The Hague without regime change in Russia is extremely unlikely. Secondly, the issue of the return of Ukrainian children remains unresolved. **Child abduction is an attempt to steal the future from the state, so joint efforts of the government, non-governmental sector and international partners are needed to return these children. People are the greatest value that Ukraine has and we must fight for them.**

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<sup>2</sup> Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, Press Release: 17 March 2023, URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and>

<sup>3</sup> Судді Міжнародного кримінального суду (МКС) видали ордери на арешт президента росії Володимира Путіна та російської дитячої омбудсменки Марії Львової-Белової, 17.03.2023, URL: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/3683849-miznarodnij-kriminalnij-sud-vidav-order-na-arrest-putina.html>

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Why didn't Xi Jinping's online conversation with V. Zelenskyy take place after the Moscow meeting of the leaders of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation?*



*Photo: Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping  
Source: BBC*

On March 20, a meeting between the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, and the Leader of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, took place in the Kremlin. The meeting took place after the ICC announced the issuance of an arrest warrant for the head of the Kremlin. However, predictably, such a move by an international institution did not make adjustments in China's attitude towards Moscow.

The People's Republic of China intends to further deepen relations with the Russian Federation, as evidenced by 14 documents adopted as a result of the meeting. Most commentators emphasized China's reluctance to get involved in the war on the side of the Russian Federation and its unwillingness to cooperate to the extent Moscow would like. However, Xi and Putin apparently also discussed military-technical cooperation, and the PRC probably agreed to help Russia.

China is building up its food reserves. Also recently, Xi Jinping gathered the heads of companies producing cars and gave instructions to fully switch to the use of domestic chips in production, despite the inferior quality compared to imported counterparts. However, **China's main goal in the coming years will be to prepare for a war over Taiwan.** Therefore, such steps, in addition to the PLA modernization plan until 2027, logically fit into

the Chinese strategy. Thus, the PRC wants to protect itself from dependence on the US and the EU and avoid problems in the event of the introduction of sanctions.

**In the conditions of confrontation with the USA, China will increasingly help Moscow in Russia's war against Ukraine.** President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly expressed his desire to meet with the leader of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping. Despite this, Chinese high-ranking officials continue to ignore the proposals of Ukrainian diplomacy, and Xi Jinping personally avoids meetings and telephone conversations with Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Before the visit of the head of the People's Republic of China to Moscow, information appeared in the media about a possible telephone conversation between the leaders of China and the country after Xi Jinping's meeting with Putin. However, this did not happen. ***China does not want Russia to lose the war with Ukraine. The Peace Formula proposed by Volodymyr Zelenskyy does not suit Beijing,*** because it involves the full restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, will be considered a capitulation which for Russia. Therefore, after the Moscow meeting, the conversation between the presidents of China and Ukraine did not take place. The PRC will promote its scenario of ending the Russian-Ukrainian war. At the same time, the Chinese plan was probably mildly rejected by the Russians. Therefore, **Xi Jinping, not agreeing to the Ukrainian initiative, could not propose his plan in a conversation with the President of Ukraine**

In public, Russia officially confirmed that the Chinese peace plan can be taken as a basis for a peaceful settlement. This plan envisages a cease-fire as soon as possible, and therefore, the fixation of the territories captured by Russia. Although the PRC declares the principle of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, Chinese diplomacy interprets it in a way that is useful for itself based on its own national interests. One of the main such interests is **China's formation of an anti-Western bloc, which is impossible without Russia.**

China will try to secure the support of as many non-Western countries as possible, as well as negotiate with the Western allies of the United States of America. Currently, Ukraine is dependent on its partners. At the same time, European states were significantly affected economically by the Russian war. If China dares to raise rates, the Asian country may try to put pressure on European states to encourage Ukraine to comply with China's offer. Currently, however, such a scenario is unlikely, and most European states clearly support Ukraine and the Ukrainian Peace Formula. At the same time, the further course of events may be affected by the results of the counter-offensive that Ukraine is preparing. The mood with which the Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sanchez came to Xi Jinping was indicative. The head of the Spanish government repeatedly emphasized before the trip that he was going to call on Xi Jinping to support the Ukrainian Peace Formula. After Pedro Sanchez, Emmanuel Macron will visit Beijing in April. The question remains whether the leaders of the People's Republic of China and France will find common ground on the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian war and whether Xi Jinping will not convince his French counterpart that the cessation of hostilities and the conclusion of a peace agreement as soon as possible is the best way to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian war.

For now, **China is likely to try to influence the balance of power on the battlefield.** China may try to demonstrate to the Europeans that further support of Ukraine is hopeless. If the People's Republic of China, with its resources, becomes more involved in the Russian-Ukrainian war on the side of the Russian Federation, the EU member states may change their approach and pressure Ukraine to make peace with Russia on any terms. In such conditions,

due to China's intervention, Ukraine will find itself in an extremely difficult situation, because Russia will be able to continue the war of attrition.

**The problem also lies in the fact that the partner countries of Ukraine have not finally decided on the fact that Ukraine should win.** A large amount of equipment and means that Ukraine needs in the offensive is still not transferred to the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This applies to medium-range missiles, as well as aviation. The USA and the EU should finally define the victory of Ukraine as their strategic goal. Instead, the danger remains that their current goal is only to help the country survive. **If Ukraine does not receive the necessary means for a counter-offensive, with a high probability, the partner states and Ukraine may find themselves in worse conditions six months from now than they are in currently.** If we give Russia time to strengthen its defense positions and train new recruits, Russia will be able to survive under the conditions of material and technical assistance from China. Thus, NATO's **eastern flank would remain under threat from an aggressive Russia.** In the future, the Black Sea would be half controlled by the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation. Security in Europe will not be restored, just like Ukraine, because no one will invest in the state if the war is not ended and the security architecture of the region is not restored. In the medium term, Russia can still achieve its own goals: to weaken Ukraine demographically and economically, to ensure the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, including land corridor to Peninsula.

Countries of the Global South also seem likely to support the Chinese vision, which poses additional challenges. Saudi Arabia moved closer to the SCO, acquiring the status of a dialogue partner on the day of the Summit for Democracies hosted by the United States of America. A little later, the reduction of oil production by the Arabian monarchy and other OPEC members was announced. Saudi Arabia did what the US expected it to do, however, exactly the opposite. The question remains: what position will the other countries of the Group of Nineteen (G20 - the Russian Federation) choose in the future, and it seems that the USA and the Allies will have to do a lot of diplomatic work to avoid further pro-Russian movement within this association outside the boundaries of liberal democratic societies.

**Currently, however, extremely negative trends are observed. If the US and the EU do not give Ukraine the means it needs to liberate the entire territory of Ukraine in the coming months, there is a danger that non-Western powers will take an anti-Ukrainian step to establish the status quo in Ukraine and force peace on Russian (Chinese) terms.**





Source: Army FM

#### ■ *Changes at the front*

**Ukraine and Russia have reached a tactical balance on the front. The question remains, who will have the strategic advantage?**

Russian troops conducted limited ground attacks on the Svatove-Kreminna line, near settlement Dibrova, Hryhorivka, Belogorivka, Verkhokamianske, Spirne and Makiivka. *There were no significant changes in the front line in this direction, the Russian troops did not manage to achieve a significant advance.*

*In the Bakhmut direction*, the Russian Federation is trying to take full control of the city of Bakhmut. Fighting continues in the city center. According to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Ukraine, if Ukrainian troops in Bakhmut are threatened by the encirclement, a decision will be made to withdraw units from the city. Also, Russia is conducting offensive actions in the area of Bohdanivka and Ivanivske.

*On the Avdiivka and Mariinka directions*, the enemy carried out offensive actions in the Novokalynove, Severne, Pervomaiske and Mariinka districts of the Donetsk region, without success. At the same time, the enemy shelled the settlements of Novobakhmutivka, Novokalynove, Avdiivka, Vodyane, Pervomaiske, Krasnohorivka, Georgiivka, and Maryinka.

Shelling of Ukrainian positions continues in the *Vuhledar direction*. At the moment, the Russian Federation is not trying to advance towards Vuhledar.

*In the southern direction*, the occupying forces continue to strengthen their defensive positions.

## ■ *Military assistance*

In the second half of March, it became known about the transfer of the following weapons to Ukraine:

### **Poland:**

- MiG 29 (4 units)
- Self-propelled anti-aircraft gun -23-4 "Shilka"

### **France:**

- AMX-10RC

### **Canada:**

- BREM Bergepanzer 3

### **USA:**

- Avenger air defense system
- Oshkosh M-ATV
- patrol boats "40 Defiant"
- Cougar armored vehicles
- Stryker armored personnel carrier

### **Slovakia:**

- SAM "Kub"
- MiG 29 (4 units)

### **Belgium:**

- 240 Volvo military trucks

### **FRG:**

- missiles for MARS II anti-aircraft missiles

- 5 thousand 155 mm caliber artillery shells
- 500 SFP9 pistols
- two forklifts
- four mobile antenna-mast systems
- two hangar awnings
- 25 generators
- BMP Marder
- Pionierpanzer Dachs engineering vehicles (3 units)
- 70 MG3 machine guns for Leopard 2 tanks

**Lithuania:**

- 155 mm caliber ammunition

**Portugal:**

- Leopard 2A6 tanks (3 units)

**Norway:**

- Leopard 2A4NO tanks (8 units)
- Bergepanzer 2 armored repair and evacuation vehicles (2 units)
- Engineering vehicles NM189 Ingeniorpanservogn (2 units)

**Finland:**

- Leopard 2R armored demining vehicles (6 units)

**United Kingdom:**

- Challenger 2 tanks

The US approved a new aid package, which included: ammunition for the HIMARS multiple-launch rocket systems; 155 mm caliber artillery shells; 25 mm caliber ammunition; high-speed anti-radar missiles (HARM); 81-mm and 60-mm mortars and ammunition for

them; AT-4 anti-tank grenade launchers; grenade launchers, small arms and ammunition for them; explosive charges and equipment for clearing obstacles; demining equipment; refueling stations; thermal imaging systems, optical devices and laser rangefinders; river patrol boats; test and diagnostic equipment for maintenance and repair of vehicles; spare parts and other field equipment.

Source: Mil.ua

#### ■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Currently, ***the strategic initiative remains with the Russian Federation, however, the Russians do not have a strategic advantage.*** The further course of the Russian-Ukrainian war will depend on which of the parties will be able to concentrate more forces and resources. Ukraine has no aviation and long-range missiles, which postpones a counteroffensive due to a lack of means to conduct an offensive operation. Ukraine depends on the help of partners, but until now this help has not been enough. At the same time, the Russian Federation is trying to restore forces by mobilizing an additional 400,000 people. Therefore, in conditions of equilibrium, both sides try to tilt the scales in their favor, to ensure the strengthening of their own capabilities, or to divert the strengthening of the opponent. ***The Russian Federation is resorting to blackmailing Ukraine's partners, as in the case of British shells made of depleted uranium.*** These projectiles have nothing to do with nuclear weapons, however, Russian nuclear rhetoric intensified after the announcement of Great Britain's intentions to transfer these projectiles to the Armed Forces. In this way, Russia is trying to divert the strengthening of the Ukrainian army due to more effective weapons.

Ukraine has not yet received enough weapons for an effective counter-offensive in several directions. ***In addition to the reluctance to transfer more modern aircraft and longer-range missiles, military assistance is limited by the capabilities of NATO member states.*** The stocks of the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance are running out, and replacement with more modern equipment takes time. As NATO countries order new ones to replace older models, their complete rearmament is a matter of time. ***The war in Ukraine, however, is in full swing and Ukraine needs weapons here and now.*** Therefore, in order to defeat Russia, the United States and the Allies must launch their military-industrial complex at a greater power. An increase in the resources received by the Defense Forces of Ukraine can tip the balance in the struggle for strategic advantage in favor of Ukraine.