

# INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

№7 01.05.2023-15.05.2023

## Topics:

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

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### ■ *THEME ANALYSIS: Will Northern Europe live up to V. Zelensky's hopes?*



*Photo: Office of the President of Ukraine*

At the beginning of May, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky paid a visit to Finland. During his trip, the leader of Ukraine took part in the Nordic-Ukrainian summit and held a number of bilateral meetings with representatives of the Nordic states. The main topics for discussion were military aid, in particular, the creation of an "aviation coalition", the issue of punishment of war criminals, as well as compensation for damage caused by Russia.

At first glance, Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Finland may seem unexpected, since most of the foreign trips of the President of Ukraine made to the leading countries of the Euro-Atlantic space and those states providing the largest volumes of aid: the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Poland, France. However, the current geopolitical realities on the continent point to the growing role of the Scandinavian countries. As John Chipman, director of the IISS think tank, noted, the balance of power in has tilted to the East with the Franco-German partnership having to accommodate the interests of states on the front line of the bloc. "It's the Nordics and Baltic states, now united almost in a single strategic theatre with the Poles and Czechs, that will determine European security priorities and continue to insist on an important response to Russia's invasion,"<sup>1</sup> the scientist said.

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<sup>1</sup> Faultline opened by Ukraine war forces new global relationships, 05.12.2022, URL: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2022/12/05/faultline-opened-by-ukraine-war-forces-new-global-relationships/>

With the accession of Finland and the future accession of Sweden to NATO, the Baltic Sea has become an internal lake of the Alliance. The countries of the region will feel more protected, while Russia has somewhat lost its dominant position compared to the Baltic countries. The entry into the North Atlantic Alliance of Sweden and Finland can encourage the Nordic countries to a more active foreign policy, as the officially established alliance obligations place on these countries a greater responsibility for security on the continent, which will benefit all NATO countries and Ukraine.

Scandinavian countries are reliable partners of Ukraine. These states consistently provide political support within international platforms, economic assistance, and have already demonstrated their readiness to provide Ukraine with the necessary military support. For example, before President Zelenskyy's visit, Finland provided 15 packages of military aid worth almost one billion euros. During the meeting of the leaders of Ukraine and Finland, the preparation of the next, 16th defense package was announced.

Ukraine also receives significant support from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In the spring of 2023, the Danish government decided to create a fund in the amount of 1 billion dollars for military, civil and business assistance to Ukraine. The main part of the funds - more than 767 million dollars - will be directed to military aid.<sup>2</sup> In April, the country's leadership also promised to supply Ukraine with 19 Caesar self-propelled guns. In addition, together with Germany and the Netherlands, Denmark promised to provide the Armed Forces with at least 100 German Leopard 1 battle tanks. Norway, in turn, only in recent months in particular provided 8 Leopard 2 tanks, together with Great Britain, the country undertook to transfer to Ukraine 8 M270 long-range anti-aircraft missile system and 3 ARTHUR artillery guidance radars. Also during his visit to Norway, Verkhovna Rada Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk announced that Ukraine will receive more NASAMS air defense systems. The contribution of the Scandinavian states is smaller than that of the leading countries, but they have demonstrated their willingness to transfer high-tech samples of equipment. The total cost of national aid packages from the countries of Northern Europe, provided to Ukraine since February 2022, is approximately 4.4 billion euros.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy probably expects that the countries of Northern Europe can also play a certain role in creating an aviation coalition. Norway has sold its last 32 F-16 fighter jets to Romania at the end of 2022. The F-16 manufactured by Lockheed Martin is the most massive aircraft of the fourth generation, and it is precisely these aircraft that Ukraine hopes to receive. Denmark still has them in service. The country, at least, can contribute to the training of Ukrainian pilots.

Sweden is a producer of its own fighter jets. Even before the full-scale invasion, Swedish Gripen aircraft were considered in Ukraine as a possible option for strengthening the Ukrainian air force. Now, in the face of a full-scale invasion and a critical need for more modern fighters to protect Ukrainian skies and conduct effective counter-offensive actions, the Ukrainian leadership is looking for all possible options to strengthen the capabilities of the domestic air force. Gripen, in this regard, could become a high-quality addition to the

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<sup>2</sup> Даниї підготувала ЗСУ дев'ятий пакет допомоги, 15.03.2023,  
URL: <https://mil.in.ua/uk/news/daniya-pidgotuvala-zsu-dev-yatyj-paket-dopomogy/>

fighters available in Ukraine, but currently, the Swedish leadership has rejected the possibility of supplying them to Ukraine. Similarly, the leadership of Finland refused to supply its own planes: President Sauli Niinisto mentioned two reasons, firstly, Finland will not be able to hand over its Hornet fighters to Ukraine until it receives a replacement for them, as it needs to protect its territory from the Russian Federation. And secondly, the transfer of the F-18 Hornet will require, according to the head of Finland, the creation of many structures for maintenance, if Ukraine also receives fighters of another type, which could be problematic.

Cooperation in the military-technical sphere is important, however, the *Euro-Atlantic path* remains no less important for Ukraine. In the context of the opening of negotiations on accession to the European Union, the position of the Scandinavian countries is of great importance. Denmark and Sweden belong to the so-called "frugal four" group, which previously opposed the increase of the EU budget and sought a balance between free trade and protectionism.<sup>3</sup> 2 other states of this group: the Netherlands and Austria are close partners of Sweden and Denmark. The rapprochement of Ukraine's position with the Scandinavian states can positively affect the position of other EU states in the context of Ukraine's potential accession.

Their support for Ukraine's accession to NATO is equally important. At a meeting in Helsinki on May 3, 2023, the presidents of Ukraine and Finland and the prime ministers of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden signed a joint statement in which they supported Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, *however, they avoided clear wording regarding the prospect of Ukraine's full membership in NATO and the EU in a short-term perspective*. The states indicated that they will continue to support Ukraine in its efforts to implement the reform process and in meeting the requirements necessary for the earliest possible start of negotiations on accession to the EU. In the context of NATO, the states refer to the open door policy and the decision of the Bucharest Summit in 2008, expressing their intention to support Ukraine on its way to future membership. **That is, they limited themselves to trivial traditional assurances that Ukrainians have been hearing for more than a quarter of a century.**

However, next to these insignificant assurances, they had to admit that until the acquisition of full membership, the security of Ukraine is of great importance for the Alliance. This thesis indicates a change in the perception of Ukraine as a buffer state between NATO and Russia and the understanding of Northern European countries that the security of Ukraine and Europe is indivisible. The states of Northern Europe, however, did not dare to clearly express the position that Ukraine should become a member of NATO, as the CEE countries did. Probably, the position of the countries of Northern Europe regarding the potential membership of Ukraine in NATO has not yet been determined and will be finally agreed closer to the NATO summit in Vilnius. **It also means their interest is keeping**

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<sup>3</sup> Catharina Sørensen, How the frugal four could grow in number and influence, 7 September 2020, European council on foreign relations, URL: [https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_how\\_the\\_frugal\\_four\\_could\\_grow\\_in\\_number\\_and\\_influence/](https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_the_frugal_four_could_grow_in_number_and_influence/)

**Ukraine in a buffer zone, using the country as an outpost of NATO's eastern flank, but outside of its collective defense.**

At the same time, the Nordic countries expressed a clear position on the issues of **restoring justice and rebuilding Ukraine**. The states expressed their support for the initiative to create a Special Tribunal for the crime of Russian aggression against Ukraine and emphasized their firm commitment to bring to justice those guilty of war and other brutal crimes. The statement also indicated that Nordic countries are encouraging other states to join and build international support for the creation of the tribunal. Considering the soft power of the countries of Northern Europe, their position can have a positive effect on the involvement of other states in the implementation of justice against Russian criminals. The countries confirmed their intention to further increase collective sanctions pressure on Russia, to intensify efforts to ensure the effective implementation of sanctions, prevention and countermeasures against circumvention of sanctions in and by third countries. Maintaining and strengthening the sanctions regime is tied to Russia's ability to continue the war.

In addition, states will work with others to develop mechanisms to compensate for losses, injuries and damages caused by Russian aggression. An important milestone for this is the international damage register, which was presented at the Council of Europe summit in Reykjavík. "The states will continue to explore appropriate options for the financing of a compensation mechanism, including a sound legal basis for the use of frozen and immobilized Russian assets, to support Ukraine's reconstruction and for the purposes of reparation", the document states.

The support of the Nordic countries is an important component of Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression. The intensity of international visits between Ukraine and Northern European countries is very high. The states of the format provide an important political, economic and humanitarian support to Ukraine, and also take an active part in reconstruction. Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit is important for strengthening relations between Ukraine and the Nordic countries, which with the entry of Sweden and Finland will play an even greater role in ensuring European security. However, ***the joint statement adopted as the result of the event could have been more ambitious***. On the one hand, Ukraine received assurances of maintaining comprehensive support on such important issues as the creation of a special tribunal, payment of reparations, sanctions, continuation of military aid, as well as ensuring the widest possible international participation in the implementation of the Ukrainian Peace Formula and in the Global Peace Summit. On the other hand, the wording regarding the future membership of Ukraine in the EU and NATO does not contain ambitious points often expressed by the leaders of the CEE states. On the eve of the summit in Vilnius, Ukraine needs the widest possible support from NATO member states. **The countries of the Euro-Atlantic space already understand the indivisibility of Ukrainian security from the European one. However, the main step remains to be taken - to integrate Ukraine into the system of collective security.**

- *THEME ANALYSIS: A truce in exchange for security guarantees before the Ukrainian counter-offensive*



*Photo: Department of Defence*

In May, Ukraine continued preparations for another counter-offensive operation. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba are conducting diplomatic work of enormous scope, aimed, first of all, at providing the Armed Forces of Ukraine with all means necessary for success. Ukraine has repeatedly heard from its partners the conviction of unwavering support for as long as it takes. Currently, however, **Ukraine is still insufficiently equipped for a counter-offensive**. Because of this situation, the expected moment is postponed.

The United States of America remains the main partner of Ukraine against the background of Russian aggression. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, the Biden administration and the US Congress have directed more than \$75 billion in aid to Ukraine. The country organized Ukraine Defense Contact Group, the so-called "Rammstein Coalition" and sets the pace of military aid. Most countries of the Coalition are focused on the USA actions, so Washington can encourage others to help Ukraine more through its decisions. However, the position of the current American administration remains not entirely clear. In the US, there are still two camps that consider different ways of ending the Russian-Ukrainian war. On the one hand, Lloyd Austin, the US Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, who support Ukraine's victory in the war. On the other hand, there is

a line of National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, who *want to prevent both Ukraine and Russia from losing*.

**Mark Milley's position** was well laid out in his latest interview with Foreign Affairs. When asked about a possible escalation, the general noted that a war between Russia and NATO, or Russia and the United States, would be devastating, and the United States is calculating every further step. Consideration of further steps is quite understandable since any state should always have an action plan. However, **the US approach to Russia is based on fear of possible escalation**. And in order to avoid escalation, Washington chooses not the strategy that allowed the country to win in a Cold War, when the US was not afraid to demonstrate its dominance, but the opposite approach – *imposing artificial restrictions on itself*. This approach was practiced even before the full-scale invasion, when Ukraine was denied the transfer of most samples of American weapons. Then, after the invasion, countries were afraid to provide howitzers and MLRS. With the passage of time and the struggle of Ukrainians for their country, the USA and the EU began to supply armored vehicles, air defense systems and tanks. The next step will be the transfer of fourth-generation fighters. Each time Russia had nothing to respond to the increase in aid to Ukraine. The only consequence of the policy of *self-restraint* was that for years this strategy encouraged the Russian Federation to increase aggression. ***Such a policy only postpones Ukraine's victory in the war and prolongs Russian aggression.***

In addition to fears of escalation, in Mark Milley's interview, it is worth noting the belief that the Russian Federation remains a great power, next to the United States and the People's Republic of China. Mark Milley is convinced that a major war like the Second World War should be avoided. The Russian Federation has lost a significant part of its military forces in Ukraine. Economically, the country lags far behind the USA and the People's Republic of China. The GDP of Russia is smaller than the GDP of the state of Texas. In terms of population, Russia is also far behind the great powers. The only indicator by which Russia surpasses other countries is the number of nuclear warheads. Mark Milley cannot fail to understand the current condition in which Russia finds itself. A possible explanation for such rhetoric may be a desire to emphasize priorities.

***The main competitor of the USA is China.*** The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff is likely to be serious about a potential armed confrontation with the PRC over Taiwan in the coming years and wants to preserve US military resources focusing on the Indo-Pacific region. **Mark Milley is wary of the fact that in case of victory of Ukraine, Russia, or the state entities that will remain in place of former Russia, will fall under the influence of China.** From this point of view, it will be easier for the US to deal with Russia, which maintains a greater degree of autonomy from China and not drive it into a corner when the possibility of Russia using nuclear weapons may increase. With such a Russia, Milley wants to find options for cooperation, hoping for the rationality of its leadership. It is the rationality of the Russians that he refers to in his interview.

The problem is that ***the strategic goal of the Russian leadership is to capture Ukraine.*** In the event of a negotiated armistice, as Mark Milley suggests, Russia would use the time to rebuild its forces. If the PRC eventually attacks Taiwan, it will be the perfect moment for the



Russian leadership to try to achieve its goal in Ukraine. Thus, Mark Milley mistakenly believes that the European security order can be restored through negotiations. However, this can only be done if Russia is defeated in Ukraine and the revisionist state is weakened in the long term. Such a scenario assumes a military victory for Ukraine. **Without the restoration of the European security order, it will be extremely difficult for the US to ensure victory in the possible fight against China.**

Currently, the American administration is inclined to continue aid to Ukraine. Importantly, there remains a consensus in the US Congress on continued support. However, it is important to consider that there are other sentiments and views similar to Mark Milley's position may intensify over time.

**We are already evidencing the creation of the groundwork for "plan B", an alternative scenario to Ukraine's victory.** Among the forces that can promote an alternative scenario are the BRICS states: China, Brazil, South Africa, other countries that did not support Ukraine, as well as France. Emmanuel Macron has repeatedly stated that he wants to save the face of Vladimir Putin. After Ukraine's counteroffensive, the French president may be among those who will encourage Ukraine to negotiate. In particular, it was the reason why Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Dmytro Kuleba continue to actively meet with the leaders of various states to ensure long-term support for Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Finland was aimed at ensuring the support of the countries of Northern Europe. In conditions where the pace of aid provision is set by the US, it is important for Ukraine to have alternative partners capable of strengthening this support. Such a country during the war was **Great Britain**, which was the first to provide NLAW ATGMs, modern Challenger tanks and medium-range weapons. The Netherlands acted as lobbyists for the transfer of fourth-generation fighter jets to Ukraine. CEE states are also countries capable of lobbying for an increase in aid to Ukraine. The support of the Nordic countries could also become important, but after all, the USA remains the core partner-country. And in the conditions of approaching American elections, the pressure on the Ukrainian side is increasing, since aid to Ukraine may end up being held hostage by American domestic political races. Therefore, Ukraine needs as many forces as possible to attack now. The risk of trying to force Ukraine to negotiate in the future is growing. Such a scenario may in the future lead to a decrease in the intensity of the Russian-Ukrainian war and a stalemate on the battlefield, when neither side will be able to conduct effective offensive operations. This threatens the continuation of the war in Europe, the lack of restoration of Ukraine and will make it impossible for a large number of the country's citizens to return.

***Prolonging the war is currently in Russia's interests.*** The aggressor state will have time to adapt to sanctions, restore military power to resume aggression in the future. Under the existing conditions, Russia would weaken Ukraine economically and demographically. It would capture part of South of Ukraine and create a corridor to Crimea. **Strategically, prolonging the war could lead to an actual Russian victory in the current war.** Such a scenario is extremely negative for European security. Therefore, it is important to provide Ukraine with all the capabilities for an effective counter-offensive. This is in the interests of the EU and the USA. **European countries will not be able to feel completely safe if**

**Russian troops remain in Ukraine.** The position of the USA regarding the PRC will also be vulnerable, because in the event of an escalation of the conflict over Taiwan, Russia will be able to take advantage of the situation to increase the scale of aggression in Europe, and therefore, events on the continent will directly affect the USA.

**Under such conditions, Ukraine can with a high probability remain outside the EU and NATO, which is also strategically beneficial for the Russian Federation.** At the next summit in Vilnius, Ukraine needs clear decisions regarding its membership, but the **Ukrainian leadership is already inclined to make concessions.** On May 5, during the Atlantic Council discussion, in his video message, the Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Oleksiy Reznikov, voiced his hope that the decisions of the Vilnius Summit would include the following **seven points**: commitment to Ukraine's membership in NATO; security guarantees for Ukraine from NATO, which will be in effect until Ukraine joins the Alliance; NATO's readiness to support the "Peace formula" proposed by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy; NATO's continued commitment to support Ukraine's urgent defense needs, including air defense, long-range artillery, ammunition, tanks and combat aircraft; defense support for Ukraine until Ukraine's sovereignty is fully restored; creation of a mechanism for crisis consultations with Ukraine within the framework of Article 4 of the NATO Charter; the transformation of the NATO-Ukraine Commission into the NATO-Ukraine Council.<sup>1</sup> **Such a plan may eventually become a substitute for full membership of Ukraine in the North Atlantic Alliance, which does not correspond to the security interests of Ukraine and Europe.**

On the eve of the Ukrainian counter-offensive, various options for the further development of events are being considered. Currently, Ukraine's partners have not finally reached a unified position on how the Russian-Ukrainian war should end, and ***there is a threat that the European security order will not be restored.*** Laying the groundwork for the implementation of such a "plan B" can be a strategic mistake of Ukraine's partner countries. The united front of resistance to Russian aggression must remain strong until the final victory, until the expulsion of the Russian Federation from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, and in the aftermath of the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Резніков озвучив сподівання від саміту НАТО у Вільнюсі, 05.05.2023,  
URL: <https://suspilne.media/467477-reznikov-ozvuciv-spodivanna-vid-samitu-nato-u-vilnusi/>



Source: Army FM

#### ■ *Changes at the front*

**Trend:** *The strategic balance forces the warring parties to switch to prolonged positional defense.*

*In the Kupyansk direction*, the enemy conducted unsuccessful offensive actions in the area of Belohorivka, Luhansk region. Russian troops carried out limited ground attacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line.

*In the Luhansk direction*, after receiving British Storm Shadow cruise missiles, Ukrainian troops are targeting Russian rear areas.

*In the Avdiyivka direction*, the Russian occupying forces continue offensive actions, however, they have not achieved significant success.

*In the Bakhmut direction*, the enemy continues to conduct offensive actions. Heavy fighting continues for Bakhmut. The enemy also conducted unsuccessful offensive actions in the direction of Ivanivske. The Ukrainian army is carrying out counterattacks on the flanks around the city of Bakhmut.

*In the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson directions* the enemy continues to conduct defensive operations. The Armed Forces of Ukraine carry out systematic attacks on enemy warehouses, headquarters and points of enemy concentration.

In the first half of May, Russia increased the intensity of missile strikes and drone strikes on the territory of Ukraine. The likely goal of these Russian campaigns is to exhaust the Ukrainian air defense system and reduce Ukraine's counteroffensive capabilities.

#### ■ *Military assistance*

In the first half of May, it became known about the transfer of the following weapons to Ukraine:

##### **The USA:**

- Zuni air-to-ground missiles;
- additional air defense systems and ammunition;
- Equipment for the integration of western air defense systems into the air defense system of Ukraine;
- Ammunition for combating UAVs;
- 155 mm caliber artillery shells;
- Services of commercial satellite images;
- Support for training, maintenance and support activities;
- ammunition for HIMARS;
- 155-mm howitzers;
- 155 mm caliber artillery ammunition;
- mortar ammunition caliber 120 mm, 81 mm and 60 mm;
- anti-tank guided missiles for ATGM TOW-2;
- AT-4 and Carl Gustaf anti-tank grenade launchers;
- Hydra-70 aviation missiles;
- small arms and ammunition for them;
- explosive ammunition for destroying obstacles;
- trucks and trailers for transporting heavy equipment;
- test and diagnostic equipment for maintenance and repair of vehicles;
- spare parts and other field equipment;

##### **Romania:**

- MLRS APR-40;
- M1981 howitzers;

##### **Czech Republic:**

- SAM "Kub" (2 complexes);

**Italy:**

- wheeled tanks "B1 Centauro" (quantity unknown);

**Poland:**

- The number of transferred MiG-29 aircraft has increased to 14 units;

**Switzerland:**

- 20 demining machines;

**United Kingdom:**

- Storm Shadow cruise missiles;
- completed transfer of all previously announced Challenger 2 (14 units).

The European Commission also allocated 500 million euros to support ammunition production for Ukraine. Germany allocates a new package of military aid to Ukraine worth 2.7 billion euros. The full content of the aid package is currently not detailed, however, the Spiegel publication reported the day before that Berlin plans to transfer 20 Marder BMPs and 30 Leopard 1 tanks, as well as 18 RCH 155 wheeled howitzers, the transfer of which was announced in 2022. Denmark, in turn, will provide Ukraine with a new package of military aid worth 250 million dollars. It should include vehicles, special equipment, air defense systems and artillery ammunition.

*Source: Mil.ua*

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

***Bakhmut as a reason for another manifestation of «victorymania».***

On May 9 a traditional Victory Day parade took place in Moscow. At the same time, 24 Russian cities refused to hold Victory Day. The event in Moscow was different from previous years. In addition to the absence of a traditional holiday atmosphere, the event was smaller in scale and shorter in time. Due to the participation in hostilities and the destruction of a significant amount of equipment in Ukraine, the parade on Red Square did not include most of the modern equipment of the Russian army, except for missile systems and air defense systems.

Russia's actions have already been evaluated by the International Criminal Court in the form of an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin. However, ***this did not prevent the leaders of six countries: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan from coming to the war criminal with reverence.***

Vladimir Putin made a 10-minute speech in which he called the so-called "*special military operation*" **a war**, which it really is. However, at the same time, the war, which was allegedly unleashed against Russia. The head of the Kremlin called the Ukrainian people

hostages of the coup and the criminal regime, although after the 2013 revolution, two democratic presidential elections have already taken place in Ukraine. In his speech, Putin also drew parallels with Russian soldiers of the past in an attempt to emphasize the legacy of generations of the Russian military. Russian propaganda actively promotes the image of the heroism of Russian military personnel, who supposedly protect Russia from external threats, "as their ancestors once did". What is important, such ideas are popular not only at the level of the Russian political leadership, but also at the level of citizens. *In the so-called intellectual circles of Russia, aggression against Ukraine enjoys active support: songs about PMC Wagner are popularized by teachers at schools, while exhibitions dedicated to Russian invaders are regularly held in Moscow contemporary art galleries.*

Wagner did not manage to capture the city of Bakhmut before 9<sup>th</sup> of May, as the Russian leadership wanted, and in particular, because of this, there was no traditional victory obsession atmosphere in Russia at this day. The head of the terrorist organization Yevgeny Prigozhin previously compared the battle for Soledar with the battle of the Soviet army for Stalingrad. However, it is **Bakhmut that can become Stalingrad for Russians.** The battle for this city exhausted the offensive potential of Nazi German grouping, which was followed by a counteroffensive operation of the Soviet army. Currently, the Russian troops in Bakhmut are losing their ability to attack. On the flanks of the city, the Ukrainian army systematically conducts successful counter-attacks. **The next stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war may be another counter-offensive operation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.**