INTERNATIONAL 🌐 WEEKLY

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- Ukraine – European Union
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■ *THEME ANALYSIS: Formation of a new bipolar confrontation*

Photo:Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Emmanuel Macron at the 2nd EPC Summit
Source:Office of the President of Ukraine

On June 1, the second summit of the European Political Community (EPC) took place in Chisinau. The EPC has once again brought together the countries of the continent to maintain political dialogue and discuss issues of common interest. Since its establishment, there have been concerns among states participating in a new format, especially in Ukraine, that the European Political Community is created as a substitute for full membership in the EU. However, the countries intending to join the European Union, including Ukraine, and even the EU members have clearly stated that the EPC cannot be an alternative for the EU and is a parallel format. Therefore, the option of substituting membership was finally rejected.

For Moldova, the fact of hosting such a high-level event is unprecedented. Since last year, there were doubts that the country could provide the logistics for the event, but Moldovan diplomats eventually coped with the task. The summit was attended by 47 heads of state and government, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Council, and the EU High Representative. It is symbolic that the event was held 30 kilometres from the occupied Transnistria.

The EPC has become a useful forum for exchanging views and discussing common issues. The summit in Moldova was devoted to such issues as security, energy sustainability, and mobility. But its main advantage was the opportunity for the leaders to discuss various issues during personal meetings on the side-lines. In particular, Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with the leaders of the countries participating in the Aviation Coalition (Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Poland), with President of Moldova M. Sandu and Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova D. Recean; with Prime Minister of North Macedonia D. Kovacevski and Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, with President of the European Commission U. von der Leyen, Chancellor of Germany O. Scholz, Presidents of France, Romania, Switzerland, Serbia, and Prime Ministers of the UK, Czech Republic, Portugal, and Spain.

At the EPC Summit, the President of Ukraine held a series of meetings at the highest level. The main topics of the talks were ***the aviation coalition and the Patriot air defense coalition.*** At the same time, clear statements in support of Ukraine were made at the summit. For example, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said that Italy supports the European path chosen by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia: "this is not EU enlargement, but the return of these states to the family, where they belong," she said. Mark Rutte, in turn, emphasized that he is close to the place where all the atrocities are taking place. In fact, he noted, Moldova is also partially occupied by Russians, and the EU will continue to stand with Ukraine in the fight against Russian aggression. An important statement for European leaders was President Zelenskyy's statement that **Ukraine will not liberate Transnistria without an official request from Moldova.** This topic was the most popular among Moldovan journalists during their conversation with the President of Ukraine.

While the summit of the European Political Community was taking place in Chisinau, in Cape Town, the foreign ministers of the five BRICS countries called for **a "rebalancing" of the world order.** The European Political Community consists mainly of democratic countries, and most of the discussions during this event centred on countering Russian aggression and supporting Ukraine. Thus, states discussed the way to preserve the state of international relations in which rules matter. By supporting Ukraine, the states of a continent are speaking out against the right of the strong and in favour of the strength of international law. At the same time, ***representatives of countries that actually legitimize aggression against Ukraine and view this aggression as part of the transformation of the world order into what they call a "more just world order" gathered in Cape Town.***

Because of the resentment towards the United States, the BRICS states do not condemn and partially support the aggressor state. The prospect of the BRICS expansion at the expense of the Global South cannot but cause concern. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, more than a dozen countries have expressed their desire to become a member of the BRICS.[1]

First and foremost, **the negative aspect of this situation for Ukraine** is not the economic consequences of the increased role of the Club and the New Development Bank,

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[1] БРІКС планує розширення і створення спільної валюти, щоб протистояти США, 01/06/2023, URL: https://suspilne.media/493906-briks-planue-rozsirenna-i-stvorenna-spilnoi-valuti-sob-protistoati-ssa/

but the political ones. Experience shows that states that are getting closer to China are more likely to agree with Beijing's policies and position. **On the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian war, such countries are lobbying for Ukraine's surrender by establishing a ceasefire and securing the seized territories for Russia.** In fact, many countries of the Global South are defending the right to seize a neighbouring state by force if it is in their interests. This is a return to the jungle. Therefore, in order to prevent the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America from strengthening their support for Russia, the United States and the EU should apply the principle of carrots and sticks to such countries: on the one hand, deepen cooperation with some states, increase economic, humanitarian and military support. On the other hand, they should impose sanctions on some states and cancel support programs for destructive foreign policy.

<u>**Russian aggression has exacerbated the conflict along civilizational lines.**</u> Currently, **two mega-blocs are being formed.** On the one hand, there is a democratic one led by the United States of America. On the other hand, there is an authoritarian one led by China. *Ukraine, in the context of countering Russian aggression, has found itself in the centre of this confrontation,* which complicates the task of pushing the occupying country out from the territory of Ukraine. In the context of intercivilizational confrontation, liberal democracies should reconsider their approach to cooperation with countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. In recent years, many such states have strengthened ties with China and increased their criticism of Europe and North America. Liberal democracies should prioritize relations with more loyal countries and increase cooperation with them, including in accordance with approaches of such states to resolving international relations issues. At the same time, countries whose leaders intensify anti-European and anti-American rhetoric should face the threat of reduced economic and humanitarian aid. Withdrawal of support for at least one of these countries may change the rhetoric and position of others.

At the same time, **Ukraine should also reconsider its approach to relations with pro-Russian states. A number of foreign diplomatic missions could be closed, and the resources that would be available in this case could be directed to more promising countries in Asia and Latin America.**

■ *THEME ANALYSIS: Vilnius: A step towards NATO or a step towards sincerity?*

Photo: Joint exercises of Ukraine and NATO states
Source: Common Brief

On July 11-12, 2023, the Lithuanian capital Vilnius will host the NATO Summit. One of the main questions before this event is the future of Ukraine in the context of the country's aspirations to become a member of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Currently, various options are being considered which the Alliance and partner countries can offer Ukraine, and not all such initiatives involve full membership in the short term. The so-called ***"Israeli model"*** has been among the most popular options in the last month. According to this model, member states provide Ukraine with military and technical assistance, probably share some intelligence information, and provide training. This model does not provide for legal guarantees to Ukraine and leaves the Allies with a lot of room for maneuver in case of a threat to Ukraine. In part, this plan is an institutionalization of current assistance. However, should the intensity of the Russian-Ukrainian war decrease, the level of such assistance will also only diminish. A fundamental drawback of the so-called "Israeli model" for Ukraine is the fact that Ukraine does not possess nuclear weapons. The hot phases of the Arab-Israeli wars stopped only after the Jewish state acquired nuclear status. ***In the realities of Ukraine, increased conventional capabilities will not guarantee that Russia will not attack again.*** At the same time, t**he fact that Ukraine is in the grey zone of European**

security will lead to further degradation of the country's economy and demographic potential, and ultimately will only encourage Russia to revenge. In the event of a new confrontation, Russia will be better prepared, and European countries will pay twice, because leaving grey zones in Europe after the end of the Russian-Ukrainian war means postponing a new war for future generations.

Another option is to grant Ukraine full membership and start the process of acceptance at the next NATO summit. The main argument for this scenario is the fact that NATO countries are already providing assistance to Ukraine, which can be seen as an application of Article 5 of the NATO Charter. This article does not enshrine the obligation to send troops to the territory of an ally, but contains the following wording: *"each Party will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary."* In addition, if Ukraine were to join NATO, member states would demonstrate to Putin that time is not on Russia's side and send a signal that there are no prospects for Russia to continue its aggression against a neighboring state. At the same time, according to American scholar Paul Poast, this approach poses two threats to the Alliance: an increased risk of a direct clash with Russia and a decrease of NATO's credibility, as providing assistance to Ukraine without sending troops to its territory would set an undesirable precedent that could potentially affect the ability to deter potential adversaries. Therefore, such a decision requires weighing the pros and cons, and so far, NATO countries have rejected this scenario, although their intervention could have brought the war to a quick end. For now, Ukrainian soldiers continue to fight one-on-one with the largest country on the continent.

Another option currently being considered by Ukraine's closest partner countries is to go beyond the Bucharest Summit result and *to make a clear decision in Vilnius that Ukraine will join the North Atlantic Alliance when the security situation allows.* That is, the threat of being drawn into the current war would disappear, and the Alliance would thus erase the grey security zone, strengthening its own defense capabilities. According to NATO's current defense strategy, in the event of an attack, the frontline country should deter enemy forces before the Allies approach. Ukraine's proximity to Russia would give NATO a deterrent advantage, and the Ukrainian Armed Forces would contribute to the security and defense of Eastern European member states. This option, membership after the war, is currently perceived by Ukraine's leadership as desirable, given that NATO countries are refusing to accept Ukraine at the next summit for fear of facing Russia in an armed confrontation. The recently adopted German national security strategy confirms the thesis that a number of member states are afraid of such development of events, as the document contains provisions on the need to avoid getting dragged into a war.

According to the Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Ihor Zhovkva, 20 countries of the North Atlantic Alliance supported Ukraine's future accession to NATO.[1] However, at least 3 countries oppose it. According to the Financial Times, the United States, Germany, and Hungary oppose the intentions of Poland and the Baltic states to offer Ukraine

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[1] Київ: Вступ України до НАТО підтримали 20 країн, 11.06.2023, URL: https://www.dw.com/uk/kiiv-vstup-ukraini-do-nato-pidtrimali-20-krain/a-65883465

a simplified accession format, the so-called "road map." Currently, the format of cooperation, where Ukraine remains a NATO outpost on the eastern flank of the Alliance, suits the United States and Germany. NATO countries provide Ukraine with economic support and weapons and have no legal obligations to Ukraine. Thus, Ukraine reduces the threat posed by Russia to all European countries with its own forces and the lives of Ukrainian servicemen, while the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance do not use their own armed forces.

Instead of NATO membership, Ukraine is offered substitutes that cannot suit Ukraine, although the current leadership partially agrees to such alternatives, hoping that actual integration into the European security system will bring legal guarantees closer. For instance, this applies to the NATO-Ukraine Council, which could potentially be established at the next summit. Now, the level of Ukraine's relations with NATO will correspond to the level of NATO's relations with Russia in the past. **Such a development appears to be ridiculous.**

According to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, *only full membership in NATO can guarantee non-aggression by other countries.* Until Ukraine becomes a member, it needs guarantees of sustainable assistance from its partners. That is, the institutionalization of aid, which is often mentioned in the expert community and by many government officials, will satisfy Ukraine, but only until the war is over. It cannot be a substitute for NATO, because increasing Ukraine's conventional capabilities will not prevent a repetition of an attack by Russia. That is why Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he did not understand why Ukraine should participate in the summit in Vilnius if it does not receive guarantees.

Ukraine is currently fighting for and defending the security of the whole of Europe, and this is not just rhetoric. In 2021, Russia issued an ultimatum not to Ukraine, but to NATO. Ukraine was not a member of the Alliance, and while at the bilateral level Russia really wanted to seize Ukraine and destroy its statehood, **at the systemic level, the Kremlin saw aggression against Ukraine in the context of confrontation with the United States and Europe.** Had the Russian aggression succeeded, the entire human potential of Ukraine, which would now belong to the occupier, would have been mobilized against NATO, as Russia used the human potential in the occupied territory against Ukraine. After seizing a neighboring state, Russia would invade the Baltic states, and neither U.S. forces nor those of other Allies would be able to defend Allies in time.

It's time for NATO to get back to its defense tasks and not hide its head in the sand. Russia is a threat not only to Ukraine but to the whole of Europe. In the fall of 2021, the United States and other NATO countries were warned in Ukraine that attempting to save money on military assistance to Ukraine now would lead to paying more later. Now, the United States and the rest of Europe are paying for Russia's invasion, and Ukraine is paying the most with the lives of its citizens. **We cannot leave vulnerabilities in the European security system for the future, and therefore Ukraine must be guaranteed NATO membership so that future generations do not have to pay for the mistakes of the past.**

Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

Trend: *Russia stops the beginning of the offensive of the Ukrainian Defense Forces with its own tactical level offensive.*

The enemy continues to focus its main offensive efforts on the Liman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Maryinka directions. In June, Ukraine conducted tactical-level offensives in the Liman sector. The Ukrainian Armed Forces advanced north of Avdiivka by more than a kilometer and drove the Russian occupiers out of the village of Vesele. Around Bakhmut, Ukrainian troops continue to gradually advance towards Klishchiyivka and Yahidne.

In the Shakhtarsk direction, the enemy conducted offensive actions in the direction of Novomykhailivka and Vuhledar in Donetsk region, but was unsuccessful.

In the southern direction, Ukraine is conducting counter-offensives. The Ukrainian Armed Forces liberated and consolidated control in Novodarivka, Levadne, Storozheve, Makarivka, Blahodatne, Lobkove, Neskuchne and Pyatikhatky.

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In the first half of June, it became known that Ukraine received the following weapons:

France:

- AANF1 machine guns.

Denmark:

- 2000 shells

- 9000 shells (jointly with Norway)

GERMANY:

- Wisent 1 demining machines (2 units)

The German government plans to provide Ukraine with a defense assistance package, which will include a large number of armored vehicles - 64 Bandvagn 206 (BV206) tracked all-terrain vehicles and 66 armored vehicles. The United States will purchase Gepard air defense systems for Ukraine. Ukraine will receive additional Bradley and Stryker aircraft. The Dutch Ministry of Defense announces the purchase of four radars worth 150 million euros. It also becomes known that Ukrainian pilots have begun training on F-16 aircraft.

Source: Mil.ua

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

<p style="text-align:center"><i>Ecocide as a mean of Russia's warfare.</i></p>

On June 6, 2023, Russian occupation forces blew up the Kakhovka HPP. The destruction of the hydroelectric power plant was another violation of international humanitarian law by Russia during this war. According to Art. 55 of the Geneva Convention, in a warfare, care shall be taken to protect the natural environment against widespread, long-term and severe damage. This protection includes a prohibition of the use of methods or means of warfare which are intended or may be expected to cause such damage to the natural environment and thereby to prejudice the health or survival of the population. Attacks against the natural environment by way of reprisals are prohibited.

According to the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Andriy Yermak, the hydroelectric power plant explosion led to the following consequences: oil and grease stains weighing at least 150 tons drifted along the Dnipro River. They can reach the Mediterranean. More than 50,000 hectares of Ukrainian forests have been flooded and at least half of them will die. This is more than the area of all Iceland's forests. The Kakhovka Reservoir is covered with dead fish. This is approximately 95 thousand tons of living bioresources. Bodies of dolphins from the Ukrainian shores are found on the Black Sea in Bulgaria and Turkey. More than 150 official cases have been recorded. It is possible that the stream will bring roes,

foxes and hares from the southern region of Ukraine to these countries. The flooded area was inhabited by about 20,000 wild animals.

Photo: Massive fish pestilence as a consequence of the Kakhovka HPS destruction

However, it seems that this information is neither known nor heard by international organizations involved in environmental and human rights protection. Most of the world's media have not unequivocally condemned Russia for the hydroelectric power plant explosion, waiting for official confirmation and "evidence" as if Ukraine could be behind the explosion, which has affected the Ukrainian and regional environment and negatively affected the ability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to cross the Dnipro River as part of a counter-offensive actions. ***Representatives of international organizations, apart from their local offices in Ukraine, did not respond to this incident in a practical way.*** The United Nations staff, for their part, seem to consider Ukraine's problems less important than those of people in Africa and the Middle East. Among international non-state actors, the particular reaction of Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg deserves special attention. She actively drew the attention to the consequences of the Russian terrorist attack and took part in a protest against Russian ecocide in the German city of Bonn near the UN office.

The Russian crime changes the tactical calculations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. However, s*trategically, the hydroelectric power plant destruction will not affect the development of fighting in general.* One of the negative consequences of the hydroelectric

power plant explosion may be the opening of the Overton window. The range of crimes that the occupying country can get away with is expanding. Blowing up a dam is a horrific crime that will have long-term consequences both for the families whose loved ones were killed by the flood, whose homes were destroyed, and for the environment. However, has there been any sharp criticism of Russia from the international community? Even the media in Europe and the United States did not condemn Russia without additional details. Of course, they will not get these details, because Russia has refused to grant the UN access to the occupied areas of the Kherson region that suffered from the flooding. For the international community, Russian crimes have become commonplace. And **<u>since the Russian Federation has already resorted to such actions as blowing up hydroelectric power plants, the next step may be a nuclear strike on Ukraine.</u>** Throughout the war, NATO countries and some societies in these countries feared that countering Russia could increase the risk of the occupant using nuclear weapons. **In practice, the lack of action leads to escalation on the part of Russia, and both the population of Ukraine and the Ukrainian environment suffer from this.** Ukraine cannot be excluded and isolated from the regional ecosystem, so the consequences of Russia's crime may eventually affect many countries in the Black Sea region.