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- *THEME ANALYSIS: The EU takes the leadership in strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities*



*Photo: Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Ursula von der Leyen
Source: Office of the President of Ukraine*

The European Union's security policy continues to transform after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Ukraine has become a factor that has strengthened the unity of the EU, forced it to reconsider the bloc's role in the world and revise its approaches to interaction with other actors in international relations. First of all, this relates to relations with Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

In the economic sphere, even after the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, Russia remained an important economic partner for the EU member states. Europe was dependent on Russian energy carriers, while the Russian side received significant investments from liberal democracies and businesses in these countries. Now, at the level of European institutions, economic relations with Russia are viewed through the prism of security and have been radically revised. This is evidenced by the 11 adopted sanctions packages. The last one was adopted by the European Council on June 25 this year.

The 11th package is aimed at strengthening the restrictions imposed on Russia and preventing their circumvention.¹ In particular, **the EU has banned the transit through Russia of wider number of goods and technologies that can be used for military purposes, aviation or space industry, and aviation and rocket fuel for goods exported from the EU to third countries.** The EU Council has additionally added 87 companies to the list of entities that directly support Russia's military-industrial complex in the war against Ukraine.

The EU has also expanded the list of prohibited goods that could contribute to the technological improvement of the Russian defense and security sector, including electronic components, semiconductor materials, equipment for the production and testing of electronic integrated circuits and printed circuit boards, precursors of energy materials and precursors of chemical weapons, optical components, navigation devices, metals used in the defense sector and marine equipment.

The EU has extended the ban on the transportation of goods to the EU by road to trailers and semi-trailers registered in Russia, including trucks registered outside Russia. In addition, in view of the sharp increase in deceptive practices of vessels transporting crude oil and oil products, the EU Council decided to prohibit access to EU ports and locks to any vessels that engage in ship-to-ship transfers, if the competent authorities have reasonable grounds to suspect that the vessel either violates the ban on imports of Russian crude oil and petroleum products by sea to the EU or transports Russian crude oil or petroleum products purchased at a price higher than the ceiling price set by the Allies. The same prohibition will apply to vessels if the competent authorities have reasonable grounds to suspect that there has been unlawful interference into the navigation system during the transportation of Russian oil and oil products. **The temporary exemption from sanctions for Germany and Poland to supply crude oil from Russia through the northern section of the Druzhba pipeline is terminated.** At the same time, it will be possible to pump oil from Kazakhstan or other third countries through this route. Personal sanctions are also imposed on a number of individuals and legal entities.

The sanctions also affected the media sector. The EU Council suspended the broadcasting licenses of five more media outlets directly or indirectly controlled by the Russian Federation and used for manipulative reporting: RT Balkan, Oriental Review, Tsargrad, New Eastern Outlook and Katehon.

At the same time, there are still **vulnerabilities** in the EU's sanctions policy. As noted in The Economist's article «Vladimir Putin's useful idiots»², there are still ***European states that, along with supporting Ukraine, are trying to maintain economic ties with the aggressor state.*** For example, **Greece** opposes restrictions on the transportation of Russian crude oil. **Austria**, in turn, has increased its trade with Russia during the war, but has not

¹ Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: EU adopts 11th package of economic and individual sanctions, 23.06.2023,

URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/06/23/russia-s-war-of-aggression-against-ukraine-eu-adopts-11th-package-of-economic-and-individual-sanctions/>

² Vladimir Putin's useful idiots, 03.08.2023,

URL: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/07/03/vladimir-putins-useful-idiots>

provided any tangible military assistance to Ukraine. In addition, there are still "Putinverstehers" among European elites. Although such individuals and the groups they represent are still marginal, their positions in the domestic political arena may again strengthen as the Russian-Ukrainian war continues.

In the area of security and defense, EU member states are significantly increasing their defense budgets. For example, Germany plans to invest 100 billion euros in the modernization of the Bundeswehr. This intention was reaffirmed in the latest and first ever German national security strategy. It is worth noting there are still doubts at the expert level that this plan will be implemented and that defense spending of 2% of GDP will be ensured in the long term. There is no similar skepticism about the intentions of the Republic of Poland. The country is already actively rearming itself, in particular through defense contracts with the United States, South Korea, and domestic orders. Poland is purchasing 1000 K2 tanks, 600 K9 units, 18 HIMARS with 9000 missiles, 288 K239 Chunmoo multiple launch rocket systems, 1000 Borsuk infantry fighting vehicles. Poland also hopes to purchase 96 Apache helicopters and 48 FA-50 combat aircraft. The number of the Polish army will increase to 300,000 people

Russia's invasion has forced European countries to focus on security issues and has made them aware of Ukraine's role in their security. In addition to investing in their own security, **European countries and the European Union play an important role in supporting Ukraine's defense capabilities.** The European Union coordinates military assistance through the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) and financial and military support to Ukraine through the European Peace Fund. Through the European Peace Fund it was already provided 4.6 billion euros to Ukraine. In May, the EU allocated 1 billion euros for the purchase of shells for Ukrainian artillery. In fact, **the EU as an institution has played a greater role in supporting Ukraine than the North Atlantic Alliance, as member states have tried to emphasize that the Alliance as entity is not opposed to Russia.**

Despite the beginning of strengthening its defense capabilities, the EU is still dependent on the United States in the military sphere. This situation cannot satisfy Brussels and Paris, which are gradually building *a more autonomous Europe*. In this regard, the component that Europe lacks is the Ukrainian army. The EU needs Ukraine, because the Armed Forces will be the element that can ensure NATO's strategy of protecting the advanced member states in the east of the Alliance. At the same time, Ukraine needs the EU to maintain stability in a postwar state with a million-strong army. Russia's **full-scale invasion has demonstrated that Ukraine's security is inseparable from the European security architecture.** At the same time, the issue of starting negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU this year is still in doubt. There are even more doubts about the decision on Ukraine's potential accession to NATO.

In such circumstances, Ukraine should work on creating a regional security complex. Such a complex could include Eastern European countries, including Poland, as well as other countries conducting active foreign policies. The United Kingdom could be such a state.

- **THEME ANALYSIS:** *Warning about the threat of nuclear terror at ZNPP becomes an important foreign policy issue for Ukraine*



*Photo: IAEA Director at ZNPP
Source: Nuclear Engineering International*

From the very beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, one of the main targets of the occupying army was Ukraine's nuclear power plants. Over the past 8 years, the share of nuclear power in Ukraine's total electricity production exceeded 50 percent.¹ The loss of ZNPP, the largest of Ukraine's four nuclear power plants and the largest in Europe, could have dealt a serious blow to the Ukrainian energy system, along with Russia's tactics to destroy other energy facilities with missile and drone strikes. However, **the main purpose of Russia's seizure of Ukrainian nuclear facilities was to create a foothold for its armed forces and nuclear blackmail.**

In the spring of 2022, Russia seized the Chernobyl NPP and the occupation army was actively setting up its positions at the plant and in the exclusion zone. After retreating from the Kyiv region as a result of the Ukrainian Defense Forces counteroffensive actions, the Russians left the station. Before that, the occupiers looted the premises, broke down the

¹ Стратегічна галузь. Атомна енергетика: про що треба було думати ще вчора?, 07.03.23, URL: [Link](#)

doors, and took away equipment. During the occupation, 9 employees of the station were killed and 5 abducted.²

Besides the Chernobyl NPP, the occupiers seized the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest nuclear power plant. The activities of the Russian Federation around the facility caused outrage among the Ukrainian government and population. Ukraine had already suffered in 1986 from one of the largest man-made nuclear disasters in history. Back then, the Soviet government tried to hide information about the accident at the fourth power unit. Now Moscow is ready to commit a crime again and create a global catastrophe on Ukrainian soil.

The fact of the presence of military equipment and occupiers' military personnel at ZNPP was confirmed by IAEA experts back in September 2022. At that time, the organization's experts called for the removal of "all vehicles that may interfere in the operation of safety systems and equipment" from the territory of ZNPP, as well as the creation of proper working conditions for the staff. A separate recommendation concerns the "immediate creation of a nuclear protection zone" around the Zaporizhzhya NPP.³ Such a zone was never created, and Russian military equipment and personnel still remain at the plant. This fact is the best evidence of the real intentions of the occupying state. Russia is not interested in establishing a nuclear safety zone, so no real steps have been taken in this direction. *The station is visited from time to time by IAEA experts who, according to video reports, have made friends with Rosatom personnel and the occupation leadership.* No one openly exerts any real pressure on Russia regarding the possible undermining of the ZNPP safety. This is primarily due to underestimation of the danger itself.

According to the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine Kyrylo Budanov, everything is technically ready for a man-made disaster at ZNPP. Unlike the head of the GUR, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi does not believe that Russia is ready to take such a step. According to Grossi, although the presence of any explosives at the plant does not meet safety standards, the basic safety functions of the facility "will not be significantly affected." In other words, the IAEA Director General recognizes and accepts the presence of explosives on the territory of the nuclear power plant and, instead of actively criticizing the occupying country and holding negotiations with states that could influence Russia, reassures the international community in the absence of danger. *After all the crimes committed by Russia on the territory of Ukraine, irresponsible and dangerous actions of Russia are already perceived as normal.*

The explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant did not draw sufficient attention of international actors to the crime of ecocide against Ukraine. It is perceived as another ordinary crime of a terrorist state, despite the damage to the environment and residents of the occupied Kherson region. The Overton Window is gradually growing, and when Russia blows up the ZNPP, international organizations and countries cooperating with

² Росіяни вкрали та знищили обладнання з ЧАЕС на 135 млн доларів – The Washington Post, 02.06.2023, URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/06/2/7350183/>

³ МАГАТЕ підтвердило, що Росія розмістила на ЗАЕС техніку та військових, 06.09.2023, URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/09/6/7366345/>

Russia would find a new excuse. This crime would not be something unusual for the international community, just as were not unusual the explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant or the murder of two schoolchildren from Berdyansk by Russian snipers in June this year.

For its part, Ukrainian diplomacy is making every effort to draw the international community's attention to nuclear and environmental safety. These two issues are included in the Ukrainian Peace Formula. Nuclear safety is point 2 of the Ukrainian Peace Formula. Countering ecocide is point 7 of the Peace Formula. *In the face of the ineffectiveness of international institutions, the Ukrainian leadership is trying to create alternative mechanisms to restore security in and around Ukraine.* The UN and the organization's Charter did not protect Ukraine from an armed attack and the country's population from Russian genocide. Instead, the format of the Defense Contact Group on Ukraine, the Ramstein Coalition, has proved to be effective. The problem of ensuring nuclear security in the context of Russia's aggressive war is that this issue requires the involvement of other nuclear powers to deter Putin, primarily China and India. Unlike the democracies of the Ramstein Coalition, **China and India have not imposed restrictions to reduce Russia's ability to continue its aggression.** On the contrary, these countries have continued and intensified economic cooperation with the aggressor. It is in China's and India's interest to deter Putin from using nuclear weapons and organizing a terrorist attack on the ZNPP. Nuclear damage knows no borders. At the same time, the United States and EU leaders must also respond more clearly and decisively to a potential terrorist attack. In the winter and spring of 2022, Ukrainians managed to defend their country without interference from other countries. At the same time, the issue of nuclear safety cannot remain a problem for Ukraine alone. **The international community must respond to the nuclear threat posed by Russia at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.**



Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

The Ukrainian offensive contrary to the canons of military art.

In the Kupyansk direction, Russian troops tried to advance in the areas of Novoselivske and Stelmakhivka in Luhansk region. All attacks of the occupation forces were repelled.

In the Lyman direction, Russia is conducting assault operations and trying to force Ukrainian troops out of their positions in the area northwest of Berestove in Luhansk region.

In the Avdiyivka direction, fighting continues south of Krasnohorivka and near Vesele. Vesele was liberated. Russian occupation forces are conducting unsuccessful assaults on Ukrainian positions and suffering significant losses.

In the Bakhmut direction, the Ukrainian Armed Forces advanced in the direction of Klishchivka and near Berkhivka. The Ukrainian Armed Forces are taking up new positions in the vicinity of Klishchivka and along the Siversky Donetsk-Donbas channel.

In the Melitopol and Berdyansk directions, the Ukrainian Armed Forces continue to advance gradually. The Orykhiv bridgehead is expanding. Fighting continues north of Robotyne.

■ *Military assistance*

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

Germany:

- Wisent 1 armored demining vehicles (2 units)
- 64 anti-aircraft missiles for Patriot air defense systems
- two HX81 8×8 tractors
- tank trawls
- 6 armored vehicles
- 155-mm caliber shells (2000 units)
- high-precision ammunition in 155-mm caliber.
- TRML-4D RADAR

France:

- SAMP/T air defense system

Denmark:

- CAESAR air defense system on the Tatra T815 chassis

Portugal:

- 14 M113 armored personnel carriers
- battery of 105-mm howitzers

Switzerland:

- Eagle armored vehicles *equipment provided by a German company without Swiss authorization

Croatia:

- MI-8 helicopters

Lithuania:

- 10 M113 tracked armored personnel carriers
- 2.5 million rounds of ammunition for small arms
- thousands of anti-tank ammunition for grenade launchers.

In addition, a number of aid packages were announced:

The Belgian Council of Ministers approved the 15th military aid package for Ukraine. As part of the new aid package, the Belgian Ministry of Defense plans to transfer an unknown number of M113 armored personnel carriers, which the Belgian army decommissioned more than a decade ago. The Office of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom announces in a press release financial assistance to Ukraine in the amount of 25 million pounds. The Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the European Union member states agreed to increase the European Peace Fund by 3.5 billion euros. The Netherlands signed a contract with the Belgian company FN Herstal for the production and

supply of 7.62 mm FN MAG machine guns worth 111 million euros for Ukraine. Also, the Government of Lithuania purchased two launchers of the NASAMS anti-aircraft missile system for Ukraine.

Source: *Mil.ua*

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Despite the strong defensive positions of Russian troops on the frontline, the Kremlin has demonstrated the weakness of the Putin regime at home

On June 23, after the Russian army attacked the Wagner PMC camp, the group's leader Yevgeny Prigozhin said that the Wagner PMC had launched a "March of Justice" on Moscow. In a few hours, the mercenaries took control of military facilities in Rostov-on-Don, including the headquarters of the Southern Military District, and then moved on to the Russian capital.

At that moment, the Russian elite was panicking and fleeing from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in turn, probably fled to Valdai. Such a shameful reaction on the part of the Kremlin leader demonstrated the true weakness of the Putin regime. Currently, Russia is firmly on the defensive at the front. However, inside, Vladimir Putin does not control the situation. Several hundred mercenaries forced the Russian president to flee Moscow. First, it shows the true human qualities of Vladimir Putin. The dictator, whom Russian propaganda portrayed as a leader with the traits of a dominant personality, is actually afraid for his own life above all else and immediately runs away in case of a threat. Second, the current Russian regime is a threat to the international community. Russia is the largest nuclear power in the world, and a few hundred mercenaries could, if they wanted, take possession of part of Russia's nuclear arsenal. This brings back the question of the urgency of Russia's denuclearization.

However, the international community's response to the events was also weak. European leaders and the United States tried to emphasize that they were not involved in the mutiny. According to CNN, during the mutiny of Wagner PMC founder Yevgeny Prigozhin, partner countries at various levels asked Ukrainian officials not to strike Russia. It is likely that Ukraine's partners would like to bring Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table, and Prigozhin's rebellion is seen as positive precisely because of the hope that weakening his power will encourage Putin to negotiate. Putin's weakness is likely to be a factor that will accelerate the supply of aircraft and medium-range missiles to Ukraine.

As a result of the rebellion, Wagner PMCs were withdrawn to the territory of the Republic of Belarus, and the Russian authorities probably began purging those who supported Prigozhin. In particular, there was still no information about General Sergei Surovikin and Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov.

The deployment of mercenaries in Belarus could pose a threat to Ukraine's northern border. According to the spokesman for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, Andriy Demchenko, Belarus may deploy up to 8,000 mercenaries of the Wagner PMC on its territory.

It is likely that the Wagner PMC group was allowed to enter the territory of Belarus under certain conditions. In the future, this terrorist organization could be used either against Belarus' neighboring countries or in Africa to strengthen Russia's positions, or, most likely, against Ukraine to stretch the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the context of a Ukrainian counter-offensive.

The use of most of the Ukrainian Armed Forces reserves is still postponed due to the lack of necessary means in the offensive. The Wagner PMC is a truly capable unit that could pose a threat. Therefore, this risk must be taken into account. In this context, Ukraine needs more military assistance to make the summer counteroffensive a success.