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

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- *THEME ANALYSIS: What do the results of the parliamentary elections in Poland mean for Ukraine?*



Photo: Reuters

Parliamentary elections were held in Poland on 15 October and brought the first change of power in 8 years. In the elections to the Sejm (upper house) the ruling party "Law and Justice" (PiS) won with 35,4% of votes; the opposition union of liberal forces "Civic Coalition" got 30,7%; the coalition of agrarian parties "Third Way" finished with 14,4%; the party of new leftists "New Left"(Nowa Lewica) got 8,6%; the association of pro-Russian right "Confederation of Freedom and Independence" got 7,2%. PiS also won the Senate (lower house) elections with 34.8 % of the votes, and the following results coincide with the upper house: 28.9% for Civic Platform; 11.5 % for Third Way; 6.7 % for Confederation of Freedom and Independence; 5.3 % for New Left Party.¹

Although the PiS who is currently in power formally won, it did not get most seats. Whereas the coalition of the liberal "Civic Coalition" with "Third Way" and "New Left" will become the main force in the parliament. Parliament plays a crucial role in Poland's political

¹ Results of voting in 2023 elections for Sejm, 27.10.2023, URL: <https://wybory.gov.pl/sejmsenat2023/en/sejm/wynik/pl>

system, serving as the body that deals with the executive and legislative branches and has a major influence on the state's foreign policy. Therefore, the elections are a key event for the future politics of Poland and Ukraine's place in it.

It was expected for PiS to not manage to stay in power three times in a row. There has never been a case in Poland when power has been in the hands of one party for more than two terms. Staying in power this time rather negatively impacted PiS. Its programme could not offer anything substantially new, and the crisis, inflation, quarantine, and unstable security situation had a negative impact on its reputation in one way or another.

In its election campaign nationalistic and conservative PiS tried to appeal to its core electorate by increasing social benefits and introducing new programmes in this domain, specifically on retirement. Before the election, the party also tried to appeal to the image of a "strong independent state" by being tough in negotiations, as in the grain dispute with Ukraine, or by voicing stronger criticism of the EU. But the main part of the eurosceptic party's campaigning this time was taken up by criticism and information campaign against its main opposition, the pro-European "Civic Coalition".

One of the frequent complaints from the EU towards PiS was the taming of the media and limiting the freedom and transparency of information. Indeed, during the years of its rule, the party ensured the loyalty of the country's biggest TV channels, which also allowed them to spread messages favourable to them. Thus, they tried to frighten Poles that if "Civic Coalition" won, they would face the "loss of Poland's sovereignty" to Brussels and Berlin, an increase of the retirement age, an "invasion of migrants" from Africa and the Middle East, and "takeover" of Polish society by LGBT. And Donald Tusk, the party leader himself has been called an agent of Berlin, questioning his loyalty to Poland.

The former Prime Minister Tusk has indeed always expressed very pro-European sentiments, and in the past has even chaired the European Council. But he traded his career as a European politician for the one of Poland. "Civic Coalition" also did not stay away from criticising its political opponent publicly but did not rely on it entirely in their campaign. Instead, they promised to promptly revise the social policy of their predecessors, especially the issues of abortion and minorities, to return freedom to the press and to restore good EU relations, which had been badly damaged by judicial reform, the human rights issues, and disagreements over financial aid projects. Tusk also expressed willingness to work on restoring Polish participation in the Reconstruction Fund and the Cohesion Fund.

Such ideas brought him the largest number of votes in the history of the independent Poland. At the same time, this election had largest turnout in history (74%). In addition, the number of young voters increased from 46% in 2019 to 68% in 2023. There was also a large turnout of women and educators.² It seems that contrary to PiS's rhetoric not only Western Europe is interested in alternative social politics, but also a certain part of the Polish population as well.

For Ukraine, such changes are a generally positive outcome. Tusk has a very favourable attitude towards Ukraine, emphasising in every possible way the need for its military and political support and expressing full approval of its EU membership. Moreover, it is also important that unlike PiS, which began to phase out aid to Ukrainian refugees,

² 'No Country for Old Men': How young voters helped swing the elections in Poland, 27.10.2023, URL: <https://www.euronews.com/2023/10/18/no-country-for-old-men-how-young-voters-helped-swing-the-elections-in-poland>

"Civic Coalition" stands with continuing aid to the displaced and creating a more expanded and rationed social security programme for them.

It would also positively influence Ukraine's path to EU membership. Of course, PiS also supported Ukraine's euro integration, but there were disputes within the party about the necessity of making demands to Kyiv, regarding the policy of "historical memory". In addition, Eurosceptics could have used the negotiations on EU enlargement to make demands to the West that Europe should not be "federalised", and that Polish sovereignty should not be encroached upon. Such a position would certainly have led to an aggravation of disputes within the EU. At the same time, "Civic Coalition" seeks coherence with other EU countries and does not need to exploit nationalist issues. This does not mean that the problem of the Volyn tragedy Bandera's image will disappear from Ukrainian-Polish relations, but it will be raised much less frequently and will not pose a threat of serious political aggravation. A well-established dialogue between the West and the biggest supporters of Ukraine's European integration will only help speed up this process.

In addition, such a change of power in Poland would negatively impact the Eurosceptic forces, which, unlike their Polish colleagues, are characterised by their anti-Ukrainian stance led by Hungary's Viktor Orbán and the "Fidesz" party. Poland and Hungary have indeed a long history of close relations. However, after the countries were led by national conservatives, this friendship has reached new levels. Together, Warsaw and Budapest created a kind of "Eurosceptic alliance" that actively opposed progressive values, migration, and the erosion of national sovereignty within the EU. Together they defended each other against criticism over press freedom and the rights of sexual minorities and supported each in judicial disputes for better funding terms. But *the Ukrainian problem has brought discord to this co-operation*. It is clear, however, that PiS could not completely abandon such an ally. It has already become known that Orbán's advisers helped prepare the party's electoral programme.³ And although Orbán has a new ally in the form of Slovakia, it is Poland that has always been the initiator and the main force in their co-operation. Undoubtedly, its transformation will have a negative impact on the Eurosceptic alliance.

However, despite the triumph, the "Civic Coalition" still has many obstacles on its way to actual power. Since there is no hard deadline for the formation of a new government, only that it should be formed within 6 months, much depends on the President. He must give a mandate to one of the parties to form a new government. The current President Andrzej Duda, the PiS representative, will be in office until March 2025. He could potentially delay the formation of a new government, which would build up internal tensions. However, this will not affect policy towards Ukraine, as Duda is one of the party's biggest pro-Ukrainian and pro-European representatives. Nor can it be said that he will be that interested in it, as he is finishing his last term and is planning a career in international institutions.

It should be noted here that, *in general, there is a consensus among all the leading political forces in Poland regarding supporting Ukraine*, with differences only in the extent and some issues. Even the left-wing forces, unlike their international counterparts, are in favour of military support for Ukraine. The only exception is the pro-Russian "Confederation of Freedom and Independence." However, it has not gained enough seats to exercise real influence. Even a potential coalition between the Confederation and PiS is not a major risk

³ Doradcy Orbana pomagali w kampanii PiS. Błaszczak reaguje na słowa Siemoniaka o liczebności armii [NA ŻYWO], 27.10.2023, URL: <https://wyborcza.pl/14,75398,30322370.html>

for Ukraine. It is unlikely to happen, as it would not bring PiS the coveted majority. And although both parties are right-wing, they are very different in their policies. And in any case, the "Confederation" will not be able to bargain for the opportunity to influence foreign politics.

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, PiS was indeed the best option for Ukraine, because they did not have the need to correspond to the Western policy on arms supplies. However, now, when issue of support for Ukraine has generally reached unity among European countries, the parties' positions are equivalent. Moreover, "Civic Coalition" can change the arms supply narrative from "righteous and independent Poland" versus "weak and short-sighted Europe" to calls for "unity of European values and ideas." In this way it would reduce tensions within the EU and stimulate further negotiations.

Therefore, in terms of relations with Poland Ukraine should expect either improvement or permanence. But the real danger comes from domestic issues in Poland. The real challenge for the opposition is to maintain the coalition, which consists of quite different political forces.

The parties' views also differ on the issues that were essential to their rise to power. While "Civic Coalition" and "Lewica" have progressive views on abortion, the representatives of rural agrarians "Third Way" have a more conservative viewpoint. There is also no unity on the issue of resolving the grain deal. So far, the coalition has agreed to continue negotiations and avoid counter-version issues. But they promised their voters to deal with them starting the first days of the election results. If the disputes will continue and no action will be taken, it will lead to frustration of the electorate.

In addition, the information war has not ended, but only intensified. PiS is trying to keep power by all means, including using its influence in the media to discredit the opposition. Even now, members of different forces are engaged in heated arguments on social media, accusing each other of policy faults. If such acrimonious hostility between the parties does not slow down and a method of transferring power is not found, Poland risks being trapped in political instability. **At best, it will become less active in foreign policy, and at worst, it will be plunged into a political crisis.** Such a weakening of Ukraine's main ally would be a big blow to Ukraine, and an invaluable gift to Russia.

The next six months will be the most challenging period for the coalition, and it needs to be consistent, strategic and united. To do this, it needs to be tough on the issue of transferring power, have a clear strategy for communicating with voters and each other, and not be provoked by the opponent. For its part, **Ukraine should already start building ties and contacts with the new Polish authorities**, with whom, despite being favourable to each other, it has few developed ties, especially at the highest levels of power.

- **THEME ANALYSIS:** *What will Slovakia become for Ukraine after the parliamentary elections: no longer a friend, but not yet an enemy*



Source: France 24

The change in the foreign policy course of Slovakia was unexpected for Ukraine, due to the results of the parliamentary elections in this country, which took place on October 6, 2023. According to their results, Robert Fico's Smer-SD party won the election, gaining 22.93% of the vote. In second place was the pro-Western party of the vice president of the European Parliament, Michal Simetskyi, "Progressive Slovakia" with 17.96%. The third place with 14.71% was taken by the "Voice" party under the leadership of Peter Pellegrini, a former associate of Robert Fico. *(In general, all parties that entered the parliament gained 68.51%)*¹. In this configuration, it was "Golos" that received the golden share, because without it none of the leaders of the race could form a coalition government and the right to choose the future of Slovakia. First, "Holos" publicly announced its negotiations with the pro-Western "Progressive Slovakia", which offered him the position of prime minister, and several attractive ministerial posts for his party members, including the chair of the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

However, Pellegrini refused such an offer and joined the coalition formed by Robert Fico, although he offered him the position of speaker of the parliament. Apparently, Peter

¹ Results of the parliamentary election in Slovakia in September 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1416802/slovakia-results-of-parliamentary-election/>

Pellegrini assessed the coalition with Robert Fico's Smer and the nationalists as more viable and able to stay in power for the next four years, in contrast to the very diverse programmatic and ideological content of the potential coalition of social democrats, "progressives", liberals and conservatives, which would have been created in the event of the formation of a pro-Western government².

However, reflecting on Pellegrini's decision, the head of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), Aleksandar Duleba, noted: "In essence, by going to create this coalition, Pellegrini agreed to the liquidation of his party. Now you can forget about "Holos" - they will be fully integrated into "Smer-SD", from where they left three years ago. In return, Pellegrini will receive a personal bonus - he will be the only candidate from the new coalition in the presidential elections, which will be held early next year"³.

Fico decided to form a coalition based on an ultra-nationalist ideology of anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian orientation. After all, there were statements from Smer about the need to stop the supply of weapons to Ukraine, and its billboards threatened Slovaks with "Ukrainian fascism". Therefore, it is not by chance that he chose the Slovak National Party (SNP), known for its **favorable attitude towards the Russian Federation**, as the third partner in the coalition, which received only seventh place in the elections, entering the parliament with a result of 5.63%. The leader of the SNP, Andrej Danko, served as the speaker of the Slovak parliament in 2016-2020, that is, after the Russian occupation of Crimea and part of Donbas. In those years, he was the main public friend of the Kremlin in the Slovak government - he regularly traveled to Moscow, signed friendship with Russia and was not bothered by the criticism of such actions by Slovak politicians, as well as representatives of the West and Ukraine⁴. Thus, a stable anti-Western, anti-Ukrainian, and therefore pro-Russian majority was formed in the Slovak parliament, the core of which became the "Smer-social democracy" party of Robert Fico and the Slovak National Party of Andrej Danko.

What was the reason that the Slovak society showed its great sympathy for Russia and its aggressive foreign policy course and rejected Slovakia's pro-Western orientation? Obviously, such a radical change was caused by a whole complex of political, economic, ideological and historical factors. Among the political factors, it is worth highlighting the disorientation of the Slovak voter with a large number of political parties, in which he is forced to make his choice in the final analysis between communists and far-right nationalists. Among the economic reasons: the standard of living of Slovaks is not too high and the overloading of this small country with EU decisions on aid to Ukraine. As one of the experts of the research group Globsec told Dominika Hyde: "It was more about values, conservatism versus liberalism" and life issues such as food and fuel prices⁵."

² Дмитро Конишев. *Чи стане Словаччина ще однією Угорщиною? Чого чекати від проросійської коаліції у сусідів*. 11 жовтня 2023, URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2023/10/11/7171146/>

³ Словаччині готують проросійський уряд: що чекати від нової влади країни-сусідки України. 19 жовтня.2023, URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2023/10/19/7171662/>

⁴ Чи стане Словаччина ще однією Угорщиною? Чого чекати від проросійської коаліції у сусідів, 11.10.2023, URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2023/10/11/7171146/>

⁵ *What Does a Russia-Leaning Party Win in an E.U. Nation Mean for Ukraine?* (2023), New York Times, September 30. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/30/world/europe/slovakia-election-ukraine.html#:~:text=A%20Russia%2Dfriendly%20populist%20party,for%20the%20war%20in%20Ukraine>

Nevertheless, the basis of such a complex of sympathies for totalitarian Russia was formed by permanent stereotypes of the public consciousness of Slovaks and their persistent "Slavic mentality", which shows a longing for the "Russian world", on which the SNP speculates. In Slovakia, there are deep sources of genuine sympathy for Russia until the 19th century, when the early Slovak nationalist politician and writer Ludovít Štúr, despairing of the pressure of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the region, turned to Russia, a fellow Slavic nation, for help. He proposed that the lands inhabited by Slovaks should be absorbed by the Russians.

All these nationalist narratives became fertile ground for powerful Russian propaganda, the object of which was Slovak society. Russia has worked hard to reinforce these historical sympathies through pro-Russian media and groups such as Brat za Brata, or Brother for Brother, a militant motorcycle gang, the Kremlin-linked and sponsored Night Wolves biker group in Russia, which has an influential presence in social networks. A March 2023 Globsec public opinion survey in Central and Eastern Europe found that 51 percent of Slovaks believe that Ukraine or the West should bear "*primary responsibility*" for the war. The figure is much lower in other countries of Eastern Europe⁶.

Another important reason for the support of Russia in Slovak society was its commitment to authoritarianism. The Mechiyar phenomenon did not arise in Slovak society by chance. Even in the conditions of the democratic transition of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Slovakia twice returned to the authoritarian regime in the conditions of the free will of Slovak citizens in the period 1992-1998 and 2006-2010, when this country was already a member of NATO and the EU. In fact, because of this penchant for authoritarianism, Slovakia was denied NATO membership during the first wave of this enlargement.

Authoritarian methods of government based on populism, nationalism and isolationism appealed to Slovak society and evoked sympathy, especially among the population living in rural areas, among elderly and less educated citizens with clear nationalist views prone to paternalism and isolationism.

This trend has not disappeared in the current parliamentary elections, in which the democratic "Progressive Slovakia" was voted for mainly in the cities, and for pro-Russian parties of nationalist and authoritarian orientation - in rural areas. So the pro-Russian and anti-Western orientation of the now-ruling "Smer-social democracy" and the SNP is quite obvious, as is Slovakia's return to authoritarianism and the collapse of democratic foundations, following the example of Hungary. The first sign of such a trend was Robert Fico's decision to adopt a law on the regulation of public organizations, just as civil society was destroyed in Hungary and Russia.

In this situation, the question arises: how will the EU relate to this authoritarian and pro-Russian trend in Slovakia, and what can Ukraine expect? Obviously, by choosing such a trend, Robert Fico is deliberately going into conflict with the European Union, using Ukraine as a tool to blackmail the European Commission, following the example of Viktor Orbán. Thus, at a meeting of EU leaders, he stated that Ukraine "is the most corrupt country in the world, and this applies to all levels of government." Fico questioned the correctness of providing Ukraine with 50 billion euros of aid for 2024-2027, adding that there is no agreement between EU member states on this issue, so he expects an extraordinary EU summit to resolve it." Has the funding of Ukraine changed anything as a result of the war?" -

⁶ Ibid

the Slovak prime minister asked rhetorically, and then asked again whether something so significant happened as a result of this support and whether it is worth continuing to finance Ukraine.

Fico does not support military aid to Ukraine: "It is better to negotiate peace for 10 years" - he is convinced⁷. "So let's invest another 50 billion and it doesn't matter what happens?", Fico added. The prime minister of Slovakia said that the EU does not have a "peace plan" and several prime ministers of the union countries are "driven into a dead end" by the situation in Ukraine because they do not know what will happen next. "If the strategy is to continue to pour money there, 1.5 billion euros per month without any result, and we have to cut our own resources? After all, we have huge problems and public money is in a difficult state"⁸.

So, the victory of the pro-Russian political forces under the leadership of Robert Fico clearly demonstrated their attitude to the Russian-Ukrainian war in support of Russia. Thus, **Slovakia became the second Russian "Trojan" horse next to Hungary in the European community.**

Difficult times are coming for Ukraine in its relations with Slovakia, and Kyiv needs to prepare for them. First, the Slovak government will support the Kremlin's ideas regarding a ceasefire and the initiation of peace talks, which will find support in Slovak society. *Second*, Slovakia will stop all military aid to Ukraine, but will continue to fulfill a commercial contract to manufacture 16 Zuzana howitzers – 2 for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. *Thirdly*, regarding the accession of Ukraine to NATO and the EU, the new Slovak government will not block this process, but will furnish it with conditions and requirements following the example of Hungary, in order to make this accession impossible in the foreseeable future.

⁷ Фіцо не підтримає військову допомогу Україні: "Хай краще 10 років домовляються про мир", 26 жовтня 2023, 10:55 <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2023/10/26/7172224/>

⁸ Фіцо: Україна – найбільш корумпована у світі, чи її підтримка щось змінила у війні? 27 жовтня 2023, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2023/10/27/7172349/>



Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

Trend: *The fighting took on the character of positional defense along almost the entire front line.*

The Ukrainian Defence Forces continued to inflict losses in manpower and equipment on the Russian forces during October, depleting the enemy along the entire front line.

In Siversk and Slobozhanske directions, Russians maintain a military presence in the border areas, conduct active sabotage activities to prevent the deployment of Ukrainian troops to threatened areas, and increase the density of minefields along the state border in Belgorod region.

In the Kupyansk direction, Russian troops conducted unsuccessful assault operations near the settlements of Sinkivka and Ivanivka in Kharkiv region.

In the Lyman direction, Russian troops did not conduct any offensive (assault) actions, continuing to regroup its troops.

In the Bakhmut direction, Ukrainian Armed Forces repelled Russian attacks near Khromove in Donetsk region. Russians also tried unsuccessfully to regain lost ground near Klishchivka and Andriivka. The Ukrainian Armed Forces are continuing their assault operations south of Bakhmut in Donetsk Oblast, inflicting losses in manpower and equipment on the enemy, and consolidating their positions.

In the Avdiivka direction, Russian troops continue to try to surround Avdiivka, but Ukrainian soldiers are holding the defence, inflicting significant losses on the enemy. The

Russian offensive in the areas of Keramik, Novokalynove, Stepove, Avdiivka, Tonenke and Opytne in Donetsk region was unsuccessful.

In the Mariinka direction, Russians conducted unsuccessful assault operations in the areas of Mariinka and Novomykhailivka in Donetsk region.

In the Shakhtarsk direction, Ukrainian troops repelled all enemy attacks near Zolota Nyva and Staromayorske in Donetsk region.

In the Zaporizhzhya direction, Russian troops tried to regain its lost position in the area west of Verbove in Zaporizhzhya region, but was unsuccessfully.

■ *Military assistance*

In October, the following weapons were transferred to Ukraine:

Belgium:

Belgium has supplied Ukraine with thousands of rounds of ammunition for Leopard 1 tanks.

Denmark:

Denmark has announced the 13th package of military assistance to Ukraine worth DKK 3.7 billion (almost €500 million). The military assistance package includes T-72EA tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery ammunition, drones, small arms and armoured recovery vehicles.

Denmark and the Czech Republic:

As part of the first part of the project, both countries will transfer about 50 infantry fighting vehicles and main battle tanks, as well as electronic warfare and reconnaissance equipment and large-calibre ammunition.

Finland:

Ukraine received 9 specialised vehicles from its Finnish counterparts to protect critical infrastructure.

USA:

American developers were able to integrate Patriot anti-aircraft missiles with an old Soviet air defence system as part of the Franken SAM project. The missiles used in the Patriot system (MIM-104) are comparable in size to Buk missiles and slightly smaller than those used by the S-300.

Germany:

As part of its support, Germany is providing Ukraine with surface unmanned vehicles Sonobot 5. The devices are used to inspect water bodies and detect ammunition and other dangerous objects on the bottom, and also delivered another package of military assistance to Ukraine. It includes another IRIS-T SLM air defence system.

The new package includes:

- IRIS-T SLM air defence systems;
- missiles for the IRIS-T SLS;
- TRML-4D radar;
- 4 armoured personnel carriers (unknown name);

- 4 HX81 tank tractors and 4 semi-trailers;
- 6 border guard vehicles;
- 8 Vector UAVs;
- 5 surface drones;
- 4 Ground Observer 12 (GO12) surveillance radars;
- 5,000 155-mm artillery shells;
- ammunition for MARS II multiple launch rocket systems;
- 10 thousand protective goggles.

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Trend: *Ukrainian Context of Russia's Participation in the Israeli-Palestinian War*

The HAMAS attack on Israel took place on 7 October 2023 and since then the front pages/feeds of leading publications have been filled with news about Israel, while Ukraine has been relegated to the end of the pages at best.

The attack on Israel has affected several processes in the international environment at once. The attack jeopardised, if not permanently postponed, Israel's "Abrahamic Accords"-like agreement with Saudi Arabia, which was promoted by the ambitious Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The MBS also promoted an agreement between India, Israel, Saudi Arabia, USA and the EU on transit from India to Europe, which is supposed to be the major infrastructure project of the decade and challenge China's One Belt, One Road initiative. All these plans have now been put on pause, which benefits China, which retains its economic position in the region, Iran, which sees the rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia as an existential threat, and Russia, which wants to maintain its role as a mediator in the region, which offers many opportunities. In addition, Russia could benefit from a potential rise in oil prices brought by this crisis. On Wednesday 11 October, Putin met with Xi in Beijing at the "Belt and Road" Forum, where he said that "external factors such as the Middle East crisis only strengthen Russian-Chinese cooperation."

HAMAS as a terrorist organisation is used by Russia as a tool to destabilise the Middle East region, which weakens US influence in the region and demonstrates America's inability to guarantee regional security. Russia, on the other hand, has used its influence over Palestinian factions, Iran and Syria to demonstrate its importance in resolving issues in the region to Israel. Until recently, the strategy looked as follows: *Russia restrains its regional partners from escalation, does not prevent Israel from carrying out strikes against Iranian forces in Syria, and Tel Aviv maintains a high level of relations with Moscow and coordinates key actions in the region.* Another important element of the formula with the onset of the Russian invasion seems to have been Israel's non-adherence to sanctions, non-provision of military and technical assistance to Ukraine, and even blocking the re-export of Israeli-made weapons.

Moscow, however, is trying to use the current tense situation to achieve its strategic interests. This crisis is weakening the world's focus on Ukraine and diverting the resources of the West, primarily the United States. Russia is conducting information operations aimed at

convincing Western societies that the crisis in the Middle East started because of its focus on Ukraine and neglect of the Middle East, as well as promoting the narrative "the West is being dragged into another war." Also, according to the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Russia has given samples of Western-made weapons seized during the fighting in Ukraine to HAMAS and is preparing an information campaign about Kyiv's sale of Western weapons to terrorists. All these activities are aimed at reducing the Western world's support and attention to Ukraine. Hardly the best ground for such operations has been formed in the United States, where isolationist sentiments are growing in the country due to the populist rhetoric of Trump and his supporters in the Republican Party. ***Therefore, Russian propaganda is promoting the message that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should worsen Israel and Ukraine relations because of the alleged sale of foreign weapons to HAMAS. Such a message is also aimed to the Jewish lobby in the US Congress, which should support the intention to stop financial aid to Ukraine planned for 2024.***

Another important aspect of the attack on Israel is that the U.S. Army depots in Israel, from which ammunition was supplied to Ukraine, appear to be now inaccessible to Kyiv. Israel will make every effort to be able to use this ammunition for its own needs as a reserve. This may affect the volume of arms deliveries to Ukraine, but not critically, unless the conflict expands to a full-scale Israeli clash with Iran and the US has to provide significant military assistance to an ally. Biden's address is important in this context, in which he said that ensuring the success of Israel and Ukraine is vital to U.S. national security and equated Putin and HAMAS.

Thus, Russian propaganda is trying to exploit the Ukrainian context in the Israeli-Palestinian war by imposing two messages on the international community: the first one is that the Israeli war will take all the attention to itself, so America will only sponsor Israel and not Ukraine, so Ukraine cannot defeat Russia. The second one is that they are saying that the Ukrainian Armed Forces and Ukraine are endangering the world because Ukraine is allegedly selling weapons on the black market.¹ Such messages, above all, jeopardise Ukraine's and the West's efforts to achieve developing countries' support for Ukraine.

¹ Яна Машкова. Росія використовує ізраїльсько-палестинський конфлікт у війні проти України 20.10.2023, <https://imi.org.ua/news/rosiya-vykorystovuye-izrayilsko-palestynskyj-konflikt-u-vijni-proty-ukrayiny-analykyunya-imi-i56278>