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

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■ *THEME ANALYSIS: Northern Europe is breaking the ice of the aviation coalition*



Photo: Flags of Ukraine and Denmark during V. Zelenskyy's speech in Copenhagen

Source: Office of the President of Ukraine

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the United States has made the largest contribution to supporting Ukraine's ability to resist among its international partners. In recent months, however, there has been a trend toward increasing European responsibility for supporting Ukraine. The upcoming elections in the United States are making defense support for Ukraine a factor in domestic political debate. Unfortunately for Ukraine, the U.S. presidential election poses far more threats than opportunities. The main candidates from the Republican Party are either openly opposed to supporting Ukraine or in favor of ending the war as soon as possible. This raises doubts about further assistance to Ukraine and pushes, on the one hand, the Ukrainian government to look for ways to ensure its ability to continue resistance under the threat of reducing US aid or even halting it, and, on the other hand, European governments to rethink the current security situation on the continent, development scenarios and possible threats posed by Russia's potential success in Ukraine.

Significant support among EU states comes from the Nordic countries, which, along with the Netherlands, were the first countries to announce the donation of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine after the decision was agreed with the United States. In August 2023, Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with the heads of government of Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the

Netherlands. In Denmark and Sweden, the Head of State met with monarchs and parliamentarians. In constitutional monarchies, kings and queens often play a constructive role in building public consensus on certain issues. Therefore, this meeting is definitely a positive development for Ukraine. In addition to that, the President of Ukraine met with the people's representatives in the parliaments of Denmark and Sweden. These meetings demonstrated the broad support for Ukraine, and specifically in the case of Denmark, the commitment to support of Ukraine not only by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, who has shown leadership in helping Ukraine, but also by the entire Danish parliament. In the Parliament, President Zelenskyy was greeted with a standing ovation.

The main issues discussed during the visit were the aviation coalition and other issues of military-technical cooperation. In Sweden, Volodymyr Zelenskyy raised the issue of transferring Saab JAS 39 Gripen fighters to Ukraine. According to the president, the Ukrainian army needs to control the sky to ensure further advancement of troops and the liberation of the Russian-occupied territories. Back in June, the Swedish government announced that Ukrainian pilots were going to be trained on Swedish-made fighter jets. ¹Although Swedish officials have not yet confirmed their readiness to provide the aircraft, given the fact that the training process has already begun, we can expect that next year Ukrainian pilots will be defending Ukrainian skies with Gripen aircraft.

A breakthrough achievement became an agreement with the Swedish side on the joint production of the Swedish infantry fighting vehicle CV90 in Ukraine. In the context of the war of attrition, Ukraine is looking for ways to ensure the production of weapons with its own resources and through joint production with partner countries. **The Russian Federation has adapted to warfare and is now providing itself with equipment necessary to continue its aggression.** Therefore, Ukraine must strengthen its own capabilities, and the agreement with Sweden is an extremely positive precedent.

In the Netherlands and Denmark, the main achievement of the Ukrainian President's visit was an agreement on the provision of F-16 aircraft after training of Ukrainian pilots and engineers. Ukraine will receive 42 aircraft from the Netherlands. From Denmark - 19 units. During his visit to Ukraine, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said that Norway will also provide Ukraine with F-16s that are currently in service. At present, the exact number of fighters Norway plans to provide is unknown; two F-16s will be allocated for a training mission for Ukrainian pilots. The head of the Norwegian government also announced the provision of IRIS-T air defense systems and demining equipment to Ukraine. According to Jonas Gahr Støre, Norway will also do everything necessary to convince its partners to provide Ukraine with NASAMS air defense systems.

Strengthening Ukraine's air defense, providing demining equipment, and other military, technical, and humanitarian assistance: European countries, and especially the Nordic countries, make a significant contribution to the realization of Ukraine's priorities.

Diplomatic support for Ukraine is also important. Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Finland have joined the G7 Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine. These countries supported the Peace Formula and expressed their readiness to join the implementation of some of its provisions. It was in Denmark that the first consultations at the level of National Security Advisors of the leaders of the states on the Peace Formula took

¹ Tolfte stödpaketet till Ukraina, 16.06.2023,
URL: <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2023/06/tolfte-stodpaketet-till-ukraina/>

place. The soft power of the Nordic countries and their active work to promote a just end to the war based on the Ukrainian Peace Formula is an important driver of Ukraine's position at the global level.

While the U.S. administration postponed the announcement of the delivery of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, the Netherlands and Denmark, joined by Norway, made this step. This important decision will accelerate the delivery of the aircraft to protect Ukraine's skies. However, although Europe is doing increasingly more for Ukraine's victory with each passing month of the war, the US military capabilities remain unrivaled. Therefore, it is important that the decisions of European states influence further U.S. assistance and that Ukraine receives fighter jets from overseas. Currently, we can see that European countries have taken on the main burden in the tank coalition. Although the United States has about 8,000 Abrams tanks², Ukraine is to receive only 31 tanks from the United States in the fall. For comparison, in peacetime Poland agreed to purchase 350 Abrams tanks for its army.

The United States is not providing Ukraine with enough weapons to defeat the Russian Federation on the battlefield. Ukraine is receiving increasing amounts of military assistance from European countries, which understand that Russian aggression is a threat not only to Ukraine but also to the European security architecture, and thus to their own security and well-being. In the coming months, Ukraine may succeed in signing agreements with European companies on joint production of weapons, their localization, and expansion of general military assistance. The relevant agreements may be signed in the fall at the Defense Industries Forum. This will be a qualitative addition to the development of military-technical cooperation at the governmental level between Ukraine and European partner countries.

² US Army Readies Ukraine Abrams Tank Options For Policymakers, 25.01.2023,
URL: <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2023/01/army-readies-ukraine-abrams-tank-options-policymakers/382202/>

■ *THEME ANALYSIS: What did Zelenskyy's Balkan trip bring to Ukraine?*



*Photo: President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis
Source: Office of the President of Ukraine*

In the second half of August, after a trip to Northern Europe, Volodymyr Zelenskyy paid a working visit to Southern Europe. The main goal of the President of Ukraine was to participate in the Ukraine-Balkans summit. This year's format was special, as previously only the Balkan states and the EU had participated in the summit.

At the beginning of the visit, the President of Ukraine met with President of Greece Katerina Sakellaropoulou, who wore a yellow and blue dress in the color of the Ukrainian flag for the meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The parties discussed further support for Ukraine amid the Russian Federation's invasion, the needs of Ukrainian citizens who have taken temporary refuge in Greece, and the possibility of Greece's involvement in the restoration of the affected regions of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy also thanked Greece for the rehabilitation program for Ukrainian children affected by Russian aggression.

Substantive and fruitful negotiations were held with Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis. In particular, the meeting resulted in an agreement on practical military assistance. Greece confirmed its readiness to join the aviation coalition and take part in training Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighters. The country has the appropriate aircraft in service. However, it is likely that Greece's participation will be limited to assistance in training Ukrainian pilots, and the country will not provide Ukraine with fighter jets. Earlier, the

country refused to provide Ukraine with Leopard tanks, arguing that it was a matter of national security due to a potential conflict with Turkey. At that time, the country also provided Ukraine with old Soviet-made armoured personnel carriers in exchange for modern German equipment.

According to the Greek press, the Greek government has decided to cancel the contract with Russia for the maintenance of Tor-M1 and Osa-AKMff air defense systems.¹ Given Ukraine's need for air defense systems as the autumn-winter period approaches, it is highly likely that, if the media reports are accurate, these systems will be transferred to Ukraine.

During the talks, Greece and Ukraine discussed a program of patronage over Ukrainian regions and cities that need to be restored after Russian strikes or hostilities. The focus of this topic was Odesa. In addition, a declaration was signed on Greece's support for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. According to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine and Greece will also continue to work bilaterally on security guarantees within the framework of the G7 Joint Declaration, which the Hellenic Republic has joined. Ukraine has already begun negotiations on an agreement on security guarantees with a number of countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. A decision has also been made to start relevant negotiations with France.

According to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the parties will "continue to work on security guarantees", which may indicate that ***Georgia is not ready to conclude such an agreement at this time***. The country may take a pause and express its readiness to sign a security agreement after progress is made in developing relevant security agreements between Ukraine and other states. In particular, other Southern European countries. It is likely that the country is trying to avoid obligations towards Ukraine and not to make serious decisions before other partner countries of Ukraine do so. This policy is generally quite consistent, because during the war Greece, on the one hand, helped Ukraine and Ukrainians affected by the aggression, and on the other hand, blocked the adoption of sanctions against Russia at the EU level in its own interests and ensured the transportation of a significant share of Russian oil. At the moment, Greece has provided Ukraine with a diplomatic platform which does not threaten the country with reputational or material losses. On the contrary, the government can present this step as its own diplomatic leadership.

Other pressing issues discussed at the summit included **the functioning of the grain corridor and unblocking the export of Ukrainian agricultural products**. Since Russia's withdrawal from the grain initiative, Ukraine has organized an alternative route, which is currently being used by ships that have been stuck in Ukrainian ports since the beginning of the war. Ukraine is currently trying to ensure the functioning of the sea route, but Russia is primarily trying to destroy the Ukrainian economy and, ***secondly***, to achieve concessions for its own exports, so it will do everything possible to endanger commercial ships heading to Ukrainian ports. Due to the inaction of international organizations and partner countries, this makes it impossible to ensure its reliable and safe functioning.

Turkish President Recep Erdogan and the UN Secretary General seem ready to make concessions and help ease the sanctions regime against the aggressor state, thus helping Russia achieve its goals through blackmail. It is significant that neither Turkey nor the UN as an organization has supported sanctions against Russia since the Russian invasion. The

¹ ЗМІ: Греція розірве контракт на обслуговування російських ЗРК і передасть їх Україні, 25.08.2023, URL: <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2023/08/25/7168207/>

second component of the problem is the 5 Eastern European countries: Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, continue to block the export of a number of Ukrainian agricultural products through their territory under the Russian naval blockade. These actions take place in violation of the Association Agreement. Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he expects any restrictions on Ukrainian agricultural products in the EU to be lifted on September 15. Therefore, Volodymyr Zelenskyy had the opportunity to hold bilateral talks with most of the leaders of the member states and the EU invited to Athens. In particular, the President of Ukraine met with the leaders of Montenegro, North Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Moldova, which were invited to the Ukraine-Balkans summit, as well as with the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. Albania did not participate this time because of tensions in Greek-Albanian relations.

Moldova's participation, along with Ukraine's, emphasized a separate, central issue of the summit: *the prospects for European integration of Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans*. Ukraine and Moldova expect a positive decision on the beginning of negotiations on accession to the European Union this fall. At the same time, the Western Balkan states expect to join the EU as soon as possible, no later than Ukraine and Moldova. The absence of Georgia at the summit was indicative, emphasizing once again the country's setback on the path to European integration.

As a result of the Athens summit, the leaders of the countries signed a declaration in the presence of the head of the European Commission, which emphasized two main topics: Russian aggression against Ukraine and the European perspective of the aspirant countries. Support was expressed for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, based on the values of democracy and the rule of law. It is noted that support and appreciation were expressed to the President of Ukraine for his earnest efforts in setting out the principles for peace in line with the UN Charter, in his Peace Formula. The countries did not indicate that there is no alternative to the Ukrainian peace plan. A possible reason for this could be the position of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic.

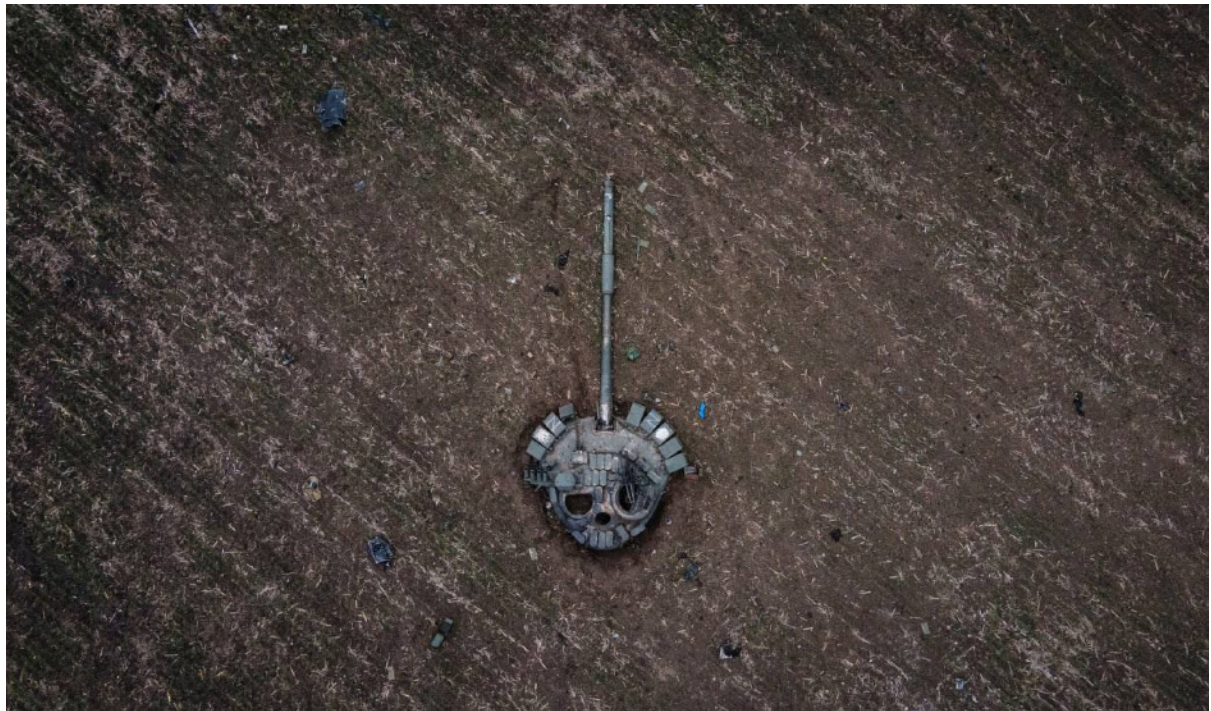
They also condemned Russia's war crimes and attacks on civilians and infrastructure and stated that all those responsible must be held accountable. The countries emphasized that the Western Balkans, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova should be embraced as full-fledged members of the European family, citing common values, opportunities, challenges, and heritage.

At the same time, paragraph 7 of the Declaration underlined the need for a re-energized and re-focused enlargement process that is tangible and credible, without shortcuts to the set conditions. The countries expressed their commitment to support Ukraine and Moldova to take the next steps in their accession process as soon as they have completed the necessary reforms. The inclusion of this language emphasizes the need for compliance with procedures and reforms before joining the European Union. It can be assumed that these statements were included at the insistence of the Western Balkan countries, which fear that Ukraine and Moldova might join the EU before they become full members. Also, Greece, as a leading country, could have emphasized the need for priority reforms, since the leaders of the Balkan countries are convinced of their own readiness to join the European Union. Greece's desire to show leadership is understandable, although the country is not a model of successful reforms, and its economy is extremely weak compared to the developed EU countries. After the global financial crisis began in 2008, Greece received a total assistance of

\$146 billion.² This amount is more than Ukraine received to save its economy in the face of a full-scale invasion and naval blockade.

In general, the Ukraine-Balkans summit was an important event, as Volodymyr Zelenskyy had the opportunity to discuss priority issues with the states of Southern Europe, in particular, aspirants for EU membership. Practical agreements were reached with Greece on training Ukrainian pilots and, possibly, on strengthening Ukraine's air defence. Another topic that was not covered, but which was most likely discussed, was the strengthening of sanctions pressure on Russia. Greece, although declaring support for Ukraine, has repeatedly blocked restrictions on the Russian energy sector during the full-scale invasion. *Greek companies were and probably still are part of the so-called Russian "shadow fleet". In a war of attrition, it is important for Ukraine to consolidate its partner states and eliminate the loopholes that allow the Russian economy to function normally and fuel the war machine.* Volodymyr Zelenskyy also held a series of bilateral meetings. Attention was paid to the functioning of Ukrainian exports, the implementation of the Peace Formula, and the participation of countries in the Crimean Platform summit. In particular, Serbia agreed to participate for the first time, although following the summit, it renounced the adopted declaration after pressure from Russia.

² Greece's Debt Crisis,
URL: <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/greeces-debt-crisis-timeline>



Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

Trend: *Ukraine's defence forces are trying to continue their counteroffensive despite significant losses and incredibly strong enemy resistance.*

In August, the Ukrainian Armed Forces liberated the 12th settlement, Urozhayne, in Donetsk region.

In the Svatove direction, fighting continues in the Serebryanske forestry.

In the Bakhmut direction, the Russians are being pushed back in Klishchivka and Andriivka.

In the Avdiivka direction, clashes took place in Pervomaiske, Maryinka and near Nevelske.

In the Berdyansk direction, there were fighting in the area of Novodonetske-Novomayorsk.

In the Zaporizhzhia direction, the Defense Forces are trying to expand the wedge near Robotyne by striking in the direction of Verbove and Novopropkivka.

Source: Deep State

■ *Military assistance*

In the second half of August, it became known that the following weapons would be transferred to Ukraine:

From Germany:

- IRIS-T SLS launchers (2 units)
- missiles for the Patriot air defense system
- 10 systems for detecting enemy drones
- 40 RQ-35 HEIDRUN reconnaissance drones
- Leopard 1A5 tanks (10 units)

From Sweden:

- ammunition
- means for demining

From Turkey:

- Bayraktar TV2

From Norway:

- anti-aircraft missiles to Iris-T
- demining equipment

From the Czech Republic:

- Kub-M2 air defense systems

From Lithuania:

- Mi-17 (1 unit)

From Spain:

- Cetme-L assault rifles

From Belgium:

- BMP YPR-765 PRI

The United States also agreed to transfer F-16 fighters from Denmark and the Netherlands to Ukraine, 42 and 19 units respectively. Norway has also joined the aviation coalition. Greece will take part in training Ukrainian pilots.

It has been reported that about 30 Irish military personnel will train Ukrainians as part of a large European group of instructors within the framework of the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy mission. A new military aid package was announced by Lithuania. The new tranche of military aid worth 41 million euros includes ammunition, rifles, maritime surveillance radars, anti-drone equipment, and other necessary supplies and weapons. Finland has approved the 18th defense assistance package for Ukraine worth about 94 million euros. Its content, schedule and delivery method are not disclosed for security reasons.

Source: Mil.ua

Trend: *The Prigozhin phenomenon and its consequences.*

On August 23, 2023, it became known that the head of the Wagner PMC, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has died. This event will have consequences both for the domestic policy of the Russian Federation and in the international arena.

While hundreds of Wagner PMC fighters were on their way to Moscow, the Russian president was already fleeing the capital, along with the entire Russian elite. **The international community saw that the image of Vladimir Putin as a tough, uncompromising leader was only an illusion.** Vladimir Putin turned out to be a coward, which will have a psychological effect in the future and will affect his perception by the leaders of other states. At the same time, when Prigozhin was killed, the Russian president once again demonstrated his unreliability and that his word means nothing. Contrary to the guarantees given to Wagner PMC leader, this agreement was violated. With these actions, Vladimir Putin not only demonstrated his lack of negotiating credibility, but also broke the consensus within the Russian elites.

Previously, various power groups unconditionally supported the Russian president. They had access to the distribution of resources and exchanged their loyalty to the regime for their own high position. ***After Prigozhin's murder, this consensus among the elites was broken, and now certain groups will not feel safe.***

At the same time, Yevgeny Prigozhin did not want to overthrow the Putin regime, but remained loyal to him until the end. The main conflict was between the Wagner PMC and the Russian Ministry of Defense. Prigozhin sought to remove Shoigu and Gerasimov. And after that, he wanted to retain power over his PMC when they were offered to sign a contract with the Ministry of Defense.

However, Putin decided to eliminate Prigozhin, and then the ultra-nationalist opposition, which supported the leader of the Wagner PMC, came under attack. Russia has arrested pro-fascist bloggers who, despite their support for Russian aggression, have become undesirable to the regime. There was a purge of officers, and General Sergei Surovikin was suspended. Now, groups associated with Sergei Shoigu and Valery Gerasimov will have a greater influence on the Kremlin leader. At the same time, the ruling groups cannot feel safe anymore, as Vladimir Putin has demonstrated that he is ready to resort to terror to maintain his power.

In order to restore his image at home, Vladimir Putin soon paid visits to Rostov, where local residents had cheered the militants from the Wagner PMC terrorist organization, as well as to Dagestan. This move is aimed at demonstrating support from the population in order to restore Putin's authority after Prigozhin's mutiny.

In addition to the domestic political factor, the events surrounding Prigozhin's murder will have consequences for Russia in the international arena. The contingent of the Wagner PMC in Belarus has been redeployed from the border with Poland, and the Lukashenko regime has apparently refused to finance the militants. The group could pose a serious threat to Poland and the Baltic states. The Wagner PMC was one of the most capable units of the Russian occupation forces. It was Wagner's troops who captured Bakhmut, despite enormous

losses and without regard for the lives of combatants. Now these forces are likely to be used away from Russia to achieve the goals of the aggressor state on the African continent.

At the same time, in Africa, the capabilities of the Wagner PMC are being reduced by the decision to recognize the organization as a terrorist by the UK. Lithuania and Latvia have also taken the same steps. The United States of America recognized the PMC as a transnational criminal organization. These decisions will limit the ability of the Wagner PMC to operate, particularly in terms of financing. However, the organization poses a real threat to the interests of liberal democracies in Africa.

For Russia, Prigozhin's murder poses additional threats. Vladimir Putin has lost his reputation. Previously loyal circles and groups will no longer feel safe, regardless of whether they support the war or not. The fear that will spread among them will reduce Russia's ability to self-analyze and identify weaknesses, as the real state of affairs will not be openly discussed, and problems will be kept hidden from the Russian authorities. Of course, this will play into Ukraine's hands. At the same time, the precedent of the Wagnerian uprising will not lead to an imminent revolution in Russia, as Vladimir Putin still manages to consolidate power.