

INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

№3 01.03.2023-15.03.2023

Topics:

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

CONTENT

■ UKRAINE - EUROPEAN UNION

Theme Analysis: Europe is re-arming realizing the Russian military threat_____3

■ FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY OF UKRAINE

Theme Analysis: China enters the global geopolitical game with Ukraine at its epicenter_____6

■ THE COURSE OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

(01.03 – 15.03.2023)

Changes at the front_____9
Military assistance_____10
Russia: External and internal challenges_____11

The publication "International Weekly" is the project of the Foreign Policy Research Institute with the support of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Project Office Ukraine & Belarus. The publication presents only the authors' research. They do not necessarily reflect the position of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

■ *THEME ANALYSIS: Europe is re-arming realizing the Russian military threat*



Photo: The NYT

For years, the European Union tried to avoid confrontation with the Russian Federation. Majority of EU leaders have mostly focused their attention on economic prosperity and soft diplomacy. Such a policy allowed the Russian Federation to use the weaknesses of the Europeans and carry out an aggressive policy using its hybrid influence against its European partners. After the start of the full-scale invasion of the Russian army into Ukraine, the European states found themselves in a difficult situation, because they realized that in the event of a major war, they would not be able to resist for a long time. A large number of weapons, even in such developed democracies as Germany, was in condition not suitable for use. The number of ammunitions was extremely limited. European states were and still are full of Russian agents.

However, despite such problems, the European Union has demonstrated its ability to adapt to new conditions. In the first months of the war, European officials began to fight Russian hybrid influence. On the one hand, large-scale work was carried out to diversify the purchase of energy carriers. On the other hand, a number of member states have banned the activities of Russian propaganda media. Although, there is still a lot of work to be done, since Russians still work in international organizations, such as the IAEA or the OSCE, and some Russian mass media continue to broadcast in EU countries

Progress in the perception of the threat from the Russian Federation can be traced in the defense sector as well. **The countries of the European Union began to actively rearm.** Poland is creating one of the largest armies on the continent. France increases its defense

budget by almost 30%.¹ Britain will spend an additional £5 billion on its military and plans to increase defense spending to 2.5% of GDP as part of a renewed strategy to counter growing threats from China and Russia.² Plans for rearmament were outlined in 2022 by Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz. It should be emphasized that, at the same time, European countries are gradually increasing the volume of arms supplies to Ukraine. If at the beginning of the war, the United States of America pushed the EU to increase military aid to Ukraine, now the EU has significantly changed the approach. This indicates a shift in the worldview of European high-ranking officials.

Previously, statements that Ukraine was defending the eastern flank of Europe were not taken seriously. Now it has become obvious and the security of NATO countries depends on the success of Ukraine. Ukraine fights for its territories, destroying Russian military potential, which strengthens the security of European states. Also, the duration of the Russian-Ukrainian war directly affects the economic development of the countries of the continent, which suffer from the Russian war to a greater extent than the United States. Ukraine has received about 50 billion in financial aid from EU countries and European financial institutions since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.³ Growth in the Eurozone fell from 5.3% in 2021⁴ to a projected 0.8% in 2023.⁵ Headline inflation rose from 0.3% in 2020 to 2.6% in 2021 and then to 8.4% in 2022. Food prices in January 2023 increased by 14.1% compared to a year earlier. This is the price of the ambitions of the Kremlin leadership.

Therefore, there is currently an increase in military aid to Ukraine from the countries of the European continent and Great Britain. The USA still remains the main partner of Ukraine, while France and Great Britain were the first to provide tanks to Ukraine. Ukraine received the largest number of tanks from Poland. The same Poland, together with Slovakia, undertook to provide 33 MiG-29 fighters. The Europeans hope for a fast end to the Russian-Ukrainian war and provide more and more of their own resources for Ukraine. This also applies to the production of ammunition for artillery. The European Commission proposed a plan worth 2 billion euros for purchase ammunition for Ukraine. On March 15, during a debate in the European Parliament, deputies called on the European Commission to publish the technical details of this plan as quickly as possible, so that it could be implemented in the shortest possible time and thus respond to Ukraine's requests for artillery ammunition

¹ 1. Macron boosts French military spending by over a third to 'transform' army, 20.01.2023, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/frances-macron-proposes-big-hike-military-spending-2024-2030-2023-01-20/>

² Британія збільшить витрати на оборону через загрози з боку РФ та Китаю, 13.03.2023, URL: <https://mil.in.ua/uk/news/brytaniya-zbilshyt-vytraty-na-oboronu-cherez-zagrozy-z-boku-rf-ta-kytayu/>

³ Ukraine: New €450 million assistance package for 2023 announced by EU, 03.02.2023, URL: <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/ukraine-new-e450-million-assistance-package-for-2023-announced-by-eu/>

⁴ Euro Area GDP Growth Rate 1971-2023, Дата звернення: 18.03.2023, URL: <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/EMU/euro-area/gdp-growth-rate>

⁵ EU raises growth forecasts, Turkey faces \$85 billion in quake costs and other economy stories you need to read this week, 17.02.2023, URL: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/eu-economic-growth-forecasts-turkey-earthquake-economy-stories-17-february/>

deliveries.⁶European high-ranking officials have repeatedly declared their intention to continue supporting Ukraine as long as necessary. These calls, as well as actions aimed at strengthening the offensive potential of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, send a clear signal to the Russian leadership that Russia will not win in Ukraine and the Ukrainian army will have the resources to continue the fight.

However, the vision of ending the war among European countries remains different. Polish President Andrzej Duda said that Ukraine must win the lasting peace to prevail. The vision of Ukraine's victory from Warsaw does not raise any questions. However, the rhetoric of the leaders of the countries of Western Europe is somewhat different from the countries of Eastern Europe. Olaf Scholz and Emmanuel Macron reject the possibility of negotiations with Russia at the current stage. At the beginning of March, Olaf Scholz, speaking in the German parliament, said: "Is Putin even ready for negotiations on a return to these principles and a just peace? Nothing indicates this at the moment".

However, Germany and France are ready for negotiations with Russia. Emmanuel Macron has repeatedly advocated for the preservation of Putin's face, against the humiliation of Russia and the need to provide the Russian Federation with security guarantees. ***The strengthening of Ukraine's offensive capabilities by the two EU leaders is happening precisely to force Russia to negotiate.*** Representatives of intellectual elites also have such sentiments. For example, the chairman of the Munich Security Conference, Wolfgang Ischinger, published an article in which the status of Crimea is questioned, the question of security guarantees for Russia through Ukraine's refusal to join NATO as well as the need to establish a ceasefire without the prior withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine are mentioned. This article does not reflect the official position of the German government, but it is indicative.

Ukraine currently has serious support from partner countries. European states have stepped up their assistance in an attempt to provide Ukraine with sufficient capabilities to carry out effective counter-offensive actions. However, Ukrainian diplomacy faces serious obstacles, because in conditions of limited resources and overwhelming dependence on partner countries, the desire to return all the occupied territories may not coincide with the vision of a number of key partners and threatens with attempts to put the issue of the return of the ORDLO and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea ***outside the brackets of negotiations***, and also questions Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic choice. ***The search for compromises with Russia at the end of the current stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in turn, threatens to preserve the vulnerability of the European security architecture leaving space for future crises that could potentially arise as a result of today's mistakes.***

⁶ Боеприпаси для України. У ЄС обіцяють діяти негайно, 15.03.2023,
URL: <https://www.dw.com/uk/boepripasi-dla-ukraini-u-es-obicaut-diati-negajno/a-65001746>

- *THEME ANALYSIS: China enters the global geopolitical game with Ukraine at its epicenter*



Photo: Li Xueren/Xinhua via AP, File

China, after almost a year of ignoring the Russian invasion, is more actively involving in the course of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Realizing that Putin's plan to seize Ukraine has failed, Xi Jinping faced a dilemma: to get more involved in the war on the side of Russia, or to let his partner lose in Ukraine. China's gradual increase in material and technical assistance to Russia's armed forces indicates that China has chosen the first option.

On March 10, Xi Jinping was unanimously re-elected as the President of the People's Republic of China. Thus, he became the first chairman in Chinese history to be elected for a third term. Li Qiang, an associate of President Xi Jinping, became the new premier of the State Council of China and the second person in the state leadership. General Li Shangfu, who is under American sanctions, became the new defense minister of China. The consolidation of Xi's power, the appointment of loyal people to key positions, marks the next step of communist China towards **totalitarianism**. At the same time, the rhetoric of the leadership of the CCP, as noted by the retired lieutenant general of the US Army, National Security Adviser to the 45th US President, H.R. McMaster, increasingly contains aggression towards Taiwan and indicates the preparation of the Chinese people for war.¹

¹ Xi Jinping is 'preparing the Chinese people for war,' Trump-era national security advisor says, 03.01.2023, URL: <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-national-security-adviser-mcmaster-xi-preparing-chinese-people-war-2023-1>

In recent months, the People's Republic of China has published several strategic documents outlining China's vision of global security, models of intercivilizational interaction, and the PRC's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war. These are documents such as *"Concept of the Global Security Initiative"*, *"Concept of Global Civilization"*, as well as *"Position on the Political Settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian War"*.

For Ukraine, the Chinese vision of ways to settle the war is not acceptable. On the one hand, Chinese diplomats proposed a concept that includes provisions regarding respect for international law, the inadmissibility of using nuclear weapons, and the importance of humanitarian support for Ukraine and its reconstruction. A number of provisions of the PRC's position on the political settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian war coincide with the points of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Peace Formula. On the other hand, along with declarations of support for the principles of the UN Charter, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, **the PRC uses Russian propaganda narratives and concepts that are in direct contradiction to international law.** In particular, in the "Position of China on the Political Settlement of the "Ukrainian Crisis"" the Russian-Ukrainian war is directly referred to as the *"Ukrainian crisis"*. There is also no mention of the occupation and illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories. The second point, "Abandoning the Cold War mentality" contains the principle of indivisibility of security, which emerged in 1992 at the Helsinki summit. "The security of one state should not be ensured at the expense of another." This statement is actively used by Chinese and Russian diplomacy. Paradoxically, it is thinking in the spirit of the Cold War that forces Russian diplomats to repeat this statement. In the second point, the PRC actually promotes the narrative that the Russian Federation was threatened by the expansion of NATO. This clause probably rejects Ukraine's right to ensure its own security by participating in defense alliances, and therefore the strategic course towards membership in NATO and the EU.

China also criticizes unilateral sanctions. At the same time, the country ignores the root cause of the sanctions introduced against the Russian Federation - an aggressive war. China's position does not mention the need to restore justice, punish those guilty of war crimes, and pay reparations.

Particular attention should be paid to the provision of humanitarian aid to Ukraine and ensuring the operation of green corridors for evacuation. During the year of the war, China provided almost no humanitarian aid to Ukraine. During this time, Taiwan provided more such aid than the PRC. At the same time, there are already defined routes for the evacuation of the population. Last summer, this issue was urgent and China did nothing to somehow influence this process. Thus, the proposal of the People's Republic of China contained in the paragraph "Resolving the humanitarian crisis" is completely late and irrelevant.

The main danger for Ukraine is contained in the clause **"Ceasing the hostilities"**. A similar provision is contained in the Ukrainian Peace Formula, but with one fundamental difference - the Ukrainian plan envisages the cessation of hostilities only after the complete withdrawal of all armed formations of the Russian Federation from the territory of Ukraine. Otherwise, **the cessation of hostilities will mean the de facto fixation of captured territories by Russia and will give the aggressor state time to rest and regain strength.** If, according to the proposed plan, Russia will keep Ukrainian territories under occupation, then the PRC's plan already contains a fundamental contradiction. The thesis of "legitimate security interests" borrowed from their Russian colleagues appeared in the rhetoric of

Chinese officials. They use this thesis immediately after the statements regarding respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Obviously, this principle contradicts international law and contradicts the official position of the PRC. China, under the guise of a "peace plan", is trying to fix Russian territorial gains and save its smaller partner from military defeat. China's proposal appeared against the background of Ukraine's large-scale diplomatic work to promote Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Peace Formula to reduce its support, as well as against the background of the preparation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine for a counter-offensive. **This poses threats to Ukraine.**

Xi Jinping consolidated his power after his third consecutive election as the head of the People's Republic of China. His rhetoric is becoming increasingly aggressive towards the US and Taiwan. It is likely that in the future, *China will try to play a more active role in international relations and use not only diplomatic and economic tools, but also military ones.* Recently, Xi Jinping promoted the restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This achievement of Chinese diplomacy has become an additional factor that convinces Xi of his ability to play the role of a global mediator. He will try to repeat this in Ukraine. However, since China's position actually violates the principle of territorial integrity of Ukraine, neither Ukraine nor partner countries will support it. Probably, after Xi's re-election, China is ready for a serious confrontation with the US and its allies in the coming years. After rejecting the peace plan, China may resort to increasing military aid to the Russian Federation, contrary to many predictions that the PRC is not interested in this.

China has already declared its intention to return Taiwan. According to various forecasts, an attempt to seize the island by military means may occur between 2025 and 2028. Economic interdependence, as demonstrated by the example of the Russian Federation, is not the reason why great powers avoid war. Authoritarian leaders are more likely to engage in military actions, besides, the PRC can currently use the Russian-Ukrainian war to weaken the US and its allies. In the event of a war over Taiwan, the PRC will ensure the functioning of its economy through the military industry. After all, the highest level of industrial production in Nazi Germany was in 1944. The PRC has drawn conclusions from the Russian-Ukrainian war and has the opportunity to better prepare for the future war.

The aggression of authoritarian countries is also facilitated by the indecisiveness of the United States of America, which is trying with all its might to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia and China. In the case of the American drone shot down in the Black Sea, the USA once again did not respond to the Russians, thus demonstrating its unwillingness to respond proportionately to the provocations of the aggressor state. In the same way, China is testing the USA, gradually increasing its aid to the Russians in the war. However, the main test for the United States will be the course of the current Russian-Ukrainian war, because the authority of the United States and the Allies in the eyes of authoritarian states depends on its outcome. **If Ukraine does not win, it would be a bigger defeat than in Afghanistan and would demonstrate that authoritarian states can challenge liberal democracies and achieve their goals through the destruction of the rules-based world order.**



Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

Trend: *Russian occupation forces continue limited offensive attacks along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line.*

Bakhmut remains the epicenter of hostilities. In the direction of Bakhmut, Ukrainian troops conducted defensive operations 11 km northwest of Bakhmut in the area of Orihovo-Vasylivka and Hryhorivka and 6 km southwest of Bakhmut in the area of Ivanivske and Klishchiivka. Russian troops are gradually surrounding the city and trying to cut the T0504 road. At the same time, the occupiers are losing their offensive potential and their activity around the city began to decrease.

Russian occupation troops continue shelling Avdiivka and are gradually advancing around the city in an attempt to surround it from Krasnohorivka and Vesele in the north-eastern direction of the city, as well as from Vodyane and Opytne in the south-western direction. The main road to Avdiivka is shot by the occupiers. 2,000 residents remain in the city, 6 of them are children.

Near Vuhledar, Russia threw reserves to reinforce the 155th brigade and additionally introduced two tank companies. However, as a result of heavy losses, the activity of the occupying forces in this direction has decreased.

In the Zaporizhzhya direction, the Armed Forces of Ukraine began checking the positions of the occupiers. In particular, Ukrainian troops made attempts to advance in the direction of the city of Polohy.

Russian troops continue to build defensive fortifications along land communications in and near the occupied Crimea, preparing for possible counter-offensive operations by the Ukrainian army.

■ *Military assistance*

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI, as a result of military aid from the United States and partner countries, after the Russian full-scale invasion, Ukraine became the 3rd largest arms importer during 2022, behind only Qatar and India.

In the first half of March, it became known that the Armed Forces of Ukraine has received the following weapons:

From the USA:

- GMLRS high-precision missiles for HIMARS
- ammunition for howitzers
- ammunition for Bradley infantry fighting vehicles
- armored bridge-layers AVLB

From the Czech Republic:

- Air defense complexes "Victor" (15 units)

From Germany:

- Anti-aircraft installations Gepard (2 units)
- Ammunition for Gepard anti-aircraft installations

From Poland:

- Leopard 2 (10 units)

From Italy:

- Self-propelled guns M109L (Quantity unknown)

From the Netherlands:

- pontoon crossings M3 Amphibious Rig

From Denmark:

- 5.56 mm cartridges for small arms
- 12.7-mm heavy machine guns
- anti-tank mines
- missiles for air defense systems
- projectile charges for 155-mm projectiles
- 21 demining robots

- 15 generators for military needs
- 15 thousand sets of clothes to protect against rain
- nine mobile heavy equipment repair stations
- six hangar tents

From Canada:

- Leopard 2 tanks (Quantity unknown)
- BREM
- 8,000 155 mm ammunition
- 12 anti-aircraft missiles
- 1800 training ammunition for 105-mm tanks

On March 15, the 10th meeting of the "Rammstein" contact group took place. According to the results of the meeting, it became known that Sweden will provide Ukraine with 10 tanks, Norway, together with the USA, will hand over new air defense systems NASAMS. The Netherlands and Slovenia also announced military aid without specifying positions. According to Ambassador Vadym Prystayko, Great Britain will transfer twice as many Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine as promised (probably 28 units). It became known that the Ukrainian army has already received Swedish RBS 70 short-range air defense systems. Currently, it is not known who gave this type of weapon to Ukraine, but the possible donors may be Sweden, Norway, Lithuania and Latvia. In addition, Israel allowed two of its defense companies to sell anti-drone systems to Ukraine.

Also, Finland is preparing the 14th package of defense aid to Ukraine, and Poland and Slovakia agreed to transfer 33 MiG29s to Ukraine. The Danish government, in turn, will this year create a fund worth 7 billion Danish kroner (1.01 billion US dollars) for military, civilian and business aid to Ukraine.

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Since the full-scale invasion, the Russian Federation has suffered significant losses. According to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Defense Forces have destroyed almost 170,000 personnel of the occupying state, about 3,500 tanks, almost 6,900 armored vehicles, 305 airplanes and 290 helicopters. The aggressor state found itself in semi-isolation and became the entity subject to the largest number of sanctions in history. Despite the significant material and human losses, the Russian leadership is not going to stop the invasion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin continues his long-term mobilization. On April 1, a new recruitment of contract servicemen will begin in the Russian Federation. The Ministry of Defense of Russia plans to add another 400,000 soldiers to the army. There is no doubt that

the armed forces of Russia will be able to do this.¹ The majority of Russian society supports the war against Ukraine. According to the Russian Field poll, **the majority of Russians, 80%, believe that Russia is moving in the right direction.** 64% of the respondents would not cancel the start of the "military operation" if they could go back in time, and 37% of the respondents stated that the "military operation" did not affect their lives in any way.²

At the level of public consciousness, Russians feel the danger of the defeat of their state in the war and fear the possible collapse of Russia. Therefore, **for the Russian population, the Russian-Ukrainian war is existential. Under such conditions, the end of the Russian-Ukrainian war is possible only under the condition of a military victory of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.**

¹ У Росії хочуть набрати до армії ще 400 тисяч контрактників ЗМІ, 15.03.2022, URL: <https://suspilne.media/414336-u-rosii-hocut-nabrati-do-armii-se-400-tisac-kontraktnikov/>

² Russian Field, Соціологія, 15.03.2023, URL: https://t.me/russian_field_soc/679