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## Topics:

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

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- *THEME ANALYSIS: Will the "grain crisis" hinder the development of the strategic partnership between Ukraine and Poland?*



*Photo: Reuters*

After mutual summonses of ambassadors to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in late summer, relations between Ukraine and Poland continued to deteriorate in September. The main issue in interstate cooperation was grain. In the spring, Poland, along with Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, banned imports of a number of Ukrainian agricultural products. In May of this year, these actions were supported by the European Commission, which, in an attempt to resolve this dispute at the supranational level, banned imports of four categories of Ukrainian agricultural products to five countries.

On September 15 this year, the European Commission did not extend the temporary restrictive measures on the import of Ukrainian grain, but Poland continued to defend its own line, which is not something new for official Warsaw, as the country has repeatedly resorted to confrontation with the EU.

For Ukraine, Poland's refusal to resume imports of Ukrainian agricultural products is an unacceptable decision that does not correspond to the level of bilateral relations. Selling grain to foreign markets remains one of the ways to support the economy affected by the full-

scale Russian invasion and to receive foreign currency. In the context of Russia's attempted naval blockade and the destruction of Ukraine's port infrastructure, exports via land corridors have become an important component. Therefore, Poland's decision to extend the ban caused a strong reaction from the Ukrainian leadership.

First, Ukraine filed lawsuits against Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary at the World Trade Organization. After that, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy criticized the neighboring state's actions in his speech at the UN General Assembly, which angered the Polish authorities. During his speech at the UN General Assembly session, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said: "Alarmingly, some in Europe play out solidarity in a political theater—turning grain into a thriller. They may seem to play their own roles. In fact they're helping set the stage for a Moscow actors".<sup>1</sup> Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau even refused to come to Ukraine for the EU Council of Ministers. "There are many reasons, including my health. But first and foremost, it is due to the fact that in politics, in particular bilateral politics between the countries, we are in a period of decline in relations between Poland and Ukraine. We are entering a period of decline, and my absence is partly an expression of this," Zbigniew Rau said.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the diplomat emphasized that the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy's criticism of Poland at the UN General Assembly had shaken the trust of Polish society in the current policies of the Ukrainian government.

In the context of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Ukrainian-Polish strategic partnership has become one of the important elements in protecting Ukrainian statehood and European security. Since the beginning of 2022, Poland has supplied the Ukrainian military with Soviet-era armored vehicles, artillery, and aircraft as well as their Polish versions. The Polish side also provided various small arms, shells, ammunition, and other military equipment. Poland has become an advocate for Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO.

Thus, **Poland became one of Ukraine's most reliable partners**. At the same time, Ukraine not only received but also made its own contribution. The transfer of weapons is beneficial for Poland, in particular in the context of the subsequent transfer of more modern weapons to the Polish armed forces by the United States in exchange for Soviet models that were supplied to the Ukrainian Defense Forces. Also, the domestic military-industrial complex receives orders and, ultimately, profits. In addition to strengthening Poland's security due to Ukraine's resistance, Ukrainian internally displaced persons have increased the GDP of the neighboring state. Ukrainian refugees received subsidies from the Polish government, but many of them found jobs and spent money in Poland, which had a positive impact on its economy. In other words, Ukraine and Poland are an example of symbiosis, although Ukraine is in a difficult situation, the assistance of the Republic of Poland is not charity.

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<sup>1</sup> Сьогодні людство має діяти в повній солідарності, щоб урятувати життя – виступ Президента Володимира Зеленського під час загальних дебатів Генеральної Асамблеї ООН, 19.09.2023, URL: <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/sogodni-lyudstvo-maye-diyati-v-povnij-solidarnosti-shob-urya-85705>

<sup>2</sup> Україна і Польща входять у період "спаду" – МЗС Польщі, 02.10.2023, URL: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2023/10/2/7422379/>

**Victory over the Russian Federation is a common interest of the two countries.**

That's why Andrzej Duda denied Prime Minister Morawiecki's statement about the suspension of military assistance. Probably, the concern over the US statements about the suspension of Polish aid also played a role.

At present, Ukraine and Poland will not be able to restore the level of trust in their relations that preceded its deterioration. The domestic political agenda in Poland is determined by the election race. Much of the rhetoric of Polish politicians depends on electoral preferences. That is why Andrzej Duda, in explanation of Prime Minister Morawiecki's words, said that Poland would transfer weapons, but not new ones.<sup>3</sup> The current Polish government communicates with the population about strengthening the Polish armed forces by purchasing modern weapons. In the fight for the electorate, it needs to demonstrate that, Poland builds relations with its neighbors in a way that is beneficial to the state and its population. That is why it is explained that the transfer of arms is in Poland's interest. That is why grain imports are blocked: Polish farmers create a significant share of jobs in the country. To ensure their support, Ukrainian grain will not enter the Polish market.

At the same time, **it is a positive development that the parties have begun to seek a consensus**. The Ukrainian government, for its part, has suspended legal proceedings against neighboring countries over grain and agreed to negotiate to find an optimal solution. Currently, they are discussing ways to ensure the transit of Ukrainian agricultural products to Europe through Poland.

The grain issue has been partially resolved. Ukraine continues to receive Polish military assistance. At the same time, tensions remain. In particular, due to the opinion of some Polish officials that Ukraine is "ungrateful". Probably, the fact that Ukraine has not adjusted its foreign policy course to that of the neighboring country is negatively perceived in Polish government circles. After all the talk of a de facto confederation, Ukraine continues to rely primarily on its partners in Western Europe.

In international organizations, Ukraine still makes decisions and defines its position independently. Poland was also not on the list of states with which Ukraine signed an agreement on security guarantees. It is likely that Polish officials expected Ukraine to be more oriented toward their country. However, this did not happen, and there is a **positive side** to this. Ukraine continues to view Poland as one of its main partners. The two countries share the same view of the threats facing the region and see common ways to overcome them. At the same time, Ukraine's position demonstrates to Western European states, which were afraid of losing their overall weight in the EU after Ukraine's possible accession, that Ukraine has its own path and its membership should be considered not only in terms of threats, in particular the weight of the votes of Eastern European member states, but also in terms of opportunities, because Ukraine is an independent state with independent views on various

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<sup>3</sup> "Зрозуміли невірно": президент Польщі пояснив слова Моравецького щодо припинення передачі зброї Україні, 22.09.2023,  
URL: <https://suspilne.media/577863-zrozumili-nevirno-prezident-polsi-poasniv-slova-moraveckogo-sodo-pripinenna-peredaci-zbroi-ukraini/>

issues, and some of them may conditionally coincide with Poland's views, and some with Germany's views, where these countries have different visions.

**The ban on Ukrainian grain is also a signal about Ukraine's future accession to the EU.** Poland has outlined its initial negotiating position, and the task of Ukrainian diplomacy will be to ensure the most favorable conditions for Ukraine's accession in the context of the neighboring country's requirements. Resolving the grain issue in a constructive manner will help improve relations between Ukraine and Poland. At the same time, it will not completely return relations between the two countries to the level that preceded the current deterioration. In the future, Poland and Ukraine will seek consensus on other issues, which will likely be difficult to achieve. This is both a historic issue and an issue of Polish-Ukrainian partnership.

Experience shows that Poland takes a rather tough stance in disputes with both Ukraine and the EU. This means that Ukraine will face a rather difficult task, as the neighboring state is a really important partner that should not be lost in the face of Russian aggression. This is compounded by the risks associated with the US elections. So, Ukraine needs strong and reliable allies in Europe. Therefore, the grain dispute is not the last problem in bilateral relations. However, due to the main threat to the two countries - Russian aggression - Ukraine and Poland must work to overcome the crises. **Improving relations between Kyiv and Warsaw is in the interest of both Poland and Ukraine, as well as the whole of Europe.**

- *THEME ANALYSIS: President Zelenskyy's visit to the United States: hopes and reality*



*Source: Office of the President of Ukraine*

On September 18, Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in the United States to participate in a UN General Assembly and Security Council sessions in New York, after which he traveled to Washington, D.C., where he met with US President Joe Biden. In New York, on the 574th day of Russia's full-scale invasion, Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for the unity of the international community against the backdrop of ongoing Russian aggression and invited the countries of the world to join the implementation of the Ukrainian Peace Formula.<sup>1</sup> Volodymyr Zelenskyy criticized the UN for its ineffectiveness and pointed out that the reason for this was that Russia still holds the veto power. The President of Ukraine also called for expanding the permanent members and giving the General Assembly the ability to surpass the veto of the Security Council members. While this idea is not new and is actively discussed in the analytical environment and in government circles of the international community, the President of Ukraine named a fairly wide list of countries that could join the reformed

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<sup>1</sup> Сьогодні людство має діяти в повній солідарності, щоб урятувати життя – виступ Президента Володимира Зеленського під час загальних дебатів Генеральної Асамблеї ООН, 19.09.2023, URL: <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/sogodni-lyudstvo-maye-diyati-v-povnij-solidarnosti-shob-urya-85705>

Security Council. In particular, the proposals included India, Japan, Germany, the African Union, Latin America, the "Islamic world" and the Pacific states.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's second speech during the UN General Assembly's general debate since the start of the full-scale invasion was followed by a conversation between the President of Ukraine and US Senate Speaker Kevin McCarthy, as well as his second meeting with US President Joe Biden this year.

Unlike the previous trip of the Ukrainian leader, when Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered a speech to American lawmakers, this time the Senate Speaker did not allow it and instead only had a personal conversation. Prior to this meeting, the following comment by McCarthy was widely published in the US media: "Is Zelenskyy elected to Congress? Is he our president? I don't think I have to commit anything and I think I have questions for him. Where's the accountability on the money we've already spent? What is the plan for victory? I think that's what the American public wants to know".<sup>2</sup> Probably, the reason for such a statement by an official who promoted the idea of supporting Ukraine last year is related to the domestic political mood in the United States, as well as his personal aspirations to stay in the Speaker's chair. However, this did not help McCarthy, who is no longer Speaker, but the situation is quite revealing. **Some US politicians are becoming less supportive of Ukraine.**

The meeting between the US and Ukrainian presidents took place in the context of the election campaign, growing fatigue from the Russian war against Ukraine, and the ongoing counteroffensive in southern Ukraine. **The main focus for Ukraine at the moment is to ensure continued financial and military support from the United States. It is currently uncertain that the level of support will remain at the same level after the presidential election in the United States.** A number of Republican presidential candidates have already made statements signaling their willingness to reduce or stop U.S. military assistance. The United States remains Ukraine's main partner, and such a development could deal an irreparable blow to Ukraine's ability to regain the occupied territories. In addition, Ukraine already needs to strengthen its ability to strike deep into the heart of the Russian occupation forces.

During his visit, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukraine is fighting and will continue to fight. But **if the aid stops, Ukraine may still lose the war**. Russia is betting on a war of attrition and the Russian leadership is preparing its country for a long war, hoping that Ukraine's partners will get tired and either stop helping or force a peace on terms that would suit Russia. Therefore, such a statement by the President of Ukraine is understandable and necessary now, when high-ranking officials in other countries may feel more secure than at the beginning of a full-scale Russian invasion.

The US did not announce the transfer of ATACMS during Zelenskyy's visit. Now the US is eager to demonstrate that the President of Ukraine cannot influence the White House, let alone demand anything. In the end, Joe Biden, answering journalists' questions, declared

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<sup>2</sup> Спікер Маккарті: "Зеленський наш президент?" Візит на тлі суперечок у Конгресі. Що законодавці розповіли Голосу Америки? 21.09.2023,  
URL: <https://www.holosameryky.com/a/mccarthy-zelensky-congress-visit-speech-democrats-republicans-washington-budget-war/7277071.html>

an understanding on the issue of supplying the necessary weapons. However, after that, there was no progress on ATACMS.

The media reported on the possible transfer of missiles for Himmars systems with a cluster part and a limited range. In an interview with Bloomberg, US Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition Doug Bush even confirmed the Pentagon's readiness to transfer these weapons as soon as the White House makes a decision. **However, there is still no decision.** The range of weapons that Ukraine needs, such as howitzers, tanks, aircraft, and medium-range missiles, are still in storage in U.S. warehouses. The Pentagon is ready to transfer the necessary weapons, but as of today, there is no political will to do so in the White House.

Realizing this, Ukraine is trying to provide itself with the necessary weapons to a greater extent: it is developing its own military industry and military cooperation with European countries, as well as European and American arms manufacturers. The United States could help Ukraine more in the war against Russia. At the moment, however, **the current US administration is pursuing tactics of limiting aid and so-called control of escalation.** Military support is being held hostage to domestic political processes in the United States. In addition, it is becoming more apparent that the victories of the Ukrainian Armed Forces on the frontline also affect the willingness of the United States to continue supporting Ukraine. The more such successes, the greater the assistance can be, because then the US administration demonstrates the correctness of its support policy and gains reputationally.

**Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit did not lead to a breakthrough in terms of increasing the level of aid.** President Biden announced a new aid package worth \$325 million, which includes such important items as cluster munitions and air defense equipment. However, Ukraine did not receive any medium-range missiles. The United States still maintains a fairly high level of support for Ukraine. At the same time, Americans are increasingly looking at the extent of support from European allies and Ukraine's success in reforming, and are tying their aid to this process. Thus, Joe Biden's lend-lease has not begun, while **Ukraine now has to work to maintain American assistance both internally and externally, and increasingly rely on its own ability to strengthen its capabilities.**



Source: Army FM

#### ■ *Changes at the front*

**Trend:** *In the second half of September, Russian troops launched an offensive along the entire frontline, while the Ukrainian Defense Forces slowed their offensive, gradually shifting to defense.*

*In the Svatove direction*, Russian troops attempted to advance in the area of Novoyehorivka, Synkivka, and Serebryanske forestry.

*In the Avdiivka direction*, Russians were advancing in the area of Krasnohorivka, Nevelske, Opytne, Maryinka and Kruta Balka.

*In the Bakhmut direction*, the Ukrainian Armed Forces liberated Andriivka and Klishchivka. Active fighting continued in the area of Andriivka, near the railroad and east of it.

*In the Zaporizhzhya direction*, fighting continued west of Verbove, and the Ukrainian Armed Forces advanced in the area of Robotyne. Russians tried to conduct counterattacks in the area of Novopokrovka.

Source: Deep state

## ■ *Military assistance*

In the second half of September, it became known that Ukraine received K600 demining vehicles from South Korea, radar equipment from Lithuania, and 130 K 54 guns from Finland. An important event was the 15th meeting of the countries in the Rammstein format. Along with the previously announced military aid packages, the following aid was announced:

**Canada** will provide \$24.5 million to a UK-led partnership that purchases air defense equipment for Ukraine.

**Norway** plans to provide Ukraine with 50 M548 tracked transporters.

**Denmark** has decided to provide Ukraine with 45 more tanks as part of its defense assistance (30 Leopard 1 tanks and 15 modernized Soviet T-72s).

**Germany** will transfer artillery ammunition and mines, namely: 30,000 155-mm artillery shells; about 3,800 155-mm smoke munitions; 105,000 120-mm explosive, smoke and illumination mortar munitions; 480 AT-2 anti-tank mines. Germany is also providing 200 MRAP armored combat vehicles and 50 surface drones of unknown type.

**Lithuania**, in the Ramstein format, announced a package that includes "demolition systems and maritime surveillance radars. The package will also include ammunition for the Carl Gustaf anti-tank grenade launcher. In addition, Leopard tanks for Ukraine will be repaired in Lithuania starting in September.

**Bulgaria** will supply Ukraine with missiles for the S-300 air defense system.

At the Rammstein meeting, **Spain** pledged to provide the Ukrainian Armed Forces with new armored vehicles, inflatable boats, launchers, and missiles for air and ship defense.

**The United States** announced a new aid package for Ukraine. It includes AIM-9M missiles for air defense, short-range Avenger air defense systems that use Stinger missiles, and additional ammunition for the M142 HIMARS highly mobile artillery missile system. Ukraine's military will also receive 12.7mm Browning M2 heavy machine guns to combat drones. The package will also reinforce Ukraine's cannon artillery: a second batch of 155-mm DPICMs and 105-mm ammunition is being transferred. To combat Russian armored vehicles, the Ukrainian Defense Forces will receive TOW and Javelin anti-tank missiles, as well as AT-4 disposable grenade launchers. The Ukrainian infantry will receive more than 3 million rounds of small arms ammunition, 59 light tactical vehicles, explosive ordnance for clearing obstacles, as well as spare parts and maintenance services and other field equipment.

*Source: mil.ua*

## ■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

### **Trend: *How Russian propaganda influenced mobilization in Russia.***

The Russian Federation, even before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, had been carefully preparing, forming the necessary information field for its own population. **The main goal of the comprehensive information campaign was to create an image of the enemy in the face of the Ukrainian state, its people, cultural heritage, as well as political and social initiatives that were developing inside Ukraine.** Through the media, social networks, and statements of politicians and diplomats, Russia actively promoted the idea of a "fascist regime" in Ukraine, an alleged threat to the Russian-speaking population, and the need for Russia to "protect" this population. **This extensive disinformation campaign has yielded results.** At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the majority of the Russian population supported Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and news of atrocities committed by Russian soldiers did not change this general public opinion.

However, due to the resistance of the Ukrainian Defense Forces and the restrictive measures imposed on Russia, support for aggression against Ukraine began to decline. This was also influenced by Prigozhin's mutiny and the targeted strikes on Russian territory, which made Russians feel the consequences of the war. According to a poll by the Russian Levada Center in March 2023.<sup>1</sup> 41% of respondents definitely supported the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine, and in February this figure was 48%. 31% rather supported it, and in February this figure was slightly lower - 29%. 20% of Russian respondents did not support the war, while in February, 17% said so. The highest level of support for the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine is characteristic of regular viewers of Russian television - 79% at that time, and supporters of Vladimir Putin - 81%.

In August, support for the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine did not change statistically significantly: 38% definitely supported them (in July - 45%), 32% rather supported them (in July - 30%).<sup>2</sup> 21% did not support them (in July - 18%). In August, the majority of Russians were in favor of peace, but only without concessions on the occupied territories. The vast majority of respondents, 75%, were against it. In general, in their recent interviews, many Russian servicemen stated that they are fighting to "bring peace". One of the slogans of the occupation forces at the beginning of the war was "fighting for peace." Therefore, the interpretation of this thesis by Russian citizens is very specific.

The still **high level of support for the Russian president from Russians is indicative.** The level of trust in Vladimir Putin and his actions remains consistently high. The approval rate for his activities from September 18 to 24, 2023, according to the Russian

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<sup>1</sup> ОДОБРЕНИЕ ИНСТИТУТОВ И РЕЙТИНГИ ПОЛИТИКОВ: ФЕВРАЛЬ 2023 ГОДА, 17.10.2023,  
URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2023/03/01/odobrenie-institutov-i-rejtingi-politikov-fevral-2023-goda/>

<sup>2</sup> ОДОБРЕНИЕ ИНСТИТУТОВ, РЕЙТИНГИ ПОЛИТИКОВ И ПАРТИЙ В КОНЦЕ АВГУСТА 2023 ГОДА, 31.08.2023,  
URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2023/08/31/odobrenie-institutov-rejtingi-politikov-i-partij-v-kontse-avgusta-2023-goda/>

sociological company VTsIOM, was 73.7%.<sup>3</sup> When asked directly about their trust in Vladimir Putin, 77.3% of respondents answered positively.

Thus, **although the desire to end the war has increased among Russians, Russian society remains united around Vladimir Putin.** The more Russians feel the war, the lower the level of support for its continuation. However, it is currently high. Therefore, **the Russian Federation is highly likely to be able to implement the plan to mobilize the necessary number of troops to continue the aggression.** And currently, the only way to stop Russia is to defeat the aggressor on the battlefield.

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<sup>3</sup> Рейтинги доверия политикам, оценки работы президента и правительства, поддержка политических партий, 29.09.2023,  
URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/reitingi-doverija-politikam-ocenki-raboty-prezidenta-i-pravitelstva-podderzhka-politicheskikh-partii-29092023>