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Ukraine – European Union

- *THEME ANALYSIS: European Parliament elections results: what should Ukraine expect?*



Photo: Reuters

The first post-Brexit European Parliament elections took place on 6-9 June 2024. Approximately 370 million voters from 27 EU countries took part in the elections. The results will influence the work of the 720 MPs elected to the main legislative body of the EU in the period from 2024 to 2029, as well as the political future of the European Union in the near future.

According to the preliminary results, **the pro-Ukraine coalition of the European People's Party has won and will play a key role in the formation of the EU's governing bodies**. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said that after winning the European Parliament elections, this political party would create a "centre" combining pro-European and pro-Ukrainian positions.

The unpleasant thing is that the right-wing forces have improved their positions and may form the second largest group in the European Parliament. This group will be represented by the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, which includes **the Brothers of Italy** with the participation of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and **the Identity and Democracy (ID)** political group with Marine Le Pen at the helm, in agreement with representatives of smaller right-wing and conservative parties. However, even if this scenario does occur, not all right-wing forces in parliament are anti-Ukrainian, which will prevent ***a fully pro-Russian force from forming***.

The national level of elections, on the other hand, produced much more pessimistic results. In France, the **National Rally** party won with 33% of the vote, compared to 15% for Macron's **Renaissance party**. In Belgium, Prime Minister Alexander De Kroo resigned after his party's defeat, recognising the victory of right-wing nationalists from the **New Flemish Alliance**. In the Netherlands, **Geert Wilders' Freedom Party**, a vocal opponent of migration and a sceptic of Ukraine, came in second with 17.7% of the vote. The success of Poland's far-

right *Confederation*, which received 12% of the vote, could lead to increased anti-Ukrainian actions within Poland to gain political advantage at the national level. Nevertheless, Tusk's democratic force retained the first place.¹

However, **the main trend of the current EU election campaign is the expected strengthening of the representation of right-wing forces**, which is a logical consequence of the success of Eurosceptics and right-wing radicals at the national level in numerous European countries, such as the Netherlands, Slovakia, Germany, Austria and others. The success of the right-wing forces confirms that their strategy has changed: they no longer advocate the breakup of the European Union, but instead, as part of its governing bodies, seek to reform it. *The main direction is to reduce the powers of supranational bodies in favour of expanding the powers of nation states.*

Now that they have every chance of becoming the second largest political group in the new European Parliament, they promise to reform EU policy in key areas. It is likely that Marine Le Pen's idea of creating a right-wing association in the new European Parliament, which was supported by Hungarian leader Viktor Orban and proposed by Georgia Maloney, will be implemented.

A significant rise in the right-wing could harm Europe's Green Deal, in particular the initiative to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, which has been criticised for its negative impact on industry and jobs. There may also be demands for tighter EU migration policy, revision of EU enlargement plans, and changes in foreign policy, especially in support of Ukraine. **A dangerous aspect is the confirmed connection of the European far right with Russia, which could lead to the use of this connection not only to stop supporting Ukraine, but also to politically destabilise EU countries.**

Moreover, the current election campaign in the EU has already been marked by a significant influence of Russian propaganda, which has proved to be destructive. According to European officials, the election period was accompanied by a high level of disinformation, especially on social media, where the radical right has a large audience. This included the dissemination of diplomatic fakes with false and misleading claims aimed at deepening the divide in Western Europe. For example, the French segment disseminated information about possible dangers during the Olympic Games and recent events in New Caledonia. In Poland, the focus was on fears about the possible involvement of Polish citizens in the conflict in Ukraine and the possibility of mobilisation as early as this summer.

In the context of the success of the right-wing forces, there is a need to maintain unity of leadership in the EU to prevent radicals from coming to power and to maintain the stability of key political processes and practices. To be re-elected as President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen needs coalition support, and her chances are assessed as quite high, but not guaranteed.

Against the backdrop of geopolitical uncertainty associated with the upcoming US presidential election, the desire of national governments and the EU leadership to accelerate the stabilisation of the EU seems logical, but it will depend on many internal factors. France and Germany, which had been gradually taking over the lead, have become the biggest threat. In response to the election results on the night of Sunday, 9 June, Emmanuel Macron surprised the public by deciding to dissolve parliament, which caused considerable debate and criticism. His political coalition supporting President Macron received only 14.6% of the vote and only 13 seats in the European Parliament.

In the EU and in France itself, this decision caused surprise and different reactions. Many

¹ Сюрпризи виборів до Європарламенту: небезпечний триумф Ле Пен, розділена Німеччина та принизлива поразка Шольца і Макрона. 10.06.2024. <https://tsn.ua/exclusive/syurprizi-viboriv-do-yevroparlamentu-nebezpechniy-triumf-le-pen-rozdilena-nimechchina-ta-prinizлива-porazka-sholca-i-makrona-2597325.html>

experts and citizens are asking about the motives behind this decision, as the probability of the president's party winning the early parliamentary elections is considered low. However, there are theories that this could be part of Macron's strategy to weaken Le Pen and her party's position ahead of the upcoming elections. Social polls show that the majority of French people, namely 54%, support the dissolution of parliament.

In Germany, the situation seems less critical. The CDU/CSU bloc party, led by Olaf Scholz, won the European Parliament elections with a 30% majority. This bloc has traditional support and is known for its pro-Western stance, particularly in support of Ukraine. However, **the most dangerous in Germany is the second place of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party**, which won 15.9% of the vote and is pro-Russian and far-right. This has sparked considerable debate and highlights potential risks for Ukraine and stability in the EU. ²

In the context of the current political situation in the EU, it is important to bear in mind that reactions to the election results in each country will be determined by internal political and geopolitical factors that may influence the future course of the European Union and its foreign policy. But overall, despite new challenges, **pro-Ukrainian forces managed to retain a majority this time around**. In the current political situation, the European Union is facing important internal and external challenges that may affect its policy towards Ukraine. However, despite the difficult circumstances, the EU is likely to try to maintain stability in its external relations and not make drastic changes in its support for Ukraine.

In terms of political parties in the EU, especially in light of the recent scandals involving Alternative for Germany candidates, it is likely that ***far-right parties will not have a significant say in shaping European policy towards Ukraine***. This is especially true for parties that have pro-Russian sympathies or offer controversial approaches to historical issues.

However, the new composition of the European Commission may have some impact on the future EU policy towards Ukraine. At the end of June, EU leaders are expected to consider opening formal accession negotiations with Ukraine. However, internal political discussions in the European Parliament, in particular among the European People's Party (EPP), Social Democrats and Renew Europe group, over the reappointment of Ursula von der Leyen for a second term may affect this process. The confrontation between parties that support different vectors of EU development and foreign policy may make it difficult to reach a consensus on strategic decisions regarding Ukraine. Leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz have already spoken out against Ursula von der Leyen's reappointment, which could be a factor in shaping future EU policy.

Thus, the future of the EU's relations with Ukraine remains under the influence of complex political processes in the European Union, where every decision can have a major impact on the international arena and geopolitical relations. It is indeed critical for Ukraine to maintain a "pro-Ukrainian" leadership in the EU, especially in the context of the upcoming US presidential campaign and the possible decline in the attention of American politicians to Ukrainian issues. In this context, the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission is of particular importance, as she maintains a clear position on supporting Ukraine on its path to EU membership and countering Russian military aggression.

It is also important to strengthen positions in key EU positions, such as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Commissioner for Political and Enlargement Negotiations, and European Commissioner for Defence. The election of suitable candidates, such as Radoslaw Sikorski or Kai Kallas, could influence the EU's course in supporting Ukraine and its common defence policy. Maintaining a network of MEPs who actively support Ukraine through resolutions and votes in the European Parliament is important for further support and assistance to Ukraine, especially in the face of Russian

² Результати виборів Європейського парламенту 6-9 червня 2024 року та їхнє значення для політичного майбутнього ЄС та України. <https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/mizhnarodni-vidnosyny/rezultaty-vyboriv-yeuropeyskoho-parlamentu-6-9-cherwnya-2024>

aggression and destructive propaganda.

Despite the growing representation of right-wing forces in the European Parliament, which may lead to certain challenges, it is important to keep in mind that this **does not directly threaten Ukrainian interests**. However, increased skepticism about Ukraine's prospects in the EU and the influence of Kremlin narratives could negatively affect the scale of military assistance and joint defence projects. Thus, it is important for Ukraine to promote the rapid completion of coalition negotiations and the formation of a new EU leadership that will support its interests and further strengthen relations with the European Union.

Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine

■ *THEME ANALYSIS: The G7 Summit in Italy: How crucial was it for Ukraine?*



Source: Reuters

On 13 June, at the G7 summit in Italy, Ukraine achieved several positive developments in the security and defence sector, signing two key agreements with the United States and Japan.

During the summit, which brought together the world's leading industrialised nations, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke about the importance of the results. In particular, he noted that the main result was an increase in the number of air defence systems for Ukraine. In this regard, he noted that the word "Patriot" has now become practically Ukrainian, and the agreements discussed provide for the supply of more equipment and other necessary resources for the frontline. The President also reported on a successful meeting with the head of the World Bank, during which they discussed financing for the restoration of energy infrastructure in Ukraine.

These events confirm **the growth of international support and recognition of Ukraine as a strategic partner in the security and defence sector**, which is an important step towards strengthening the country's defence capabilities in the face of Russian aggression. However, the most important event during the summit was the signing of a 10-year bilateral security agreement by US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy. This agreement is an important step in supporting Ukraine in the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The agreement is also recognised as supporting a bridge to Ukraine's eventual NATO membership.³

Its main provisions include the provision by the United States of long-term material, training, advisory, technical, intelligence, security, defence industry, institutional and other support for the development of the Ukrainian security and defence forces. These measures are aimed at ensuring that Ukraine is able to defend its sovereignty, independence and democracy, as well as deter future aggression. The agreement also stipulates that in the event

³ Саміт G7: Зеленський назвав головні результати для України. 14.06.2024.

<https://www.unian.ua/politics/samit-g7-v-italiji-zelenskiy-nazvav-golovni-rezultati-dlya-ukrajini-12665646.html>

of an armed attack on Ukraine or a threat of such an attack, representatives of the United States and Ukraine will meet within 24 hours to consult and identify additional defence needs of Ukraine. These steps demonstrate the deep strategic defence and security partnership between Ukraine and the United States, which is aimed at enhancing defence capabilities and stability in the region.

However, **the agreement has its shortcomings, especially in the context of legal binding and the wording of the provisions, most of which are intentions or "policy"**. This may make it difficult to put into practice important aspects of the agreement, such as military support in the event of a threat of aggression. For the US, the agreement with Ukraine is part of its foreign policy aimed at supporting democracy and stability in the region. It carries certain political and reputational risks, especially in the event of possible changes in the US administration or geopolitical conditions. The main task for Ukraine after the signing of the agreement is to ensure its effective implementation and to constantly put on the agenda the issues of its improvement and development of cooperation with key international partners, in particular with the United States.

The agreement between Ukraine and the United States, which was signed at the G7 summit, is indeed different from all previous agreements between Ukraine and other international partners. In particular, it has specific terminology typical of binding international agreements, such as the use of the term "**parties**" instead of "participants" and the presence of verbs "shall"/"must" in some provisions. It also mentions that the agreement "shall enter into force", which is an indicator of an international treaty. It is planned to register this agreement with the UN, which also confirms its binding nature.⁴

However, it is **important to note that most of the provisions of the agreement are not binding. The agreement contains language that indicates the intention or "policy" of the United States, rather than unconditional obligations. Most of the important aspects of the agreement are set out in an annex, which is stated to be non-binding and does not create legal or obligations under domestic or international law.**

Thus, this agreement with the United States, while having legally binding elements, retains flexibility and does not impose a permanent obligation on all aspects of the agreement. This allows both sides to adapt cooperation to changing conditions and political circumstances.

The agreement also includes declarations and provisions that define defence and security cooperation, but **does not contain any legal obligations to ensure that Ukraine is able to fully restore its territorial integrity.**

The agreement uses terminology typical of political commitments rather than binding agreements, in particular, it sets out intentions and policies to support Ukraine in defence. Many important provisions are included in an annex to the agreement, which has no legal force and does not create binding legal obligations.

Compared to the agreements with France and the United Kingdom, the agreement with the United States is less ambitious and **does not set clear criteria for "credible defence and deterrence posture". It does not specify what is meant by "winning the war" and does not define goals such as restoring territorial integrity.**

In terms of military assistance, **the agreement does not commit the US to arms or other legal obligations, but only sets out the intention to seek US Congressional approval for funds to support Ukraine's defence capabilities.**

Finally, the mechanism for responding to future armed attacks by Russia, while stipulating that high-level consultations should take place within 24 hours, also **does not create any binding legal obligations for the United States to determine further steps or measures.**

Thus, the US-Ukraine Security Agreement is an important step, but it has its limitations and risks.

⁴ Право на допомогу. Які недоліки має безпекова угода з США та чи збережеться вона за Трампа. 18.06.2024. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2024/06/18/7188341/>

First, most of the provisions of the agreement are formulated as political commitments and intentions rather than clear legal obligations. This means that the US is not legally obliged to provide certain levels of assistance or protection in the event of armed aggression against Ukraine.

Second, the right to terminate the agreement with six months' notice is problematic for Ukraine, as it reduces predictability regarding the duration and levels of assistance.

Third, there is a risk that failure to fulfil promises or even terminate the agreement could damage the reputation of the United States among its allies and partners, in particular, reducing faith in American promises in international relations.

Ukrainian society and the government perceive the agreement as an important step in strengthening the country's defence capabilities, but *further improvement and clarification of responsibilities and mechanisms of cooperation is needed to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness.*

In addition, Volodymyr Zelensky and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida signed a bilateral security agreement during the G7 summit held in Italy on 13 June. Under the agreement, Japan pledged to provide \$4.5 billion in aid to Ukraine in 2024 and to continue supporting the country over the 10-year term of the agreement. The agreement covers security and defence assistance, humanitarian aid, technical and financial cooperation, as well as joint efforts to implement the "Peace Formula". It also includes sanctions against the aggressor country and measures aimed at bringing it to justice, as well as cooperation in reconstruction and recovery.

Zelensky expressed his gratitude to Japan for its solidarity and support for Ukraine in its fight for international law and the protection of life. For Japan, this type of agreement is a significant breakthrough, demonstrating its commitment and support for the Ukrainian people. Understanding security agreements as a temporary measure after a war is an important aspect. Agreements with partners such as the United States or Japan can play a key role in supporting Ukraine's defence and security, especially in the transition period after a conflict. However, it is **important not to depend solely on such agreements as an alternative to NATO.** Therefore, Kyiv has every reason to demand improvements to these agreements, especially at future NATO summits, ensuring that they are robust and predictable to ensure national security. While these are certainly positive developments, **they do not guarantee certainty or strong support from allies like the United States, which is still in political limbo.**



Source: Army FM

■ *Changes at the front*

Trend: *The most critical phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war is coming.*

The growing dynamics of hostilities can be seen in the fact that between 10 and 16 June, over 700 combat engagements took place on the frontline between the Ukrainian Defence Forces and Russian occupation forces, which launched a total of 19 missile attacks and 399 air strikes at Ukrainian positions. The situation was the most intense in the Pokrovske, Kurakhove and Lyman directions. The command of the Russian troops is currently making every effort to increase the intensity and expand the geography of hostilities in order to maximise the depletion of our troops, disrupt the training of reserves, and prevent a transition to active offensive operations.

In the Kharkiv direction, the Russian troops carried out massive attacks near the settlements of Hlyboke, Liptsi, and Vovchansk in the Kharkiv region, where the battles in Vovchansk and near Liptsi (north of Kharkiv) became positional. Between 10 May and 10 June 2024, as a result of an attempted new offensive in the north of Kharkiv region, Russian troops lost up to 4,000 manpower and dozens of vehicles in the killed.

On the Kupiansk direction, Russian units unsuccessfully attacked near the settlements of Senkivka, Petropavlivka, Pishchane, Berestove, Stepova Novoselivka in Kharkiv region and near Stelmakhivka and Andriivka in Luhansk region.

In the Liman direction, Ukrainian defence forces repelled enemy attacks near Druzhelyubivka in Kharkiv region, as well as Hrekivka, Serebryanske forestry in Luhansk region, Terny and Torske in Donetsk region.

In the Northern direction, Ukrainian troops repelled attacks in the areas of Bilohorivka, Luhansk region, Verkhnekamianske, Vyymka, Spirne, and Rozdolivka, Donetsk region.

In the Kramatorsk direction, the Russian troops attacked 65 times in the areas of Hryhorivka, Kalynivka, Klishchivka, Ivanivske and Novyi in the Donetsk region.

In the Pokrovsky direction, Ukrainian troops repelled 240 attacks by Russian invaders in the areas of Kalynove, Yevhenivka, Novooleksandrivka, Sokil, Umanske, Novoselivka Persha, Progress, Nevelske, Yasnobrodivka, Netaylove in the Donetsk region. The Russian proxies concentrated most of their attack brigades and regiments in the Pokrovske direction. On the 30-kilometre stretch of the front near Pokrovsk, the Russians are holding a 70,000-strong army that can push into the powerful line of Ukrainian army fortifications. Fierce fighting is currently taking place in the areas of Hlyboke, Chasovyi Yar, Staromayorsk, Robotyno, Krynky and the islands on the coastal part of the left bank of the Dnipro River.

In the Kurakhove direction, Russian troops launched about 100 attacks on Ukrainian troops' positions. The Ukrainian defence forces continue to hold back the Russian invaders in the areas of Krasnohorivka, Novomykhailivka, Heorhiivka, Pobeda, Paraskoviivka and Kostiantynivka.

In the Vremivsk direction, Ukrainian troops fought back in the areas of Urozhayne, Vodiane and Staromayorske in the Donetsk region.

In the Orikhiv direction, Russian proxies attacked the positions of Ukrainian soldiers near Robotyno and Mala Tokmachka in Zaporizhzhia region.

In the Prydniprovsky direction, Russian invaders tried to drive Ukrainian units from their footholds on the left bank of the Dnipro River. The militants unsuccessfully attacked Ukrainian troops' positions near Krynky, Kherson region.

■ *Military assistance*

Lithuania has decided to allocate at least 0.25% of its GDP annually to support Ukraine's security and defence, for which it will receive M113 armoured vehicles, 5.56 mm ammunition, anti-drone systems, reconnaissance drones, generators, field beds and truck tyres.

The Czech Republic provided Ukraine with the first batch of ammunition under the Czech initiative.

Spain handed over the second batch of Patriot missiles to Ukraine. In addition to missiles, the aid includes a second batch of Leopard battle tanks, various types of ammunition, including 155mm calibre, anti-drone systems, optoelectronic surveillance systems, and remote control towers.

Germany donated 41 Mercedes Arocs trucks to the Ukrainian Border Guard Service.

The EU approves a €1.4bn tranche of military aid to Ukraine from the proceeds of frozen Russian assets

The United States has handed over an experimental Hawkeye howitzer to Ukraine to test it in combat

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Trend: *What threatening messages did Vladimir Putin express to the West during the economic forum in St. Petersburg?*

In early June, Russia hosted the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, which was marked by even fewer foreign participants this year. It also featured Russian President Vladimir Putin addressing an audience of Russian elites and foreign dignitaries with important statements on global politics and security.

The annual meetings in St. Petersburg serve as a platform for Putin to regularly present his domestic and foreign policies, express optimism about Russia's economic development despite sanctions, and reject the dominance of the US financial order. His speeches are also known for the presence of major foreign dignitaries who attend the forum. In general, Putin uses these meetings to maintain an optimistic vision of the country's development and to emphasise his positions in international affairs, including nuclear strategy and relations with the West.

This year, Putin emphasised that even the combined arsenals of Europe and the United States would not be a match for Russia in a nuclear confrontation, but he hoped that it would never come to that. He noted that Russian superiority played a key role in the war in Ukraine and made a nuclear conflict scenario unlikely, using the nuclear threat as a possible response to a threat to the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In general, we can already see how the alleged "nuclear threat" of the West is becoming more and more present in Kremlin rhetoric. In 1993, Russia reneged on the Soviet promise not to use nuclear weapons first, fearing that its weakened armed forces would not be able to deter a US attack, regardless of its likelihood. But now, Putin has emphasised that their armed forces are gaining experience and efficiency, making nuclear weapons unnecessary to preserve national sovereignty.

Putin also noted that he rejected the idea of using nuclear weapons as a last resort, emphasising the counterproductive nature of "*sabre-rattling*". But one should never take Kremlin quotes at face value. The fact that **Putin so frequently voiced the narrative of the use of nuclear weapons suggests that Moscow has adopted the nuclear threat in an attempt to subconsciously scare Western countries while maintaining its image as a 'messenger of**

peace". This is highlighted in particular by another statement by Putin, when he stressed the need for a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of previous agreements, although the Minsk and Istanbul agreements, according to him, failed to prevent the conflict.

However, during a press conference with foreign journalists, **Putin said that Russia could strike at "sensitive targets" of countries that supply long-range weapons to Ukraine for use against Russian territory.** He said: "We are considering the possibility that if someone decides to supply these weapons to the conflict zone to strike our territory and create problems for us, why can't we supply our weapons of the same class to those regions of the world where these weapons will be used to strike sensitive targets of those countries that do this against Russia."

He also said that Russia could "*asymmetrically respond*" if other countries were to engage in a war against it. He noted that if countries start using long-range missiles to strike at Russian territory, Russia reserves the right to do the same: "If we see that these countries are involved in a war against us, and this is their direct participation in the war against Russia, then we reserve the right to act in a similar way. This is a path to very serious problems." ⁵

Putin's statements have caused outrage and reaction in the West, where questions are being raised about possible "*red lines*" regarding the use of long-range missiles in military conflicts with Russia. The United States is currently not granting Ukraine permission to use ATACMS missiles to strike military targets in Russia. It is clear that these words give a more realistic picture of Russia's true intentions to freeze Europe into stopping its armed support for Ukraine at the risk of direct confrontation. The main victims in such a scenario would be the closest countries, such as the Baltic states, Finland, Poland and Romania, but this would directly lead to a direct confrontation with NATO.

At the same time, this shows that the increase in military assistance to Ukraine, along with the increased possibilities of its use, has indeed caused panic in Moscow. And now it feels in considerable danger. **Russia will now increasingly turn to a strategy of nuclear blackmail, trying to cause panic and destabilisation. *The West should not fall for such provocations, but rather consolidate its support for Ukraine and the defence of the region as soon as possible.***

⁵ Путін почав відкрито погрожувати війною західним країнам за удари України далекобійними ракетами по РФ. 05.06.2024. <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/countries/udari-po-rosiji-putin-natyaknuv-na-viynu-z-krajnami-zahodu-50424835.html>