

EVOLUTION OF MILITARY-POLITICAL COOPERATION IN THE RAMSTEIN FORMAT (2022-2024)

ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ ВІЙСЬКОВО-ПОЛІТИЧНОГО СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВА В ФОРМАТІ «РАМШТАЙН» (2022-2024 РР.)

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Abstract. *The Ramstein format, initiated in 2022, has emerged as a groundbreaking mechanism for military-political cooperation in response to the escalating security crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This article explores the evolution of this international coalition from its formation to 2024, focusing on its role in uniting over 50 countries to provide coordinated military and logistical support to Ukraine.*

The study examines the main stages of the coalition's development, highlighting its strategic goals, such as strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities, supplying advanced military equipment, and fostering interoperability among allied nations. Particular attention is given to the challenges faced by the coalition, including maintaining member-state cohesion, overcoming logistical hurdles, and addressing resource limitations in the face of prolonged conflict.

The findings reveal that the Ramstein format represents a new model of collective action in global security, demonstrating the effectiveness of flexible, multi-nation partnerships in addressing large-scale aggression. The article also underscores the format's impact on redefining military-political cooperation, setting a precedent for future alliances in mitigating similar threats to international peace and stability.

This research contributes to the understanding of how innovative frameworks for collaboration can adapt to rapidly changing geopolitical realities, offering insights into the long-term implications for global defense strategies.

Key Words: *Ramstein format, military-political cooperation, international security, Ukraine, defense aid, geopolitical crisis, collective action, military alliances, global stability, interoperability, advanced weaponry, coalition dynamics.*

Анотація. У науковій роботі досліджується еволюція військово-політичного співробітництва у форматі «Рамштайн» протягом 2022–2024 років. Формат «Рамштайн» став новою моделлю міжнародної координації та взаємодії у забезпеченні безпеки України в умовах повномасштабної російської агресії. Аналізуються ключові етапи формування та розвитку цього формату, зокрема його роль у зміцненні міжнародної коаліції, організації постачання озброєння, координації дій союзників та розробці спільної стратегії протистояння загрозам глобальній безпеці.

Особлива увага приділяється впливу формату «Рамштайн» на трансформацію євроатлантичної системи безпеки, його інституціоналізації та розширенню функціоналу в межах міжнародної взаємодії. Дослідження висвітлює внесок ключових держав-учасниць, їхню дипломатичну активність та роль у формуванні спільних військових і політичних рішень.

Результати роботи дають змогу оцінити ефективність «Рамштайну» як унікального інструменту кризового реагування, підвищення обороноздатності України та забезпечення міжнародної безпеки. Зроблено висновки щодо перспектив розвитку формату в контексті довгострокових викликів та збереження стабільності на глобальному рівні.

Ключові слова: Рамштайн, військово-політичне співробітництво, міжнародна коаліція, безпека, Україна, обороноздатність, координація дій, військова допомога, геополітика, колективна безпека, міжнародна взаємодія, кризове реагування.

Introduction. It is generally accepted that after this war, the world was divided. Today, given this division, several groups (blocks) of international actors have formed based on how one or another international actor perceives the war. Therefore, Ukraine should maintain and strengthen the dialogue with the collective West to increase the pace of military and economic assistance to end the war on favorable terms for Ukraine (Rafalskyi, 2023).

In this review, the authors highlight key challenges in the most economically developed countries sided with Ukraine. One of the key events in international cooperation in support of the Ukrainian state was the establishment of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, also known as the Ramstein format.

This exploratory study tries to interpret the results of its establishment in April 2022. This group has undergone significant internal and external changes, going through a complex transformation process from periodic working meetings to a de facto international coalition to support Ukraine, which influences global processes and may become a component of the new international security architecture. The interaction between the members of the Ramstein format has resulted not only in mutually beneficial cooperation but also in complex interdependence, which should be transformed into a stable political alliance for Ukraine, as stated in the philosophy of the Ukrainian Peace Formula: ‘The risk of escalation in and around Ukraine will remain until its security is guaranteed by legally binding instruments of international law, backed by reliable domestic defense capabilities, and integrated into a new international security architecture.

This study aims to trace the evolution of cooperation between the participants of the Ramstein format during their interaction in providing international assistance to Ukraine.

Literature review. The theoretical, international, and historical aspects of Ukraine's behavior in the international arena in the context of repelling Russian aggression have been studied by such scholars as O. Rafalskyi, V. Horbulin, A. Maiboroda, H. Perepelytsia, S. Troyan, S. Shergin, A. Kudriachenko, P. Hai-Nyzhnyk, S. Vidnianskyi, M. Kapitonenko, B. Bernadskyi, R. Vovk, M. Malskyi, M. Trebin, A. Lytvynenko, A. Bohomolov (Mayboroda, Khamitov, Holovakha, Dembitskyi, Smolii, Skrypniuk, Stoetskyi, 2022).

Main results of the research. The findings revealed that many recent studies have focused on the diversity and multiplicity of mutually beneficial aspects of cooperation, ties, and contacts that have taken place between Ukraine and its allies in the Ramstein format in recent years. It is highly likely that this format has created a solid foundation for unilateral international support for Ukraine in repelling Russian aggression and significantly influenced the foreign policy strategies and behavior of Ukraine's allies in international politics. Ukraine has proven itself to be a strong international actor capable of acting as an outpost of defense of Western civilization against external threats to the Euro-Atlantic community for an extended time. Strengthening the defense of states that cannot ensure their security or protect their geopolitical interests on their own. At the same time, military assistance, as one of the foundations of Ukraine's resilience, is a component of the international support provided by Ukraine's allies in the military, socioeconomic, financial, diplomatic, and other spheres, including humanitarian, where the most important place is occupied by assistance to internally displaced persons from Ukraine to the EU (Buzarov, 2023).

The discussion points out that since February 2022, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Poland have taken the lead in coordinating international military assistance to Ukraine. One trend is essential to note. From the outset, there was a clear institutional distinction between NATO's assistance as an actor in international relations and that provided as part of an initiative by a single country (group of countries), such as the UK. This institutional approach was further confirmed at the NATO summit in Washington in July 2024, when the Alliance took on a more active coordinating role in providing military assistance and training to Ukraine. The US stated that NATO's new role would go hand-in-hand with the work of the Contact Group on Ukraine's Defence (Ramstein). In other terms, despite close cooperation between NATO and the Ramstein, an institutional separation of cooperation with Ukraine was developed at the level of NATO and the Ramstein.

In April 2022, the United Kingdom and its partner countries established the International Donor Coordination Centre (IDCC) in Germany to make the international community's military assistance to Ukraine more coordinated and effective. Subsequently, the IDCC, which consisted of more than a hundred military personnel from 30 countries, was to respond to Ukraine's requests for weapons, coordinate allied responses, and ensure the delivery of equipment to Ukraine over the next two years (*Rafalskyi, 2023*).

It is commonly suggested that the first meeting in this format occurred on 26 April 2022 at the Ramstein Air Force Base near the German city of Ramstein-Miesenbach. 'Representatives of 43 countries, including 13 non-NATO countries, took part in the Summit on Ukraine's Long-Term Security at Ramstein Air Force Base. Most of them were represented by defense ministers or senior defense policy officials. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also took part in the discussion. Among the non-NATO countries invited were the United States' key Pacific partners: Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Representatives of the Middle East - Israel, Qatar, and Jordan, a quartet from Africa - Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, and Tunisia, as well as Finland and Sweden (at that time, these countries were not yet full members of NATO) and, of course, Ukraine itself. The Pentagon also had to create a new kind of coalition, convening more than 50 countries worldwide to coordinate the supply of materiel to Ukraine through the Ukraine Defence Contact Group - the most complex and rapid effort ever undertaken to rebuild a single country's armed forces (*Perepelytsia, 2017*).

Broadly speaking, experts, journalists, and politicians used various terms and phrases to describe a new, historic, international format of support for Ukraine: from the emergence of the Anti-Putin Coalition to the new NATO format for engagement with Ukraine. However, the Ukraine Defense Contact Group was the official name used in international documents of NATO countries and the US Department of Defence. According to the definition of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine's website ArmyInform: 'Ramstein meetings are a series of diplomatic meetings of defense ministers from several dozen countries. The primary purpose of the Ramstein is to discuss, synchronize, and accelerate the provision of military assistance, weapons, and equipment to Ukraine. In other words, defense ministers from around the world discuss what weapons will be provided to Ukraine to accelerate the end of the war (*Troian, 2014*).

The launch of the Ramstein format had the practical result of formalizing the political and legal aspects of specific packages of military and technical assistance to Ukraine and accelerating relevant political decision-making at the level of the governments of the allied countries. For example, on 9 May 2022, the United States passed the Ukraine Democracy Assistance Act of 2022, which laid the legal groundwork for in-depth military cooperation between the United States and Ukraine for the following year (*Pirozhkov, 2022*).

The study is a preliminary attempt to analyze that by April 2023, the assistance to Ukraine from the Ramstein Group countries had increased tenfold in a year. As of April 2023, the total security assistance from the member countries of the Contact Group on Defence of Ukraine was \$55 billion. This is a tenfold increase since the first meeting in the Ramstein format (the largest share of this assistance was provided by the United States (USD 35 billion). The number of members of the Defence Contact Group, the donor countries that assist Ukraine, increased to 54 countries over the year.

This paper reports on the study's results, exploring that during the first year of the Ramstein meetings, the Allies gradually improved Ukraine's defense capabilities and increased the Armed Forces' combat capability. The following chronological classification of specific Ramstein meetings can be made in the context of the main topics discussed at a particular meeting: 'Ramstein 1'. Inaugural meeting and assessment of prospects; 'Ramstein 2'. Artillery and Missiles; Ramstein 3. Announcements about HIMARS; 'Ramstein 4'. Repair of damaged equipment, ammunition, and HIMARS again; 'Ramstein-5'. Gepard anti-aircraft guns, HARM, and Hellfire missiles; 'Ramstein-6'. Air defense against Russian missiles; 'Ramstein-7'. More air defense and artillery; 'Ramstein-8'. The West decides to transfer its tanks; 'Ramstein-9'. Formation of the tank coalition; 'Ramstein-10'. Shells for the counter-offensive.

According to some Ukrainian websites, during the first year of the Ramstein format, Ukraine received: 'At least 400 155-mm shells; at least a hundred 105-mm artillery pieces; about fifty Western MLRS (MLRS, HIMARS, Mars II, LRU); more than a thousand armored vehicles; anti-radar and anti-ship missiles; Western tanks (*Kapitonenko, 2009*).

The most impressive progress has been made in air and missile defense. At the end of January 2022, Ukraine could not buy banal stringers—it was impossible. Subsequently, within a year, the defense forces were able to secure Hundreds of man-portable air defense systems of various types: Crolate (France), Aspide, and Gepard (Germany); IRIS-T SLM (Germany) and NASAMS (Norway—USA) systems; and finally, Patriot (USA) systems capable of shooting down ballistic targets.

Thus, during the first year of the Ramstein format, the combat capability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces gradually improved, and the Ukrainian army was technically re-equipped according to Western standards.

Security assistance to Ukraine will increase to \$95 billion by 2024. US Secretary of Defence Lloyd J. Austin III officially announced this at a press conference after the 21st meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group. Austin also noted that he is very proud of America's leadership and contribution and welcomed US President Joe Biden's law signing on additional assistance to Ukraine. He also welcomed increased funding for Israel, Taiwan, and the US defense industrial base (*Kudriachenko, 2006*).

It is commonly suggested that during the second year of the Ramstein format and its last meetings in 2024, the following thematic meetings were held: 'Ramstein 11'. Still no Western aircraft; 'Ramstein 12'. The Fighter Coalition; 'Ramstein 13'. Assistance against the backdrop of a counter-offensive; 'Ramstein 14'. Pilot training and clarity on the F-16; 'Ramstein 15'. Capability Coalition Initiative and launch of the IT Coalition. Ramstein 16. F-16s, air defense systems, tanks, and winterization. Ramstein 17. A coalition to strengthen Ukraine's air defense has been formed. Ramstein 18. Commitments on long-range weapons are announced. Ramstein 19. The Drone Coalition is officially launched. Ramstein 20. Ammunition, air defense, F-16s, and drones. 'Ramstein 21': Additional air defense funds are provided to Ukraine. 'Ramstein 22': more munitions, Leopard tanks, and air defense. 'Ramstein-23': improving air defense. Ramstein 24. Critical weapons and equipment, M2 Bradley fighting vehicles and missiles for HIMARS (*Malskyi, 2011*).

However, the 25th meeting of the Ramstein Group did not occur in September. It cannot be ruled out that one of the reasons for the postponement was the problematic domestic political situation in the United States on the eve of the presidential election. For an extended period, Trump's team made contradictory statements about how they saw further support for Ukraine and the end of the war in general. At the same time, there were media reports that the administration of the current US President, Joe Biden, wanted to urgently send the remaining \$6 billion in military aid to Ukraine. At the same time, Defence Minister Rustem Umerov hopes that the format of the Contact Group on Ukraine's Defence, known as the 'Ramstein,' will continue under the future Donald Trump administration.

It should also be added that as of November 2024, the Pentagon has clarified the remaining amount intended to provide military assistance to Ukraine, which is waging a defensive war against Russia: 'It totaled \$9.3 billion (about €8.8 billion). This was stated by US Department of Defence

spokesman Major General Pat Ryder during a press briefing on 12 November 2024. The Pentagon spokesman stressed that the United States wants to use all available funds to help Ukraine before the new US president's team takes over. Thus, more than \$7 billion remained under the Presidential Drawdown Authority program (\$4.3 approved by Congress in April and \$2.8 that became available after recalculations), and about \$2.2 billion is available under the USAI (Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative) program, Voice of America correspondent Ostep Yarysh wrote on social media platform X (*Khoma, 2015*).

In addition, according to Western analysts, 'since the beginning of the war, the US Congress has passed five bills providing Ukraine with permanent assistance, the last one in April 2024. The total budget allocated under these bills (and this is the amount that often appears in the headlines) is \$175 billion. It is important to note that out of the total \$175 billion, only \$106 billion goes directly to the Ukrainian government. Most of the remaining funds are used to finance various US activities related to the war in Ukraine, and a small portion is used to support other affected countries in the region.

Taken together, the results suggest that between the beginning of Russian aggression against Ukraine in February 2014 and the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, the United States provided financial and humanitarian assistance many times less. In 2017, the US aid to Ukraine aimed to provide Ukraine with essential humanitarian and non-lethal assistance. Under President Obama, the United States was an active supporter and catalyst for reforms in Ukraine. Ukraine received other assistance to improve its defense capabilities and conducted many military exercises. From 2014 to 2017, the United States provided Ukraine \$1.6 billion in security assistance. Between 2014 and 2021, the United States provided Ukraine with \$2.5 billion in military aid. 'The ruling party of the United States still argued that the supply of Western weapons would accelerate the war's end, and a victorious war at that.' Eventually, the law supporting Ukraine was passed in April 2024, but the delay in its adoption led to significant changes at the front, not in favor of the Ukrainian side.

Indeed, the Ramstein format has dramatically contributed to the rapprochement between the Alliance's and Ukraine's structures. All 32 NATO member states are also members of the Ramstein Group. On 30 September 2022, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed Ukraine's application for NATO membership on an accelerated basis against the backdrop of Russia's annexation of the occupied territories of Ukraine. Since February 2022, NATO has implemented support projects in various fields under the Ukraine Airspace Trust Fund. At the Vilnius Summit in 2023, member states agreed to further develop the Partnership for Ukraine into a multi-year assistance program based on sustainable and predictable funding. Long-term assistance is provided in three main areas: reconstruction, institutional transformation, and transition to interoperability with NATO. At the Madrid Summit in 2022, NATO leaders agreed to step up training and capacity building as part of the NATO 2030 agenda. At the Washington Summit in 2024, Allied leaders pledged long-term security assistance to Ukraine to provide military equipment, assistance, and training to support Ukraine in building a force capable of defeating Russian aggression today and deterring it in the future.

Conclusions. The above multilateral analysis (mainly based on the theory of international relations and the historical and descriptive method) of the Ramstein phenomenon in world politics allows us to draw some conclusions about the trends in its functioning as the main center of international military and technical assistance to Ukraine in countering Russian aggression.

These results indicate that Ramstein has become a phenomenon in world politics. Partner assistance to Ukraine is essential to its defense capability and resilience in resisting Russian aggression. The term 'Ramstein' itself has become universal. Its analogs can be found in journalistic and academic literature and the media: 'Ramstein 2.0', 'Cultural Ramstein,' 'Financial Ramstein,' 'Economic Ramstein,' etc. These phrases are associated with planning and the desire to modernize a particular area.

Taken as a whole, the Ramstein Group has created opportunities for the strategic rearmament of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and convergence with NATO standards. Within the framework of this format, specific types of weapons were supplied and purchased with financial assistance (over

\$100 billion) from Ramstein member countries. Ukraine improved its defense capabilities, ensuring successful counterattacks and strategic defensive actions.

Specifically, during the entire period of intensive work of Ramstein, not only did the strategic rearmament of the Armed Forces of Ukraine take place, but also the technological improvement of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex. This, in turn, may increase interest in Ukraine's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. In this regard, the chronicle and peculiarities of relations over the two-and-a-half years of intensive work of the Ramstein format to counter Russian aggression make it possible to state that Ramstein has also become a catalyst for Ukraine's multi-level accelerated integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

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