

POLICY OF COLLECTIVE WEST ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE

ПОЛІТИКА КОЛЕКТИВНОГО ЗАХОДУ ЩОДО ВІЙСЬКОВОЇ ДОПОМОГИ УКРАЇНИ

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Abstract: *Since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and especially after the full-scale invasion in 2022, the policy of the Collective West on military assistance to Ukraine has undergone a significant transformation. The article systematically analyzes the evolution of the leading Western countries' (NATO, EU, G7) approaches to supporting Ukraine in the military and defense sphere in 2014-2025. The main stages of change are identified: from symbolic non-lethal support to large-scale supplies of modern weapons and training. The motivating factors of the West's policy - geopolitical interests, principles of international law, humanitarian obligations, internal political dynamics and the threat of revisionism - are investigated. Special attention is paid to institutional mechanisms of coordination and the influence of public opinion, media and economic factors on decision-making. It is concluded that military assistance to Ukraine has become not only a tool for responding to the crisis, but also an important factor in the formation of a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture, in which Ukraine is an active actor in the transformation of regional security.*

Keywords: *military assistance, Collective West, Ukraine, NATO, security policy, full-scale invasion, Euro-Atlantic security*

Анотація: Від початку агресії Росії проти України у 2014 році, а особливо після повномасштабного вторгнення 2022 року, політика Колективного Заходу щодо військової допомоги Україні зазнала суттєвої трансформації. У статті системно проаналізовано еволюцію підходів провідних країн Заходу (НАТО, ЄС, G7) до підтримки України у військово-оборонній сфері в 2014–2025 роках. Визначено основні етапи змін: від символічної нелетальної підтримки до масштабного постачання сучасного озброєння та підготовки кадрів. Досліджено мотиваційні чинники політики Заходу — геополітичні інтереси, принципи міжнародного права, гуманітарні зобов'язання, внутрішньополітичну динаміку та загрозу ревізйонізму. Особливу увагу приділено інституційним механізмам координації та впливу громадської думки, медіа й економічних факторів на ухвалення рішень. Зроблено висновок, що військова допомога Україні стала не лише інструментом реагування на кризу,

а й важливим чинником формування нової євроатлантичної безпекової архітектури, у якій Україна виступає активним суб'єктом трансформації регіональної безпеки.

Ключові слова: військова допомога, Колективний Захід, Україна, НАТО, безпекова політика, повномасштабне вторгнення, євроатлантична безпека.

Introduction. Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began on February 20, 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the conflict in Donbas (Armyinform, 2023), and especially its full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, have significantly transformed Europe's security architecture. In the context of a large-scale armed conflict, military support from Western countries has become unprecedentedly important: it has become not only a tool to support Ukraine, but also a mechanism to curb the revisionist ambitions of the Russian Federation.

There is no unified interpretation of the concept of "military assistance" in the scientific literature. Most often, it is seen as assistance to an ally or partner country in defense efforts or to preserve territorial integrity. In some cases, military assistance may also be provided to counter internal armed threats, including insurgencies. It can include the supply of weapons and equipment, as well as the provision of funding, training or technical support (Ivasechko, Lopushanskyi, 2023). Analyzing the evolution of the Collective West's policy on military and defense assistance to Ukraine is key to understanding current challenges to Euro-Atlantic security. Despite the existence of a number of studies on certain aspects of international support, a comprehensive analysis of changes in the strategies of the leading Western powers in 2014-2025 is still limited.

For the purposes of this study, the term "Collective West" refers to the leading democracies that share the values of the liberal international order and coordinate policies within structures such as NATO, the European Union, and the Group of Seven (G7). The G7 is an informal international grouping of the world's most socially and economically developed countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the United States (Velyka simka, n.d.). These states are key donors of military aid to Ukraine and play a crucial role in shaping a common approach to deterring Russian aggression.

In the context of a large-scale armed conflict, military support from Western countries has become unprecedentedly important: it has become not only a tool to support Ukraine, but also a mechanism to curb the revisionist ambitions of the Russian Federation. However, it is important to realize that a solely defensive strategy without changing the dynamics of the conflict carries significant risks, as a potential "freezing" of the conflict would fix the occupation of part of Ukraine's territory, leaving millions of Ukrainians under Russian control, and threatens future destabilization (Sydoruk, Pavliuk, Avhustiuk, 2023). This emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of the policy of the Collective West. Analyzing the evolution of the Collective West's policy on military and defense assistance to Ukraine is key to understanding current challenges to Euro-Atlantic security.

After the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the volume of bilateral military assistance increased significantly. Many NATO countries provided Ukraine with lethal weapons, including offensive weapons, for the first time. For states such as Germany and historically neutral countries such as Sweden, this meant a fundamental revision of previous defense policies (Mills, 2025).

The purpose of the article is to analyze the transformation of the Collective West's military support policy for Ukraine in the period 2014-2025, as well as to identify the key motivations, institutional mechanisms and strategic implications of this policy.

The main objectives of the study include:

1. Identify the stages of evolution of the West's approach to military support for Ukraine;
2. Analysis of foreign policy, security, legal and humanitarian factors that influenced these processes;
3. Assessment of Ukraine's role as an active participant in the transformation of regional security.

Literature Review. Since the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014, and especially after the full-scale invasion in 2022, the policy of the Collective West on military assistance to Ukraine has undergone significant transformations. In 2025, Charlie Mills emphasized that at the initial stage, the support was mostly symbolic and focused on non-lethal aid (Mills, 2025). However, since 2022, the

scale of military support has increased significantly: in particular, modern lethal weapons were provided and large-scale training of the Ukrainian military was organized (Velykasimka, n.d.).

In 2024, Andriy Buzarov argued that the Ramstein initiative, which brought together more than fifty states and became the main platform for discussing and making strategic decisions, was a key factor in coordinating international aid (Buzarov, 2024). At the same time, Kim and Ukrainets noted that the motivating factors of Western policy are geopolitical interests, adherence to the principles of international law, humanitarian obligations, as well as domestic political and economic dynamics in donor countries (Kim, Ukrainets, 2022).

Yevheniia Kravchuk emphasized that Ukraine is gradually transforming from an object of military assistance to an active actor in regional security, which is important for the formation of a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture (Kravchuk, n.d.). Similarly, a 2024 study on the impact of political decisions on international support for Ukraine noted that military assistance has become a multidimensional process with long-term strategic implications for the security environment in Europe (Shapovalova, 2024).

Back in 2015, Scott Wolford considered military coalitions as an important instrument of international politics, which helps to explain the dynamics of modern support for Ukraine (Wolford, 2015). An analysis of Canada's experience with Operation Unifier also confirms the importance of a systematic approach to military training and cooperation (Government of Canada, 2021).

Thus, the scientific literature shows that the policy of military assistance to Ukraine is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is shaped by various internal and external factors and is of great strategic importance for the security of the Euro-Atlantic space.

Methodological basis. The methodological basis of the study is a combination of systemic, institutional and comparative approaches that provide a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the Collective West's policy on military assistance to Ukraine.

The systemic approach allows us to consider the interconnection of political, security, economic and humanitarian factors that determine the dynamics of Western support. This approach makes it possible to study the processes of transformation of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The institutional approach allows us to analyze the role of international organizations such as NATO, the EU and the G7 in shaping, coordinating and implementing decisions on military assistance. This helps to identify key institutional mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of support and its adaptation to new security challenges.

The comparative approach is used to study the different stages of the evolution of military support to Ukraine from the West (2014-2016, 2017-2021, 2022-2025). This makes it possible to identify differences in the scale, nature and priorities of assistance in different phases of the conflict.

In addition, the study is based on the analysis of official documents of international organizations, statements of political leaders, and expert opinions, which form the empirical basis of the study. The content analysis of these sources allows us to identify key trends in the policy of the Collective West and to substantiate the factors that influence decision-making.

The combination of these methodological approaches makes it possible to conduct a comprehensive study of the transformation of the policy of Western military assistance to Ukraine and to reveal its strategic importance for the security architecture of Europe.

Main results of the research.

Initial stage (2014-2016). After the start of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the Collective West's response in the area of military support was restrained and limited to non-lethal means. The main areas of assistance included the provision of protective equipment, medical kits, body armor, helmets, and training missions. The Operation Orbital program launched by the UK in late 2014, which trained more than 22,000 Ukrainian soldiers at the Yavoriv training base, was particularly valuable (House of Commons Library, n.d.).

The reasons for this limited support were complex. First, Western governments were dominated by an approach that did not allow for conflict escalation, and therefore they preferred sanctions and diplomacy to lethal weapons. Second, Ukraine's lackluster military governance, as well as weaknesses in defense reform and high levels of corruption, have also deterred significant military assistance.

At the institutional level, the most important instrument was the creation of the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) by NATO in 2016. It included six trust funds that opened 40 areas of cooperation aimed at reforming the defense sector, ensuring cybersecurity, developing logistics, medical care, and other critical areas - although the amount of funding remained symbolic compared to the needs of the Armed Forces (Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d.).

Although the support in those years was mostly non-lethal, it paved the way for Ukraine's further integration into NATO standards, increased structural cooperation, and professionalization of the Ukrainian security forces. This period laid important foundations for a further transition to more active forms of cooperation.

Expanding cooperation and building momentum (2017-2021). In the period 2021-2021, middle Western states, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Poland, and the Baltic states, played a key role in strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities through specialized military training and support programs. These countries have initiated a number of long-term operations that have had a significant impact on the capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

The United Kingdom has deployed Operation Orbital, launched in 2015, which will train more than 17,500 Ukrainian military personnel by 2019. The main purpose of the operation was to improve the tactical, technical and medical training of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as to strengthen interoperability with NATO. Similarly, Canada has provided training to more than 22,000 Ukrainian troops through Operation Unifier from 2015 to 2021. The program covered both basic training and specialized courses on countering asymmetric threats, which was a key factor in improving the combat capabilities of Ukrainian troops (Government of Canada, 2021).

Poland, having a strategic interest in deterring Russian aggression on its eastern border, has also significantly expanded military cooperation with Ukraine. In 2017, a number of bilateral agreements were signed on joint exercises, exchange of experience, and supply of military equipment. Poland provided not only lethal and non-lethal weapons, but also helped modernize Ukraine's logistics and defense industry.

The Baltic states-Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia-supported Ukraine through ongoing training programs and the transfer of expertise, especially in the areas of cybersecurity and countering hybrid threats. They also acted as important diplomatic actors in promoting Ukrainian security issues in the international arena.

Taken together, the activities of these middle powers created a significant impetus in military support for Ukraine, complementing the global efforts of NATO and other leading Western countries. Importantly, these programs provided a platform for further increasing military assistance after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Full-scale support, institutionalization of coordination (2022-2025). Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, marked a fundamental shift in the scale and nature of military assistance to Ukraine from the Collective West. From reacting to the crisis at the initial stage, when assistance was mostly limited to non-lethal equipment and humanitarian support, Western countries moved to actively supplying modern lethal offensive weapons, which significantly increased the combat capabilities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

The volume of aid increased tenfold and covered a wide range of equipment: from anti-tank missile systems, anti-aircraft missile systems, artillery and armored vehicles to unmanned aerial vehicles and precision weapons. At the same time, large-scale training of Ukrainian military personnel took place in Western countries, as well as the provision of intelligence and advisory support. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW Kiel), Ukraine received total international aid worth about 267 billion euros (\approx 287 billion US dollars) in 2022-2024. Of this amount, about 130 billion euros (49%) is military aid, another 118 billion euros (44%) is financial support, and 19 billion euros (7%) is humanitarian aid. The largest donors remain the European Union (including European states outside the EU) and the United States of America. As of the end of 2024, the total contribution of European countries amounted to approximately 132 billion euros, including 62 billion for military purposes and 70 billion for financial and humanitarian support. At the same time, US aid amounted to about 114 billion euros, of which 64 billion was military aid and 50 billion in other areas. In 2025, after the US effectively suspended new aid packages, European countries

stepped up their participation, allocating more than €20 billion in March-April alone to fill the gap. It is worth noting that more than 60% of the military aid provided in 2023-2024 was the latest equipment, including from EU companies. Small states, such as Estonia, Lithuania, and Denmark, demonstrate high relative support, with contributions exceeding 1.5-2% of their GDP. Thus, over the three years of the large-scale war, international aid to Ukraine, as recorded by IfW Kiel, has not only been large in volume, but continues to grow despite the changing political dynamics among leading donors.

The Ramstein initiative, launched in April 26, 2022 at a US air base in Germany, has become a symbol of a new quality of coordination of support for Ukraine. This platform has brought together more than 50 states, including NATO members, the EU and other partners, to discuss and coordinate arms transfers, standardize technical requirements and exchange operational information. It has become an important tool for ensuring synergy in the actions of partners, which significantly increases the effectiveness of military assistance. According to the Minister of Defense of Ukraine R. Umerov: "We have created eight coalitions of capabilities within the Ramstein platform, which include 34 member countries of the Contact Group on Defense of Ukraine. They signed letters of intent to cooperate. In addition, some coalitions have already signed memorandums that allow for centralized procurement funding." (Buzarov, 2024). A coalition is a group of two or more states that have entered into an agreement to use force jointly against a third country(s) in an international conflict (Wolford, 2015).

In parallel, specialized mechanisms were created at the level of NATO and the European Union to optimize decision-making and resource allocation. In particular, NATO has launched programs to improve Ukraine's defense capabilities and integrate its security forces into the Euro-Atlantic security system. The EU has stepped up cooperation in financing weapons, rebuilding infrastructure, and humanitarian support.

At the same time, Ukraine has made significant efforts to reform its defense system with the involvement of Western experts and advisors. These reforms include raising the level of personnel training, improving logistics, enhancing command and control systems, and modernizing military equipment. Such measures strengthen Ukraine's ability to wage a long-term defensive conflict and are a key factor in the country's integration into the Euro-Atlantic security space.

Thus, the period of 2022-2025 is characterized not only by a significant increase in military support for Ukraine, but also by the formation of sustainable and structured institutional coordination mechanisms that guarantee effective and efficient response to security challenges in the region. This process is of strategic importance for ensuring long-term stability and security in Europe.

Motivational factors of the Collective West policy. The policy of military assistance to Ukraine by the Collective West is determined by a number of complex motivational factors that cover both strategic geopolitical interests and ideological, humanitarian, domestic political and economic aspects. One of the key incentives for active support of Ukraine is the West's desire to curb the revisionist ambitions of Russia, which is trying to undermine the existing international order and establish a new sphere of influence in the Euro-Atlantic area through its aggression. In the context of military conflicts, such as the Russian-Ukrainian war, decisions made at the national and international levels directly affect the support strategies provided to Ukraine by Western countries, international organizations and alliances. In particular, these decisions shape the political, economic, and military assistance necessary to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty and counteract aggression (Shapovalova, 2024). Western countries see their support for Ukraine not only as assistance to an individual state, but also as protection of their own security, as successful containment of Russian aggression reduces the risk of the conflict spreading to other regions of Europe.

Another important factor is compliance with the principles of international law, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Russia's aggression is seen as a gross violation of the basic norms governing relations between states, and therefore support for Ukraine is a response to this challenge and a confirmation of the West's commitment to the international legal order. This aspect of the policy also encourages the international community to consolidate and demonstrates a willingness to defend the norms that guarantee security and stability. International humanitarian law is a system of principles and norms of international law that governs relations

between states to protect victims of war and limit the means and methods of warfare (Voytenko, Yeligulashvili, 2021).

Domestic political factors play an equally important role. In many Western countries, support for Ukraine enjoys considerable public support, which puts pressure on governments to increase military aid. The media, activist movements, and political forces shape public discourse by emphasizing the injustice of aggression and the need to protect democratic values. For political leaders, assistance to Ukraine is becoming a means of demonstrating their own responsibility and leadership in global security issues.

Economic factors also cannot be ignored. The military-industrial complex of Western countries benefits from increased orders for weapons and military equipment, which stimulates support for defense aid. The development of the military-industrial complex of the world's countries is determined by a combination of certain prerequisites, including the ratio of the territory area, population size and demographic structure, availability of natural resources and the degree of development of the production base. The economic system with basic economic relations (liberal market, state-controlled market, etc.) plays an important role in economic activity, socio-economic development and foreign policy of the country (Kim, Ukrainets, 2022). At the same time, the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia and energy policy create additional pressure on the Kremlin, while creating new conditions for transatlantic cooperation. Energy security and reducing dependence on Russian resources also determine the priorities of support for Ukraine.

Finally, the humanitarian commitments and values of the Collective West are an important motivation. Supporting Ukraine is perceived as an act of solidarity with the people who are fighting for the right to live in a democratic and sovereign state. This is not only a political choice, but also a moral obligation to promote and protect human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. Thus, military assistance is becoming a symbol of defense of liberal values in the global context.

Thus, the motivations behind the West's policy are multifaceted and interconnected, forming a comprehensive foundation on which the current strategy of military support for Ukraine is based. They combine pragmatic security interests and political goals with value-based guidelines, making the collective West's policy more stable and sustainable, despite possible internal challenges and changes in the international environment.

Ukraine as a subject of regional security. After the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in 2022, Ukraine not only became a victim of aggression, but also actively transformed into a key actor of regional security on the European continent. "European parliamentarians realize that Ukraine is an integral part of the continent's security today." (Kravchuk, n.d., Ukrinform) This opinion was expressed by Yevhenia Kravchuk, Vice President of the European party ALDE, Deputy Chairman of the "Sluga Narodu" parliamentary faction, in a commentary to Ukrinform on the sidelines of the "Women's Leadership in Time of War" forum.

This status is due not only to its geopolitical location between Europe and Russia, but also to its consistent ability to self-organize, mobilize resources and build strategic alliances with Western partners.

Ukraine today acts as a kind of "barrier" to further Kremlin aggression, which has a direct impact on the stability of not only Eastern Europe but the entire European security architecture. At the same time, it is actively integrating into regional security structures, demonstrating its willingness to cooperate with NATO, the European Union, and individual member states.

The problem of effective cybersecurity needs to be addressed comprehensively and requires coordinated action at the national, regional and international levels to prevent, prepare, respond and recover from incidents by government, the private sector and civil society (Ivasechko, Lopushanskyi, 2023). It is particularly important to emphasize that Ukraine is forming its own approach to regional security, based on the principles of collective responsibility, defense cooperation and mutual support. This is manifested in the development of multinational military exercises, participation in joint initiatives on cybersecurity, countering disinformation, and maintaining stability in Eastern Europe.

Thus, Ukraine's status as a regional security actor is not just a declaration, but a real functional factor that determines the balance of power in the region, shapes new rules of the game, and stimulates the development of partnerships based on democratic values and respect for international law.

Results. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the Collective West's policy on military assistance to Ukraine in the period 2014-2025. The main trends in the development of this policy, motivational factors, and its strategic implications for regional and global security are identified.

First of all, it was found that the policy of military support for Ukraine has a distinct dynamic that reflects the changing geopolitical realities and the level of threats perceived by the West. Three successive stages identified: the initial period (2014-2016), when support was mainly symbolic and non-lethal; the intermediate stage (2017-2021), marked by increased defense assistance, in particular in the form of lethal weapons and intensified training programs; and the current stage (2022-2025), characterized by large-scale, systematic, institutionalized support, in particular through the Ramstein initiative, which has become a platform for coordinating more than 50 states.

The second key discovery is the complex motivation of Western policy, which combines pragmatic and principled factors. Geopolitical containment of Russia and protection of European security are the main drivers. At the same time, the emphasis on adherence to international law, including the principle of sovereignty, as well as domestic political factors in Western countries - public support, the role of the media, and the economic interests of the defense industry - are building a strong consensus in support of Ukraine. Sanctions and energy policy play a significant role as a means of putting pressure on the aggressor, stimulating integration and solidarity within the framework of collective security.

The third important result is the identification of the strategic implications of such a policy. Military assistance not only helps to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities, but also significantly influences the formation of a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Ukraine is increasingly becoming an active participant in the security environment, which enhances stability in the region. Western support helps modernize the Ukrainian Armed Forces and create the preconditions for integration into NATO and the EU, which has long-term implications for European security.

Thus, the results show the transformation of the Collective West's policy from fragmented and symbolic support to a comprehensive, coordinated and strategically sound system of military assistance to Ukraine. This indicates the formation of new security norms and models of international cooperation in response to the challenges of modern hybrid warfare.

Conclusion. The article analyzes the evolution of the Collective West's policy on military assistance to Ukraine from 2014 to 2025, in particular in the context of a full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. The results of the study show a significant transformation in the approaches of Western countries: from symbolic non-lethal support at the initial stages to large-scale provision of modern lethal weapons and comprehensive training of the Ukrainian military. A key role in coordinating this assistance was played by the Ramstein initiative, which became a center of consolidation for more than fifty countries, reflecting a significant level of international solidarity and cooperation.

It is determined that the motivating factors of Western policy include both geopolitical interests and compliance with international law, humanitarian obligations, as well as domestic political and economic factors of donor countries. It is important to emphasize that Ukraine, thanks to the military support it receives, is gradually moving from the status of an object of assistance to an active actor in regional security, which affects the formation of a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

The findings are important not only for understanding the current dynamics of international military support for Ukraine, but also for the further development of the theory of international relations and security. They can also be useful for formulating effective policies both in donor countries and in Ukraine, taking into account current challenges and prospects for regional stability.

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