

Europe Decreasing Military Aid to Ukraine

Data shows that European countries did not offer new military aid to Kiev in July.

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Apparently, European countries are understanding that the path to peace in Ukraine requires stopping military aid. Data show that in July the six major European powers abstained from making new military agreements with Kiev. It was the first month without European aid pledges to Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian special military operation, in February. In fact, this indicates that Western support is on decline, leaving only Kiev to decide whether or not to continue with the conflict.

The news was announced by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy – more specifically through Ukraine Support Tracker, which operates within the Institute. According to the researchers, European authorities have become unable to keep up with the speed with which the US, UK and Poland send military aid. This situation has led to a slow decline in the supply of money, weapons and equipment, resulting in July’s absolute absence of support contracts.

The decline has been occurring since April. Looking from a realistic point of view it is possible that the Russian advance may have discouraged European leaders from maintaining high spending on the conflict, considering it as simply “lost”. Also, the discouragement may have been intensified especially after the Russian victory at the battle of Azovstal in May, when Western analysts finally began to admit that Kiev is losing the conflict.

More than geopolitical realism, there is also the direct pragmatic factor: Europe cannot promise Kiev more than it currently promises simply because it cannot give Kiev more than it currently does. Americans, British and Poles are managing to fulfill their promises because they have taken the Ukrainian situation as a national emergency and are mobilizing their productive forces to meet this demand. However, the EU has many other priorities that

make it impossible to give more help to Kiev. In other words: whatever is happening at the front, Europe is not promising Kiev any more aid simply because it can no longer help.

Obviously, the situation will not lead to an abrupt interruption of aid, but a gradual decline. Certainly, the end of support will not be definitive or linear, having expectations for modest resumptions and new interruptions again. For example, at the beginning of August, there was a meeting between European authorities in Copenhagen to re-discuss aid strategies. It was decided that an amount of 1.5 billion euros would be sent. Although the act somehow means that Europeans still “care” about Ukraine, the number is far lower than previous conferences’ packages.

Commenting on the topic, Christoph Trebesch, head of the team compiling the Ukraine Support Tracker, said: “Despite the war entering a critical phase, new aid initiatives have dried up. (...) When you compare the speed at which the checkbook came out and the size of the money that was delivered, compared to what is on offer for Ukraine, it is tiny in comparison (...) I would say [current European support is] surprisingly little considering what is at stake (...)”.

Trebesch believes that the correct European stance would be to invest in the Ukrainian conflict the same amount of money invested in overcoming previous events, such as the eurozone crisis and the new coronavirus pandemic. Trebesch’s opinion reiterates that of many other pro-Kiev activists, who believe that a Russian victory would be an absolute disaster for the entire Europe and lead to the bloc’s collapse, which is why every possible effort should be made now in order to prevent Moscow from reaching its goals.

And even though political realism is growing among Europeans, many authorities still think like Trebesch. For example, Latvian Defense Minister Artis Pabriks asked: “If we are wanting the war to end as soon as possible, they need to ask themselves, are they doing enough?”.

In fact, realism may overcome ideological or humanitarian arguments. The EU certainly has other priorities to address. The conflict itself brings with it many problems, such as the energy and food supply crisis. Thinking about solutions to problems that affect Europeans should be a priority over thinking about strategies to reverse the military scenario.

Furthermore, the argument that the current crisis should receive the same investment funds from previous crises is unfounded. The pandemic has killed thousands of Europeans, requiring direct state intervention. The conflict in Ukraine, as much as it worries the EU, is a foreign matter and cannot be a priority now. If the US, UK and Poland keep Ukraine as a priority, it is because these countries maintain a geopolitical and ideological rivalry against Russia, which is not the case in Europe.

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