

Kiev Is Not Any Closer to Joining NATO After Vilnius Summit

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During last week's NATO Summit in Vilnius, French President Emmanuel Macron announced Paris will be sending Kiev long-range missiles while Berlin in turn promised to ship air defense systems and armored vehicles. Washington, the week before, unprecedentedly, announced that it was sending (illegal) cluster munitions to Ukraine and is expected to announce additional support pretty soon. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is not happy however and his [tweet](#) has sparked some controversy. He wrote:

"Now, on the way to Vilnius, we received signals that certain wording is being discussed without Ukraine. And I would like to emphasize that this wording is about the invitation to become NATO member, not about Ukraine's membership. It's unprecedented and absurd when time frame is not set neither for the invitation nor for Ukraine's membership. While at the same time vague wording about 'conditions' is added even for inviting Ukraine. It seems there is no readiness neither to invite Ukraine to NATO nor to make it a member of the Alliance. This means that a window of opportunity is being left to bargain Ukraine's membership in NATO in negotiations with Russia." He added that such "uncertainty" is "weakness" and that he would discuss it at the summit.

Michael Birnbaum, a national security reporter for The Washington Post, [wrote](#) that, according to his sources, the Ukrainian leader's tweet almost backfired, to the point of US officials even considering "scaling back" their "invitation" - if could even describe it as that. Toluse Olorunnipa, Washington Post's White House Bureau Chief, and journalists Emily Rauhala and Meryl Kornfield also wrote that American delegation members were "furious" with the tweet.

Zelensky did adopt a more conciliatory tone during the summit but even so his confrontational tweet exposed tensions and fissures within the alliance. Such [fissures](#) have been evident to anyone since at least October 2022: already in August 2022, Europe even

seemed to be quietly “[abandoning](#)” Kiev – although it continued nonetheless to send billions in aid and weapons.

It has once again become clear in any case that US President Joe Biden does not consider Ukraine “ready” to join the Atlantic Alliance. In his interview to CNN, he stressed: “I don’t think there is unanimity in NATO about whether or not to bring Ukraine into the NATO family now, at this moment, in the middle of a war.” He added that “it’s premature to say, to call for a vote, you know, in now, because there’s other qualifications that need to be met, including democratization and some of those issues.” Biden knows that having Kiev join the Atlantic military bloc now would amount to entering in a direct war with Moscow – Washington prefers instead to continue to wage its [proxy attrition war](#) in the Eastern European country.

Surprisingly to some, Berlin and Washinton were in agreement with a more conservative approach and both powers backed a wording for the summit’s concluding statement that does not in any way endorse an invitation for Kiev to join NATO when the conflict is over (whenever that is) and does not even provide a “pathway” to Ukraine’s future accession.

Zelensky’s declarations have long been characterized by a demanding and confrontational tone: for instance, regarding his persistent demands that Israel provides his country with air defense systems, already in October 2022 he said in an interview with French TV5 Channel that “I don’t know what happened to Israel. I am in shock, because I don’t understand why they couldn’t give us air defenses.” Such an approach has not been very successful, to say the least.

It has become clear that Kiev will not get American Iron Dome batteries due to Israel blocking the transfer, as [Russo-Israeli pragmatic relations remain intact](#) despite all Western pressures. It is quite [arguable](#), however, whether such Western air defense systems could do Ukraine much good. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made it quite clear in his recent [interview](#) with the Wall Street Journal, that [Israel will continue to block](#) any transfer of aforementioned Iron Dome batteries to Kiev. From the Jewish state’s perspective, Moscow is a great regional power, with which Tel Aviv must engage in a number of issues in the Levant and beyond; Israel and Russia have a working relationship today in Syria, and there is no reason to damage bilateral relations for Tel Aviv now.

Things are not looking too good to Zelensky, as of lately. In May, it was reported that he was being pressured by Poland and regional states such as Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the Czech Republic [to come to a peace deal](#).

In August 2022 I wrote on how the “cult of Zelensky” was already wearing off by then, with an Amnesty International’s report exposing Ukrainian violations, and PR stunts [backfiring](#). At the time, Thomas Friedman of the New York Times [wrote](#) that the White House did trust the Ukrainian leader and things do not seem to have improved much in that regard.

15 years ago, in 2008, NATO offered a commitment that Kiev would one day join it. This, plus a number of other Western initiatives, was [one of the main causes of the 2014 crisis](#), and from 2022 onwards it [remains so today](#). In July 2022 I [wrote](#) that Ukraine’s accession was currently not even in Washington’s best interests anymore, and that, ironically, when everything is said and done, Ukraine could end up not joining the Alliance at all, for the costs would be too high and thus outweigh the benefits, from the West’s perspective. This of course would not be the first time an [overburdened](#) US [abandons](#) or [betrays](#) an ally, and

the latest developments show that such a scenario seems to be increasingly likely.

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