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SUMMIT NATO: UKRAINE AS A HERO, WHO LEFT IN DEFEAT

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Summary

The NATO summit was a great hope for Ukraine. But in the end, the country could not rejoice the way that they deserved, and wanted to for so long. The Allies have once again declared their support for this war-torn country, and condemned the brutal Russian aggression. But... from Washington, President Zelensky has only taken away assurances that one day his country will become part of this Alliance. Although the promise of more weapons has also been made, and F-16 aircrafts will arrive soon, Ukraine needed more than this. And most important - the commitment of financial support. Ukraine will receive 40 billion, but only for the following years is completely missing.

Key Takeaways

- Ukraine as the main topic of the NATO summit in the USA: military and financial aid, as well as Ukraine's own membership in the Alliance were discussed.
- The United States and other countries have pledged billions of euros in weapons, equipment and training. This decision was supported by almost all member states. However, this only spans the following year.
- The final document states that Ukraine's path to NATO is undeviating, and will absolutely happen. However, there was no further progress in the accession negotiations.

Three days about Ukraine

To no one’s surprise, the NATO summit in Washington was devoted primarily to Russian aggression against Ukraine. For three days, nationals and representatives of member countries discussed social and bilateral negotiations on the amount and form of aid, armaments, financial platforms, peace plans, and finally post-war reconstruction. For the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, the meeting of allies was a great opportunity, and he was able to bring good news from America to his homeland: security guarantees, membership, weapons, and of course, money.

Ukraine has been defending itself against Russia for more than two years, and a certain weariness can be seen in friendly and supportive countries. This may be why we are beginning to discover more of a push that would lead to a swift end to the conflict. But Ukraine would have to pay dearly for peace at the moment. There is no doubt, that the innocent lives in the occupied zones would be lost. On the eve of the meeting of the leaders of the NATO countries, the Russian aggressor once again struck. On Monday, July 8, a massive blow struck Kyiv outside another major children’s hospital, Ochmatdyt. When shown the images of cancer-ridden children on the street, interrupted heart operations, and wounded children, it was not difficult for politicians to condemn Moscow for committing atrocities. There was solidarity, a general statement for background and support, and also confirmation of further military aid. Ukraine came to the United States full of expectations, and President Zelensky was sure that they would achieve a better result than last year in Vilnius.

Ukraine’s Near Guaranteed Position in NATO

The Closest allies warned Zelensky not to push too hard. Or at the very least, to not to put too much hope in the summit. From the beginning, it was more than clear that he would not receive an invitation to NATO from Washington. He didn't get it last year and he won't get it this year either. Although the North Atlantic Alliance states that the door is open to every European country, the states must first fulfill certain conditions. The host has participation in the so-called Membership action plan, which focuses on the fulfillment of political, economic, defense, raw material, security and legal aspects. Such preparation takes years: Montenegro -8 years, the Republic of North Macedonia-21 years. Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the accession process in 2010 (NATO, 2024), and are yet to be allowed in.

A future member country must meet several conditions. The following table shows which of these conditions Ukraine meets:

Table 1: Conditions to become NATO member

Condition	Ukraine
Function as a stable democratic country	✓
Have a functioning market economy	✓
Ensure public support	✓
Meet NATO's political, economic, and military standards	✓
Commitment to help another affected country	✓
Effort to resolve conflicts peacefully	X
Military forces must meet NATO standards	X
Contribute to the security of the alliance area	X
Approval of all member states	X

Source: NATO 2024, own resources

The ongoing war conflict basically does not allow Ukraine to become a member of the Alliance. This is also the reason why, just like last year, President Zelensky left the summit, only taking away the promise of membership in quotation marks. "The question is not whether Ukraine will join NATO, but when it will happen," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters, calling Ukraine's path to the Alliance "irreversible." In the final communique, the summit positively evaluated the ongoing economic or security reforms, and as such the Alliance is determined to further support the country in its accession. However, it is still only in word. "We confirm that we will be able to invite Ukraine to join the Alliance, as soon as the Allies agree and the conditions are met," the Washington Declaration (Washington Declaration, 2024) states. The conditions are gradually being met, but some, like the last, will still be very difficult to attain. According to Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, Ukraine's entry into NATO would lead immediately into the third world war. He also confirmed to his allies, that the members of his party would be all beagainst it during the vote. "I understand Ukraine's wishes. But Ukraine's membership in NATO is only a guarantee of the third world war. Frankly speaking, even without Ukraine's membership in NATO, we are not far from it, if we look at how some advanced democracies are sinking under the cauldron," said Fico (Fico, R., 2004). And a similarly critical approach can be expected from Hungary, given Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's past statements. "Membership of Ukraine in NATO would not even strengthen the defensive nature of the alliance, because in practice it would create the risk of an open conflict between Russia and NATO," Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó expressed his doubts in Washington (České noviny, 2024).

Weapons for Ukraine

Even before the summit, there was talk that NATO should play a bigger role in supporting Ukraine. Already in June, before an informal meeting of foreign ministers in the Czech Republic, Stoltenberg outlined a plan that the Alliance will take over from the United States control over the coordination of the security systems sent to Ukraine.

And so it happened. For this purpose, the North Atlantic Alliance will set up a completely new agency to oversee the distribution of aid and also the training of Ukrainian soldiers. "Its goal is to get security assistance to Ukraine on a permanent basis and to ensure improved, predictable and comprehensive support. (...) It will support the transformation of the defense and security forces of Ukraine, thereby enabling its deeper integration with NATO," the declaration states. (Washington Declaration, 2024). The coordination of aid to Ukraine will now be ensured by the headquarters at the American military base in Wiesbaden, alongside smaller centers in other countries of the eastern wing. Nearly 700 people from NATO and partner countries should be involved in the coordination activities.

The United States also announced another large delivery (the eighth in the series) of military aid at the summit. This time, the amount was 225 million dollars. According to the US Department of Defense, Ukraine will receive more Stinger missiles, Javelin and AT-4 systems, artillery ammunition and the much-desired Patriot anti-aircraft systems. After the bilateral negotiations between Biden and Zelensky, the American president reconfirmed that America will still be the largest supplier of weapons.

President Zelensky also received similar promises from other statesmen. The aid announcements were probably planned, but the Russian attack on Kyiv and the children's hospital on the eve of the summit made the countries' reactions even stronger. For example, Norway announced the strengthening of Ukrainian's air defense systems, worth one billion Norwegian crowns (ie 2.18 billion CZK). In addition, Oslo joined the countries (Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands) that will send six F-16 fighter jets to the war-torn country. Canada will help with the training of pilots, and the Ministry

of Defense there will allocate 389 million Canadian dollars (CZK 6.5 billion) from the budget for this purpose.

Money for Ukraine

In the final communique, NATO also made it clear that the Alliance is "determined to support Ukraine in both building an army capable of defeating Russia and deterring any further attacks" (Washington Declaration, 2024). For this purpose, the partners agreed to provide a minimum amount of financing at the level of 40 billion euros. The money is supposed to go to military equipment, to help with training, and support the country in any other way.

Thirty-one states stood for the fact that Ukraine should be given what it needs to defend itself against Russian imperialist goals. All states with one exception – Hungary, have pledged to provide additional assistance. "Ukraine can only win with our help, and that's why today, with the exception of Hungary, all states have pledged to further support the attacked country," wrote President Petr Pavel on the X social network (Petr Pavel, 2024).

This was a big strategic plan of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, which had been discussed since the beginning of the year, and for a quarter of a year the negotiating teams communicated it with the individual governments of the member states. Originally, there should have been a sentence about a long-term framework, long-term support and a long-term fund. But in the end, it is still missing from the declaration.

Did Ukraine leave the summit as a winner or as a loser?

Every participant of the summit knew that they were going to the United States in an uncertain and extremely tense atmosphere. America is facing a presidential election, and while the democratic candidate (whoever it may be) can be expected to continue the work started and provide further support, the republican nominee assures the voters of immediate peace and gives uncertain answers regarding support for NATO and Ukraine. The Alliance should also prepare for this situation.

It is nice that, as always, the partners sided with the attacked country and expressed their unwavering support in many ways. Posing in photographs, shaking hands, meeting face to face and so on. Everyone wanted to be seen in Zelensky's presence, especially after Russia's attack on a children's hospital. But behind the tinsel, somewhere in a shadowy corner, there is caution and doubt.

Win: Ukraine gained more promises of financial aid from Washington. Canada, the United States and other countries have announced millions for the purchase of weapons, equipment and training of soldiers. Loss: no major coordinated action took place. Such an agreement could be reached across the member countries, which would ensure enough weapons, aircraft, equipment and equipment sooner, so that they may have used the equipment for their summer, not autumn offensive. This did not happen, and Ukraine will have a lot to deal with, to be able to repel Russian attacks.

Win: the commitment to provide Ukraine with military aid of 40 billion euros. The current level of support will therefore be maintained. Loss: the sentence "for next year". It is a commitment defined only for one year and not for the following years. In a few months, the Alliance will probably start discussing what the partners will do, with regard to financial support in the next period.

Win: it is certainly good news that NATO will take over the coordinating role from the United States. Considering the uncertain foreign policy direction of the USA from November onwards, it is appropriate that someone else takes over the agenda. NATO is more than a suitable candidate,

given that it is an international organization with influence in Europe. The supply of weapons, the training of soldiers, and the strengthening of the eastern wing will be much easier. Loss: none.

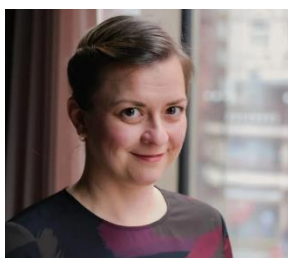
Win: Ukraine's "irreversible" path to NATO, says the final document. Irreversible = apodictic = unquestionable = the country is headed for the Alliance. This is certainly the word that Zelensky wanted to hear. Loss: Maybe he did not?? Ukraine has already heard a lot of promises in the last two years, and more. The promise was also made last year at the summit in Vilnius, but such "promises" without a time frame are lost, forgotten and disappear in a gaping crevice left by yet another missile. Ukrainians need security guarantees against the Russian giant. A real win for Zelensky would be if he were to be formally invited, and talks with individual countries could begin. Even this can still drag on for years, this is actually procedure that can be described as irreversible.

Is Ukraine the winner or loser of the summit? Bottom line: she suffered more defeats than she deserved. On the other hand, it is still only small country in Eastern Europe: at war with Russia. What real demands can it have? It's role is to resist aggression, defend peace on the old continent and patiently wait in the back seat for what it gets, and from whom. And in Washington, the truth didn't get much.

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