



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on February 4, 2023

Chinese State Media: EU-Ukraine Summit a “Political Show”

European Union (EU) leaders convened in Kyiv on Friday for a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at what some Western media hailed as a “historic” summit, whereas Chinese state media lambasted the meeting as a “political show.”

The summit on Friday was the first EU-Ukraine summit since the Russia-Ukraine conflict began in February last year, and also the first since the European Council gave Ukraine the status of candidate country in June 2022.

As the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia conflict looms, the head of the EU’s executive commission and the chairman of the 27 EU national leaders traveled to Kyiv to show their support for Ukraine.

“There will be no let-up in our resolve. We will also support you every step of the way on your journey to the EU,” EU chairman Charles Michel posted on Twitter on Friday morning under a picture of himself at a central Kyiv square.

Elaborating, Michel claimed that “Ukraine is the EU and the EU is Ukraine,” telling the country’s parliament, “We must spare no effort to turn this promise into reality as fast as we can” and imagining a time when a Ukrainian occupied his post.

Also, host Zelensky pledged that Ukrainians will fight “for as long as we can” to defend the eastern city of Bakhmut, as he called for further sanctions on Russia. Yet the series of new sanctions that the bloc is preparing are poised to fall short of Zelensky’s demands.

“Nobody will give away Bakhmut. We will fight for as long as we can. We consider Bakhmut our fortress,” Zelensky told a news conference with top EU officials.

“Ukraine would be able to hold Bakhmut and liberate occupied Donbas if it received long-range weapons,” he said.

Adding, Zelensky claimed that Russia would persist in its push eastwards and that Ukrainian forces would be able to fend off the Russians until more Western weapons arrive.

Recently, the city of Bakhmut emerged as the center stage of Ukrainian resistance to Russian troops.

In turn, Russian officials have admitted that Russian forces are surrounding Bakhmut from several directions and fighting to take control of a road that is a vital supply route for Ukrainian forces.

In the lead-up to the summit, the Ukrainian government declared its plans to be a full EU member state



AP Images

Charles Michel, Volodymyr Zelensky, and Ursula von der Leyen at the EU-Ukraine Summit



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within two years.

"We have a very ambitious plan to join the European Union within the next two years," declared Denys Shmyhal, the prime minister of Ukraine, in comments to Politico.

"So we expect that this year, in 2023, we can already have this pre-entry stage of negotiations," Shmyhal added.

Meanwhile, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said about Ukraine that "over time, they belong to us. They are one of us and we want them in." "The EU will support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people against Russia's ongoing war of aggression for as long as it takes," Michel, Zelensky, and von der Leyen were previously slated to declare in a joint statement, a draft of which was seen by *Reuters* beforehand.

Although the EU has welcomed Ukraine's application to join the bloc, it has dismissed Ukraine's request for a fast track to membership while the country is at war.

Nonetheless, Brussels seems to be concerned about the problem of corruption in Ukraine, with an official admitting to Politico, "We cannot have the same Ukraine as before the war," but only a "reformed Ukraine."

Besides, EU officials have stipulated various entry criteria, from political and economic stability to implementing various EU laws, for Ukraine to meet before its application is accepted. The process is estimated to take years.

"Some may want to speculate about the endgame but the simple truth is that we are not there yet," an EU official said.

Furthermore, France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux nations have cautioned against being too optimistic about Ukraine's proposed EU membership. Last May, French President Emmanuel Macron even said it could take "decades" before Ukraine meets the EU criteria and achieves full membership.

At the same time, Chinese analysts expressed doubts about the effectiveness of Friday's summit, stating that Western nations are divided over the issue of Ukraine's "fast track" admission to the EU.

"Two voices are fighting within the system — one insisting that Ukraine follow the rules and join after meeting all the criteria, while the other says it should be handled as a special case, showing support for Ukraine by admitting it into the organization so as to further pull it in, which is also in line with the long-term interests of Europe," Cui Hongjian, director of the Department of European Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, told the Chinese state-run *Global Times*.

Also, Cui Heng, an assistant research fellow from the Center for Russian Studies of East China Normal University, told the *Global Times* that Ukraine was able to be a possible candidate to the EU because of political reasons.

"Saying yes to Ukraine has become a politically correct thing to do for Europe, but there are indeed difficulties involved in admitting Ukraine at this point, especially with a heavy fiscal burden under such high inflation," Cui Heng stated.

"They don't want their cake to be split even more, but they dare not say this when they feel that they ought to do the right thing," Cui added.

Other analysts also pointed out that the EU might not want to provoke Russia even further by granting Ukraine a "fast track" route to the bloc.



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Overall military support from the EU to Ukraine has been estimated at around 12 billion euros, whereas overall assistance to Ukraine granted at both EU and member state levels totaled almost 50 billion euros thus far, based on data from the EU website.

However, in yet another snub at Russia, the EU will ban Russian refined oil products beginning Sunday, and EU envoys in Brussels on Friday agreed to limit Russia's ability to fund the conflict by capping prices of the aforementioned products globally as long as Western insurance and shipping companies are involved.

In response, the Kremlin said the ban would destabilize global energy markets but indicated that Moscow was acting to alleviate its impact.

Since the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, actions from Ukraine, the EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States in sanctioning Russia have led to grave ramifications worldwide such as economic recession, an energy crunch, widespread strikes, and livelihood struggles.



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