EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Modern warfare

As ministers gathered in the Foreign Affairs Council this week, we delve into the week's military and technological considerations.

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Empty tanks

Big brother to the rescue? Apparently not. According to soldiers interviewed by CNN, the Abrams M1 battle tanks donated by the United States are not suitable for the war on the front line in Ukraine, writes Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. The tanks donated by the United States are currently not serving the Ukrainian troops properly, as they fail to protect soldiers on the frontline from the increasing number of drone attacks from Russia. According to Ukrainian soldiers interviewed, tanks are the drones' number one target. Attempts are always made to attack tanks when they appear. And when that happens, the armour is not enough to protect the troops inside. Additionally, the tanks are designed for NATO warfare, where airpower and artillery prepare the battlefield before tanks and infantry advance. Additional challenges? Both the Ukrainian ammunition shortage and the vehicles donated by the Americans, used in the Iraq war, are not suitable for the conditions in Ukraine. Condensation of moisture in rain and fog damages the electronics inside the trolley. Despite the problems, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine emphasises that the troops are doing everything to make the equipment as useful as possible on the front.

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From the sidelines

This week, NATO allies have continued to deliberate over whether they can allow Ukraine to use their weapons to attack targets inside Russian territory, writes Czech outlet *iDNES*. According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Ukrainian forces are well within their right to self-defence by striking targets on the Russian side of the border, with Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur adding that the alternative would be like fighting with one hand behind their back. The Dutch and Czech agree, but countries such as Italy, Spain, and especially the United States are much more wary of triggering further escalation – but it is much more of a political consideration than a military one, and could damage relations with Russia down the line, even if Putin is long gone, according to analyst Zdeněk Petráš from Czechia's University of Defence. According to the Kremlin, NATO is a direct participant, but by most other accounts, two facts remain: that the use of Western weapons does not implicate NATO in the conflict, and that it is ultimately up to each country to decide for themselves, with a strong urge from Stoltenberg for the US above all to reconsider its position.

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Two sides of a coin

While the United States holds back Ukraine from using its weapons against Russian territory, its bombs continue to devastate Gaza and its civilian occupants via the Israel Defence Force; this Sunday, a brutal air strike on a refugee tent camp killed 46 civilians who were already fleeing the ongoing assault, and subsequent reports determined that the bombs were supplied by the US, writes Portuguese newspaper *Expresso*. Though the strike has triggered international outrage, Sunday's massacre still does not cross US President Joe Biden's "red line" that would result in any meaningful policy change. Meanwhile, Israel has continued its assault on Rafah this week, and Israeli National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi has estimated that it will continue for at least another seven months to the end of the year – also announcing that Israel controls 75% of the "Philadelphia" buffer zone between Gaza and Egypt. American analyst Raphael S. Cohen predicts that Israel will not back down and once again pivots to blaming Hamas for the IDF's actions, and while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken demands a plan for "the next day", Israel simply does not provide one.

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Late to the party?

A new audit report published on Wednesday by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) indicates that the EU so far has had little success in developing Europe's artificial intelligence ecosystem and failed to accelerate AI investment on par with global leaders, writes *The Brussels Times*. Since 2018, the European Commission has taken multiple actions and worked on key building blocks to advance the EU's AI "ecosystem", such as regulation, infrastructure, research, and investment. In addition, the EU took early steps to explore AI risks, leading to the world's first general rules on AI use. However, this was not enough for the bloc to be able to compete with countries such as the US and China, who rely on substantial private investment through their tech giants. The explanation? EU measures to boost research and investments in AI were not well coordinated with those of the Member States, and monitoring of investment was not systematic, according to the auditors. Going forward, stronger governance and more – and better targeted – public and private investment in the EU will be paramount if the EU is to achieve its AI ambitions.

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