



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

The strength of the European Parliament's decision on Russia



On Wednesday, the European Parliament adopted a resolution recognising Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism," and accusing its forces of carrying out atrocities in its invasion of Ukraine. The decision was convincing. Only 58 MEP's voted against it and 494 supported it. This move by the European legislators is a symbolic political step with no legal consequences, but MEP's urged the governments of the 27-nation EU to follow their lead.

Why is this decision, although symbolic, still important both for Europe and for Ukraine's defence against Russian aggression?

First, the reactions from Moscow showed that they are not indifferent to the decisions of the EU parliamentarians in Strasbourg. Far from it. The Kremlin chose the tactic of mocking this decision, not ignoring it, as reactions followed immediately. Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov said that the recommendations of the European Parliament should be interpreted by doctors - "I have no medical education." And his spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, immediately reacted in the same style - "I suggest that we declare the European Parliament a sponsor of idiocy!"

Moscow's response was aimed at the domestic, Russian audience, because turning an important decision into a joke should soften its bitter content, which is that someone declared them subjects of a terrorist state.

Second, the resolution of the European Parliament, although not legally binding, is important as a continuation of similar decisions made in the past months in the parliaments of several Western countries. The Estonian and Polish parliaments declared Russia a "state sponsor of terrorism" last month. The parliament in neighbouring Latvia declared Russia a "state sponsor of terrorism" in August, accusing Moscow of "targeted genocide against the Ukrainian people." Lithuania adopted a similar resolution in May.

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The NATO Parliamentary Assembly on Monday supported the propositions of the Ukrainian delegation and adopted a unanimous resolution recognising Russia as a "terrorist state" during its 68th Annual Session. The PA passed a series of resolutions calling on the 30 NATO allies to intensify backing for Ukraine's resistance and support the country's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. The PA urged members to "state clearly that the Russian state under the current regime is a terrorist one."

Therefore, the European Parliament expanded the range of institutions that see Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism" and, due to its political authority, put strong pressure on EU members to adapt their future decisions. After the EP resolution, the declaration of Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism" left the sphere of individual precedents and grew into a political position with a very broad, international legitimacy.

What about the US?

The decision of the European Parliament will probably not affect the position of US President Joe Biden to change his "No" to the bipartisan initiative of the US Congress to put Russia on the list of countries that the US considers to be sponsors of terrorism.

President Biden has made a final decision not to designate Russia as a "state sponsor of terrorism", the White House said at the beginning of September, that such a move could backfire and have unintended consequences for U.S. support of Ukraine amid Russia's invasion.

Biden's one-word response — "no," he said, when reporters asked him "should Russia be designated a state sponsor of terrorism?" — ends months of serious, intensive discussions on Capitol Hill and in foreign capitals over

whether to add Russia to the short, grim list that currently includes Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Syria.

The US State Department is responsible for designating nations as state sponsors of terrorism. **The department defines the designation** as a country that has "repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism." There are only four countries that are currently labelled state sponsors of terrorism by the US: North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Syria.

In July, the Senate passed a nonbinding resolution calling on State Department to designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. And in April, a senior administration official said department officials were looking at the possibility of labelling Russia a state sponsor of terrorism.

Earlier this year, Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal and Republican Senator Lindsey Graham **introduced a bipartisan resolution** calling on Blinken to designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism. The Committee on Foreign Relations **reviewed** the resolution, which was then **unanimously approved** by the Senate. While the resolution was non-binding, it **sent a message** that Congress may take matters into its own hands if the State Department is unwilling to designate Russia.

The House of Representatives went a step further. Representatives Ted Lieu, Joe Wilson, Jared Golden, Adam Kinzinger, and Tom Malinowski **introduced** a bipartisan bill in late July to designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism.

Although in the USA the decision to declare a state as a "state sponsor of terrorism" is in the hands of the executive authorities, the position of Congress in this case coincides with the position of the European Parliament, which after the decision in Strasbourg, creates a common political platform on both sides of the Atlantic. Whether implemented in practice or not, the decision on Russia being a state sponsor of terrorism will have much greater political power in the future than before,

which means additional pressure on the executive authorities in Europe and America to adapt their common policies towards Russia, taking into account the views of their parliaments.