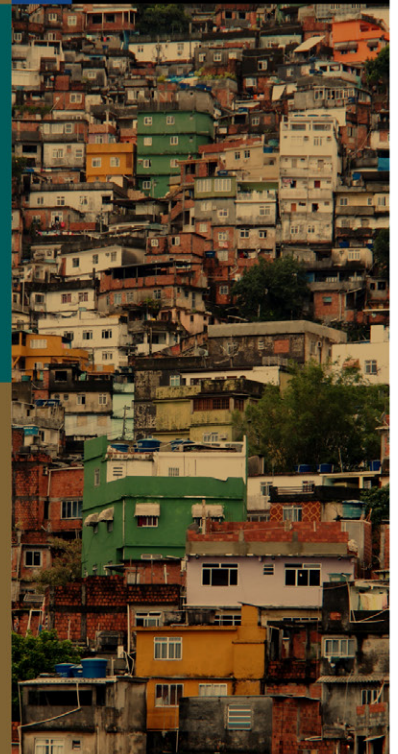


# The Euro-Atlantic security order and the war in Ukraine

Patricia Daehnhardt

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## Abstract

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sealed the collapse of the European security order created after 1991, the end of peace and the return of war in Europe. In its place, a confrontational international disorder is emerging, characterized by the weakening of the rules-based international order and the ideological crystallization between democracies and autocracies. The article assesses how the US and the EU have responded to the war in Ukraine while forging a new transatlantic security architecture. While this war has already shattered the European post-Cold War order, it may become the prelude to the first war of the ongoing power transition between the United States and China.

**Keywords:** Ukraine war, NATO, the transatlantic security community, power transition.

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# Introduction

**R**ussia's invasion of Ukraine has sealed the collapse of the post-1991 European security order, the end of peace and the return of war in Europe. With its full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, Russia aims to annex a neighboring sovereign state, overruling Ukraine's 31-year-old political sovereignty and denying it the right to exist. This unprecedented violation of international law was sparked by President Putin's revisionist imperialist ambition to recover its sphere of influence and reconstitute great imperial Russia. However, this war is not only a war against Ukraine. It is also an attack against Europe's democracies, NATO, and the wider Euro-Atlantic security community, based on Putin's resentment against the democratic and liberal West and the Atlantic Alliance. In response to Russia's invasion, the Biden administration and its European allies have shown impressive unity in their determination to provide military, financial and humanitarian aid to help Ukraine defend itself.

It is difficult to predict the ongoing war and its outcome for the Euro-Atlantic security order. The article makes five observations which stand out in the responses to the war and how they may affect the European security order. The first section examines the collapse of the European security order and the return of large-scale inter-state war. The second section discusses NATO's response and the revitalization of the transatlantic security community. The third section assesses the US-Europe relationship and the US's renewed commitment to Europe, despite China's continued status as the US's top priority. The fourth point of view addresses the European Union's response to the war in Ukraine. Finally, the article returns to the question of the European security order by looking at how China has thus far positioned itself vis-à-vis the war between Russia and Ukraine. Additionally, the article explores how the US-China competition for global hegemony will probably affect the European security order and transatlantic security community. While this war has already shattered the post-Cold War order in Europe, it may become the prelude to the first war of the ongoing power transition between the United States and China.

# 1 The collapse of the European security order and the return of war

Russia's military invasion of Ukraine marked the collapse of the European security order and brought an end to 77 years of long peace in Europe.<sup>1</sup> The demise of the post-Cold War international order was a long time in coming, and the Euro-Atlantic stability had fallen prey to different crises with Moscow. The frozen conflict in Moldova's Transnistria region since the 1990s, the five-day war in Georgia in 2008, Russia's induced Ukraine's energy crisis in 2004 and 2009, Russian cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and election interference in EU countries were successive stumbling blocks of a cooperative European security structure, undermining three decades of post-Cold War peace and security. It resulted from President Vladimir Putin's revisionist policy of destabilizing Russia's near abroad, especially in those post-Soviet countries that had entered an institutionalized relationship with the European Union through the Eastern Partnership in 2009. Since 2011, Russia has supported Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad in the ongoing civil war outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

However, Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea in 2014 put the stability in the Euro-Atlantic area under even more strain. Russia's illegal annexation was a watershed moment. At that time, 'the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine represented a radical change in the European status quo, and Putin's strategic offensive decisively altered the European security framework as it had existed since the end of the Cold War.'<sup>2</sup> A change of frontiers through force violated international agreements such as the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the 1990 Charter of Paris, both of which recognized the territorial status quo in Europe, and the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which guaranteed Ukraine's sovereignty, was unprecedented in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Russian president followed the script that he had announced to a disbelieving audience at the 2007 Munich Security Conference when he expanded on his revisionist vision and stated his aim to unravel the post-1991 order, including rejecting post-Soviet states' sovereignty.<sup>3</sup> In the summer of 2021, the President published an article denying Ukraine's right to exist due to the supposed historical unity between Russians and Ukrainians.<sup>4</sup>

On 17 December 2021, raising the stakes on the deteriorating NATO-US-Russia

1. SAROTTE, Mary Elise – *Not one Inch: America, Russia and the Making of the Post-Cold War Stalemate*, Yale University Press, 2021.

2. DAEHNHARDT, Patricia and GASPAR, Carlos - «The erosion of the transatlantic security community», In *Nação & Defesa* 2019 (in Portuguese).

3. Munich Security Conference 2007. Speech by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, 10 February 2007. Retrieved: Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>

4. WILSON, Andrew - «Russia and Ukraine: 'One People' as Putin Claims?» Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), 23 December 2021. Retrieved: Available at: <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russia-and-ukraine-one-people-putin-claims>

relationship, Putin presented NATO and the United States with two draft treaties demanding legally binding security guarantees for Russia: NATO should commit to no further enlargements, provide a legally binding written guarantee that Ukraine will never join NATO and withdraw all military infrastructure and Allied forces from NATO countries that joined the Alliance after 1997.<sup>5</sup>

Russia's security demands were unacceptable to the US and the Europeans, as they would have legitimized the end of the post-Cold War security order negotiated in 1997 between the West and Russia in the NATO-Russia Founding Act and reversed NATO's eastward enlargement. In other words, both ultimatums demanded that NATO return to its Cold War order disposition, annul the Alliance's 'open door policy,' which had paved the way for the integration of fourteen Central and Eastern European countries, which had voluntarily joined the Alliance after 1991, and return to a division of the European security order into great power zones of influence.

As Putin stated as an argument for his actions, Ukraine's NATO membership was not on the negotiating table between Kyiv and NATO. It was clear that this was merely a manipulative move to attack Ukraine, regardless of the West's answer. The Russian President had always opposed NATO enlargements. As Robert Kagan observed, in 2018, 'more than Russia's security, NATO enlargement threatened Russia's ability to reassert its regional sphere of influence, to reclaim its position as a dominant power in Eastern and Central Europe and its standing on the world stage as an equal of the United States'.<sup>6</sup> Rather, the ultimatums culminated in the revisionist claims that Putin had advanced to establish a Russian zone of influence over Ukraine and the post-Soviet space forward for almost two decades. Besides, this strategy intended to drive a wedge between the US and its European allies and help Russia advance its goal of expanding its hegemony over Europe.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, in 2021 the President ordered the positioning of around 100.000 Russian troops at the Belarus-Ukraine border in preparation for the full-scale invasion of the country on 24 February 2022.<sup>8</sup> To ensure China's acquiescence, Putin signed a Russian-Chinese treaty with President Xi Jinping, in Beijing on 4 February, declaring their 'unlimited friendship'. Putin and Xi converge in their opposition to the Western democracies and, more importantly, to America's global predominance.<sup>9</sup>

By invading Ukraine and starting a full-scale war, the Kremlin, however, made a series of strategic miscalculations that prevented it from achieving its goal of a rapid subjugation of Ukrainian forces and installation of a puppet government in Kyiv through a so-called

5. PIFER, Steven – «Russia's draft agreements with NATO and the United Nations: Intended for Rejection?», 21 December 2021. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/12/21/russias-draft-agreements-with-nato-and-the-united-states-intended-for-rejection/>

6. KAGAN, Robert – *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*, Vintage Books, 2018, p. 110.

7. THOM, Françoise – «What Does the Russian Ultimatum to the West Mean?», 30 December 2021. Retrieved: Available at: <https://en.desk-russie.eu/2021/12/30/what-does-the-russian-ultimatum.html>

8. «Russia's military is again on the move, adding pressure on Ukraine as invasion fears grow», *The Washington Post*, 20 January 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/20/russia-ukraine-military-satellite/>

9. WRIGHT, Robin - «Russia and China Unveil a Pact Against America and the West», *The New Yorker*, 7 February 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/russia-and-china-unveil-a-pact-against-america-and-the-west>

‘special military operation’.<sup>10</sup> The Russian president underestimated the leadership and population of Ukraine. First, the government in Kyiv was not overthrown, and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky did not abandon his country and, instead, asserted himself as a Churchillian wartime leader. Second, the Ukrainian people’s resilience and ability to resist the enemy and defend their country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity are commendable. In the process, Ukrainians are consolidating the unity of their country and strengthening their national identity, which had been strained in the preceding years, particularly in the war-ravaged Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine. Finally, the conflict in Russia has significantly impacted Ukraine’s position in the Euro-Atlantic security order. Previously, the country was considered a buffer state between the EU, NATO, and Russia. However, the outbreak of war has shifted the West’s Eastern border to the East, and Ukraine is now, albeit without immediate EU and NATO membership, a front state on the West’s border with Russia. The result is an expansion of the transatlantic security community.

Furthermore, President Putin misjudged and underestimated the West’s response. NATO, the European Union, the United States, and other like-minded states responded unprecedentedly and in a unified manner. NATO has strengthened collective defense and deterrence on its Finland’s Eastern flank; Sweden will probably become a NATO member in 2023; the EU has adopted a series of sanctions packages against Russia; the individual states have committed to more lavish defense spending; and NATO, the EU, and a coalition of over 40 countries have pledged their support to help Ukraine defend itself.

President Putin’s energy cut-offs and threats of using nuclear weapons have not intimidated Europeans but strengthened their resolve to assist Ukraine and reduce their own energy dependence on Russia. Despite soaring energy prices and rising inflation, public opinion in Europe and the US has supported providing Ukraine with humanitarian, financial and military assistance. Throughout 2022, European public opinions supported their governments’ decisions regarding humanitarian aid, taking in Ukrainian refugees, adopting economic sanctions, and supplying heavy military equipment to Ukraine.<sup>11</sup> Regarding transatlantic relations, European and Americans favor maintaining US involvement in European security and defense.<sup>12</sup>

In the early months of the war, the West hoped that negotiations would be possible once Russian offensive power on the battleground had been weakened, as happened in the summer of 2022. Losing on the battlefield, however, only made Putin more determined to continue the brutality of war to prevent Russia’s strategic defeat and Putin’s own demise. In September 2022, Putin turned military weakness into a political offensive by unilaterally declaring the annexation of four Ukrainian blasts, partially occupied by

10. For an analysis of the conduct of the war in the first two months, see WATLING, Jack and REYNOLDS, Nick - «Operation Z: The Death Throes of an Imperial Delusion», RUSI Special Report, 22 April 2022, Retrieved: Available at: <https://static.rusi.org/special-report-202204-operation-z-web.pdf>

11. BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG - «Under pressure: The war in Ukraine and European public opinion», 12 October 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://globaleurope.eu/europes-future/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion/>

12. TRANSATLANTIC TRENDS – Public Opinion in *Times of geopolitical turmoil*, German Marshall Fund and Bertelsmann Foundation, October 2022. Retrieved: Available at: [https://downloads.ctfassets.net/9vgcz0fppk13/2zel6Og621C50HzkblEtCw/5fae6377774f950236d15b2aedf25de1/TT2022\\_PDF\\_Final.pdf](https://downloads.ctfassets.net/9vgcz0fppk13/2zel6Og621C50HzkblEtCw/5fae6377774f950236d15b2aedf25de1/TT2022_PDF_Final.pdf)



Russian troops, namely Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia, and declaring a partial mobilization in Russia.<sup>13</sup>

The war was meant to serve the Kremlin's triple purpose of denying Ukraine's sovereign right to exist, weakening the EU and NATO and driving a wedge between Europeans and Americans. Russia and China (the other revisionist autocratic regime) aim to divide the transatlantic allies and end the global predominance of the US. Russia aims to weaken the European security order and replace it with its vision by creating a division between the US and Europe; China's strategic goal is to drive a wedge between the US and Europe to prevent a joint Euro-Atlantic front against China in Asia.

Nevertheless, Putin misjudged the reconstitution of the transatlantic security community and President Biden's commitment to defend the liberal order, its European allies, and other like-minded democratic countries as part of his administration's strategy. The Euro-Atlantic security community is set to enlarge, with Finland and Sweden joining NATO Ukraine and Moldova joining the European Union in the future.

Finally, Russia's security was not enhanced. Putin's anticipated gains from the war appear to be outweighed by the losses incurred thus far regarding Russian soldiers' lives, military equipment and political support.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, Russia has excluded itself from the European security order. Post-Putin, Russia appears likely to maintain its confrontational towards the West. However, a democratic Russia may be much less likely than the deterioration of the Russian regime into a rogue or failed state and Russia's disintegration.

At the time of writing, it is difficult to envisage the possibility of a peace that would guarantee the end of the war through an armistice agreement or the capitulation of one of the parties, or at the very least, the end of hostilities.<sup>15</sup> First, without a clear path to victory, President Putin does not want to end the fighting, as doing so would amount accepting a strategic defeat and possibly the end of the Russian regime. Second, President Zelensky will risk losing Ukrainian territory by sitting at the negotiating table., and neither can Ukraine stop fighting, as it would cease to exist as a sovereign state and nation. Third, there is no credible international mediator: while Turkey facilitated a grain exporting deal to mitigate the global food crisis in July 2022, as a NATO member, it is seen with suspicion by Russia.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, despite abstaining from the UN resolutions on Russia's invasion, China has little credibility as a mediator due to its ambiguous stance vis-à-vis Moscow and its 'no limits' friendship treaty with Russia.

13. «What Russian annexation means for Ukraine's regions», BBC, 30 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63086767>; «What does Putin's partial military mobilization mean for Russia and Ukraine? », Washington Post, 21 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/21/russia-partial-mobilization-putin-war-ukraine/>

14. FIX, Liana and KIMMAGE, Michael - «Putin's Next Move in Ukraine Mobilize, Retreat, or Something in Between? » 16 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/putins-next-move-ukraine>

15. See POLYAKOVA, Alina, Edward Lucas, James Lamond, Bobo Lo and Lauren Speranza, - «What does Europe look like 3–7 years after Russia's war in Ukraine?», Center for European Policy Analysis, 24 May 2022, Retrieved: Available at: <https://cepa.org/what-does-europe-look-like-3-7-years-after-russias-war-in-ukraine>

16. «Turkey announces deal with Ukraine, Russia and UN aimed at resuming grain exports», The Guardian, 14 July 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/14/turkey-announces-deal-with-ukraine-russia-and-un-aimed-at-resuming-grain-exports>

## The US-European transatlantic security community

The stability of the Euro-Atlantic area has been founded upon the cohesion and unity of the transatlantic security community. After the Second World War, the United States, Canada, and Western European countries created the Atlantic Alliance in 1949 to guarantee the protection of Western Europe against Soviet expansionism. During the Cold War, shared values and interests facilitated the development of a transatlantic security community.

In its original conception, the transatlantic security community emerged from what Karl Deutsch, in 1957, defined as the “pluralist security community” – “a set of states that has integrated and in which there is an effective guarantee that the members of the community do not physically fight each other and resolve their disputes by other means’. Security among members developed from a ‘feeling of community’ that sustains “institutions and practices strong enough to sustainably secure expectations of peaceful change.”<sup>17</sup> As a result, the security community thus reduces the security dilemma among its members and mitigates their strategic competition.

Given that a security community is characterized by its normative nature, a shared ideational vision of the international order, and the resolution of disputes between member states without resorting to military force, a security community is distinct from a classic alliance; it can exist independently of a formal alliance.<sup>18</sup> Decisively, its members converge regarding the contours of the international order, the hierarchy of threats, the identity of adversaries, the interests, and a shared vision that sustains the security community. This strategic convergence is crucial during periods of power transition and redefinition of regional orders. This was the case at the end of the Cold War in 1991, when the bipolar world order was replaced, and the existing European security architecture was extended through NATO’s enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe into a wider transatlantic security community.

In contrast, this transatlantic security community has been under considerable strain over the past decade. In the Euro-Atlantic security area, President Barack Obama, who assumed office in 2009 after the serious transatlantic crisis over the Iraq war a few years earlier, pursued a policy of ‘leading from behind’ and expected the European allies to take the lead in addressing crises of Libya, Syria, and Crimea. In 2014, after Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea, the United States delegated to Germany and

17. DEUTSCH, K. W., S. A. BURRELL, R. A. KANN, M. LEE, Jr., M. LICHTERMAN, R. E. LINDGREN, F. L. LOWENHEIM, VAN WAGENEN, R. W. - *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 5.

18. ADLER, Emmanuel, BARNETT, Michael, eds. *Security Communities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

France the mediation of the Ukraine-Russia conflict and expected German Chancellor Angela Merkel to assume a leading role.<sup>19</sup> This partial US retrenchment from Europe was conducted amicably and explained by America's 'Asia pivot' in the early 2010s as a response to China's rise. This retreat simultaneously facilitated Russia's revisionist strategy of militarily supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the ongoing civil war and annexing Crimea.

Nevertheless, Russia's annexation of Crimea, in 2014, was in part a gamechanger for NATO's deterrence and defense posture. In response to the annexation, the United States increased its military presence in Europe and together with Great Britain, Canada, and Germany deployed four multinational battalion-sized battlegroups through NATO's enhanced forward presence in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and NATO's tailored forward presence in the southeast of NATO territory. President Donald Trump, Obama's successor, pursued a different transatlantic policy.<sup>20</sup> Despite upholding America's military deployments in Eastern Europe, he accused the US's European allies of security freeriding regarding the agreed-upon 2% of GDP for defense spending. He considered withdrawing the United States from NATO.<sup>21</sup> The Obama and Trump presidencies weakened the transatlantic link to the extent that some questioned the end of the transatlantic Alliance and the erosion of the transatlantic security community.<sup>22</sup> Obama's empathy won over the Europeans. However, his geopolitical focus seemed to be on the Asia-Pacific and the emergence of China. Trump criticized NATO as an obsolete institution, raised suspicion in European capitals about the administration's commitment to the US security guarantee contained in NATO's Charter article 5, and multiplied the conditionalities on the US collective defense guarantees, including ordering the withdrawal of the US troops from Germany. This weakened the transatlantic security community and unsettled the European allies. In his resignation letter, former US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis recognized the importance of the transatlantic security community and the Alliance's role in defending the euro-Atlantic security order when he stated, in his resignation letter, that 'our strength as a nation is inseparable from the strength of our unique global system of alliances and partnerships. The United States remains the indispensable nation of the free world, but we cannot protect our interests or play that role effectively without strong alliances and without respect for our allies.'<sup>23</sup>

In January 2021, when Joe Biden became the US President, it was far from clear that the transatlantic security community would recover. Indeed, President Biden's tone differed considerably from that of his predecessor. However, the new administration still

19. DAEHNHARDT, Patricia – «German foreign policy, the Ukraine crisis and the Euro Atlantic order: assessing the dynamics of change». In *German Politics*. Vol. 27, No. 4, 2018, pp. 516-538.

20. BRANDS, Hal - «The Unexceptional Superpower: American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump». In *Survival* Vol. 59, No. 6, 2017, pp.7-40.

21. «Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. From NATO, Aides Say Amid New Concerns Over Russia», *The New York Times*, 14 January 2019. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html>

22. DAEHNHARDT, Patricia and GASPAS, Carlos - «The erosion of the transatlantic security community», In *Nação & Defesa*, IDN, No. 151, 2019, pp. 45-65. (in Portuguese).

23. «Mattis breaks with Trump in resignation letter», *Politico*, 20 December 2018. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/20/mattis-to-retire-in-february-trump-says-1072150>

identified the Indo-Pacific as the United States' strategic priority, with consequences for the transatlantic relationship. But, upon assuming office, President Biden committed to strengthening transatlantic unity, declared that America was 'back' to rebuild America's alliances, and recognized that to guarantee the international status quo and the US's global role, the US needed its allies to counterbalance Russia and China, whose mutual strategic partnership had strengthened in recent years.

Thus, the transatlantic allies recovered the Alliance's strategic convergence, and albeit the double shock of the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the surprise signing of the US-UK-Australia AUKUS Treaty one month later, and the temporary unease it caused between allies, the Alliance recovered its momentum. This was all the more crucial in the run-up to the war and the increasing global power transition that was crystallizing.

In this context, the West's reaction to the outbreak of the war confirmed the transatlantic security community's strategic convergence. In the following months, Washington and its European allies maintained a decisive unity in their joint responses to Moscow's actions. As a consequence of the West's unified response, uncertainty about Ukraine's status as a member of the transatlantic security community has been clarified: Ukraine shares the West's interests in preserving the liberal international order and converges strategically, at the highest price in the loss of human life, in opposing the offensive revisionism that Russia's military invasion has unleashed on its territory. As opposed to remaining neutral in a condition of strategic blurring, Ukraine has become the front state between the West and Russia, rather than giving in to demands to demilitarize as Ukraine did in 1994, abandoning the nuclear arms stationed on its territory, as stated in the Budapest Memorandum, post-war Ukraine will rearm and potentially emerge as a strong military power. To ensure lasting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, Ukraine should join a NATO member and an EU member at the earliest possible stage.<sup>24</sup>

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24. KAIM, Markus and KEMPIN, Ronja – «Die Ukraine gehört in die NATO - jetzt», *Spiegel online*, 5 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/die-ukraine-gehört-in-die-nato-jetzt-gastbeitrag-a-214adc3a-9153-4e49-9cbb-7663720c5a14>

## 3 The US-Europe relationship and NATO revitalized

The revitalization of the transatlantic alliance preceded the war in Ukraine and began when the Biden administration took office. Nevertheless, one of the unintended consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine was reinforcing NATO's revitalization. When the Biden administration took office in January 2021 it was then already clear that the US support for Ukraine was necessary for different reasons: "Russia's war is against the West, not just Ukraine; the future of a rules-based international order depends on Russian withdrawal from Ukraine; and the United States has a moral commitment to both Ukraine's fight for independence and democracy in general."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, when Russia's invasion started on 24 February 2022, the US and its allies coordinated their response and sent arms and equipment individually to support Ukraine militarily. Despite President Zelensky's request for an Alliance-enforced no-fly zone, NATO's direct involvement in the war was considered a red line by the Alliance.<sup>26</sup> The allies agreed that they would support Ukraine's defensive war strategy, deliver weaponry and train Ukrainian soldiers, but withheld from considering a no-fly zone over Ukraine or deploying NATO troops on the ground because doing so would have made NATO into an active part in the war.<sup>27</sup> NATO's goal is to assist Ukraine in exercising its legitimate right to self-defense while keeping transatlantic unity and strengthening Europe's deterrence but avoid escalation towards a confrontation with Russia or between NATO and Russia.

The US Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, established the Ukraine Defense Contact Group to coordinate military assistance to Ukraine. On 26 April 2022, the group first met at the Ramstein Airbase in Germany and gathered over 40 allies for consultations providing military assistance to Ukraine, and has continued to meet regularly ever since.<sup>28</sup> As the war drags on, the allies and Ukraine have continuously discussed and coordinated the delivery of more sophisticated weapons systems to Ukraine, such as air and missile defense, anti-tank and artillery systems, drones, heavy arms delivery,

25. ANDERS ÅSLUND, MELINDA HARING, WILLIAM B. TAYLOR, JOHN E. HERBST, DANIEL FRIED, AND ALEXANDER VERSHBOW – «Biden and Ukraine: A Strategy for the New Administration», Atlantic Council, 5 March 2021. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Biden-Ukraine-FINAL.pdf>

26. «Considering the No-Fly Zone Prospects in Ukraine», *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 30 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/considering-no-fly-zone-prospects-ukraine>

27. BIDEN, Joe - «What America will and will not do in Ukraine». In *New York Times*, 31 May 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/opinion/biden-ukraine-strategy.html>

28. «US plans regular Ramstein Air Base meetings on Ukraine», *Deutsche Welle*, 26 April 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/us-plans-regular-ramstein-air-base-meetings-on-ukraine/a-61593717>

and even combat tanks.<sup>29</sup>

The unity of NATO in 2022 has been impressive. French President Emmanuel Macron, who in 2019 considered NATO to be ‘braindead’, now views the organization as being revitalized by electroshocks.<sup>30</sup> Finland and Sweden, traditionally neutral countries that had intensified cooperation with NATO after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, became candidate countries for membership at the Alliance’s summit in Madrid, in June 2022.<sup>31</sup> At this summit, NATO approved its New Strategic Concept, defining Russia as ‘the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area’.<sup>32</sup> To counter Russia’s aim ‘to establish spheres of influence and direct control through coercion, subversion, aggression and annexation’, the allies committed to strengthen NATO’s deterrence and defense posture in Eastern Europe and accelerate the development of forces, capabilities, and infrastructure. In 2017, more personnel were assigned to the four existing battlegroups in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Four new multinational battlegroups were deployed to Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. The United States, for its part, significantly increased its military presence in Europe, with additional troop and capabilities deployments to other NATO allies and with the establishment of a permanent headquarter in Poland.<sup>33</sup> The Alliance adopted a new NATO Force Model, increasing the scale and readiness of its troops.<sup>34</sup> Member states pledged to reach 2% of GDP defense spending targets faster, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that the Defense Investment Pledge of 2% of GDP in defense by 2024 was ‘increasingly considered a floor, not a ceiling’.<sup>35</sup>

The question for Europeans will be how to guarantee that the US remains committed to the formula that America’s and Europe’s security are inextricably linked. This means: first, the United States has reinforced its troop and capabilities presence in Europe to an unprecedented degree since the end of the Cold War. Second, given that Washington will not re-pivot away from the security engagement underway in the Indo-Pacific in the global competition with China, Euro-Atlantic democracies need to cooperate more intensively with Asian democracies, for example, through the Transatlantic Quad and

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29. «US weapons systems Ukraine will or won’t get», *Associated Press*, 13 October 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-loyd-austin-government-and-politics-b7d48caead3838e6621c1a4b0a0bcb7>

30. THE ECONOMIST - «Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead». Interview, 7 November 2019. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead> ; «War in Ukraine is ‘electroshock’ for NATO, says Emmanuel Macron», *Politico*, 17 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: [https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-tells-russia-war-causes-electroshock-for-nato/?utm\\_source=Twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=RSS\\_Syndication](https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-tells-russia-war-causes-electroshock-for-nato/?utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=RSS_Syndication)

31. «Finland, Sweden Apply for NATO Membership, Breaking Decades of Neutrality», *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 May 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/finland-sweden-apply-for-nato-membership-breaking-decades-of-neutrality-11652854966>

32. NATO 2022 Strategic Concept adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid, 29 June 2022, p.4. Retrieved: Available at: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf)

33. The US will deploy over 100,000 troops to Europe, two additional destroyers to Spain’s naval base in Rota, two F-35 fighter squadrons to the United Kingdom, one additional combat brigade to Romania, and establish a permanent headquarter of the US’s Army V Corps in Poland. See Fact Sheet: U.S. Defense Contributions to Europe, U.S. Department of Defense, 29 June 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3078056/fact-sheet-us-defense-contributions-to-europe/>

34. The New NATO Force Model increases the number of high-readiness forces from 40,000 to over 300,000 troops ready to deploy in up to 10 days (Tier 1), and 200,000 troops ready to deploy in up to 30 days (Tier 2). Additionally, 500,000 troops ready in 30-180 days (Tier 3) to respond to any contingency across land, sea, air and cyber. New NATO Force Model. 29 June 2022. Retrieved: Available at: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220629-infographic-new-nato-force-model.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220629-infographic-new-nato-force-model.pdf)

35. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Pre-Summit press conference, 27 June 2022. Retrieved: Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_197080.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_197080.htm)

the Indo-Pacific Quad formats to prepare for two simultaneous conflicts, in Europe with Russia and the Indo-Pacific with China.<sup>36</sup> Third, the US needs to support Europe's defense.<sup>37</sup> Ten months of war have laid bare Europe's grave insufficiency in guaranteeing its security and deciding about peace and security issues without the United States' complete commitment. To overcome this situation, Europeans need to get serious about contributing substantially more to their defence through a combination of national and joint capability and procurement development, and the US needs to clarify its position on European defense. While Europe's insufficiencies have rendered the long-standing debate on European (defense) autonomy somehow secondary, the US should support a European pillar in NATO as the most effective means of enhancing Europe's security.<sup>38</sup> As this is a long-term process, Europe may evolve more dependent before becoming less dependent on the US for its security and defense. Europeans will need to increase defense cooperation among EU members to a serious level to reduce fragmenting defense efforts and production costs and foment joint defense procurement.

However, emerging divisions between Poland and the Baltic states, on the one hand, and Germany and France, on the other, in providing political and military support for Ukraine, make it difficult to envisage concrete development in European defence cooperation. While the Eastern European countries are urging for Ukraine to receive military equipment promptly, promoting quick accession talks for Ukraine's EU membership and applying tougher sanctions against Moscow to accelerate Russia's defeat in the war, Berlin and Paris have taken a more cautious and hesitant attitude regarding the delivery of weapons and being less outspoken about Ukraine's victory and the terms of the outcome of the war.<sup>39</sup> The leaders of the Baltic states, Poland or Finland, have openly stated that Ukraine must win the war and recover lost territory. In contrast, Chancellor Scholz and President Macron stated that 'Ukraine must not lose this war' and 'Russia must not win the war'.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding Ukraine's bid for EU membership, while Eastern European countries and the Baltic states, for apparent reasons, argue for Ukraine's quick EU accession, President Macron has suggested the creation of a European Political Community, a sort of antechamber without guarantee of full accession.<sup>41</sup> The EU Versailles summit declaration adopted this idea on 10-11 March 2022, stating that 'Ukraine belongs to our European family', a formulation which did not satisfy the Ukrainians nor the Baltic

36. The transatlantic quad, composed of the US, the UK, France, and Germany, was launched in November 2021. The Indo-Pacific quad, composed of the United States, Australia, India, and Japan was created in 2004 and recently revived to discuss security matters of common concern. See SCHNEIDER-PETSINGER, Marianne, NOUWENS, Veerle, BILLON-GALLAND, Alice CAINEY, Andrew and PRICE, Gareth - «Transatlantic cooperation on the Indo-Pacific», *Chatham House*, November 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/2022-11-17-transatlantic-cooperation-indo-pacific-schneider-petsinger-et-al.pdf>

37. MARTIN, Garret & SINKKONEN, Ville - «Past as Prologue? The United States and European Strategic Autonomy in the Biden Era», *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 27, No.1, 2022, pp. 99-120.

38. RINGSMOSE, Jens; WEBBER, Mark - «Hedging their bets? The case for a European pillar in NATO». In *Defence Studies*, 2020, pp.295-317.

39. GRAMER, Robbie and MACKINNON, Amy - «Baltic States Wanted German Tanks in Ukraine Yesterday», *Foreign Policy*, 27 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/27/baltic-states-ukraine-war-russia-germany-military-aid/>

40. See Kaja Kallas, 'No Peace on Putin's Terms', *Foreign Affairs*, 8 December 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/no-peace-putins-terms>

41. NGUYEN, Thu - «European Political Community: From family photo to 'strategic intimacy'», *Policy Brief*, Hertie School, Jacques Delors Centre, 8 November 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/european-political-community>

or Eastern European states due to its vagueness.<sup>42</sup>

The Eastern European and the Baltic states, in particular, have criticized of Germany's support for Ukraine, deeming it to be 'too little, too late' regarding arms delivery to Ukraine. They have been more vocal in arguing for the speedy delivery of heavy armament to Ukraine.<sup>43</sup> According to data from the Ukraine Support Tracker at the University of Kiel as of 20 November 2022, in terms of bilateral deliveries of military equipment, Germany has been the third biggest supporter of Ukraine with €2.3 billion, behind the United Kingdom with €4.1 billion and the US, which with €23 billion remains by far Ukraine's most significant supporter.. The European Union member states and institutions have committed to providing Ukraine with military, financial and humanitarian aid". With their decision to provide another €18 billion starting January 2023, will have surpassed the United States.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike France or Germany, these countries have acted as the Nordic-Eastern bulwark against Russia's actions in Ukraine, displaying a keenness to assume a leadership role. Poland has not shied away from exerting leadership during the war. However, some European governments may view this approach as too hawkish.<sup>45</sup> The dislocation of Europe's center of gravity towards the East is bound to slow down European defense cooperation, given that apart from Europe's inherent difficulty in reducing its dependence on US capabilities, the Baltic and Eastern European states see the US military presence in Europe as the best guarantee for their security. Without the US as Europe's pacifier and protective nuclear umbrella, Europe would be much worse off, and Russia would try to wield its power not only over the the former Soviet states but also over Eastern Europe and the Baltic.

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42. Versailles summit. Informal meeting of the Heads of State or Government Versailles Declaration 10 and 11 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54773/20220311-versailles-declaration-en.pdf>

43. STELZENMÜLLER, Constanze - «Germany must shake off its habit of finding excuses for inaction», *Financial Times*, 14 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at <https://www-ft-com.ezp.lib.cam.ac.uk/content/fa1102b0-9511-4230-814a-725b7bcd5881>

44. «UkraineSupportTracker:EuropesurpassestheU.S.intotalcommittedaid», *KielInstitutefortheWorldEconomy*, 7December2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/publications/media-information/2022/ukraine-support-tracker-europe-surpasses-the-us-in-total-committed-aid/>

45. KARNITSCHNIG, Matthew and KOSĆ, Wojciech - «Meet Europe's coming military superpower: Poland», *Politico Europe*, 21 November 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-military-superpower-poland-army/>



# 4 The European Union and the war in Ukraine

In reacting to the war in Ukraine, the European Union's response has been impressive, and, in the process, the EU has attempted to become a geopolitical actor.<sup>46</sup> The EU and its member states quickly provided humanitarian aid, financial assistance, and military support (weapons and ammunition) to Ukraine in a coordinated effort. In October 2022, the UNHCR registered 7.6 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe, of which 4.2 million refugees have been granted a temporary protection scheme in the EU to access health care and a temporary work permit.<sup>47</sup> In a series of unprecedented decisions, as of late November 2022, the Council adopted eight sanctions packages targeting the Russian state and economy, members of the government, Russian banks, and companies. Despite the ongoing challenges, Europe has managed to maintain its unity and drastically reduced its dependency on Russian fossil fuels at a galloping pace. Additionally, EU policymaking has become more cohesive. Four days after the outbreak of the war, President Zelensky submitted Ukraine's EU membership application. Moreover, Ukraine and Moldova were accepted as EU membership candidates at the European Council on 23-24 June 2022.<sup>48</sup>

The EU implemented for the first time the European Peace Facility, an off-budget instrument that reimburses member states for defense equipment supplied to Ukraine. As of 9 November 2022, Ukraine had received six tranches of €3 billion worth of military equipment and non-lethal support financed by EPF-funded.<sup>49</sup> To support those member states in replenishing depleted stockpiles and boosting defense cooperation, the Commission proposed joint equipment procurement on 19 July 2022 through the European Defense Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act.<sup>50</sup> If approved, the EU would allocate €500 million of the EU budget for 2022-2024. Where this equipment is to be procured, on the European market or from non-EU countries is a subject of debate as it concerns not only competition between European defense

46. BORRELL, Josep - «Europe in the Interregnum: our geopolitical awakening after Ukraine». In Groupe d'Études Géopolitiques, 24 March 2022. <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2022/03/24/europe-in-the-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine/>; BLOCKMANS, Steven - «In security and defense policy, the emergence of a geopolitical EU», in S. Blockmans (ed.) *A Transformational Moment? The EU's response to Russia's war in Ukraine*, CEPS, 2022, pp. 7-11.

47. KARASAPAN, Omer - «Ukrainian refugees: Challenges in a welcoming Europe», *Brookings Institution*, 14 October 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2022/10/14/ukrainian-refugees-challenges-in-a-welcoming-europe/>

48. TOCCI, Nathalie - «Why Ukraine (and Moldova) Must Become EU Candidates», *IAI Papers*, No.22, 15 June 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaip2215.pdf> ; Cfr. SCHIMMELFENNIG, Frank - «Ukraine is an E.U. Candidate. Full membership is an obstacle course. *The Washington Post*, 30 June 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/06/30/ukraine-eu-membership-moldova-georgia/>

49. «European Peace Facility: Ukraine and beyond», *European Parliamentary Research Service*, 18 November 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://epthinktank.eu/2022/11/18/european-peace-facility-ukraine-and-beyond/>

50. «Defence industry: EU to reinforce the European defence industry», *European Commission*, 19 July 2022. Retrieved: Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_22\\_4491](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_4491)

industries but also with the US defense industry.<sup>51</sup> What is clear is that the European ‘peace dividend’ of the last three decades has meant that Europe’s armed forces and defense industries have become underfunded and underinvested.<sup>52</sup>

The need to step up defense capabilities, help support Ukraine and strengthen Europe’s national defenses has rendered discussions on strategic autonomy and European sovereignty a secondary concern.

NATO’s role as the continent’s leading organization for collective defense has reignited the debate to strengthen the European pillar in NATO: (1) the EU as a military power is not realistic, and NATO is the most effective Euro-Atlantic institution to ensure deterrence and defense; (2) NATO is the best way to keep Global Britain attached and interested in European security; (3) if a debate on European nuclear deterrence sets off, this would be best handled within the framework of the Atlantic alliance; and finally, (4) Europe’s reliance on the US nuclear and overall military deterrence has again brought home that despite timid European efforts to develop into a military power, European countries are still overly dependent on the US for its security and defence.

In recognizing the renewed relevance of the transatlantic alliance, the development of a European pillar within NATO is likely to gather the allies’ agreement, and it is a way for Europeans to overcome a decades-long disagreement over the concept of European strategic autonomy and focus on developing European defense in close interconnectedness with NATO.

Reinforcing EU-NATO cooperation is one important element. While the EU’s Strategic Compass, adopted in March 2022, and NATO’s New Strategic Concept, adopted in June 2022, already envisaged closer institutional coordination, the war in Ukraine has strengthened the need for the strategic partnership to boost EU-NATO cooperation on capabilities, interoperability, and military mobility.<sup>53</sup>

The return of war to Europe has also forced the EU Member states to adapt their own national security and defense policies in helping to assist Ukraine and, more decisively, to ensure their security and defense policies adapt to the new geopolitics.

Germany is a case in point. In an unprecedented move, and after weeks of criticisms from Berlin’s allies being too hesitant regarding Russia, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a radical change in Germany’s security and defense policy that, if fully implemented, will transform the country into a military power and a strategically thinking player. In response to the outbreak of Russia’s aggression and a major policy reversal, Scholz enabled weapons delivery to Ukraine by ending Germany’s restrictive policy, which

51. BRZOZOWSKI, Alexandra - «Global Europe Brief: Could pragmatism reign into joint EU defence procurement?», 13 November 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/global-europe-brief-could-pragmatism-reign-into-joint-eu-defence-procurement/>

52. PFEIFER, Sylvia and FOY, Henry - «Europe’s Defence sector: will war in Ukraine transform its fortunes? », 18 July 2022, Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/0a917386-7a62-4e4a-9b89-123933f750a6>

53. Council of the European Union - «A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security», 21 March 2022, Retrieved: Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

prohibited sending defensive weaponry to conflict regions.

On 27 February, the Chancellor delivered a remarkable speech to the Bundestag, which quickly became known as the *Zeitenwende* speech, meaning a turning point or watershed moment. He condemned “Putin’s “war” as “an unjustifiable attack on an independent country, on the peace order in Europe and in the world” and a “watershed era” that would change the world.<sup>54</sup>

Scholz announced major changes in Germany’s defense, energy policies and its relations with Russia. Firstly, Germany’s underfinanced armed forces, the Bundeswehr, would receive a €100 billion one-off special modernization funds;; the government would now invest over 2% of GDP annually in defense , procure new military equipment and step-up Germany’s defense efforts on NATO’s Eastern flank. If implemented, this will increase a budget from €45 billion to €75 billion, elevating Germany to NATO’s preeminent military power in Europe.

Secondly, in response to Russia’s unilateral recognition of the separatist republics in Eastern Ukraine (Luhansk and Donetsk), following up on the decision made two days prior to the invasion to suspend the Nordstream II pipeline process, Scholz stated that Germany would work towards reducing its reliance on Russia energy by diversifying its energy imports and sources, building new liquefied natural gas terminals and importing fossil fuels from new countries.

Thirdly, Scholz’s speech discussed changes in Germany’s relationship with Russia. Germany’s *Ostpolitik*, which stated that security and peace in Europe were not possible without Russia, and the principle of ‘*Wandel durch Handel*’ (transformation through trade), aimed to bring Russia closer to the Euro-Atlantic security order, producing democratization and modernization partnerships through trade interdependence , have failed and would no longer define Berlin’s Russia policy.<sup>55</sup>

The *Zeitenwende* speech represented a revolution in Germany foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> Three post-Cold war decades in which Germany had thrived as one of the main beneficiaries of the European status quo ended with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the concept of the European security being indivisible lost its meaning. There was no possibility of returning to the status quo ante, and the emerging confrontational order with Russia suggested that European security was only possible *without* Putin’s Russia.<sup>57</sup>

54. Policy Statement by Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Member of the German Bundestag, 27 February 2022 in Berlin, German Federal government. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>

55. That Germany’s Russia policy was inherently flawed was seen by many keen observers. See Kristi Raik, «New World Order: Germany’s Dangerous Idealism vis-à-vis Russia», *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, 24 June 2021. Retrieved: Available at: <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/new-world-order-germanys-dangerous-idealism-vis-vis-russia>

56. STARK, Hans - «German Defense Policy: A Historic Turning Point?», *Politique Étrangère*, (87/3), 2022, pp.89-101. BLUMENAU, Bernhard - «Breaking with convention? *Zeitenwende* and the traditional pillars of German foreign policy». In *International Affairs*, Vol. 98, No.6, 2022, pp. 1895-1913; BUNDE, Tobias - «Lessons (to be) learned? Germany’s *Zeitenwende* and European security after the Russian invasion of Ukraine». In *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 43, No.3, 2022, pp.516-530; BESCH, Sophia and FIX, Liana - «Don’t let the *Zeitenwende* get derailed». In *War on the Rocks*, 21 November 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2022/11/dont-let-zeitenwende-get-derailed/>; DAEHNHARDT, Patricia – «*Zeitenwende*: a Alemanha, a NATO e a Segurança Europeia no Contexto da Guerra na Ucrânia». In *IDN Cadernos*, Instituto da Defesa Nacional, No. 48, pp. 1-103, December 2022 (forthcoming).

57. MAJOR, Claudia and MÖLLING, Christian - «Zusammen mit Russland, das geht nicht mehr», *Zeit Online*. 24 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2022-03/russland-kooperative-sicherheitsordnung-krieg-ukraine-deutschland>

# Euro-Atlantic security order and the international power transition

The war in Ukraine may represent the first major war of the global transition of power. The decade preceding the outbreak of the war in Ukraine was marked by successive crises in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area: the sovereign debt crisis in the eurozone, the refugee crisis, in 2015, the Brexit crisis, in 2016, the Trumpian transatlantic crisis, and the Crimea crisis in 2014. These crises all significantly destabilized national economies and affected relations among EU and NATO partners. However, they did not structurally change the power distribution: the United States remained the prevalent power in the Euro-Atlantic area. Existing institutions were reformed and new ones were created to address the crises.

The war in Ukraine, in contrast, is producing a global impact. The war is a conflict between a revisionist autocratic regime and democratic regimes in Europe and the United States in the Euro-Atlantic context. Nonetheless, the competition among the great powers for spheres of influence persists concurrently. The war affects the stability and future order in the Euro-Atlantic region and the relationship between the West and China, and these two factors are closely linked. Ultimately, it raises the question of the decline of the United States and the extent to which the war in Ukraine highlights that American decline and the US's failure in deterring Russia from assaulting its neighbor.<sup>58</sup>

NATO's new strategic concept recognizes this by referencing China for the first time in its strategic concept. It also identifies China as a systemic challenger of the Alliance. NATO's partnership with the EU should be strengthened because of "the deepening strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation and their mutually reinforcing attempts to undercut the rules-based international order".<sup>59</sup>

China has revealed "n ambiguity in its response to the war in Ukraine in an attempt to reconcile competing interests and President Xi Jinping has followed an ambiguous position typical of a hegemonic leader: Xi refers to the Ukraine conflict as a 'crisis' rather than a war, and he has not pressured Putin to end the war.<sup>60</sup> This tacit support for Russia annuls China's neutral position. It entails questions about Europe's future security order and, more decisively, galvanizes geopolitical competition with the US

58. Cfr. IKENBERRY, G. John - «Why American Power Endures: The U.S.-Led Order Isn't in Decline», *Foreign Affairs* Nov/Dec2022, Vol. 101, No. 6, pp. 56-73.

59. NATO 2022 Strategic Concept adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid, 29 June 2022. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf)

60. FEIGENBAUM, EVAN A. - «China faces irreconcilable choices over Ukraine», 24 February 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/24/china-faces-irreconcilable-choices-on-ukraine-pub-86515>; NOUWENS, Meia - «China's difficult balancing act in Russia-Ukraine crisis», International Institute for Strategic Studies, 4 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2022/03/chinas-difficult-balancing-act-in-russia-ukraine-crisis>; KUSA, Iliya - «China's Strategic Calculations in the Russia-Ukraine War», Wilson Center, 21 June 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/chinas-strategic-calculations-russia-ukraine-war>

in the Indo-Pacific region. China opposes NATO enlargement and, shortly after the war began, warned the US ‘not to try to establish an Indo-Pacific version of NATO to “suppress” Beijing’s rise’.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the war in Ukraine serves a test case for China regarding from the potential response of Western countries to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.<sup>62</sup>

Common interests have been united China and Russia in a bilateral relationship that lies somewhere between an axis of convenience and a strategic partnership.<sup>63</sup> As Michael Cox observed in 2016, on the annexation of Crimea and the crisis in Ukraine: [the crisis has revealed] that ‘China has been prepared to ignore certain basic principles in order to maintain its relationship with Russia, while Russia has been more than willing to appease China in order to make sure it can keep the Chinese on their side. (...) a Russia under increasing siege from what it now perceives as being a permanently hostile West, and a China confronted by an America that stands as the principal obstacle to its ambitions in Asia-Pacific, have come to the not illogical conclusion that there is nothing to lose, and probably much to be gained, from moving even closer together.’<sup>64</sup>

There are at least three foreign policy interests that China and Russia share. First, they both oppose US global hegemony and want to end it; second, they aim to change the rules-based, multilateral liberal international order and replace it with a post-western and post-democratic order based on spheres of influence; and third, in doing so, they want to demonstrate that authoritarian regimes are more effective in dealing with crises than democracies.<sup>65</sup> This convergence, however, hides what Jeremy Cliffe terms ‘a dangerous new reality’, in which ‘authoritarian states strong enough to accrue more relative power within the global system but not strong enough to found new poles of stability’.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, the war in Ukraine has confirmed the growing asymmetry in the Russia-China relationship, with the balance shifting in China’s favor.<sup>67</sup> Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine has benefited China. As a result of the EU’s and US sanctions, Russia has become increasingly dependent on Beijing to sell the gas that it stopped exporting to European countries to whom it wishes to maintain ties by

61. LEGARDA, Helena - «Indo-Pacific watch: Lessons from Ukraine for the Indo-Pacific», 15 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://merics.org/en/short-analysis/indo-pacific-watch-lessons-ukraine-indo-pacific>

62. SACKS, David - «What Is China Learning from Russia’s War in Ukraine? », *Foreign Affairs*, 16 May 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-05-16/what-china-learning-russias-war-ukraine>

63. KENDALL-TAYLOR, Andrea and SHULLMAN, David - «Navigating the Deepening Russia-China Partnership», 14 January 2021. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/navigating-the-deepening-russia-china-partnership>

64. COX, Michael - «Not just ‘convenient’: China and Russia’s new strategic partnership in the age of geopolitics». In *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol.1, No.4, 2016, pp. 317-334. Retrieved: Available at: [https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83632/1/Cox\\_Not%20just%20convenient.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83632/1/Cox_Not%20just%20convenient.pdf). Bobo Lo had spoken of the Russian-Chinese relationship as that of an ‘axis of convenience’ considering that the bilateral relation would not evolve to a closer construct such as an alliance given that the relationship was of ‘strategic convenience’, ‘non-committal and asymmetric’. ‘The new geopolitics is not based on fixed and long-lasting “strategic partnerships,” let alone alliances, but on much more supple arrangements that are frequently opportunistic, non-committal, and volatile’ (p.6) LO, Bobo – *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics*, Brookings Institution Press, 2008.

65. DIBB, Paul - «How the geopolitical partnership between China and Russia threatens the West», *Australian Strategy Policy Institute*, 29 November 2019. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/how-geopolitical-partnership-between-china-and-russia-threatens-west>

66. CLIFFE, Jeremy – The War that changed the world, *New Statesman*, 17 August 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/ukraine/2022/08/ukraine-invasion-six-months-that-changed-world>

67. RACHMAN, Gideon - «Putin, Xi and the limits of friendship», *Financial Times*, 19 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/76953b49-d7d8-48f7-9ab2-56e81ca2330a>

claiming the support of non-western great power.<sup>68</sup> However, the prolonged war has also been costly for China and exposed economic vulnerabilities, given that it is the world's largest importer of oil and one of the world's major importers of food, both of which have seen rising costs.<sup>69</sup>

After Washington's long-held policy of 'strategic ambiguity' that kept both China and Taiwan guessing, President Biden pledged in May and September 2022 that the US would defend Taiwan militarily if China invaded Taiwan.<sup>70</sup> However, given the ongoing war in Ukraine and the US war effort to support it, a simultaneous war on two fronts would be the worst-case scenario for the United States.<sup>71</sup> It is a valid assumption that if the US was unsuccessful in preventing Putin from invading Ukraine, it might also fail to deter Xi from taking action against Taiwan. If such a scenario materialized, the competition for power transition through which China aspires to replace the US would be tested, with an unpredictable outcome, especially if a hegemonic war is foreseen as its preferred change mechanism.<sup>72</sup>

The collapse of the European security order shows that we have already entered a confrontational international disorder characterized by a weakening of the rules-based global order, increasing ideological crystallization and an offensive contest between democracies and autocracies. This new dynamic has already led to a bipolarization between the transatlantic and Asian democratic communities, 'the United States and its allies - the main conservative powers, on the one hand, and China and Russia - the main revisionist powers, on the other'.<sup>73</sup> In this more confrontational world order, we observe the growing bipolar competition between the US and China for the future international order, a return to power politics and spheres of influence from which Europe is not able to escape.

As China's claim to global hegemony threatens the transatlantic relationship, Europe will find it increasingly difficult to avoid this bipolar power competition. Europe depends highly on the US for its security and defense but is also economically interdependent with China. The US will need its European allies in the growing US-China competition. Simultaneously, China will vow to wedge between European capitals and the US. The recent US mid-term elections in November 2022 resulted in an unexpectedly strong showing for the Democratic Party, partially seen as support for the Biden administration's transatlantic foreign policy. However, the US presidential elections in 2024 may produce a less committed president for transatlantic relations.

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68. GABUEV, Alexander - «China's New Vassal», *Foreign Affairs*, 9 August 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-new-vassal>

69. «The rising costs of China's friendship with Russia», *Financial Times*, 10 March 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/50aa901a-0b32-438b-ae2-c6a4fc803a11>

70. WILLASEY-WILSEY, Tim - «US Policy on Taiwan and the Perils of 'Strategic Ambiguity'», *RUSI*, 26 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/us-policy-taiwan-and-perils-strategic-ambiguity>

71. «Biden's Pledge to Defend Taiwan Chips Away at Longstanding U.S. Policy», *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 September 2022. Retrieved: Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/bidens-pledge-to-defend-taiwan-chips-away-at-longstanding-u-s-policy-11663962151>

72. GILPIN, Robert – *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

73. GASPARELLO, Carlos – *O Fim da Europa*, Instituto da Defesa Nacional, 2022, p.127.

This uncertainty confirms for Europeans the need to support the Biden administration's policy of increasing cooperation between its European allies and the Indo-Pacific like-minded democratic countries, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, to counter China's claim to global dominance. The Ukraine war, as bitter as it is, has shown that democracies are peace-loving, but once attacked in their integrity is attacked, they will fight back ferociously and can muster great collective willpower.

Numerous countries in the Global South should be won over as equal partners by Europe and the US. Globally, Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an assault on the United Nations' self-determination principle and its rules and norms-based order. Additionally, it has global consequences, affecting food and energy security well beyond the European continent. Europe and the US should not miss the opportunity to try to win over the hearts and minds of countries in Latin America and Africa based on mutual respect and to persuade them that a world of conflict is neither beneficial to them, their regional security orders, nor the Euro-Atlantic security order.

It is crucial to prevent China from exploiting this transitional period to prevent the Ukraine war from becoming the first major war of the global transition of power. With the United States supporting a major war effort of the first large-scale war since World War II, China may feel tempted to challenge the dominant power and become a new dominant power in the international system. In 1989, the last transitional moment was 'peace and change'. Let us strive to prevent this one from becoming, in the words of Robert Gilpin's seminal book, a transition of 'war and change in world politics'.<sup>74</sup>

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74. GILPIN, Robert – *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

# Conclusion

**T**he war in Ukraine is Europe's war, as the future of the Euro-Atlantic security order is at stake. Even without full EU or NATO membership, Ukraine will be firmly embedded in the Euro-Atlantic security structures in the future post-war order. After three decades as a buffer state between the EU and NATO, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, the war has acted as a catalyst to locate Ukraine firmly within the Euro-Atlantic security community. The war has consolidated the Euro-Atlantic security community and strengthened its two strongest institutions, NATO and the EU, which have converged towards united and coordinated responses to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Ukraine war is also the first major war in international politics' global power transition phase. The outcome of the war and the future of the Euro-Atlantic order will have repercussions on how the United States positions itself vis-à-vis China, its hegemonic contender.

The stakes are high for global security and the democratic security community: Ukraine risks losing its sovereign right to exist; Europe risks losing security and stability on its continent; like-minded democracies globally risk losing security and stability in their own regions; and the United States risks losing the great power contest with China.

One way of reducing the threats to the future of democracy is to strengthen it by extending the transatlantic security community towards a global democratic security community to help contain great power revisionisms and restore international order and stability.



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## About the Project

The Jean Monnet Atlantic Network 2.0 is a small network of six members that keep intense communication and joint activities on the Atlantic Basin. The Network also serves as a central arena for discussing globalisation and key major trends in the several Atlantic microcosms. By combining the national with the regional perspective, its research and debates take into account the different foreign interests and pressures, as well as a critical view on the possible roles and future of the European Union (EU) in the area.

It is the present link of a long chain of projects. In 2016, the project that established the first Jean Monnet Network on Atlantic Studies ([jeanmonnetnetwork.com.br](http://jeanmonnetnetwork.com.br)) sought to foster knowledge and co-operation among scholars and researchers on topics of fundamental importance for Atlantic actors in general, and for the EU, in particular. It involved a greater number of centres and universities.

Seven years later, still focussed on the original three broad thematic axes -Energy/Sustainability, Trade/Economy (International Economic Flows) and Security/Inequality-, the Jean Monnet Atlantic Network 2.0 represents a continuation and a rupture with the previous undertakings.

It intends to offer a wide, innovative and sometimes controversial view on Atlantic problems and the expectations on and scope of the EU activities relative to them. The papers in this series are a sample of its achievements.





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