

LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF WAR: FOREIGN POLICY SHIFTS AND SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

European Security Perceptions and Failure to Detering Russian Threats

The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in global power dynamics, ending the decades-long confrontation between major powers. In the aftermath of this historical event, Europe experienced a period of relative stability and peace, except during the Yugoslav Wars. While the United States maintained a military presence in Europe via NATO, it shifted its focus toward other regions. The American security umbrella that many European countries enjoyed profoundly impacted the perception of security in European capitals, with different countries viewing Europe's main challenges and threats based on their geographical location, historical context, political and economic conditions.

To a large extent, many European states ignored the need to strengthen their defense capabilities as they counted on Washington. Eastern European states had long expressed concerns over Kremlin actions, while Western European countries were focused more on combating terrorism and other non-traditional threats. Southern European countries were grappling with migration and illegal trafficking issues. Notably, **the post-Cold War shift from traditional military security to human-centric perspectives, such as climate change, migration, and terrorism, overlooked critical military and defense domains.** Such an approach to security was challenged by Vladimir Putin's campaign to gather lands of former-Soviet republics, which resulted in one invasion after another. Despite the Kremlin's aggression, many European countries believed democratization and economic engagement with Russia could avert a major war. This approach proved naive, as the ruler of the Kremlin exploited it, resulting in a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, **the policies pursued by European states failed to deter the aggressors.** Neither military nor non-military deterrence methods (such as disclosing aggressors' plans by Western intelligence) have prevented Kremlin from invading.



Mr. Putin attacked the West during a speech at Munich Security Conference in 2007. Photograph: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

This critical situation calls for European states to realize that until Vladimir Putin and his circle remain in power and the Kremlin does not change its neo-imperialistic policies towards its neighbors, **the relations between the West and Russia must be based on deterrence and containment.** It also highlighted the importance of considering each partner's concerns, as Eastern European states were not heard when they pointed out the seriousness of the Russian threat. The war in Ukraine

has prompted an increase of NATO troops on the Eastern flank and made Sweden and Finland apply for membership in the Alliance, potentially enhancing NATO's capabilities to deter Russian threats. Furthermore, the Russian invasion has exposed the fallacy of the belief that assisting the Kremlin in integrating into the world economy and Western institutions would lead to democratization and predictable relations with Moscow.

Many claim that existing deterrence methods have failed, but one might wonder: Was there any effective deterrence concerning Russia at all? If yes, what kind of nature was it, and why did it fail? Indeed, the NATO Eastward enlargement might indicate that the West did not entirely disregard the scale of the Russian threat. However, the constant problems of underfinancing defense and security initiatives, including relatively low levels of ammunition production and the lack of capabilities, show that it is **difficult for the West to address armed conflicts of such high intensity** as the war between Russia and Ukraine. The West turned a blind eye to the increasing assertiveness of Russian foreign policy and Moscow's efforts to destroy everything built during and after the Cold War, including the European security architecture.



Russian military vehicles enter Georgia during the 2008 aggressive war. Photograph: GETTY IMAGES

The Russian threat was perceived as some irritating noise in the background, and many politicians on both sides of the Atlantic preferred to focus on other issues. As a result, often misperceived, miscalculated, and to some extent encouraged Kremlin's actions paved the way to what we are facing now - a major war in Europe after already known cases of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014. Thus, the apparent transformation in the European security environment happened much earlier than on the 24th of February 2022.

Still, the full-scale invasion on that day reflected the failure of previous efforts to address security issues on the continent. The poor focus on European security, the decreasing role of the armed forces, and insufficient investments in defense industries and industrial production to secure procurements have led us to where we are. The invasion of 2022 was a real shock to everyone in the West, and many observers realized that **freedom could not be taken for granted, and one should be ready to fight for such a privilege.**

The invasion of February 2022 has been a game-changing event, prompting states to rethink their foreign policy principles and consider old, Cold War-era deterrence strategies and methods. Returning to "business as usual" seems unlikely, as a realistic and rational approach will dominate Western policies towards Moscow and their respective security and defense policies, at least in the short term.

The measures taken by Western states emphasize that returning to the pre-war state and restoring normality in relations with Russia are difficult to imagine soon. The war has led to debates regarding the contours of the post-Russian order, with Western states shifting their foreign policies and **reawakening to power politics realities.**

Interestingly, it is difficult to identify just one evident leader driving Western support for Kyiv. Instead, there is a "*leaderless unity*" and participation of many states to decide and coordinate support. It is crucial to assess how countries' foreign and security policies have evolved since the war began, as they have been changing their dominant principles regarding Russia

step by step, which might have been unexpected. Therefore, **reassessing foreign policy** thinking and approaches towards Moscow and drawing lessons is **vital for building a prosperous and secure future** for the decades to come.

The War-Time Debate: Major Perspectives That Drive Western Support for Ukraine

Before diving into the support trends, it is essential to note that various debates played a decisive role during the war in determining the type, quantity, and terms of help provided. These discussions can be referred to as a 'war-time (neo) realist debate,' which is evident while examining the collective West's efforts against the Kremlin.

This debate involved two dominant perspectives. On the one hand, many diplomats, politicians, international scholars, and analysts were skeptical about providing weapons and solid support for Ukraine, as they believed it would not withstand the Russian invasion. Very often, some of them were referring to the 2021 case of Afghanistan, when the Taliban managed to take over the country despite all the efforts the US put into training for the Afghan army and substantial military and economic support that did not help to prevent the collapse of the Afghan army. Moreover, it led to the problem of the Taliban seizing some US-made weapons, which threatens the US national security and regional stability in Central Asia. Therefore, they argued that Kyiv should receive limited support and be pushed into negotiations.

Even further, many in the West still believe that Beijing poses a more significant threat than Moscow in the long run, which is difficult to deny. They argue that the West should refrain from spending its resources to support Ukraine, as it would reduce its capabilities, particularly against the backdrop of the deteriorating security situation across the Taiwan Strait. They claim that the West cannot engage in two wars simultaneously and should concentrate on China, which poses more strategic threats to the foundations of the liberal order and the United States and the West's position in the international system.

On the other hand, the opposite camp argues that Russia's war on Ukraine has existential implications for Kyiv, all free world capitals, and the unity of the West. This perspective advocates providing Ukraine with all necessary means to defeat Russia on the battlefield while avoiding direct conflict that could trigger the use of nuclear weapons. Such an approach is crucial for stabilizing the war geographically and signaling that NATO is not part of the conflict. It is also necessary for the West to have an opportunity for conflict management and maintain predictability that the Russian war will not spill over into NATO member territories.

Proponents of this strategy see a full-scale Russian invasion as a test to the West, liberal democracy, and the international system they created, which has guaranteed stable and peaceful conditions in Europe without major wars. If Russia prevailed, all the achievements of the previous order would be destroyed, exposing the West to even more significant security implications. Furthermore, the occupied territory of Ukraine, in the case of Russia's success, would have an enormous impact on the security of the United States and NATO, especially Ukraine's neighboring countries. The strengthening ties between Russia and China and the autocratic challenges they pose are among the other international concerns.

Finally, most people believe this strategy for the war would deter Chinese aggression by signaling the West's firm response and readiness to defend the basic principles of the liberal order, namely respect for state borders, independence, and territorial integrity.

Transatlantic Unity in the Face of Russian Aggression: Reassessing Security and Investing in Defense Capabilities

Despite pre-war discussions about NATO's obsolescence, the Russian war against Ukraine has demonstrated the importance of transatlantic unity. Paradoxically, neither Russia nor the West anticipated how much Western countries would retreat from their trivial view of Russia and its relations with it. The invasion has shown **the need for a strong transatlantic alliance and the reassessment of security per se** since many countries prioritized questions of economy, energy, infrastructure, etc.

Furthermore, the war's repercussions have led the United States to re-examine its global role as a major power and its responsibility and leadership. The Russian invasion has also proved that closer relations between the US and Europe are needed, as European states can only ensure their security with Washington's support. With the rise of revisionist powers, navigating the global age of disruptions alone is challenging for Europe. Nonetheless, achieving a certain level of strategic autonomy in Europe is crucial, and it is best to start addressing this issue now, at least regarding dwindling stockpiles. Increasing defense budgets and reinvesting in defense industries are no longer debatable issues and will likely dominate

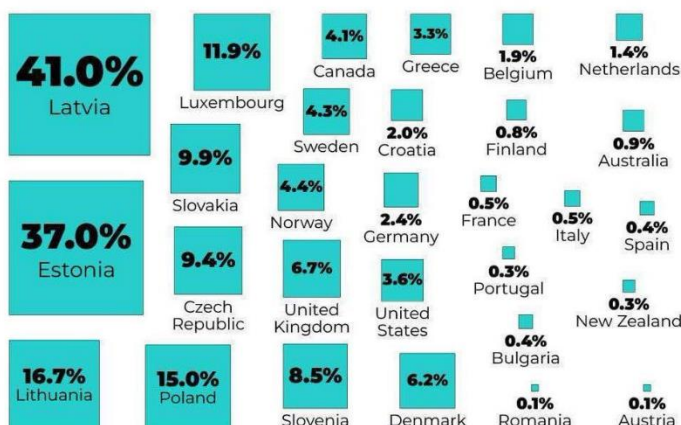
the transatlantic agenda. Specifically in Europe, the question remains about the format in which this could be done. **The need to invest in conventional deterrence capabilities is of utmost importance.** Russian attempts to weaponize disagreements between transatlantic community members remain a significant part of the Kremlin's strategy towards the West. The "divide and rule" principle of Russian foreign policy will likely be present regardless of who sits in the Kremlin. Putin's successor is expected to continue his foreign policy line since a robust democratic opposition in Russia is not visible on the horizon and is not likely to appear anytime soon.

The perception and role of security matters differed across the Atlantic. Many countries, mainly those close to Russia, had expressed their concerns about Russian actions long before the full-scale invasion began and were among the leaders in supporting Ukraine and the first days of the war demonstrated the incredible support provided by the United States, under the personal leadership of Joe Biden, who managed to gather a coalition of more than 50 states to address the Russian aggression. Among the leaders were the United Kingdom, Canada, the Baltic states, Poland, the Czech Republic, and countries in Northern Europe, some of which are not yet NATO members. It is especially noteworthy to mention Sweden and Finland, who have shifted from being neutral states after quite a long period of neutrality and are now sending considerable military aid.

The case of Finland is unique, as despite its vulnerability because of its 1340 km border with Russia, the country is still committed to delivering military packages to support Ukraine. This is an example of exceptional leadership. Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands provided limited defense supplies initially, but their aid was crucial in stopping the Russians at the tactical and operational levels. These packages comprised SAMs, anti-tank weapons, grenade launchers, machine guns, and other critical equipment. As regards Central and Eastern European states, an infographic by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy as of October 2022 reveals that Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Luxembourg, and Slovenia have contributed 41%, 37%, 16.7%, 15%, 9.4%, 9.9%, 11.9%, and 8.5% of their defense budgets, respectively, to support Ukraine's resistance, demonstrating their significant contributions to enhancing Ukraine's defense capacities. Some of these countries possessed a considerable amount of Soviet-origin weapons that were decisive in the initial phase of the conflict. Shared values and major security concerns drove such support.

LATVIA GAVE 41% OF ITS MILITARY BUDGET TO UKRAINE

Share of the defense budget transferred to Ukraine as military aid, %.



€41.3 bn
Ukraine has received or will receive soon as military aid

This is 7.6 times bigger than the military budget of Ukraine in 2022

This is 86% of Russia's military budget in 2022

Sources: Aid data as of 3 October 2022 — Kiel Institute for the World Economy, defence budget data as of 2022 — SIPRI.

TOP LEAD

The complete occupation of Ukraine would destroy the European security architecture and necessitate even more investment in preparing for a potential war between NATO and Russia. If Russia succeeded in Ukraine, it would be a disaster for all neighboring countries, and their security would be threatened. At the same time, Russia, having occupied Ukrainian territory, would significantly increase its power and capabilities.

Even though some European states have a significant number of pro-Russian politicians or those who take a soft stance toward Russia, there are **cases where genuine leadership and a profound understanding** of what is at stake in Ukraine prevail. A perfect example is the incredible support Bulgaria supplied during the early stages of the war. Former Prime Minister Kiril Petkov provided support that was kept secret due to the presence of pro-Russian politicians in the government. However, according to an investigation conducted by WELT, which was confirmed by interviews with the Foreign Minister of Ukraine and the former Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Sofia managed to supply Kyiv with fuel and some Soviet-made weapons in the most critical moment for Ukrainian resistance in April. Back then Ukraine has run out of weapons and fuel and the western supply didn't reach the country yet. This case shows that despite Kremlin's strong influence on specific

countries, they are choosing to support Kyiv in the face of aggression. If the investigation is to be believed, during an EU finance ministers' meeting, Asen Vasilev, who represented Bulgaria, reminded attendees of what Russia did in Bulgaria after the communist coup d'état in 1944, when the Soviet Union invaded the country and murdered thousands of dissenters, professors, and priests. This is similar to what Russia has been doing in Ukraine. It seems that historical memory and commitment to the values of freedom and protection of the principle of sovereignty prevailed in Bulgaria, despite a significant pro-Russian lobby in the government and other governmental bodies. Vasilev was an exceptional example of leadership that helped bring hope back to those still shocked by the brutal Russian invasion.



Bulgaria's Prime Minister Kiril Petkov visited Kyiv in April, where he met President Volodymyr Zelenskyi. Source: DW.

Also, some pro-Russian politicians have significantly changed their minds and joined the mainstream in condemning the Russian invasion and calling for more support for Ukraine. One of the most impressive examples is the President of the Czech Republic, Milos Zeman, famous for his vague and often entirely pro-Russian views. Nevertheless, immediately after the war started, he admitted he had been wrong about Moscow and called for concrete actions, including Russia's isolation and more sanctions. Realizing that your policy has failed is challenging for any politician, but Zeman found the courage to do so, and it is not just him. The former foreign minister and acting Federal President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, acknowledged past mistakes in German relations with Russia. President Steinmeier mentioned, *"It is true that we should have taken the warnings of our eastern European partners more seriously, particularly regarding the time after 2014"*, which is a vital lesson for everyone in the transatlantic community - **take all the possible security reservations of your partners seriously**. He also realized that achieving **political convergence through economic exchange does not work with Russia**. Moreover, he added that "We must cast off old ways of thinking and old hopes". Steinmeier also noted that Germany must reduce its dependency on Russia, especially in terms of energy, therefore, putting a cross on his policy of supporting Nord Stream-2 and energy trade with Moscow...

Beyond the Red Lines: Germany's Foreign and Security Policy Shift and the "Global Zeitenwende"

As the war unfolded, many countries had self-imposed red lines not to provoke Russia, which led to a careful approach to prevent the escalation of the conflict into NATO territory. However, they are now shifting from this position and declaring that Ukraine winning and Russia losing the war is in the interests of the West. A fundamental and remarkable policy shift has occurred in Germany, where key parts of the country's foreign and security policies have been dismantled. First, the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared a "Zeitenwende", a turning point in history, and announced a profound recalibration of traditional pillars of German foreign policy. Hence, his speech ended the dominant idealistic views of Ostpolitik and relations with Russia, which were maintained in the spirit of "**change through trade**." The Ostpolitik, designed by Chancellor of West Germany Willy Brandt suggested that strengthening economic contacts with Moscow would lead to a more democratic and predictable Russia. It is now being challenged as the Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought an entirely converse result.

Scholz also acknowledged that Germany's Bundeswehr was underfunded and in poor condition. He pledged that Berlin would increase defense spending, which the United States had been asking for a long time, and it was stressed explicitly during the Donald Trump administration. Germany's outsourcing of security to the United States for a long time became a real problem, with the consequences visible in the lack of military capabilities and low production rates. This problem needs to be addressed not only by Berlin but also by other European capitals.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz delivers his "Zeitenwende speech" during a meeting of the German federal parliament on February 27, 2022. (Photo by Hannibal Hanschke/Getty Images).

The decision to send heavy weapons to Ukraine marks another fundamental change in Germany's security policy, which was previously based on not sending weapons to conflict regions. The Zeitenwende, declared by Olaf Scholz, was necessary to address the leadership question that Berlin had been unwilling to undertake for a long time. Germany must now position itself as a responsible power ready to make tough foreign policy decisions to protect critical principles of the rules-based order, regardless of domestic opinion.

The Zeitenwende is crucial to regain credibility, prove reliability to Germany's partners, and reassure them that Germany is still committed to the other key pillars of its foreign policy: multilateralism, European integration, and the rules-based order. This vital and brave decision by Germany has led to its approval of sending heavy weaponry to Ukraine, including tanks and modern air-defense systems such as IRIS-T.

The metamorphosis of Germany's position regarding arms supplies has had a **massive impact on the decisions of other states**, which were previously cautious about sending heavy weapons to Kyiv. France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain opened the way to transfer modern defense systems and various types of heavy weaponry, and other countries have followed the same path. This is significant, especially in the context of the transfer of German-made weaponry, which requires Berlin's export permission. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that **Germany's Zeitenwende has a global dimension** and impacts the decisions of other European powers. The support provided by Germany amplifies and opens opportunities for other countries to deliver their military equipment, which might sometimes be a bit out-of-date. However, it is essential for Ukraine that Germany can satisfy needs and supply new military equipment to Berlin's NATO allies, allowing them to transfer their equipment, often Soviet-made, to Ukraine. Different choices regarding the supply of weapons are made in close consultations with partners, which sometimes takes valuable time, but this is probably the only option to preserve German leadership.

Turbulent Asia and Shared Challenges: Japan's Pivot and Asian Solidarity with Ukraine

Despite the complexity of the Asian region and its reaction to the war, there are Asian countries that have undoubtedly shown their solidarity with Ukraine. After all, Asia's geopolitical situation is tense due to the tightening of great power competition in the region. However, some of the critical actors in Asia, such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Taiwan, have either provided economic aid, supported sanctions on Russia or even delivered some military

assistance. There are various explanations for those measures, including security threats from authoritarian regimes, namely Russia, China, and North Korea. Moreover, although many countries are cautious in choosing a side between Kyiv and Moscow and prefer to stay neutral, most are undoubtedly worried about the nuclear weapons rhetoric from Russia and its blackmail to use them. Another reason is the rising tensions over the region of the Taiwan strait and the potential for a Chinese invasion. Various countries believe that Russia's loss in the war would decrease the aggressive appetites of Beijing and make it think twice before trying to occupy the island. Finally, numerous countries depend on maintaining a rules-based order for their survival. They have greatly benefited from it, as it provides preconditions for free trade, respect for fundamental human rights, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, etc.



The Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, meets President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his visit to Ukraine, on March 21, 2023. Source: The Presidential Office of Ukraine.

First, a major foreign and security policy shift has occurred in Japan, a country with a strong pacifist tradition. The Russian war has put the use of nuclear weapons on the agenda, which Japan is sensitive to due to its historical memory and North Korea's regular missile tests. Japan, like Germany, pursued a non-confrontational foreign policy and spent less than 1% of its GDP on military spending, favoring soft-power instruments over military means. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio has suggested his concept and vision of foreign and national security policies, which will be based on **“realism diplomacy for a new era”**. Japan's Prime Minister is leading efforts to deliver the message to Asian countries about the importance of the Russian war against Ukraine by conveying clearly that it has broad implications for international norms and that **changing the status quo by using force is unacceptable**, considering the context of the Indo-Pacific region and China's assertive behavior.

Facing renewed power politics in Europe, Japan gave up on attempts to negotiate with Russia over the Northern Territories. Japan has also introduced a new National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, which observes the security environment around Japan as severe and complex, meaning that security challenges posed by the authoritarian trio are amplifying. Therefore, **Japan is shifting from its pacifist past** to a more realistic and pragmatic foreign and security policy following the changing reality. It aims to increase its investments to bolster security by spending 2% of GDP on defense, strengthening counterstrike capabilities, and improving resilience in the cybersecurity domain.

The final message and lesson of Japan's shift are that **“diplomacy needs to be backed by defense capabilities, and that reinforcing defense capabilities will also lead to persuasiveness in carrying out our diplomatic efforts, as well as the importance of the will of each and every citizen to proactively defend the country as precisely evidenced by the Ukrainian people at this moment in time”**, as mentioned by PM Kishida.

Not only has Japan reiterated its commitment to defend democracy and universally-accepted principles of state sovereignty, but other Asian states, which are leaning toward the West either politically or ideologically have also supported Ukraine. South Korea, which faces similar challenges as Japan due to its neighbor's regular threats of nuclear weapons, supported sanctions and provided humanitarian and economic aid. In addition to Japan and South Korea, three other countries with valuable support are Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. Australia unexpectedly sent military support to Ukraine, including a few types of armored personnel carriers, M113AS4, Bushmaster PMVs, M777 howitzers, drones, ammunition, and other valuable equipment. This outstanding step **makes Australia one of the most significant non-NATO contributors to boosting Ukraine's defense capabilities** and repelling Russian aggression, as well as one of the most important countries in Asia for Ukraine.



Photo 1: The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea met with Ukraine's Minister of Energy to discuss projects for the restoration and reconstruction of the Ukrainian energy industry. Photo 2: Meeting between Defense Ministers of Ukraine and New Zealand to discuss ways to strengthen Ukrainian defense capabilities and coordinated efforts to rebuild Ukraine after the war.

Sources: Ministry of Energy of Ukraine; Twitter of Ukraine's MoD Oleksii Reznikov.

New Zealand is actively training Ukrainian soldiers, donating to NATO's trust fund to provide Ukrainian soldiers with fuel and food, and supplying some protective equipment. Singapore, along with other Asian nations, supports imposture sanctions on Russia and delivers a valuable amount of humanitarian aid. Finally, even Taiwan, which has no diplomatic relations established with Kyiv, has offered its help against the backdrop of threats of being invaded by China. Taipei sanctioned Russia and Belarus and provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including power generators, to address Russia's infrastructure shelling.

The West's Evolving Support for Ukraine: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges

It is comprehensible how difficult it can be to maintain a high level of support, ultimately shifting from traditional principles and guidelines of foreign policy and, to some extent, giving a chief part of what you have got to protect Ukraine's sovereignty and ensure the survival of Ukraine as a sovereign nation. There is no doubt that making decisive foreign policy decisions is complicated due to various types of pressure, whether from the domestic dimension or coming outside, namely from the Kremlin and its propaganda. However, we see how impressively the West has changed since the beginning of the war, shifting daily to eliminate self-imposed red lines on support provided to Ukraine and adopting approaches based on defeating Russia entirely on the battlefield. The West is also putting aside rose-colored glasses and looking at Russia more realistically, and discussions about increasing deterrence levers are ongoing everywhere.

Sometimes it is tough to acknowledge past mistakes, but seeing all the nations contributing to Ukraine's successes is inspiring. Most Ukrainians would admit that without Western support, it would have been challenging to defend themselves, de-occupy lands captured by Russia, and save the people who lived under Russian occupation and were subject to torture. However, many of them continue living in such conditions. It is necessary to remember that Ukraine's upper hand over Russia is a victory for the entire collective West and everyone who supports the basic principles of international law and sovereignty, regardless of geographical location. Nevertheless, this would not be the case if not for the fascinating resilience of the Ukrainian people and the sacrifices its defenders make day-to-day to protect shared European values and the world based on respect for the rules.

Noteworthy that the lessons learned from the Russian war on Ukraine have taught the West not to neglect questions of security, its military capabilities, and the resilience of nations to be better prepared for future wars. The West has to be united and listen to each other's security concerns. It is also crucial that military support to Ukraine is increased and issues regarding the production of ammunition and logistical matters are addressed. Furthermore, the West should boost its readiness to respond to military threats not just in the short term but also develop medium and long-term strategies and bolster its defense capacities to protect the well-being, security, and shared values of nations in case of another full-scale war.

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