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## **US Perspectives on the EU in View of a Potential Second Trump Administration – Part 1**

# **Apr 09, 2024**

From an American perspective, the EU is often seen as both a problem and an opportunity. An incoming Trump administration will no doubt view cooperation between the EU and NATO positively only if it benefits American security. If burden sharing is ineffective, the US may form informal coalitions outside institutional frameworks. The Heritage Foundation and other think tanks are developing plans to prioritize American interests and leverage bilateral relationships with European states. The US remains, however, dependent on international cooperation, including trade with Europe and China. The US has a predominant role in European security, but disengaging would diminish its leverage. The importance of US-European non-military security cooperation was highlighted after 9/11. In contrast the US has historically viewed the importance of a military security role for the EU as low, preferring to lead in NATO or informal coalitions. The US thus long discouraged the development of an EU security and defense policy. However, over time, the US has realized the need for Europe and has supported European capabilities at least in areas not vital to American interests.

**"You are damned if you do and damned if you don't."**

Europe should contribute to US security and prosperity. But Europe may be seen as a problem if the EU tends to develop its own security policy that contradicts or competes with American interests. For a potential incoming Trump administration, cooperation between the EU and NATO may be perceived as playing a positive role only if it remains a mechanism to leverage European investment in support of American security. If this mechanism proves ineffective in terms of burden sharing, as it has been for many years after the Cold War, might respond forcefully given increased expectations in Washington of what Europeans actually are able to do. Such a development is likely to result in the creation of another set of informal coalitions of the willing outside institutional frameworks, as seen in Iraq and elsewhere.

Plans are now being developed by the Heritage Foundation in coalition with staffers from a significant number of other think tanks, acting in support of a second Trump administration. For them, it seems to be a matter of putting America first and catering to American vital interests, where the notion of partnership is constantly viewed through the prism of evaluating the net value for the US of different types of cooperative relationships. Their vision of American relations with Europe seems to be based on a transactional approach, seeking to maximize American leverage bilaterally with a number of European states. Multilateral formats such as the EU and even NATO play a limited role in this concept, not to mention bilateral US-EU negotiations. The diplomatic recognition of the EU by the US may once again be questioned. This clearly is a vision that goes beyond the traditional US interest in leveraging European burden sharing: It is now stated more or less openly that to the extent the US is asked to become involved in Europe, Europeans should pay. This is a bargaining position, of course, which, however, denotes a fundamental conviction that American interests in a strong Europe in themselves are not vital. In view of the internal challenges to security in addition to the Chinese challenge to US primacy, this may seem to be a justified assessment in the perceptions of many American voters.

In the analysis of the prospects for future EU-NATO cooperation, it is therefore important not to take shortcuts and disregard overall US and European interests. Both the EU and NATO are as institutional frameworks more often than not seen as instruments to promote national interests.

**The US is Less Dependent on International Cooperation than Europe – But Still Very Dependent**

One of the first questions that arises is the question of the importance of international cooperation at large for the most important actors concerned, starting with the United States of America. This is, of course, essentially a question of political perceptions but is also closely related to objective realities measurable by statistics. In this context, the level of international dependencies, both in terms of overall trade statistics and necessary conditions for economic life, seems to be a relevant indicator. It is generally argued, and seems plausible, that the US is more self-sufficient than Europe but still very dependent on a number of raw materials, etcetera.

Culturally, Americans could be seen as more inward-looking than Europeans but still with fundamental ties to their heritage with a number of European and other cultures. In this context, Europe stands out as being closer to the US than the Western Hemisphere in general, possibly with the exception of Canada.

Also, it may not be well known to a majority of Americans, but Europe remains of vital importance to US trade and investments – as does obviously China.

**The Role of Security in US-European Relations**

If one then takes another step and zooms in on the role of security in US-European relations, several observations seem pertinent.

First of all, clearly, the US, since the Second World War, has developed a predominant role in European security, which it also uses to maximize its overall power over Europe and European states. This power is continuously developed in close cooperation with important European actors, such as the UK, in order to safeguard generic transatlantic economic and cultural interests. Not seldom is the argument put forward from the American side: "Since we are so important for your security, you need to pay more than us," for instance in terms of international economic assistance. The expression "we tell you pay" has been heard more than once in US-European negotiations. However, this also obviously means that if America were to disengage from European security, much of that leverage would disappear, which might hurt fundamental American interests.

The US has also – although not always successfully – been able to mobilize European support for American security interests. Wars countering Russian aggression involving US armed forces would, in the first phase, have to be fought in Europe rather than on American soil and would not primarily cost American lives – the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 was a partial exception to the rule. Fundamentally, such wars would be fought based on American strategic priorities.

An America disengaging from European security would also lose many of these benefits. In this context, it is often forgotten that it is possible and has been possible to construct coalitions of the willing in a number of out-of-area conflicts, but such conditions become incredibly more effective if there is well-trained and developed interoperability between forces over a long period of time.

The next article in this series will be published on April 15.

## **Is There A Breaking Point For Russia? Looking Back At the Cold War and Ahead Towards 2025**

# **Mar 08, 2024**

How do we know and when will we know if a change will be expected in Russia towards a policy other than Putin's current one? In retrospect, there are, arguably, essential lessons to be learned from the Cold War that should be considered when assessing the way ahead for Russia. These lessons motivate caution when interpreting current and future Russian policy indicators. Still, Putin would be wise to anticipate major problems ahead for himself and his regime.

Let's face it: we know little more than we did towards the end of the Cold War what Russians think. Many citizens of the Warsaw Pact states coming out of the Cold War found their place in the new Europe without significant difficulties. On the elite level, it was normal to express some degree of support to Western ideals concerning democracy, human rights, and the rule of law through organizations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, including the OSCE Politico-Military Code of Conduct from the mid-1990s. Some of these officials are still in office in Russia. Still, their current posture is typically challenging to reconcile with how they behaved in the 1990s. Former president Medvedev is a spectacular example of this sea change with his violent rhetoric, including on nuclear war. But this may change again. Who knows?

It is a simple fact that what people think and believe at this point is very difficult to know. In a repressive society, there are relatively few people who dare to take a stand and risk their positions.  In such societies, families often come first. For this reason, the courage demonstrated by thousands during the Russian electoral campaign and the burial of Navalny is worthy of great respect.

The validity of the polls undertaken by the Russian institute Levada and other analysts indicating robust support for Putin should be looked at critically. We simply don't know how popular Putin is. Moreover, popularity can change quickly, as in open societies like the US.

###### **Russian Capabilities – Military and Civilian**

Repeated mistakes have also been made concerning the assessment of Russian capabilities –  current and future. Sometimes, these mistakes have been intentional: to underpin calls for higher defense budgets in the West, think tank analysts towards the end of the Cold War not seldom sought to forward the hypothesis that Russia would be able to continue the arms race unabated.

At the same time, it is essential to keep an open mind as regards the effects of Russian casualties on societal support for the war in Ukraine, difficulties to replace lost equipment, and the net effect of sanctions, etcetera.  All these factors normally would be expected to influence the possibilities for Russia to sustain the war effort.

In some parts of Russia, **casualties,** no doubt, hit many affected families hard and impacted demography negatively, although nowhere near the suffering known to the Russian population during the first half of the 20th century. But in Moscow, perhaps 1% of the casualties in comparison with the most distant regions are registered. There are likely Muscovites who simply do not know anyone who the war has seriously hurt.

Regarding **equipment,** an authoritarian regime can order production to be intensified with much less delay than in a Western society with its complicated rules of production and procurement, even more so if its leadership can adopt alert procedures without declaring war. For Western societies to do the same normally requires a wartime situation.

And Russian resilience to **sanctions** has already been demonstrated. Once alternative suppliers and buyers have been identified, Russian economists and planners have seemingly skillfully found ways to neutralize the effects of sanctions to a surprising extent.

There is also significant data collected by analysts in the West that indicate a strong capability on the Russian side to **learn from initial mistakes** after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

###### **Clouds On the Russian Horizon**

Still, from Putin's perspective, significant clouds are on the horizon. Not only have Europeans come together when enlarging NATO, supporting Ukraine, and increasing their defense budgets as a response to the Russian aggression. During the pandemic, Europe created new ways to respond to seemingly overwhelming challenges.

According to the dictionary, resilience means to recover your shape after external pressure. What is often forgotten here is that external pressure can bring new energy to a political system.

The first two years of the war effort have been managed and led by the president of Ukraine with courage and enormous energy. Ukraine had eight years to prepare for this war since 2014. And the country is now one of Europe's most important military powers.

Even more fundamental is that Putin cannot be sure what will happen in the US. This fact is visible when studying Russian frequent signaling about the possibility of Russia using sub-strategic nuclear weapons in the war.

This option is linked to the need to deter other nuclear powers, primarily the US but also, to a certain extent, France, and the UK, from openly intervening with their troops on the ground in Ukraine. Western military personnel, including those in civilian clothes, are of course already present in Ukraine. That Western military aid has enabled direct attacks on Russian territory is another red line that have been trespassed by the West and, so far, accepted by Russia.

But Russia desperately needs to avoid a situation where the wrath of the American president and the American Congress explodes in the way that happened not only after Pearl Harbor but also after 9/11. This worry is – also – associated with the strong possibility that Donald J Trump will be elected president of the US in November 2024. Trump may believe that he can make a deal over the heads of Ukrainians and Europeans with Putin. But if he finds himself betrayed when that deal is not coming through or not being respected by Putin, his reaction may be very unpredictable. In such a situation, he may also have amassed powers outside the standard authority of a US President.

As now is widely discussed, it is therefore by no means obvious that Russia will focus its capabilities to wage hybrid war in support of Trump's candidacy. The favorite outcome of the American elections, more likely, is more of the same – underpinning systemic American difficulties to make decisive decisions on security, meaning something entirely different than the Founding Fathers Montesquieu-inspired ideas of checks and balances. But he cannot be sure if this strategy will succeed or what the net outcome of the elections to the European Parliament in early June will be in terms of European governance.

It is not well known in the West, but it is also an essential factor to consider that Russia harbors significant threat perceptions as regards China. Important parts of the Russian nuclear capabilities are directed towards meeting threats from China. Should Russia seriously or perhaps even in an existential way threaten China's future avenue towards becoming the world's leading economic superpower with extensive trade relations and economic dependencies across the globe, including through the Arctic passage, no one knows how China would react. Nuclear war – even on a sub-strategic level – has already been ruled out as inadmissible by the Chinese leadership.

###### **Actions and Reactions Not Only Tend to Cancel Each Other Out But Can Also Lead To Unforeseen Escalation In Surprising Directions**

Security policy analysis is repeatedly proven faulty if it is performed in stove pipes. That is one problem that constantly is undermining the possibilities to create and implement comprehensive and integrated strategies.

But equally important is the ability to study honestly the net results of actions and reactions both in the military and nonmilitary domains of policies. No serious military exercise can be conducted without an opposing force (OPFOR).

Looking at the Middle East, it was, for instance, striking to note already in the early 1970s that there was almost a perfect correlation between military assistance provided by the Soviet Union to Egypt and Syria and what was sent to Israel from the US if one took into account the quality of the equipment.

###### **Is There A Breaking Point For Russia?**

Every government faces the possibility of a breaking point when continuing the current policy is no longer possible. The Soviet Union came to such a breaking point in the second half of the 1980s through a combination of different factors that could not be managed by the Soviet bureaucracy after a series of critically ill leaders who only too late were replaced by young Gorbachev.

Many analysts describe 2024 as a year of muddling through, including on the battlefield waiting for 2025. We face great difficulty forecasting developments during that year on many levels and in many dimensions.

There is good reason to believe that the Russian leadership is as worried about the situation as the West. Otherwise, Russia would, arguably, not, with increasing frequency, threaten with the use of nuclear weapons in the war. Should polls indicate with even more clarity that Trump will be the next president of the US, this would by no means suggest that Putin's problems would be solved. Instead, they may worsen, if also Europe bounces back under pressure and becomes more effective in supporting Ukraine.

### Will Strategic Stability Between the West and Russia Require  Arms Control?

[**News**](https://www.consiliointernational.se/news/)

# **Feb 06, 2024**

Arguably, there is a need to connect the dots between four somewhat separate discourses: military rearmament in Russia, conditions for peace in Ukraine, rebuilding defense in the West and prospects for future arms control.

A recent [article](https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/09/why-the-west-should-stick-with-conventional-arms-control-in-europe-for-now/) posted by the Foreign Policy Research Institute argued:

“A formal dissolution of the (CFE) Treaty would undermine Western normative commitments to military transparency. In the long run, it could lead to a loss of expertise on how to conduct inspections and information exchange, which might become relevant again in the context of ending Russia’s war against Ukraine.---

Meanwhile, Russia currently has no interest in reducing its conventional forces or limiting its flexibility. To the contrary, Moscow has[announced](http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70159) changes to its force posture that, if successful, would see the establishment of an army corps in Karelia, new divisions in the occupied Ukrainian territories, and the re-establishment of the Leningrad and Moscow military districts, which were dissolved in 2010. --

Western officials should consider what European security will look like after Russia’s war against Ukraine. Any conceivable end-game scenario would arguably result in a high concentration of conventional forces and equipment in the region, even after a ceasefire or preliminary political settlement. A continued strategic conflict between Russia on the one hand and NATO and Ukraine on the other, which is likely, would always risk renewed military action. Under these circumstances, knowledge about how to conduct inspections and information exchange about conventional armed forces and major equipment might come in handy. Once lost, it will be difficult to rebuild the necessary expertise from scratch.“

As Sweden is following Finland into NATO, it will be important to prepare for deliberations on future arms control likely to take place inside the Alliance in a not-too-distant future. NATO played a central [role](https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/cfe#:~:text=Negotiated%20during%20the%20final%20years,weapons%20in%20Europe%20by%20setting) in the negotiation of the Conventional Armed Forces (CFE) treaty and the agreements on CSBMs after the Cold War - as well as the updated CFE never ratified by the parties after the end of the Warsaw Pact. But the future and viability of the CFE model is very much under discussion inside the alliance. It does not even in the best of time seem to add much significant information to NATO about possible destabilizing factors. And the national ceilings established would need to be reviewed in light of what is necessary after the Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine. After all the West is increasingly focusing also on conventional deterrence, which requires considerable rearmament.

Any future arms control system in Europe that would make a difference therefore needs to be tailor-made to subregional requirements, using the latest available verification technologies. To what extent such a model could be developed in the Northern part of Europe would need to be very carefully studied. And obviously, it all would have to be based on a genuine Russian political will to cooperate.

Finland and Sweden will find themselves in a completely different position than as nonaligned nations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They may be a part of zones where proposals for allowed force levels could be put forward. And they, like everyone else, could be proposed to be subject to stringent and intrusive verification provisions. Understanding what this means for small and medium-sized states will be extremely important.

For the private sector, all of this holds at least the same level of importance as the negotiations during the early 1990s of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The private sector will be tasked with developing verification technologies. At the same time, there will be concerns about commercially sensitive data, and there will be worries about prohibiting research and development that may also be important for civilian products.

Prudent political leaders often, for good reasons, refuse to speculate about uncertain future developments. Much of what may happen further down the road cannot be explicitly dealt with  in official strategy documents. This is something which is highly relevant, when considering Ukraine and its peace formula to overcome the Russian threat.

The Ukrainian position obviously concentrates on what is necessary to restore Ukrainian territorial integrity and the international support necessary to secure a prosperous Ukraine for the future.

The peace formula does not deal with what needs to happen in and with Russia, in order to create conditions for peace between Russia and the West. This article highlights one particularly sensitive area of discussion which has been off the table for quite some time in the West: arms control.

During the period of widespread unilateral disarmament in Europe, arms control was not seen as a major issue. Once it was clear that Russia could not be trusted, analysts widely discarded arms control as a viable instrument for peace. Notably, confidence and security building measures were seen as a way to mislead the other side about intentions. And lofty political commitments were often not respected, notably the Budapest commitments undertaken by Russia in 1994 in order to secure a nuclear weapon free Ukraine.

An unconditional total surrender of the aggressor, as happened after the Second World War is less problematic in terms of arms control than the negotiated settlement which was made after the Cold War between NATO and the then-Warsaw Pact. An unconditional surrender squarely puts the burden on the aggressor in terms of arms control, whereas a negotiated settlement such as the CFE treaty puts the requirements on both sides, not least in terms of verification.

The CFE treaty was negotiated under the auspices of the OSCE, which initially when elaborating confidence and security building measures operated under the assumption that all measures should be equally applied to all participating states.

This notion was highly problematic for nonaligned states such as Sweden and Finland with a vulnerable defensive posture which required less than total transparency. Even more this was the case for the Baltic states, which when they joined NATO chose to stay outside the CFE treaty. Defensive preparations against a possible surprise attack for good reasons require a considerable level of secrecy.

###### **Taking Stock of the Current Situation: the Danger of a Frozen Conflict with Russia**

The Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine since 2022 is increasingly evolving into a protracted war. There are concerns regarding the ability of the US to make decisions that uphold its support for Ukraine, both during the current and potential future Biden administrations, and even more so if Donald Trump were to be elected as president.

Numerous European states are confronted with arduous choices as they endeavor to rebuild their national defense, while simultaneously providing substantial support to Ukraine. The prospect of diminished American assistance, in addition to the existing burdens, is undeniably daunting.

Given this backdrop, it is only natural that many are currently worried about a frozen conflict in Ukraine, leaving numerous questions unanswered and creating opportunities for Russian rearmament and the redeployment of forces, particularly in the northern direction, thereby posing a significant threat to the Baltic states.

It is self-evident that if a ceasefire were to be agreed upon, it would seem imperative to combine commitments with rigorous verification mechanisms, complemented by punitive measures, in order to prevent any possibility of renewed hostilities.

Anything less than a Ukraine victory, will again put the Nordic Baltic region in a dangerous situation.

###### **New Verification Possibilities**

At the same time, the current situation presents favorable prospects in that there exist, and will continue to develop, significant opportunities to verify compliance, which were absent during the negotiation of the CFE treaty. In those days, this primarily entailed control over the quantitative stocks of verifiable equipment. NATO and the former Warsaw Pact were each limited to 20,000 tanks, 30,000 ACVs, 20,000 heavy artillery pieces, 6,800 combat aircrafts, and 2,000 attack helicopters within the treaty's area of application. Commercially available satellite data only possessed a resolution of approximately three meters during that period. Needless to say, the precise location and quality of said equipment were of utmost importance for maintaining peace.

In recent years verification possibilities have been enormously improved and there is already a discussion about how this could be applied to future arms control agreements:

The utilization of remote monitoring with active tags could significantly diminish the need for on-site inspections while simultaneously enhancing the level of confidence in verification, all at a reduced cost and without the intrusiveness of foreign inspectors. Although the ideal scenario would involve combining active tags with regular inspections, their independent use would serve as a crucial transparency measure and a significant interim step that could assist the United States, Russia, and NATO in rebuilding trust

as highlighted in an [article](https://thebulletin.org/premium/2023-01/remote-monitoring-verifying-geographical-arms-limits/) published in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist in 2023.

Using artificial intelligence, it should also be possible to make sense of millions of pieces of data from satellite imagery and non-governmental verification investigators such as Bellingcat to alert governments about dangerous trends.

But as indicated above the devil is in the detail what it comes to finding a model for future arms control in Europe, and even more so if one includes sub-strategic nuclear weapons.

To be continued…

# **Jan 19, 2024**

Among all global and regional powers, the US is least dependent on international trade. China, Russia, and Iran, are much more dependent, measuring trade in proportion to GDP. Still, the US shoulders the most important role in trying to keep sea lanes open. That a potential second Trump administration would agree to pay for this over the longer term is more than wishful thinking. Arguably there is a limit, therefore, to the freedom of action given to rebel groups such as the Yemeni Houthis. Threats to flow security worldwide have expanded enormously over the last decades. Most states still are dependent on a rules-based international order in this domain in order to survive and develop.

A diagram of a diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Bruce Jones at the Brookings Institution published on January 11, 2024, a very substantive [documentation](https://goodauthority.org/news/why-globalization-is-now-in-the-crossfire/#:~:text=Longer%20shipping%20times%20%E2%80%93%20as%20major,in%2Dtime%20globalized%20supply%20chains.) of the risks to global commerce now linked to attacks against shipping. Right now, most people will probably associate this flow security-problem to the Houthis of Yemen, supported by Iran, as a spillover of the Israel-Hamas war.

When assessing this problem, it may be worthwhile to take a step back and look at the issue of *who is dependent on the well-functioning of international trade*. The results are partly surprising.

But first it might also be useful to look back at an earlier [article](https://www.consiliointernational.se/news/creating-conditions-for-a-just-and-durable-peace-also-an-issue-of-flow-security/) by the current author on flow security with a slightly different twist from December 19, 2022, in the context of the war against Ukraine.

The concept of flow security has wider implications for the organization of international relations, than often realized. Although literature about the security of supply, and also about flow security (mainly linked to cyber) exist, it seldom gives an overview of the whole range of challenges facing states and private enterprises in this context. And the responses to these challenges are very much dependent on how the challenges are conceptually organized.

As an example, security of supply (as recently analyzed in a voluminous [inquiry](https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/a93eb5b8e6fa4d3ca3202828cf2bf549/en-modell-for-svensk-forsorjningsberedskap-sou-202350.pdf) solicited by the Swedish government)  is not only an issue of imports, but also exports as well as international assistance, both military and economic. It is an issue of cyber security, as well as the flow of information, the movement of people, etcetera.

That this is a real problem now affecting the prospects for future global trade is vividly illustrated by the Houthi rebel attacks against international shipping, which exacerbates the already existing problems with pirates from the Malacca Straits to the coast of Somalia, and the Gulf of Guinea.

The following is what I wrote in December 2022 as the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine was starting to turn into a war of attrition affecting flow security, including exports of grain, imports of military assistance etcetera:

* This concept in the international debate is often associated with cyber, and there is abundant literature on how to secure the integrity of the flow of data on the Internet.
* From a military perspective, flow security traditionally has to do with securing the delivery of military trade and aid in peace and wartime. At the same time, military operations traditionally focus on interdicting corresponding flows to the enemy.
* From a maritime security perspective, experts typically point to the fact that more than 90% of all goods travel on the high seas and need protection also from terrorists and organized criminals, including pirates.
* In crises such as a pandemic, the delivery of vaccines and other medical equipment highlights the need for flow security when transports become difficult due to the risk of infections.
* From a private-sector perspective, the need to secure all the necessary and sufficient conditions for the production of complex products, including strategic metals, chips, et cetera, is increasingly highlighted.
* That the free movement of people, materials, and information requires an integrated approach to border management has, for several decades, been a significant objective for the work of the EU and, in particular, the vast network of cooperation managed by the European Commission. The requirement is to keep borders as open as possible by letting good flows through while interdicting bad flows through intelligent surveillance methods.
* At the same time, the long period of relatively safe conditions for flows after the Cold War has encouraged less cautious policies, for instance when it comes to the privatization of critical infrastructure and *just-in-time*systems of deliveries of spare parts, etcetera.

All of this started to change already after 9/11 and further after the first Russian aggression against Ukraine following the war against Georgia.

The complexity of flow security was multiplied during the migration crisis of 2015 following the Arab spring. The consequences of these crises are now starting to dawn upon societies, not least when it comes to organized criminality.

At the same time, the roles of the American Congress and the European Parliament as watchdogs in protecting citizens' personal integrity by regulating horizontal flows of personal data between different government agencies have become much more challenging to implement. Just managing GDPR has become a major consulting business in many countries.

It is now obvious that the EU and NATO need to see to flow security in a more comprehensive way than currently reflected  in overall EU and NATO strategies. However, the problem was already highlighted more than a decade ago by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Carl Bildt.”

*End of quotation.*

It cannot be stressed enough, that the issue of flow security at sea has developed into a completely different ballgame compared to just 10 or 20 years ago.  When for instance the issue of piracy was addressed as a difficult enough problem, some 15 years ago, the criminal actors involved operated small vessels with a number of gunmen on board.

Now a range of sophisticated technology is employed, including drones and missiles and also underwater assets, which are likely to be used to destroy pipelines and cables.

The problem has developed from an issue of organized crime for profit to include a political and military confrontation between proxies not seldom working on behalf of major powers, such as Russia, China, and Iran.

If the geographical focus a decade ago was primarily the Red Sea and part of the Indian Ocean with piracy also being frequent in the Malacca Straits, and in the Gulf of Guinea the problem has developed to be a global one.

Recent [reports](https://www.ejiltalk.org/attacks-against-europes-offshore-infrastructure-within-and-beyond-the-territorial-sea-under-jus-ad-bellum/) indicate an interest on behalf of major powers in destroying pipelines and cables, not only in the Baltic Sea, but outside Ireland, and elsewhere where vital financial cables are located.

And as regards the level of destruction that could be created, let it suffice to note that the positioning of nuclear mines on the seabed was identified as a potential threat and prohibited already in 1971.

An important finding during the piracy discussions, taking place after the deployment of the [Atalanta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Atalanta) operation on behalf of the EU from 2008, is that once the instigators of piracy attacks note increased efforts to prevent piracy in a particular region, their attention is temporarily or permanently shifting to another region or avenue of attack only to consider coming back once the protective measures have been reduced. This means in reality that no major nation actually can afford to comprehensively protect its flows worldwide.

# **December 19 2023**

”The last regular European Council meeting in 2023, on December 14 and 15, promises to be a very challenging one. All the salient topics of 2023 – notably the war in Ukraine, enlargement, revision of the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the conflict in the Middle East – are on the agenda; and on many of these, EU leaders are divided. Whereas the conclusions on the war in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East will reiterate previous positions, the European Council will focus on seeking an agreement in principle on enlargement, in particular on the possible opening of EU accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, and on granting candidate status to Georgia. It will also endeavour to find an agreement on the MFF revision. ---.”  
  
(European Parliament [briefing](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/sv/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)753194) ahead of the meeting)

Much will no doubt be written about the dynamics in and around the EU Council summit in December 2023. During a matter of hours, news coming out of Brussels changed from euphoria to disappointment from the perspective of many observers hoping for strong agreement on the way ahead for the EU and Ukraine.

First, the President of the European Council Charles Michel cabled out an agreement about moving forward with EU enlargement and later a statement about the budget for the coming years. Both agreements were made among 26 out of 27 member states – without Hungary.

On enlargement, the main parts of the conclusions concerned Ukraine and Moldova and constituted a formal EU agreement in the absence of a Hungarian vote. That was something many observers had not seen possible, given the insistence of Hungary to block what had to be unanimous decisions.

The European Council decides to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and with the Republic of Moldova.

The European Council also decides to grant the status of candidate country to Georgia, on the understanding that the relevant steps set out in the Commission recommendation of 8 November 2023 are taken.

The decision on the multiannual financial framework, including support to Ukraine was, however, delayed as [described](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/15/press-statement-by-the-president-of-the-european-council-charles-michel/) by Michel although overwhelmingly supported:

 The MFF (Multiannual financial framework) Revision --- is firmly supported by 26 Heads of State or Governments. We will revert early next year.

As often happens in the EU, agreements on principles seemed to contradict agreements on implementation.

When seeking to understand what happened, pictures say more than words. The scene captured above, circulated in the media, of the two EU institutional leaders sitting together with the President of France and the Chancellor of Germany, with the Prime Minister of Hungary in the middle says something about the way the European Union is led.

 One can only imagine the spoken and unspoken pressure put on Orbán in that situation leading to the above-mentioned outcome. So, the dissenting party Hungary decided to stay outside the room when a fundamental decision in principle was taken not to have to face unforeseeable consequences but returned with a vengeance when it came to agreeing on implementation.

As we have seen also in NATO during recent summits, there comes a point when decisions must be taken. So, there was a decision in principle to invite Ukraine and several other states to accession negotiations to join the EU. But Hungary can be expected to try to continue to block the implementation of this and a number of other decisions.

For the Hungarian leader, however, the situation was challenging in more ways than non-experts probably can imagine. Hungary is under international pressure from the east, it has a difficult situation economically, and on top of that, this country is going to take over the rotating presidency of the EU in six months’ time. The program for the Presidency is most likely to focus on ending the isolation of Hungary within the EU.

If in normal situations, a country can achieve a lot by always trying to avoid what is called a demandeur position (“I can live without an agreement and I am not under time pressure).

But this is more complicated in the case for an incoming rotating presidency of the EU, even if many of its functions with the Lisbon Treaty has been taken over by the permanent leadership of the European Council and the High Representative. There is a great amount of prestige involved and the presidency needs to mobilize cooperation on the part of other member states.

Being isolated may have important domestic political costs as illustrated by the recent elections in Poland where the previous anti-EU government was voted out of power.

Orbán has both short and long-term considerations to make about what Ukraine means for Hungary. Short-term benefits of good relations with Russia make up one part of it.

But Ukraine is also a huge neighbour in terms of resource requirements, almost right next door to Hungary. Orbán has already seen his country, moving from a stronger, supported candidate to becoming member of NATO and EU - to eventually becoming more and more isolated and deprived of economic support from the EU.

That enlargement will bring both intense economic competition for support from the EU to the neighbourhood of Hungary is obvious if one also includes further enlargement in the western Balkans.

The decision to signal a willingness to enlarge the Union is from the perspectives of the larger countries, Germany, and France, a strategic one relating to worries about the future of Europe. Enlargement is intended to signal deterrence to Russia, a continuation of the mobilization of a political will on the European level, which many Russian analysts initially thought impossible. And enlargement is intended as a signal to the US President and the incoming American leadership that Europe is willing to take a responsibility for its own region, which in turn is deemed a necessary condition for the mobilization of continued American support.

So, what can Hungary and other member states, possibly hiding behind Budapest, do in such a situation of intense pressure from the main European powers in the picture above? Delaying agreement on the multiannual financial framework in this situation gives Budapest – perhaps at most – one or two more months to bargain for a better outcome from its perspective.

However, again, as illustrated by NATO history, there are limits to what can be achieved in such a negotiation. Hungary is facing the risk that a coalition of the willing possibly including all member states except Hungary will go ahead with finding another format to deliver economic and political support to Ukraine, outside the formal EU framework. The [European Peace Facility](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/) is already a budget outside this framework.

Hungary, inside the EU and NATO, as well as Turkey inside NATO, in the final analysis need friends inside the respective organizations. Playing for time may only bring time-limited benefits and may have domestic political consequences sooner or later.

Media have recently concentrated attention on a tendency of weakening support for Ukraine in many European states and Hungary might be hoping for continued tendencies in this direction.

 At the same time, [statistics](https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/) show that Europe altogether delivers more assistance to Ukraine than the United States. And the [European Peace Facility](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/) has mobilized economic resources from the number of EU member states which most likely would not have paid up bilaterally. Notably, the decision to deliver [ammunition](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/act-support-ammunition-production-asap_en) to Ukraine was taken in a few months’ time in the spring of 2023 – a remarkable example of an ability for quick decision-making in the EU (even if implementation of the delivery of 1 million artillery ammunition pieces to Ukraine so far has not met expectations.)

But there is another complicating factor not mentioned above: that Europe is proceeding towards elections to the European Parliament in April 2024. The European Parliament is one of the budgetary authorities of the European Union without which not much will work. The political power balance in the parliament is also decisive for the election of European leaders for the coming Commission and European Council, including a new High Representative.

Maybe Orbán –  as not doubt Russia –  hopes for changes  in this context as already indicated by the [polls](https://europeelects.eu/ep2024/) (projecting a shift to the right) just as they may be hoping for changes in view of the American elections in November of 2024.

# **May 03, 2023**

Discussing peace and the future security order in and around Europe is not something many are interested in doing during what increasingly looks like a war of attrition in Ukraine.

In the Middle East, it took two major wars, 1967 and 1973, with a War of Attrition in between, for Israel and Egypt to come to Camp David in 1978 and, in the following year, agree on what was labelled a *Framework for peace in the Middle East*. And still, we know now that this was not the end of a painful process towards stability in the region. And the format for negotiations was far more straightforward than is the case in and around Ukraine. The Soviet Union was forced to partially withdraw from Egypt with its 20,000 advisers in 1972. China was not yet a prominent global actor. The negotiations took place not between global powers but between regional actors brokered by the one global actor, the United States, soon to become – for a short period – the only superpower in the world. As one of the main actors in the negotiations, Egyptian President Sadat was looking to establish his future legacy not as a loser but as a promoter of peace while maintaining a policy posture focusing on Egyptian national interests. Israeli Prime Minister Begin was a much more hesitant participant in the negotiations and later initiated the policy of Israeli settlements and authorised new hostilities against Iraq and Lebanon. During the final years of his tenure before his assassination in 1981, Sadat sought to contain widespread protests against the treaty inside Egypt.

We are still only one year into the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, although it may seem like a very long time. The number of casualties is still limited from the global perspective compared to devastating conflicts in many regions where millions have perished, and entire states have been close to implosion. The shock created by the October War in 1973 as a threat to global peace and security, which provided a basis for the Camp David Accords, has not yet come, and will hopefully not come, threatening the use of sub-strategic nuclear weapons.

Pessimism about the future of the OSCE is widespread. [Civil society organizations](https://www.civicsolidarity.org/article/1890/civic-solidarity-platform-osce-parallel-civil-society-conference-2022) working in the context of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are currently and predominantly focusing on regime change in Belarus and, to a certain extent, in Russia. For them and many governments in the Western sphere, nothing less than how to reach victory without compromises for Ukraine is the crucial legitimate issue for discussion. How can decisions be taken by consensus in an organisation, including the Russian Federation? And do not speculations about compromise proposals, as suggested by senior statesmen such as [Henry Kissinger at Davos](https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2023/01/17/davos-2023-henry-kissinger-outlines-path-to-peace-in-ukraine/) or [Tom Pickering in Foreign Affairs,](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/how-prepare-peace-talks-ukraine) contribute to confusion and a lack of resolve to reach victory? Pickering argues the need for the US to think ahead:

All parties to the conflict have made clear that they believe it is too soon for diplomacy. But at some point, the time will come for negotiations, and it is essential that the United States plans carefully for that day. Failure to do so will condemn Washington to a hurried and poorly thought-through approach to ending the war—a mistake the United States has made in every serious conflict it has become embroiled in since 1945. No war ends without political consequences. Either the United States engages in shaping those consequences to serve its interests, or others will shape the consequences in its stead.

In response, many contributions in the debate on future peace are labelled *disinformation*.

That is one thing. In addition, there is a fundamental lack of agreement in the West about the future format for a security order in and around Europe. President Macron promotes, with the support of the President of the European Council, the [European Political Community](https://czech-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/presidency/prague-summit/european-political-community/#:~:text=The%20European%20Political%20Community%20is,prosperity%20of%20the%20European%20continent.) concept, which has already resulted in two summits with the participation of up to 45 countries west of Russia, including the southern Caucasus, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The representative of the Russian Federation in the OSCE has another [perspective](https://osce.mid.ru/web/osce-en/-/statement-by-the-head-of-delegation-mr-alexander-lukashevich-at-the-closing-session-of-the-29th-meeting-of-the-osce-ministerial-council-lodz-2-decembe?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Fweb%2Fosce-en):

Despite the current challenges, we believe that the OSCE has a future. The Organization is still relevant as a platform for peer-to-peer and mutually respectful dialogue and for co-operation. When the Russophobic hysteria passes, we will be ready to restore the work of the OSCE together. But this will have to be done on a new footing, as the traditional approaches have been thoroughly discredited.--

We are convinced that it will definitely not be possible to replace the OSCE with a structure similar in terms of composition and competence. If there is no OSCE, its functions will be partially taken over by another format seeking to occupy an independent “niche” in building a bridge between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian areas.

It is not easy to represent the Russian Federation in multilateral fora. This goes for the UN Security Council, where Foreign Minister Lavrov, presiding over the Council, recently made a valiant effort to convince his audience that Russia wishes to promote global multilateralism. He [called](https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15263.doc.htm) on those present to respect the principles of the Charter, facilitate genuine multilateralism on the international stage and reform the Council to enhance representation of Asian, African, and Latin American countries. It is a difficult message to sell since Russia, in its negotiations, promotes the notion of the [Golden Billion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_billion) (a West worthy of isolation) and wishes to focus on BRICS and the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation).

Normally one would expect the future format for the European security order to include the United States and Russia. This is the cognitive framework established since the Helsinki Accords in 1975 and redesigned to include Central Asia after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. Still, it is increasingly evident that at least one prominent actor with an increasing stake in European security and cooperation, not least if one includes the Arctic region, is missing – China. It is not yet an observer at OSCE meetings, unlike several US allies in Asia, Japan, and South Korea. A recent survey of views on the way ahead in the perspective of Finland’s upcoming role as chair of the OSCE 2025 [summarised](https://www.fiia.fi/sv/publikation/the-osce-and-a-21st-century-spirit-of-helsinki?read):

One of the main questions pertaining to the renewal of the spirit of Helsinki focused on how to make the reinvigorated process attractive to a variety of actors, including Russia and the US. Ideas vacillated from Arctic affairs to climate change and the inclusion of China in the talks.

Realistically, however, clarity is likely to have to await the outcome of the US elections in 2024 and the inauguration of the President-elect of the United States in January 2025 – when the goals and ambitions of the Finnish Chair of the OSCE in 2025 since long will have to be decided. A difficult task for a very competent Finnish diplomacy to be implemented in parallel with Finland’s integration into NATO.

Security and Cooperation Are Still Required for Europe to Be Able to Face a Challenging Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Map

[**News**](https://www.consiliointernational.se/news/)

# **Apr 11, 2023**

" ---one can already see the emergence of three distinct shifts in global trade. These are the shifts from dependence to diversification, from efficiency to security, and from globalization to regionalization.---" (Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank) Awareness about the three trends quoted above is probably high in the private sector. Unfortunately, there is more to it than economic parameters alone.

**Democracy and Rule of Law**

A map of the world

Description automatically generated

It would be nice to say, as was standard at the end of the Cold War, that respect for democracy and rule of law is spreading worldwide, creating global like-mindedness on which trustworthy relations could be built. However, like-mindedness on this score is already limited, looking at the latest map showing the [Democracy index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index) of the world from 2022 (as illustrated by the Economist). Democratic areas are concentrated in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. There remains a glimmer of hope in southern Africa as well. But otherwise, the world, to a considerable extent, is populated by authoritarian and hybrid regimes.

A map of the world with different colored countries/regions

Description automatically generated

The situation is even worse when looking at the world map from an international rule of law perspective. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has indicted the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. But a large number of states in the world do not take a clear position on this fundamental matter. It is particularly disconcerting that according to another [map](https://twitter.com/AgatheDemarais/status/1633059919183364103/photo/1), these states include large parts of the areas judged democratic according to the Democracy index. These areas include Southern Africa and the most populous country of the world, India, and its neighbor Bangladesh. This effectively shrinks the areas of like-mindedness further.

**Globalization and regionalization**

Instinctively, one might propose not developing cooperation, including trade relations, with undemocratic states. But Europe has an enormous dependency on what remains of globalization in a period of rapid geoeconomic fragmentation.

The  [European Commission](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2022/html/ecb.sp220422~c43af3db20.en.html) has found that 34 products used in the EU are highly exposed to supply chain disruptions, given their low potential for diversification and substitution inside the Union. And this vulnerability has become more evident due to Russia's war in Ukraine.

Still, there is room for developing European regional cooperation. Lagarde again:

" Europe's main challenge today is to achieve "open strategic autonomy" – that is, to strike a careful balance between insuring against risk in areas where our vulnerabilities are excessive and avoiding protectionism. Having spent decades investing in regionalization, the EU is well placed to succeed in a world where the global order is more fragmented, while still acting as a force for trade openness."

Europe has the world's largest single market, which gives Member States a strong base on which to establish new supply chains if strategic imperatives require it. Over 70% of the euro area's participation in global value chains was already regional in 2019.

But when moving forward towards regionalization, the costs will be enormous. For example, the United States is estimated to have to invest more than 1 trillion dollars in developing self-sufficiency in terms of semiconductors.

Regionalization alone is not an option. And the concept of strategic autonomy is, when applied to hard security, very controversial vis-a-vis the United States.

This sensitivity came out very much in the open following [remarks](https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-china-america-pressure-interview/) by President Macron coming back from his state visit to China. In an interview he stated with reference to Taiwan that: “the great risk” Europe faces is that it “gets caught up in crises that are not ours, which prevents it from building its strategic autonomy”.

**Focusing on Ukraine alone will not be enough**

In terms of international security, many European states mainly put their eggs into the basket aiming to support Ukraine. As a short to medium-term strategy, this is understandable.

At the same time, it is not surprising that French President Macron did undertake his state visit to China in the first days of April 2023 appearing publicly with the President of China Xi and the President of the European Commission von der Leyen. They are all aware of Chinese strategic interests in and with Russia and in control over the Arctic passage of future fundamental importance for world trade. Still, there is hope to discourage China from actively supporting Russia militarily and encourage it to reestablish direct dialogue with Ukraine on the highest level.

And there are other vital European interests at stake.

Europe has a dramatic need to improve its resilience and stabilize its economy. The President of the European Central Bank attributes half of the current inflation in Europe to the lack of security of supply of industrial components. China is essential from this perspective. China was the largest source of EU imports and the third largest buyer of EU goods in 2022, highlighting Beijing's economic importance for Europe.

It is also noteworthy that if Europe and the rest of the world can tackle climate change, it must secure its supply of several strategic metals and other core materials such as copper, cobalt, and nickel. These are largely to be found in Africa, China, Russia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

Therefore, European security and development is a multidimensional topic where skillful diplomacy is needed both on state level and the level of the private sector. And – of course – this includes engagement in order to fight world poverty and climate change.

**Domestic politics are part of the problem as well**

Even when looking at states professed to be democratic, we know there is a constant struggle to maintain rule of law and respect for constitutions – look at the situations in the United States and Israel. And, indeed, NATO, soon hopefully to include Sweden, has one prominent member characterized as a hybrid regime, according to the Economist.

That very country (Turkey) is currently moving towards elections. The worry of the current leadership about the risk of foreign interference in the election is indicated by the protest just expressed by the [President](https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/03042023) Erdogan about the chief candidate of the opposition having a courtesy meeting with the ambassador of the United States. In most democracies, such contacts would be seen as perfectly normal.

**Widening Swedish and European security concerns**

Before the war in Ukraine, Swedish preoccupations with security were focused on northern Europe. The pandemic, the migration crisis in 2015-16, and terrorism had led to a parallel concern about flow security.

But the map changed further with the second Russian aggression against Ukraine. It became evident that war in Europe - as was the case of the Balkans – was not automatically deterred by the existence of nuclear weapons. It could and did develop into a major conventional conflict engaging Russia fully, which could also proliferate into northern Europe. To prevent that, all European states, members of NATO and the EU, would have to chip in to support Ukraine to withstand enormous multidimensional pressure from Russia.

Not least in Sweden, it [remains](https://kkrva.se/sverige-finland-och-nato-2/) conventional wisdom that national security should be analyzed, zooming in on the Nordic map and the border to Russia. Regarding flow security, protecting the most important harbor in Sweden, Gothenburg, was and remains a significant focus.

But in parallel and gradually, the overall security perspective has broadened as one crisis after the another hit the European continent.

The wars in the Balkans disproved the assumption that the European continent would stay peaceful after the Cold War and led to large migration flows, including to Sweden.

* These wars demonstrated the need for peacekeeping and peace support operations, civilian crisis management, and a role for the EU.
* Already 9/11 taught decision-makers that security problems have to be dealt with starting at their source when it comes to terrorism and organized crime, including drug trafficking, etcetera.
* The tsunami of 2004 illustrated the need for international cooperation of a more generic character when it comes to crisis response.

* The financial crisis in 2008-9 had multisector implications, not least in terms of preventing adequate investments into security, following similar effects after the financial crisis at the end of the 80s.
* Fukushima in 2011 illustrated that what was a natural catastrophe could have far-reaching consequences in other sectors of security, not only as regards the future of nuclear energy.

* The Arab Spring uprisings along the northern shores of Africa and the Middle East in 2010-11 created new threat perceptions of major international importance, not least the Russian fear of 'color revolutions'.

* The war in Georgia in 2008 and the first war in Ukraine in 2014 indicated that the battle over the Russian sphere of influence was starting to take more violent expressions also outside the territory of the Russian Federation after the Chechen wars.

* Several conflicts frozen after the Cold War showed tendencies of flaring up again, starting to involve directly not only Russia but also, for instance, Turkey, as in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh.

* The failed reset between the United States and the Russian Federation at the beginning of the Obama administration had far-reaching consequences for the decisions taken in Washington and Moscow on strategic arms and new forms of super weapons.

All these developments, taken together, indicate a fundamental change to the geopolitical map of Europe for Sweden. But it doesn't stop there.

The challenge is much wider in terms of geoeconomics. It requires close cooperation within the Western world and a *modus vivendi* with many states that are not established democracies.

The world will require a focus on both security and cooperation. But the primacy of European and transatlantic cooperation cannot be put in question.

# **Mar 27, 2023**

President Xi, having been re-confirmed as the Chinese leader of the Communist Party, made his first visit outside China to Moscow for three days in March 2023. This visit had very high symbolic importance. It came at a time when Putin became an indicted war criminal – making it much more difficult and dangerous for Putin to appear outside the Kremlin and his various dachas. He did not even welcome his "very good friend" Xi at the airport.

As always, when interpreting the intentions of these two major powers, caution is advised, and the need to study actions more than words is obvious.

Analyzing the seemingly very ambitious language in the Russian-Chinese [joint statement](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202303/t20230322_11046088.html) “Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era,” it is also helpful to go back to read the language of the Chinese official [evaluation](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221104_10800546.html) of the German Chancellor's visit to Beijing in November of last year: “China will work with Germany for a future-oriented all-round strategic partnership and for new progress in China-Germany and China-Europe relations.”

Russia remains statistically a medium-size partner to China in trade terms on the level of states like Malaysia and Thailand. Trade has increased, not least in terms of Russian exports of fuels to China and, notably, India. In this way, Russia has been able to compensate somewhat for the effects of Western sanctions. Exports from China to Russia have increased much less so far, and there are limitations in terms of logistics, etcetera. It is unclear whether China will expose its more sophisticated high-tech lethal equipment to being used by less professional soldiers and maybe captured by the West on the battlefield in Ukraine. In addition China and indeed Chinese companies would have to expect sanctions which they so have sought to avoid.

A reasonable assumption seems to be that Beijing will do what is necessary to make Russia truly dependent on China, for it to be able to make plans for the long-term exploitation of Russian natural resources and to keep an avenue for shipping through the Arctic passage, as it is gradually opening up due to climate change. China will seek to establish leverage vis-a-vis Russia for exploiting natural resources along a 4500 km long common border with an enormous landmass on the Russian side in Siberia which may benefit from climate change in terms of exploitation possibilities.

Allowing Russia to implode cannot be an acceptable Chinese option. At the same time, serious escalation and proliferation of hostilities to other arenas where China does not control escalation risks are also not desirable.

To make investments in ports etc., in the Arctic worthwhile, there must be someone to trade with in Europe.

A drastic implementation of the notion of isolation of the [Golden billion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_billion), the Russian conspiracy theory about Western elites, cannot be in China's interest. In that order, China's biggest [trading partner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_largest_trading_partners_of_China)s after [ASEAN](https://asean.org/) are the EU, the United States, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. Russia comes in much later in that list at place 10, followed by Brazil, India, and other [BRIC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BRIC)s and [SCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation) powers.

China needs, not least for domestic political reasons after the traumatic pandemic, to return to earlier growth figures. This requires flow security at sea (21st Century Maritime Silk Road), where some 90% of all goods are transported and virtually, including through [submarine cables](https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/leveraging-submarine-cables-political-gain-us-responses-chinese-strategy) in the South China Sea and worldwide.

Long-term secure solutions to reaching Europe and Central Asia on land (Silk Road Economic Belt) have been more difficult to find due to factors such as the Afghanistan conflict, climate change in Pakistan, and Iran's instability. Serious air traffic restrictions due to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine also do not help.

On balance, it would seem in the Chinese interest to use the Ukraine War to respond to US decoupling efforts to distract Western attention from the Taiwan issue. China has a strategic interest in decoupling Europe from the United States. Therefore, it is only natural that concern is expressed in the joint communiqué about NATO's increased involvement in Asia.

In this sense, a limited level of conflict between Russia and the West may be worth supporting from a Chinese perspective. Sanctions have also made it possible for China to require more trade with Russia in the Chinese currency yuan, which is a strategic goal for China.

At the same time, China needs to keep a working relationship with Europe as well, seeking to diminish apprehensions in Europe vis-a-vis Chinese intentions also in the long-term regarding intelligence and technology, as the TikTok and Huawei controversies illustrate.

Reading the joint Chinese-Russian communiqué from the Xi visit, the intention was to demonstrate unity on a number of essential principles, including the one promulgated by the [Security Council](http://www.en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770). Permanent members in early 2022 that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. That the Chinese leadership would welcome an escalation to the nuclear level on issues that are not vital to China remains more than improbable.

However, in the eyes of the West, such a declaration has almost lost news value over the last year, given the large number of occasions that Russia has been threatening to use nuclear weapons. A few days after this declaration, [Russia](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-moscow-has-deal-with-belarus-station-nuclear-weapons-there-tass-2023-03-25/) announced its intentions to deploy sub-strategic nuclear weapons to Belarus.

The predictive value of the joint communiqué regarding Chinese and Russian policies seems more evident when it comes to China than Russia. For Russia, what is happening in and around Ukraine is of existential importance to the Russian leadership.

This is certainly not the case for China which has many other interests to cater to. Words are insufficient to underpin an assumption that China will firmly support a further Russian escalation of the war against Ukraine if this would mean proliferation outside Ukraine. Likewise, words do not so far indicate a serious Chinese intention to mediate between Moscow and Kyiv. Kyiv is ready [to talk](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/18/zelenskyy-writes-letter-to-invite-chinas-xi-for-dialogue) to Beijing, but as far as is publicly knowledge, such talks have not yet taken place. Any serious effort to mediate would of course need to start with consultations with the parties concerned. China in its 12-point peace plan [presupposes](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html) a non-expansion of NATO  and avoids being explicit as regards what respect of the territorial integrity of all states concerned means – before or after the Russian integration of parts of Ukraine from 2014 onwards?

# **Mar 14, 2023**

A remarkable volume of articles and reports is already appearing, seeking to draw lessons from the Ukraine War so far. Preliminary findings are to some extent surprising and may have effects on future strategies.

On the effectiveness of different types of weapons

This article will devote less attention to the most debated topic: the upgraded attention to the need for conventional capabilities in [kinetic warfare](https://www.msspalert.com/cybersecurity-breaches-and-attacks/cyber-war-vs-kinetic-war-explained/) using bombs, guns, bullets etc. For a very long time it has been an established view in the West that nuclear weapons, both sub-strategic and strategic, can compensate for superior conventional capabilities on the Russian side. That this is a contentious statement is now more and more obvious in the debate. Nuclear deterrence has not prevented the Russian unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, the Finnish researcher [Lavikainen argues:](https://www.tepsa.eu/fiia-briefing-paper-nuclear-deterrence-in-the-ukraine-war-diplomacy-of-violence-jyri-lavikainen-fiia-finland/)“Russia’s nuclear deterrence strategy is failing because it uses nuclear deterrence for something it is not suited for: as a coercive tool in a protracted war of conquest.”

The issue of the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence will no doubt be extensively debated after the war. Already now it is clear that deterrence against *actual use* to a large extent needs to be framed in terms of a response - using conventional and hybrid capabilities, not necessarily nuclear. This topic deserves a more extensive elaboration in a separate article later. Suffice it here to cite the [article](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/eroding-balance-terror) by Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr. in Foreign Affairs from 2019: “--deterring aggression has become increasingly difficult, and it stands to become more difficult still, as a result of developments both technological and geopolitical. –"

However, at this stage it may be important also to recognise the ongoing debate on the effectiveness of [hybrid warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybrid_warfare) on the part of Russia. It should be noted that many contributions to this discourse before the war evaluated Russian hybrid capabilities with alarmist overtones.

The effectiveness of non-kinetic warfare has been highlighted as a tool for Russia to compel other actors to comply with its objectives, a case in point being [Turkey, SU-24 and Russian non-kinetic responses](https://kkrva.se/turkiet-su-24-och-ryska-icke-kinetiska-motatgarder/), the shooting down by Turkey in 2015 of a Russian Sukhoi-24 in the airspace over the Turkish – Syrian border. In a very short period of time, Russia forced Turkey to comply, using a large number of non-kinetic actions against Turkey.

Defence against non-kinetic attacks has also been discussed before the war in many different scholarly and other contributions. The difficulties to deter and deal with cyberattacks have notably been highlighted in an influential  [article](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/isec_a_00266.pdf) by  Joseph S. Nye, Jr. from 2017. He paints a very complex picture of the available tools to deter and dissuade cybercrimes and cyber warfare, involving punishment, denial/defence, [entanglement](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17419166.2020.1773807?journalCode=fdas20) (as a way of altering how states conceptualize offensive actions in cyberspace and works toward building mutual interdependencies to make actions that disrupt, degrade or deny within cyberspace undesirable) as well as promoting norms/taboos. He sees no simple solutions but advocates:

“The analogy to nuclear deterrence is misleading -- because the aim of the United States (achieved thus far) has been total prevention. In contrast, many aspects of cyber behavior are more like other behaviors, such as crime, that the United States tries (imperfectly) to deter.”

As Richard Clark and Robert Knake [argue](https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/dissuasion-cyberspace-limitations-classical-deterrence-theory), “Of all the nuclear strategy concepts, deterrence theory is perhaps the least transferable to cyber war.”

These discourses tend to upgrade the complexities in countering hybrid threats, including in the cyber domain.

Lessons from the Ukraine war may, however, somewhat nuance these concerns.

More specifically, as regards *cyber* warfare, early evidence from the Ukraine war indicates that the cyber weapon is not an infinite source of capabilities. It takes time to gain non-authorised access to cyber networks and once such access has been detected, many forces in the West converge on denying Russia future effectiveness of a similar cyberattack. For this they do not need to deploy to the battlefield but can work in real time.

The Russian leadership is arguably drawing the conclusion that actual physical, kinetic, damage to electronic networks of importance to critical infrastructure protection in Ukraine is more effective.

One of the key observations the U.S. Army is [reported](https://fedscoop.com/us-army-lesson-from-ukraine-war-cyber-ew-capabilities-not-decisive-on-their-own/) to be taking from the war in Ukraine is that non-kinetic capabilities such as cyber and [electronic warfare](https://fedscoop.com/russias-lack-of-electronic-warfare-in-ukraine-puzzling-to-experts/) must be combined with other weapons in order to achieve their full potential on the battlefield.

More broadly, as regards hybrid warfare, it is [argued](https://www.rand.org/blog/2022/11/ukraines-lessons-for-the-future-of-hybrid-warfare.html) in a contribution from RAND that Russia has been less effective than expected: “At the onset of the war, Russia leveraged a suite of [“active measures,”](https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/hybrid-warfare-and-active-measures#_edn8) including espionage, [cyberattacks](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/vladimir-putins-ukraine-invasion-is-the-worlds-first-full-scale-cyberwar/), and [internet-based disinformation](https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/russian-disinformation-propaganda-ramp-conflict-ukraine-grows-rcna17521). These measures were aimed at softening Ukraine's civil defenses and grooming its population for a takeover. However, active measures appear to have failed in Ukraine. Russia was outplayed on the[social media front](https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-disinformation-playbook-ripped-apart/6486203.html), largely failed in its [espionage](https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220314-russian-spies-in-spotlight-over-ukraine-shortcomings) efforts, and was relatively unsuccessful at using [cyberattacks](https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/ukraine-says-russian-cyberattack-sought-shut-energy-grid-rcna24026).”

[Carmack](https://www.heritage.org/cybersecurity/commentary/assessing-the-non-kinetic-battlespace) concludes drawing upon lessons from Ukraine with special emphasis on the future threat from China: “if organized and conditioned properly, non-kinetic tactics (both current and future) can play a key role in any overall strategy. However, they cannot, by themselves, win a battle. As Gen. Patrick Sanders, Britain's chief of general staff, recently put it in the context of Ukraine: ["You can't cyber your way across a river."](https://www.wsj.com/articles/lessons-of-russias-war-in-ukraine-you-cant-hide-and-weapons-stockpiles-are-essential-11656927182) Hard, kinetic tools still dominate an active battlespace, but hybrid activities can help shape battlefields. To persevere, those seeking strategic advantage in future warfare will need to integrate leading-edge technologies into their broader arsenals of conventional military tactics, systems, and strategy.”

Two types of actors in security and defence with upgraded importance - preliminary lessons from the Ukraine war from a European perspective

Discourses about different types of weapons systems seem to highlight the importance of other types of actors than typically are discussed when focusing on military deterrence and defence.

Already the potential importance of the EU through activation of the European Peace Facility in order to deliver military assistance to Ukraine has been highlighted in an earlier [article](https://www.consiliointernational.se/news/enabling-victory-in-ukraine-military-assistance-and-the-new-role-of-the-eu/) on this site. But the European Union also possesses many other capabilities of importance to networking on non-kinetic aspects of warfare. Notably, from the American side the emerging cooperation with EUROPOL has been [stressed](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3197215/transparent-cyber-deterrence/). EUROPOL:s [pride](https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/world%E2%80%99s-most-dangerous-malware-emotet-disrupted-through-global-action) in globally coordinating the EMOTET malware is a case in point.

And this links to the issue of the private sector which was of course already engaged after 9/11 in fighting both terrorism and organised crime through 'public-private partnerships. But, concretely, how major multinational companies could be engaged as defence actors has not been obvious until in recent years. On the offensive side, the example of Huawei has of course been widely discussed. But on the defensive side, the reports from Microsoft ([Defending Ukraine: Early lessons from the Cyber War](https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2022/06/22/defending-ukraine-early-lessons-from-the-cyber-war/)) and Google ([Fog of war: how the Ukraine conflict transformed the cyber threat landscape](https://blog.google/threat-analysis-group/fog-of-war-how-the-ukraine-conflict-transformed-the-cyber-threat-landscape/)) document how these companies with subsidiaries fight the Ukraine War alongside Western governments, in the case of Google reporting success in mitigating some 2000 cyberattacks. Other companies clearly have an important enabling role in support of Ukraine but are hesitant to acknowledge their role in the actual warfare, a spectacular example being the Elon Musk [Starlink](https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/13/elon-musk-scott-kelly-debate-use-of-starlink-in-ukraine.html) communication system in Ukraine, providing independent access to the Internet.

Swedish and European companies of importance in term of technology and resilience are likely to be involved in this discourse in the near future in the context of a rebuilt total defence on different levels.

# **Mar 06, 2023**

More than ever, it seems vital to be able to zoom out on the problems facing each of the leading global actors. This is done without claiming expertise on all of the four topics - very few can seriously pretend to possess such expertise. The discourses in question arguably focus on milestones, processes, relationships, dimensions, lessons learned, concepts, etc. The latter includes topical debates on decoupling in the US-China relationship, deterrence and defence in the relationship between the West and Russia.

**The US**

The US upcoming elections in November 2024 constitute not only a milestone but a planning target for a huge number of politicians and lobbyists – and not only in the United States.

This puts the limelight on the fact that domestic politics remain a central process also in terms of US security policy. Positions taken by candidates are framed in order to maximise voter support. Political leaders not seldom adapt their views in order to get elected, on the highest level to control both houses of Congress. Former President Trump took this to an extreme ahead of the 2016 elections, by [contracting](https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/2016-election-day/trump-campaign-pays-millions-overseas-big-data-firm-n677321) Cambridge Analytica to find out which messages would be welcome in different constituencies.

This methodology may in this variant not be repeated in the 2024 elections, but there is a reason for caution for outsiders to draw quick conclusions about where the actual elected candidate will land in response to crises facing him or her in 2025 and onwards.

Whether knowing the name of the President-elect (Trump? De Santis? Haley on the Republican side – vs. Biden or a younger Democratic candidate?) means knowing the way ahead for US security policy thus is uncertain. This was certainly true, for instance, for Lyndon Johnson in his battle against Barry Goldwater in 1964 as regards not only civil rights but also the Vietnam War. The same will probably be true for the main candidates in the 2024 elections in the US as they gradually emerge and their positions on Russia and China become known.

**China**

China seems to be a case in point. Trump could be perceived as an isolationist on the Ukraine issue - which pleases Putin, but has an aggressive separatist agenda as regards China - which does not please Xi. Biden's positions on China seem less clear cut. But he does continue certain policies on China initiated by Trump as regards decoupling.

China is projecting political and economic power worldwide and is moving into a more and more competitive and conflictual relationship with the US. Chinese economic development is influenced not only by the pandemic but also by the way the Chinese *dual circulation strategy* [evolves](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/dual-circulation-in-china-a-progress-report/), partly in response to American efforts to decouple China from the global market. Not least in the financial sector, China [works hard](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Enodo%20Economics_China%27s%20Quest%20for%20Financial%20Self-reliance_August%202022.pdf) in order to be able to create a dependence on the part of its BRI (Belt and Road) policy partners worldwide trading in the Chinese currency yuan rather than dollars. In this way potential sanctions using the SWIFT system can be counteracted.

The American response in terms of*decoupling* may in this context be defined as an emerging [strategy](https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/drive-decouple) of policies that partially limit the business flows with China. For the US, this obviously is a strategic balancing act seeking not to hurt major US business interests in China itself. Nevertheless, the US response to China will be influenced by a number of geopolitical factors such as the conflict over Taiwan, Chinas support to Russia and its global efforts to project power worldwide, inter alia through the *Belt and Road* program.

The US discourse has by several thinktanks been characterised in terms of a spectrum of stereotypes ranging from [*separationists to cooperationists*](https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/debate-decouple) with a middle of the road, *centrist*approach often recommended by experts - but not necessarily the way US policies will develop.

The way ahead will not be determined by the US-China relationship alone, but as noted by the domestic policy process inside the US and a number of geopolitical processes in different contexts. The extent to which China will be able to exploit important global and regional cooperative frameworks such as the [SCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation) (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and [BRICS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BRICS) will also play a role. Russia is a member of both. How China may use [ASEAN](https://asean.org/) as an intermediary to Western markets may also be important.

In addition to this complex picture has to be added geopolitical factors relating to deterrence and defence. China may increase its nuclear stockpiles. One also cannot exclude a more significant Chinese effort to support its partners through military aid as illustrated by Russia.

**Russia**

The question should at this point be what relevance all of this has for the discourse on Russia. On Russia, the spectrum of discourses includes a whole range of policies from isolationism to all out support for Ukraine victory, leading to the demise of the Russian leadership and effectively to regime change in Russia.

Let it suffice here that this analysis obviously becomes much more complex should the war in Ukraine go on for another several years. Increasingly, it might then be the case that Ukraine and the West do not fight Russia alone but a Russia in some sort of coalition with the other major superpower. Russia was characterised by President Obama as a regional power some years back which clearly agitated Putin. But is it to be regarded as such if its shortcomings to a large extent are compensated by China in return for increasing Chinese power projection in Russia and the Arctic region? As noted, also the Indian position in this new configuration may be of importance.

 Russia is increasingly perceived as an autocratic system aspiring to re-create an imperial past ready for brutal war against civilians to keep and expand power using force and threat of force. Many analysts now - one year into the second Ukraine War - argue that the Russian leadership *needs*war in order to pursue this ambition. Peace is not a value in itself.

The question is then also whether this posture may be influenced by Chinese positions on nuclear weapons and conditions for peace. In this context there seems to be reason to return to the issue of China seeking to reduce its vulnerability against Western sanctions. Clearly this effort is a long-term process over many years which ideally would require some sort of stability and calm in developing Chinese cooperative strategies with partners worldwide including, importantly, in Europe, Germany as a prime target.

If this is the case, China has a very strong reason to influence Russia not to further escalate the war in Ukraine.

**Europe**

Europe is increasingly seen as not only a regional but global actor in a geoeconomic but potentially also geopolitical sense, focusing much more on projecting power than was declared policy only a few years ago. It is simultaneously acting on several levels, on the EU level through the European Council and the European Commission, on the level of states mainly through Berlin and Paris with London as a somewhat disconnected regional power with global interests.

Arguably, European strengths as an actor is very much related to the crises that Europe faces. Europe has grown stronger and more united in crisis both during the pandemic and in response to the Ukraine War. Particularly in the latter case this has also contributed to strengthened transatlantic ties where European efforts have been more welcomed than before as a contribution to burden-sharing.

But this Western unity cannot be taken for granted in all situations, particularly when it comes to geoeconomics. Major European regional powers as Germany and France are not shying away from market opportunities resulting from American decoupling. The French deal with China on Airbus in 2019 is a case in point and the German visit to China last autumn signals a strong German interest to explore opportunities with China. And London feels free to do deals with the US and Australia (AUKUS) even if they hurt French interests.

Also, for Europe - against this background - the 2024 US elections are key to understanding the way ahead on many of these issues.

**Bridging the discourses in view of the American elections**

Currently some would argue that Biden has positioned himself closer to supporting Ukrainian victory in the War against Russia than Trump. Whether Trump if still in power would have been more radical in terms of decoupling than Biden is less certain.

If both of these assumptions would be true before and after the 2024 elections one would assume that Russia would once more prefer a Trump-like candidate as President of the US and work for this result in various open and clandestine ways. The experience of the candidates in foreign and security policy may also play in as a factor. Many analysts characterise Biden's half a century long experience on foreign policy as a vital – and unwelcome - American asset from a Russian perspective.

At the same time, it would seem that a more Biden-like candidate should be preferred as President on the part of Beijing.

In such a case, this may indicate a further possible conflict of interest between Russia and China. This in turn might partially condition China's support to Russia in the war and when it comes to helping Russia to survive economically. One might even think of the possibility that Beijing would exert pressure on Russia not to influence the American elections in favor of Trump or any other candidate close to his views.

So, not only domestic politics in the US are complicated and require analysis which will need to include many nuances and complicating factors. Also the geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics between the main actors require the inclusion of more complicating factors.

Against this background, it also seems necessary to forecast potential alliances in the east with great caution. Chinese potential military support to Russia is discussed at the same time as China launches a peace proposal. China may wish to avoid being lumped together with Russia in future sanctions packages. On the Western side it is of course a huge complication if in the context of *deterrence,* China must be included in the equation.

Of less importance, but still worth mentioning, is that the border conflict between China and India may need to be dealt with in some way before more Indian support of Russia can be established.

It seems therefore more important than ever in this multipolar world to involve regional expertise in a global analysis. What we see is a gradual evolution over time of policies in the major capitals. In terms of *deterrence and defence*what at one point seemed impossible for Washington supporting Ukraine has been deemed possible only months later.

And China is also pursuing a delicate balancing act in order to promote the Belt and Road and its recent soft power-oriented [GDI](https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/13/china-belt-and-road-initiative-infrastructure-development-geopolitics/) initiative on a global scale while at the same time keeping doors open for more influence on Russia and its vast potential resources.

And several medium-size actors such as Turkey, India etcetera may be influenced by domestic policies making it difficult to forecast the outcome before and after electoral campaigns such as the current one in Turkey.

**Megatrends**

Still, everything is not unknown. There are certain trends which may play an increasing role for the coming years. Here are some candidates:

* One is certainly the now increasingly obvious fact that security requires strong conventional defence which cannot be replaced by nuclear weapons.

* The actual use of nuclear substrategic weapons seems to be a much less likely escalatory option than many analysts would have thought, particularly as regards managing deterrence in Europe. Many would no doubt have expected a major European war to go nuclear which should have prevented it to occur in the first place even if a conventional deterrence had not been established.

* For the above two reasons, American support for deterrence vis-a-vis Russia undoubtably will for the future require substantial conventional and troop presence in Europe combined with much more robust defence policies in Europe itself.

* Paradoxically, the utility of nuclear weapons to threaten other states and seek to force them into submission has been demonstrated as an important asset for Russia in the case of the Ukraine War. If the nuclear factor had not been there Western support to Ukraine had no doubt been much swifter and more decisive.

* Many nuclear analysts take this last point to mean that the risk of nuclear proliferation will increase substantially notably but not only in countries with nuclear neighbours, including in the Middle East.

* Finally, many countries will seek to diversify their dependencies and pay more for security of supply in crisis situations. This includes policies such as China’s aimed at reducing vulnerabilities to sanctions.

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# **Feb 22, 2023**

• Can Ukraine win, and if so, what does victory mean? • When is it possible, and appropriate, for one or several actors to seek to enable a state to win in a military conflict? • Is the EU an international actor that can and should contribute to this in addition to extensive sanctions? • What does this mean for the security policy of EU member states?

Can Ukraine win, and if so, what does victory mean?

Ukraine may, at this point, be the West's second-strongest conventional military power after the United States. Therefore, according to several military experts, many of the necessary conditions in Ukraine as a recipient of military assistance may exist for restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity - as long as the war does not escalate to the level of weapons of mass destruction. But, as the NATO Secretary General has pointed out, this does not mean that the conditions are both necessary and sufficient. Ukraine needs extensive assistance.

At the same time, uncertain prospects in the war led Henry Kissinger to a fundamental and equally controversial observation in Davos in January 2023. He believed that Ukraine and the West had already achieved their strategic goals in the war and that it should soon be time for negotiations. Putin should have realized by now that an attack even on a state outside of alliances may lead to increased Western cohesion that prevents Russian victory.

At the same time, it is difficult to unambiguously define what would be required for a total Ukrainian victory. Many would probably argue that it is up to Ukraine, which is fighting for its survival, to define these requirements, which has partly already happened in a document published under the name [*The Kyiv Security Compact*](https://rasmussenglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/UKR-security-220913-ENG_version.pdf). For the time being, many observers and state leaders avoid taking a position on the matter but consider it their duty to assist Ukraine to victory – without further definition.

That this requires more than sanctions has become increasingly evident as sufficient, comprehensive effects of the sanctions still are not observed.

To help another state to victory in a military conflict

The historical record of attempts to influence the development of a regional conflict through military assistance is lined with failures. The Soviet Union saw 20,000 military advisers expelled from Egypt in 1972. Still, US aid to Israel could not prevent the October War one year later. US efforts to help the South Vietnamese government to victory failed. The efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union over many years to influence Afghanistan's future had, in both cases, a dismal net effect. Helping another state to victory requires - to be unproblematic - a fundamental consensus between donors and recipients. In addition, the recipient must be able to use the aid, which requires a significant basic capacity from the start.

Today, as mentioned above, Ukraine is perhaps the strongest Western conventional military power after the United States. That, combined with real heroism on the part of the Ukrainian leadership and population, gives the state a unique opportunity to use Western military aid effectively, despite clearly recognized problems of corruption still existing after the internal upheavals over many decades.

As for the issue of consensus with the rest of the West, it is limited by the fact that Ukraine is fighting for its survival, and most Western states are not – yet.

This has led to a caution on the part of several donors. But with each passing day, this caution diminishes, and options for action become possible, which at an earlier stage of the war were considered too challenging. To a certain extent – perhaps to a large extent – this is due to Putin's provocations against the West.

The US has gone the furthest in the direction of mobilizing significant resources in support of Ukraine, despite mixed experiences with past aid programs in regional conflicts. For the US, military aid aimed at enabling a recipient to achieve its military objectives has become a major focus of security policy with – in the case of Ukraine – a budget that may exceed $100 billion in the period 2022 to 2023. That this volume impacts US stocks of ammunition, etcetera, in a very significant way is now openly debated. A renewed debate about the end use of delivered weapons is also underway, bringing back unpleasant questions from the Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan Wars when weapons not seldom showed up in the hands of the enemy. The problem has again started to be studied, for instance, by the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](https://www.sipri.org/news/2022/sipri-briefs-european-parliaments-subcommittee-security-and-defence-impact-war-ukraine-eu-arms), SIPRI.

A strategic balancing act

That the current phase of international development still requires a security policy and domestic policy balancing act of extraordinary difficulty is shown not least by the debate about tanks and fighter aircraft in Ukraine and the agony the German state leadership continues to experience. In this process, as witnessed during the Munich security conference, the German Chancellor moved from being a very hesitant leader to a proactive proponent of urgent delivery of tanks to the battlefield.

Both the US and Germany have decided to deliver their most advanced tanks to Ukraine in the coming months, and so have other states possessing Leopard 2 and other sophisticated major battle tanks.

This speaks volumes for the strength of Ukrainian claims to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom. Ukraine simply has international law on its side, and Western support for this is perceived as a duty already for Western self-defence.

Is the EU an international actor that can or should contribute to Ukrainian victory through military aid?

Sweden is currently in a unique situation as rotating chairman of an EU that has a far more important role for security in Europe than many could imagine before the aggression against Ukraine. This is not *instead* of NATO – through some form of strategic autonomy – but *together*with NATO and in close cooperation with the US.

The notion that Sweden, as the state holding the presidency of the EU, would have a role in designing and dimensioning the EU's military support to Ukraine is, from a historical perspective, remarkable.

But now we are there.

The EU's military aid to Ukraine exceeds 2.5 billion euros, still a small amount in comparison with, for instance, the flood of spending that the pandemic is causing – for Europe, in the long run, perhaps several thousand billion euros.

But the question still must be asked why the EU countries have taken the step to finance extensive military aid jointly.

The road to this point has been long. It began in the early 2000s when the Union established a so-called "African Peace Facility" to enable the African Union and regional cooperation organizations to carry out peacekeeping operations. It was obvious for a long time that this could not include weapons but had to be limited to training and aid other than weapons. Nevertheless, this policy was criticized for unduly influencing the African Union and contributing to repression that could lead to adverse side effects, such as radicalization into terrorism.

But as China and Russia increased their presence on the continent (for instance through the Wagnar Group in Mali) the resistance within the EU to establishing a more militarily oriented aid mechanism decreased. The new instrument was named the European Peace Facility. This instrument, with a budget exceeding EUR 5 billion for the current financial perspective, is now also used to finance EU military missions and some other common expenditure. The mechanism is administered by the EU Commission but is outside the actual EU budget and is governed by a member state committee.

This instrument has now gained significant principled and practical importance for several member states, for example, Poland. Poland has requested that the tanks it sends to Ukraine be partially financed by this mechanism. This broadens the responsibility for aid to all member states and the cost burden is distributed across the entire EU.

A method has thus been found to mobilize support for military action from across the EU in a way that can be considered highly innovative and, in the long run, significant for burden sharing in relation to NATO and the US. At the same time, one can expect many long and traumatic discussions in the European Council and the current committee before future unanimous decisions can be made.

It then remains to note that this development has led to a more visible role for the EU in military security policy that few could have imagined just a short while ago.

The development is not based on new treaty changes within the EU. The Treaty of Lisbon entered into force already in 2010. But the whole thing is an example that with political will and in a severe crisis, considerable efforts can be mobilized and financed within the EU system, even though this does not have a clear legal basis, according to some of the Union's lawyers.

The first step along this path was taken already in the beginning of the millennium when, against the opinion of the Council Secretariat's lawyers, it was decided that demining could be financed from the Union's community budget. In addition, the European Defence Agency was established in 2003, even though many believed that this would require a new treaty.

Over the years, the President of the European Commission has increasingly taken over the leadership in pushing forward more common EU policy in defense. The High Representative has increasingly come to be perceived as what he is, namely Vice President of the Commission.

It can be assumed that this process towards a more prominent role for the EU in security will continue but, at the same time, be hotly contested.

Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Internal Security, pointed out in a recent security policy conference at Sälen, a Swedish winter resort, noted that this partly follows on to the EU's efforts during the pandemic. Now Ukraine reinforces this trend, but without unrealistic overtones as regards the ambitions for European strategic autonomy. For the regional powers within the EU, it is an attractive prospect to mobilize support from the entire EU for efforts and for the financing of efforts that are in the self-interest of these great powers.

Consequences for Swedish security policy

The consequences of all this for Sweden's security policy within the framework of a new national security strategy are potentially significant. If the EU and NATO are to assist those who need help defending peace, freedom, and justice, it can lead to extensive, not only financial involvement but also a significant military and civilian presence abroad in the coming years. It will place considerable demands on interoperability in synergy with civil society and the business world.

(This article will later in a slightly different version be published in Swedish in the periodical *Vårt Försvar)*

# **Feb 14, 2023**

This is a follow up column to “War of attrition - Russian external perspectives” published on November 10, 2022. The headline from then still seems to hold. Particularly, since Ukraine - just as last spring - is moving into the muddy season making it difficult for the aggressor to move forward. Ukrainians have dug in. Ukrainian forces are reported to maintain high morale, but the winter season has, naturally, been exhausting.

**Information campaigns on both sides**

Insistent speculations about a Russian major offensive, expected to be launched towards late February this year, have circulated widely. Observers have learned to analyse such forecasts critically as part of information campaigns launched on both sides.[Institute for the Study of War](https://www.understandingwar.org/) notes on February 12:

“Russia has partially regained the ability to conduct successful information campaigns in support of strategic objectives and even discrete operational aims. Russian hybrid warfare theory has long called for the integration of information campaigns and military operations, with information operations sometimes taking precedence over kinetic activity.”

The talk about the use of nuclear weapons in Russian propaganda could indicate that it is increasingly difficult for Moscow to find other ways to deter the West. Caution is still advised when it comes to drawing definite conclusions about the prospect of actual use of such weapons.

In the West - including in Sweden - governments are, however, preparing the population for the possibility of devastating terror attacks and other attacks on critical infrastructure.

Still, if such open or covert attacks take place it is difficult to believe that this would lower Western morale. The effect could be the opposite.

From the perspective of Ukraine, it is of course important through information campaigns on its side to maintain and if possible, increase the sense of urgency in the West to speed up deliveries of advanced weapons and equipment to the battlefield. For some time, Germany and the Leopard II tank was a focus objective. Now it is very much an issue of fighter aircraft for instance from the UK.

Modern tanks and other equipment will be delivered during the coming months although the debate is still on when it comes to fighter aircraft. The West is carefully calibrating its posture in order not to legitimise a further escalation on the Russian side.

The courage and determination on the Ukraine side has this week been convincingly demonstrated by the fact that President Zelensky has been able to swiftly move through several European capitals, appearing among large groups of politicians and journalists, seemingly without fear.

He may be worried about continued corruption in Ukraine  The defence minister and other senior officials are being held accountable for corruption in their services. But he does not seem to be worried about loyalty from his own when it comes to the war. The way the EU leadership was greeted in Kyiv recently is far from the image of a government under attack receiving visitors in heavily fortified bunkers. The visitors are being seen walking in open daylight even if air defence sirens are heard at a distance.

And a forthcoming visit of the American president to Poland may further project the seriousness of the American security guarantees to its NATO allies.

**Indicators of war**

It is notoriously difficult to objectively estimate casualties. But it has been [reported](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-wagner-mercenaries-halt-prisoner-recruitment-campaign-founder-prigozhin-2023-02-09/) that recruitment of the Wagner group from prisons in Russia has been discontinued due to high losses. And although the absolute levels of casualties always are difficult to certify during a conflict, the trend upwards in terms of Russian casualties is [reported](https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2023/feb/12/russia-ukraine-war-latest-updates-ukraine-forces-hold-frontline-in-donetsk-kyivs-top-military-commander-says) to be dramatic, going back to levels at the start of the war, when the number of Russian killed in action even were reported to exceed one thousand per day.

And as regards the possibilities for Russia to mobilise it is still argued by many military experts that delivered equipment needs to be used effectively. For this a long period of training is required - on the level of battalion commanders many years. And such experience cannot be instantly mobilised through Putin decrees.

Russia still clearly holds large stocks of missiles and artillery pieces. But its capabilities to carry out major surprise attacks on a large scale against large cities across Ukraine are most likely seriously depleted.

**Proliferation of the conflict?**

On a sidenote, the issue of possible attacks against Moldova has also come up, including preparations for a coup according to the President of the country, Maia Sandu. What would be gained by trying to broaden the war to Moldova? It is one thing to launch robot attacks over Moldovan airspace from the Black Sea to Ukraine as happened early February. It is quite another to prepare for war which would involve the thin land strip of Transnistria, squeezed as it is from both Ukraine and the rest of Moldova. There is no depth in terms of defence and the supply lines from Russia would be extremely long. It would have been another matter would adjacent Odessa by now be in the hands of Russia. Instead, developments over the winter have rather solidified defence on the southern front pushing back earlier Russian forces at Kherson across the Dnieper River.

**External factors of importance for the evolution of the conflict**

Turkey, while still holding out when it comes to ratification of Finnish and Swedish NATO membership, is increasingly dependent upon major support efforts from the West due to the devastating earthquake along the border to Syria.

The level of solidarity with Turkey is high and is going to have to be kept high for Erdogan to manage the upcoming elections. BBC reports credible evidence that newly constructed buildings have not been following advertised security guidelines. In addition, more than 75,000 buildings across the affected regions are [reported](https://www.bbc.com/news/64568826) to have been given amnesties when it comes to meeting updated construction requirements.

Further packages of sanctions against Russia are being implemented. In January, major economies imposed a price cap on the country’s seaborne exports of oil to be followed by a 5% reduction of [Russian oil production](https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/10/energy/russia-oil-output-cut/index.html) in March. Diversification of dependence on Russian deliveries to Western companies is proceeding.

Again, time is not on the Russian side, even if cooperation between Russia, China, and Iran may  increase.

Scrapping the no-Covid policy in China means dealing with devastating short-term consequences in maintaining the Chinese economy running. But the Chinese economy may quickly [pick up](https://www.cnbc.com/2023/01/17/chinas-earlier-reopening-means-earlier-recovery.html). China is [helping](https://www.forbes.com/sites/brianbushard/2023/02/04/china-helping-russias-war-with-ukraine-with-military-aid-violating-sanctions-reports-show/) Russia militarily. China’s state-owned defence companies have shipped navigation equipment and parts to fighter jets and other military technology equipment to Russian defence companies, according to Russian [customs data](https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-aids-russias-war-in-ukraine-trade-data-shows-11675466360). In addition, large quantities of dual use deliveries have been reported, i.e., goods for either military or civilian use. A question now is whether the controversy over the Chinese balloons will further stimulate Russian-Chinese cooperation.

The Iran faces internal resistance which dwarfs anything else seen after the Shah was deposed in the late 70s which may force the leadership to seek closer ties to external actors, notably China and Russia, despite major differences in terms of religious values.

The reports coming out of Central Asia, further substantiates earlier reports about strained ties between Moscow and the Central Asian leaders. Remittances from Russia to Central Asia have, however, so far not [decreased](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/labor-migrants-russia-ukraine-war-central-asia). Remittances are reported to amount to 1/3 of the GDP of several Central Asian countries. Russia successfully attracts many workers from the region by offering citizenship. But worries about forced conscription remain high, partly for the fact that media coverage of the war is more open in Central Asia than in Russia itself.

**Conflict resolution prospects**

The eminent strategy expert professor Lawrence Friedmans notes in a recent [column](https://samf.substack.com/p/the-storm-before-the-calm?utm_source=twitter&sd=pf):

“There is no obvious compromise. Ukraine wants its occupied territory back; Russia wants to take more of it.”

And:

“Russian forces are relying increasingly on sheer weight of numbers while Ukraine’s are relying more on the quality that comes with advanced Western systems.”

He concludes:

“As I have cautioned before, we need to be careful when it comes to predicting the course of war, not only because of the inherent uncertainties that come with armies and battles, but also because of strategic choices that have yet to be made. During its latest stage the war has taken on the appearance of a long attritional struggle so it is natural to assume that is what it will continue to be, but neither side can sustain it at current levels of intensity indefinitely.”

Even if Russia by now may have been able to mobilise several hundred thousands of troops for the front the question is whether this only will mean more casualties. Or will it also mean the capacity to sustain a major and successful offensive in the east? Even the most prominent experts do not seem to be willing to make firm forecasts on this matter.

# **Dec 19, 2022**

Creating conditions for a just peace is a much more complex and broader scope endeavor than many analysts may have thought. Deterring Russia is also an issue of endurance, resilience, and flow security over the long term for the West. It is now obvious that the EU and NATO need to see to flow security in a more comprehensive way than currently reflected in overall EU and NATO strategies.

On deterrence

A large number of analytical pieces on the issue of *deterrence* have appeared in international media after the unprovoked Russian aggression on Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022.

Many feel that clearer red lines must be established for the future.

The problem of deterrence often starts outside NATO territory. The fact that Ukraine is not a member of NATO almost immediately led to the application of Finland and Sweden for membership in the alliance.

Russia was not effectively deterred from attacking. In particular, many see the role of nuclear weapons as problematic, forcing a more cautious Western approach to assisting Ukraine. Nuclear deterrence – through Russian threats of the use of atomic weapons – may have facilitated the invasion making it more difficult for the West to make early and sufficiently robust decisions. Russia may be deterred from actually using nuclear weapons, but even that is debated.

So far, it seems, however, as if the Russian efforts to deter Ukraine from attacking Russian territory proper are failing as is, of course, the attempt to keep Ukraine outside annexed territories in Ukraine by declaring them parts of the Russian Federation.

Large-scale Russian efforts to destroy Ukraine's capability to manage life during a difficult winter also do not seem successful, so far.

On the front lines, many quickly mobilized Russian soldiers are suffering in a way reminding of trenches in France during the first world war, often much less prepared than their Ukraine counterparts.

For NATO and the West, this illustrates the requirement to couple the concept of deterrence in the NATO Strategic Concept from June of this year with the concept of defense.

But this doctrine has a third concept: *cooperative security,* which is much less evident in its interpretation. In a line speech by the German Chancellor recently, Russia was mentioned about 50 times – but not once was the issue of peace negotiations explicitly discussed.

For most in the West, this discussion has to wait.

Much more urgent questions include how to beef up support to Ukraine by scaling up deliveries and production of ammunition, etcetera. Several tens of thousands of explosives are detonated every day on the battlefield. Currently, the West is far from being able to match Russian artillery in quantity. Instead, the focus has had to be on precision with drones and resilient communication systems – partly delivered by Elon Musk.

The future costs involved in seeking to create security at large are likely to be enormous on all levels, from international organizations to governments to the private sector and the general public. And the efforts will affect overall relations not only with Russia but to a considerable extent with China, India, and other significant actors.

On flow security

A war of attrition becomes, in this perspective, to a considerable extent, a political war, affecting *flow security*.

* This concept in the international debate is often associated with data, and there is abundant literature on how to secure the integrity of the flow of data on the Internet.

* From a military perspective, flow security traditionally has to do with securing the delivery of military trade and aid in peace and wartime. At the same time, military operations traditionally focus on interdicting corresponding flows to the enemy.

* From a maritime security perspective, experts typically point to the fact that more than 90% of all goods travel on the high seas and need protection also from terrorists and organized criminals, including pirates.

* In crises such as a pandemic, the delivery of vaccines and other medical equipment highlight the need for flow security when transports become difficult due to the risk of infections.

* From a private-sector perspective, the need to secure all the necessary and sufficient conditions for the production of complex products, including strategic metals, chips, et cetera, is increasingly highlighted.

* That the free movement of people, materials, and information requires an integrated approach to border management has, for several decades, been a significant objective for the work of the EU and, in particular, the vast network of cooperation managed by the European Commission. The requirement is to keep borders as open as possible by letting good flows through while interdicting bad flows through intelligent surveillance methods.

* At the same time, the long period of relatively safe conditions for flows after the Cold War has encouraged less cautious policies, for instance when it comes to the privatization of critical infrastructure and *just-in-time* systems of deliveries of spare parts, etcetera.

All of this started to change already after 9/11 and further after the first Russian aggression against Ukraine following the war against Georgia.

The complexity of flow security was multiplied during the migration crisis of 2015 following the Arab spring. The consequences of these crises are now starting to dawn upon societies, not least when it comes to organized criminality.

At the same time, the roles of the American Congress and the European Parliament as watchdogs in protecting citizens' personal integrity by regulating horizontal flows of personal data between different government agencies have become much more challenging to implement. Just managing GDPR has become a major consulting business in many countries.

It is now obvious that the EU and NATO need to see to flow security in a more comprehensive way than currently reflected  in overall EU and NATO strategies. However, the problem was already highlighted more than a decade ago by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Carl Bildt.

Wider implications on the relations of the West to China, India, and other major actors

Deterring Russia through denial of necessary and sufficient conditions for war has further enormous complications for the West. The problem spells China (including the Taiwan issue) and, to a certain extent, India and other significant actors passively supporting Russia in different ways.

To be continued.

# **Dec 05, 2022**

In a period of converging crises, the newly established Swedish government has chosen to focus on just a few overriding priorities. From the perspective of the EU minister, it's all about competitiveness on the European level. From the perspective of international assistance, the critical issue is Ukraine. Behind this relatively clear-cut approach is, of course, hidden an enormous complexity.

Sweden is over the come in six months chairing several thousand meetings in the EU Council formations. At the same time, it is a presidency much more circumscribed in its competencies than last time in 2009, when the rotating presidency also managed the European Council on the level of heads of state and government.

The task is monumental and, at the same time, vitally important. NATO and the EU have one thing in common: a perceived weakness ahead of the now ongoing crises:

* NATO was declared brain-dead by the French president just a few years ago with reference to Turkey’s 2019 incursion into Syria. But the Alliance is now revitalized in the struggle against Russian aggression.

* The EU has for many years been ridiculed for being soft and somewhat irrelevant in protecting safety and security in Europe. After a slow start during the pandemic, the EU has, however, shown its advantages, not least when it comes to procuring vaccines also to its smaller member states. And during the Ukraine war, it has already delivered more than €3 billion worth of military assistance to the victim of aggression. The EU is implementing eight substantial packages of sanctions against Russia and Belarus. And perhaps even more importantly: it plays a key role in adapting the continent to the need to diversify dependence on Russian oil and gas.

The European Commission President, who is received with much greater respect in Washington than any of her predecessors, did from the start declare the need for a *geopolitical Europe*. This means, among other things, speaking the language of power. For Sweden, as a Presidency and as a member state, this also means having to be comfortable with the thought that governance on the European level requires more decisions with a qualified majority. The importance of the European Parliament as a supranational level of democracy is increasing.

A major problem is that the multilateral effectiveness of EU and NATO corresponds to a multilateral disarray on different levels from the United Nations to several sub-regional formats of cooperation with Russia. A key goal of NATO – of course in close cooperation with the EU - beyond deterrence and defence, is *cooperative secur*ity to prevent further conflicts. This is easier said than done in fora and contexts where Russia, sometimes with more than passive help from some key players around the world, does its best to incapacitate rule of law on the international level.

The preferred solution to mainly cooperate with like-minded states is easy to promulgate but much more challenging to implement. Only a limited part of the international community fulfils modern standards regarding democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Promoting competitiveness while maintaining European integrity in terms of values is increasingly difficult when competing and cooperating with giants such as China and India at the same time as Europe needs to keep its own house in order. This requires strong leadership.

In all this, the private sector is likely to find itself in many difficult situations, making it ever more challenging to interpret what is a *level playing field*for business with countries under scrutiny for the lack of implementation of fundamental values and commitments. Should China be allowed to procure other critical infrastructure in Europe beyond part of the harbour in Hamburg?

These were just some of the dilemmas discussed during a valuable pre-presidency conference in Stockholm at the beginning of December 2022. There are no easy solutions – but an unprecedented need for geopolitical knowledge also on the level of those not in political power.

# **Nov 18, 2022**

As this column was written on November 10, the news is dominated by the declared (but not assured) Russian withdrawal from Kherson. It was made public immediately after the mid-term elections in the United States – the outcome of which cannot be assumed to have corresponded to Russian expectations.

According to many observers, the picture of a war of attrition that at least extends over the winter months of 2022-23 is even more apparent - while others speculate about possible escalating responses from the Russian side.

The option of tactical nuclear weapons has been analysed by many observers using various conceivable rational or irrational explanatory models during the autumn and will not be elaborated further here. Powerful strikes by other means against critical infrastructure, such as nuclear power plants or dams, have also been discussed.

If it now turns out that Putin perceives increasingly locked positions along the front in Ukraine, what conclusions will he draw from this? How will this affect the willingness to assist Ukraine in the US and Europe, and what further can be done on the Russian side to undermine Western morale?

What potential bright spots are there on the international map? Could defence-industrial cooperation between Russia and India make a difference in the short term? What can be gained from the Russian side by a further rapprochement with Iran? This and much more must be carefully explored by Foreign Minister Lavrov and his emissaries at various levels.

But the primary impression seems gloomy, as the news suggests that Putin will likely refrain from participating in the summit with the G20 countries in Indonesia shortly. In that case, it will be another example of an international meeting where Lavrov will feel isolated.

Greater clarity about what the German Chancellor's visit to China with several similar contacts might mean in the medium term is also likely to be an essential issue for Putin's side. Is there a serious risk that the Chinese leadership will further distance itself from Moscow to secure trade and investment opportunities in the West?

Possibly underestimated in the West, is the importance of the Russian problems with its allies in the East. The Swedish Foreign Ministry's Sovietologist Alf Edéen in the 70s, never tired of reminding about the extent of Moscow's threat perceptions when it came to demographic changes that threatened Russian dominance within the Soviet Union.

The fact that young citizens in these countries have not infrequently been able to be recruited into terrorist activities must be deeply worrying for Putin. To the extent that he chooses to continue to recruit guest workers to the front forcibly, he possibly risks further radicalizing a large group that already exists within the borders of the Russian Federation.

Even now, there have been special reports of concern from the hitherto relatively loyal Central Asian leaders. The Tajik President Rahmon, who was already concerned about the American withdrawal from Afghanistan almost ten years ago, now has publicly stated reinforced threat images about how a lack of Russian respect for his security concerns can make the situation unsustainable.

The distancing has already gone quite far between Kazakhstan and Russia despite the Russian "help" to the Kazakh president to restore order earlier in the year.

Visiting diplomacy from the West to Kazakhstan, Armenia, and several states formally allied with Russia may destabilize the situation for Putin. Perhaps even more significant was the visit that Chinese leader Xi Jinping made in September 2022 to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Central Asia is, for China, as the New York Times pointed out, a critical area to secure the country's westward expansion, not only in terms of trade and energy. After all, China's economy was ten times bigger than Russia's, even before the Ukraine war. China continues to invest in infrastructure, and the countries trade with China increases.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the method of divide and conquer was used to keep the former Soviet republics in check in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The dependence of the Central Asian neighbours on Russia was, of course, also enormous.

From the perspective of a war of attrition in Ukraine, against this background, time is possibly less and less on Putin's side. Even if he were to succeed in starting war production, the disintegration tendencies around the Russian borders are increasingly a threat to the entire Russian Federation. An escalation of the war to the level of mass destruction can hardly help Putin restore order in the East.

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# **Nov 04, 2022**

It is increasingly difficult to make assumptions about the structure of the international system. When researchers - including in Sweden - in the early 70s speculated about the possibility of a multipolar world they were often dismissed as being too academic in their approaches. Later it was also even questioned whether there could be more than one superpower in the world. After the recent political turbulence in China one cannot be sure what the growth and stability of this world power will look like over the medium term.

The US in its recently published national security strategy assumes that Europeans will join in managing Chinese influence globally. Still the US Administration hopes for continued globalisation including China. Whether this US China policy will change as a result of the elections in 2022 and 2024 is up in the air.

What the war in Ukraine will mean for Russia in the medium to long-term is equally uncertain. The Russian leader offers his population a war of attrition with no quick fixes which is likely to deplete resources unless a new sense of unity can boost Russian morale.

The Russian war against Ukraine following the pandemic and including an energy crisis has galvanised European unity.

At the same time elections in Italy and major problems in the UK and other European countries constantly threaten this vital European unity.

As the EU High Representative has noted: “You—the United States—take care of our security. You—China and Russia—provided the basis of our prosperity. This is a world that is no longer there”

On top of this there are questions out there about the way ahead for Brazil after Bolsonaro as well as for India performing a strategic balancing act between Russia and the West.

Whether against this background it is likely that we will see a powerful counterweight to the G7 in a revitalised BRICS  (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) configuration needs further study – to say the least.

# **Nov 03, 2022**

The importance of establishing a uniform standard for protecting classified information in the Euro-Atlantic space is increasingly recognised. This goes also inside the European Union and not only in its cooperation with NATO. This was an important consideration already when the early cooperative agreements between the EU and NATO were implemented after 9/11.

Nevertheless, given the successive broadening of what is deemed relevant for security - now witnessed during the Russian war against Ukraine – it is not obvious how this principle should be implemented.

Who has a need to know and who should have a right to know in a situation when not least the private sector, including civil society, play an increasingly important role in security policy?

In one context this is vividly illustrated namely when decisions are to be taken on community policies in the EU - where the European Commission is in the lead. The need to securitise policies which deliberately have been kept outside zones of security established in Brussels buildings is becoming ever more pressing.

The war in and around Ukraine is more and more targeting critical infrastructure and flow security which closely involves the private sector and non-habilitated officials inside EU and member State administrations.

Legal regulations trying to codify and strike a balance between the need to know (by protecting information) and the right to know (by making information particularly in crisis situations available) is becoming increasingly difficult to implement.

In a recent speech to EU Ambassadors the High Representative Borrell voiced his frustration about not being informed about things that his officials in many cases probably were not able to communicate to him following information security regulations. That he did so in public says something about the seriousness of finding pragmatic solutions to the problems at hand.

If being brave means having to break security and other administrative rules, then officials are likely to continue to hesitate. Telephone calls can be overheard as already illustrated during the first Ukraine War.

# **Oct 19, 2022**

Notable highlights are:

* Welcoming Finland and Sweden to NATO with further improve US security and capabilities. No questionmark is added in this context.
* US focus has shifted considerably in the direction of Russia (mentioned more than 70 times in the document) and Ukraine (more than 30 times) in comparison to China (14 times) and Taiwan (7 times).
* The US does not support Taiwan independence.
* As regards China the US remains committed to managing the competition responsibly. PRC is described as central to the global economy and has a significant impact on shared challenges, particularly climate change and global public health. The PRC is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective.
* As regards Russia *constraining* it is seen as the main objective. The relationship to Russia is to a large extent seen through the prism of the war against Ukraine. Still the US commits to sustaining and developing pragmatic modes of interaction to handle issues on which dealing with Russia can be mutually beneficial.
* The focus on cooperation with European allies, notably the European Union and the UK has several key components. The US wishes to cooperate with the European Union and United Kingdom on US competition with China arguing that this is not a favour to the US.
* NATO and the European Union are seen as united in standing up to Russia and defending shared values. US supports Ukraine regional integration with the European Union. European security arrangements need to be rebuilt. Bilateral cooperation with the EU on energy security is highlighted.
* The US has partnered with the European Commission on an ambitious plan to reduce Europe’s dependence on Russian fossil fuels, strengthen European energy security, and advance shared climate goals. Across these efforts, the EU—an integrated market of over 450 million people—is an indispensable partner, and the will support efforts to foster EU unity.
* The US encourages close cooperation on matters of mutual interest between the EU and the United Kingdom.
* The US will continue to engage with Turkey to reinforce its strategic, political, economic, and institutional ties to the West.
* Nuclear deterrence – by the 2030´s of two major nuclear powers remains a top priority. The US remains equally committed to reducing the risk of nuclear war, including through arms control and strengthening the global non-proliferation regime.
* In parallel the US is broadening its focus towards integrated deterrence beyond conventional and nuclear arms with a very broad concept of security.
* US strategy to tackle the shared challenges that require global cooperation involves two simultaneous tracks: on one track, the US will fully engage all countries and institutions to cooperate on shared threats, including by pressing for reforms where institutional responses have proven inadequate. At the same time, the US will also redouble efforts to deepen our cooperation with like-minded partners.
* The US commits to working with allies and partners to harness and scale new technologies.
* The focus on democratic values, human rights and the rule of law is considerable throughout the 48 page document.