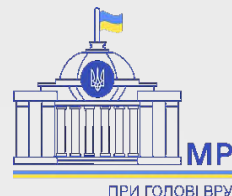


Issue №3. December 2025

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Think Tanks Essentials



In a rapidly changing world, analytical centers (or think tanks) have become key players in shaping international discussions and strategies. They not only generate ideas but also set the direction for political decisions and influence public opinion.

ThinkTanks Essentials magazine was created to summarize and analyze the most important expert research, showing how it shapes our understanding of the global order.

This magazine is useful for anyone seeking to navigate the increasingly complex world of international politics. It allows readers to track key trends and the reasoning of leading experts who influence government and international organization decisions. For researchers and students, it serves as a convenient source of analysis and up-to-date case studies; for diplomats and specialists, it provides a tool for understanding global processes and anticipating possible scenarios; and for the general audience, it offers an opportunity to see the deeper context behind the headlines.

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Overview of key trends in November 2025



November 2025 has been marked by increased attentiveness of analysts to specific instruments that will determine European security in the coming years. Analytical researches and commentaries reflect not only an awareness of the long-term nature of the confrontation with Russia, but also the gradual formation of how Europe plans to act in this reality on a daily basis.



The reduction of the American presence in Romania and the concentration of the Trump administration on internal political priorities are pushing European states towards greater self-sufficiency. Analysts at RUSI and CSIS point out that formal assurances from the US are no longer taken for granted, and therefore any new security model must take into account the potential unevenness of American involvement. This is particularly evident in research analysing shifts in the perception of threats in the US and the EU: Europe sees Russia as the predominant challenge, while Washington is increasingly focused on China.



The second cluster of topics concerned Europe's defence capabilities and industrial base. Materials from the IISS, Chatham House and other centres show that the war in Ukraine has accelerated the transition from declarations to real projects: the creation of long-range missiles, the modernisation of production lines, and the search for common standards for armaments. The ELSA initiative reflects Europe's gradual development of its own strike capabilities, while discussions on cooperation between Germany and the United Kingdom raise questions not only about resources but also about the conceptual vision of future warfare. Against this perspective, Ukraine's agreement with France reveals its limitations: while strategically important, it is unable to meet Kyiv's urgent needs without a new EU-level financing mechanism.



Special consideration is given to energetic and maritime security. The strengthening of American sanctions against 'Rosneft' and 'Lukoil' creates an opportunity for the EU to end its enduring dependence on Russian energy, but requires decisive and immediate action in Berlin, Bucharest, and Sofia. ECFR analysts see a chance for a systemic breakthrough if European governments abandon temporary asset management regimes and move towards their final nationalisation. In the maritime dimension, the Clingendael study emphasises that the Black Sea is becoming a strategic centre of gravity, where the security of maritime corridors determines the economic viability of Ukraine and the stability of the entire region.



As is traditional, experts are analysing hybrid threats. The European Policy Centre is analysing the dangerous systematic nature of Russian GPS jamming, which is already affecting a significant portion of air traffic. The ICDS and EUISS emphasise that information warfare is no longer a peripheral issue: Russian and Chinese narrative ecosystems are working together, while the EU's responses remain fragmented. The need for active information operations, rather than just defence, is becoming increasingly urgent.



Ukraine remains a constant focus of analysis as a country that is shaping the rules of the new security order. On 20 November, the Donald Trump administration published a 28-point peace plan, which sparked a wave of discussion in Ukraine, among allied governments, and in leading think tanks. Initial analytical comments show unanimity: Russia's peace terms are unacceptable, the so-called Trump plan contains structural risks, and Ukraine's long-term stability is a prerequisite for the security of the entire continent.



In this context, November's focus issue, 'Point of Non-Return: A New Model of European Security with Ukraine and without Russia', describes not a prediction but a gradual norm. Europe is beginning to build security not alongside Russia but in spite of it, and not for Ukraine but together with it.



US Troop Cuts On NATO's Eastern Flank

Oana Lungescu, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), United Kingdom
03.11.2025

The United States has decided not to extend the rotation of the US 2nd Combat Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division stationed on NATO's eastern flank, specifically in Romania. Formally, this is an 'adjustment of presence' rather than a troop withdrawal, but the timing and region make it strategically sensitive.

The Pentagon explains the move as part of 'balancing the global military presence of the United States,' emphasising that its commitments to NATO remain unchanged. At the same time, the number of American troops in Romania is being reduced from 1,700 to 1,000. The author emphasises that the decision was made 'at the wrong time and in the wrong place,' as Romania remains critical to Black Sea security, bordering Ukraine and hosting the strategic bases of Mihail Kogălniceanu and Deveselu. Any reduction in the American presence there weakens the system of collective deterrence against Russia and creates the risk of reducing NATO's operational flexibility in the event of an escalation in the south.

This signal has been received with mixed feelings: allies fear that Trump is using the reduction of the American presence as leverage in negotiations with the Kremlin. The move has also met with resistance in the US Congress. At the same time, France, Germany and other allies are strengthening their presence in Romania.

This issue is important for Ukraine, as Romanian territory serves as a rear hub for logistics, pilot training and control of the Black Sea. The reduction of American troops clearly increases the need for European autonomy in the field of security. Therefore, on the other hand, the strengthening of the role of Romania, France and Germany in the region may contribute to greater 'Europeanisation' of the eastern flank, which is also in the interests of Ukraine as a future ally in the European defence system.



Transatlantic relations; European security

Russia's Latest Nuclear Saber-Rattling: Nuclear Testing?

Heather Williams, Lachlan McKenzie, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

05.11.2025

The authors assess the new surge of nuclear tension between the United States and Russia following Vladimir Putin's statements on November 5, instructing the military-political leadership to prepare proposals for potential first steps towards resuming nuclear testing. This came immediately after Donald Trump's post on X about the USA intention to begin nuclear weapons testing, as well as after the launch of the American Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile..

editor's note: Back on October 29, Putin announced that Russia had tested the Poseidon underwater drone with a nuclear power plant; and it was after this statement that the American president wrote about the US intention to begin testing nuclear weapons. That is means, Trump's decision was a response to Russian actions



Moscow traditionally states that it will not be the “first” to act, but will respond symmetrically to any steps by Washington, thereby preserving the right to escalate without formally going beyond the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Moscow is also motivated to use nuclear signals as a tool of pressure in an attempt to curb US support for Ukraine or to force the West into making concessions.

It is important to remember that nuclear blackmail remains a component of Russia's strategy against the West, thus reinforcing Kyiv's need for active participation in arms-control regimes and in a consistent international coalition to deter Russia.

International security; world order.

Deconstructing Russia's Plans for Greater Eurasia: Where Theory Meets Supply Chains

Emily Ferris, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), United Kingdom
05.11.2025

The concept of “Greater Eurasia,” which the Kremlin uses as an ideological justification for its foreign policy, is in practice increasingly turning into a survival tool in the war against Ukraine. Russia is trying to rebuild military-industrial and logistical supply chains through Belarus and North Korea, which are becoming critical elements of its strategy.

In late October 2025, a conference in Minsk demonstrated the deepening coordination between Russia, Belarus and North Korea. Belarus provides equipment repairs, component manufacturing, and logistical support, while North Korea supplies ammunition, engineers and even military units. This cooperation is actively overseen by Sergei Shoigu, who, after resigning as defense minister, has been given the informal role of Putin's special envoy for the Far East.

However, the author emphasizes that material and financial realities contradict the Kremlin's ambitions. Russian infrastructure is overloaded, investments in Belarusian railways have been reduced, and new projects with the DPRK have limited practical effect. The Russian budget does not have the resources to create sustainable supply chains, and dependence on states under sanctions only deepens structural problems.

Thus, Russia's alliances with Belarus and North Korea are more tactical than strategic in nature: they help to keep the pace of the war, but are not able to transform the concept of “Greater Eurasia” into a real geopolitical architecture.

Ukraine and partners can exploit this Russian vulnerability by promoting sanctions control, breaking logistical chains between the Russian Federation, North Korea and Belarus, and emphasizing the global threat of such cooperation.



World order

Energy reckoning: How Europe can use US sanctions to cut Moscow's oil ties

Szymon Kardas, Vessela Cherneva, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), an EU-level think tank

05.11.2025

The authors analyse the tough package of US sanctions that the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) implemented on October 22, 2025, against Rosneft and Lukoil, companies that together provide about 75% of Russian oil production and 80% of exports. The US not only froze its assets but also announced secondary sanctions against any foreign structures that continue to cooperate with them. It radically increases economic pressure on Moscow: Russian oil revenues are falling, India and China reduce purchases, and the ruble is already unstable.



However, the authors emphasize that these sanctions are a double opportunity for Europe. On the one hand, they obviously create risks of short-term disruptions in oil supplies, but on the other hand, they provide a historic chance to finally break energy dependence on Russia. If European countries take advantage of the situation, they can strengthen their own energy security and purge their strategic infrastructure of Russian influence by expropriating the assets of Rosneft and Lukoil. This is particularly relevant for Germany, Romania, and Bulgaria, where the assets of these companies still determine the energy balance and have political influence. In Germany, assets of Rosneft still formally belong to Russia, although the government manages them through a trust mechanism. The authors urge Berlin not to ask the US to extend this permission after the end of its term, but to nationalize these assets completely. Similarly, Romania and Bulgaria should liquidate Lukoil's presence in critical infrastructure.

An important warning is the possibility of sanctions circumvention: particularly, the attempt of Lukoil to sell European assets to Gunvor, a trader linked to sanctioned oligarch Gennady Timchenko.

The current moment allows Europe to weaken the financial base of the Kremlin, strengthen energy security, and accelerate the implementation of REPowerEU at the same time, and therefore, strengthen support for Ukraine and reduce Russian influence in the region.



Energy security

A return to nuclear testing in an unstable age?

Daniel Salisbury, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), United Kingdom

05.11.2025

The author analyses the escalation of the nuclear rhetoric following Donald Trump's statement on October 30, 2025, announcing his intention to immediately begin the US nuclear testing "on equal terms" with other countries' programs. Although it is likely not about explosive nuclear tests, but rather about testing delivery systems (ICBMs, underwater drones, cruise missiles), the statement itself, in the author's opinion, sets a dangerous precedent and increases global instability.

At the same time, China is rapidly increasing its nuclear potential: from about 200 warheads in 2020 to a projected 1000-1500 by 2035, meanwhile developing hundreds of new silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles. Russia is modernising its arsenal and testing unconventional delivery systems, including the Burevestnik and Poseidon, which were tested just before Trump's announcement. In light of this, Washington is facing two strategic nuclear opponents at the same time.



According to the author, a return to explosive testing would be devastating for the global arms control regime, particularly for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is already being undermined: Russia "denounced" it in 2023, and the US, China, and Israel have still not ratified it.

Despite the technical capability to conduct testing within 36 months, it's actually more beneficial for the US to keep the status quo: it possesses the most powerful technological base, which allows it to maintain its arsenal without actual explosions. Therefore, a return to testing does not solve strategic problems, but only deepens the risks of a new nuclear arms race.

World order; international security



War in Ukraine: Between Stalemate and Diplomatic Deadlock

(fr. *Guerre en Ukraine : entre enlissement et impasse diplomatique*)

Igor Delanoë, Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS), France

05.11.2025

The investigation describes the war between Russia and Ukraine as a war of attrition, which continues not only on a battlefield, but also in politics and the economy. Despite signs of a rapid recession in the Russian economy, Putin is convinced that time is on his side: he relies on the West's exhaustion and internal contradictions within the EU. Ukraine, on the other hand, is facing a shortage of weapons and funding, while in Brussels, they are increasingly discussing how to keep supporting Kyiv. Regarding financial assistance to Ukraine, EU member states are divided: some propose confiscating frozen Russian assets (approximately 140BN euros), others consider that this will harm investors' trust and may cause legal disputes; therefore, they are promoting the second option – new debt instruments.



The US position also remains controversial. Donald Trump does not want the collapse of Ukrainian statehood, so as not to repeat Biden's "Afghan fiasco"; however, despite that, he avoids direct participation. He sells weapons to Kyiv, but does not transfer them for free, and expects that now Europe will fund the bulk of the war. He aims to force both Moscow and Kyiv to agree on a ceasefire, which would allow the US to concentrate on their own interests.

The Kremlin's demand for the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from 25% of Donbas remains the central stumbling block, which made the summit in Budapest impossible.

The author notes that the Russian economy is currently stagnating, but remains stable for now. Russia can maintain its current level of military spending for another 1-2 years without critical consequences. The Kremlin considers such economic sacrifices an acceptable price to pay for the political goals of the war.



War in Ukraine; European security

The Impact of Evolving Threat Perceptions on the Transatlantic Alliance

Erik Brattberg, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), the United Kingdom
06.11.2025

The US and Europe are increasingly diverging on what they consider to be the main security threats, and this is gradually changing the nature of the Transatlantic Alliance. If during the Cold War, there was a shared strategy (containment of the USSR, reliance on NATO, shared values), priorities began to fragment after its end: the US shifted its focus to the Middle East and later to China, while Europe remained in a “comfortable” mode for a long time, without investing systematically in defence.

Today, the central line of division is different approaches to Russia, China, economic security, and “non-traditional” threats (climate, pandemics, migration). For Europe, Russia has become an existential threat and the main focus of defence policy following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. For the Trump administration, Russia is more of a secondary challenge and a potential “counterweight” to China, while China is perceived in Washington as the main rival in the military, economic, and technological spheres. Europe is tougher on China than before, but is still trying to balance rather than break ties.

In the US economy, trade and technology are increasingly being securitised (sanctions, export controls, restrictions on China), while the EU is trying to protect its industry but remains within the logic of multilateral rules. There is also a divide on climate, pandemics, and migration: the EU continues to view climate as a key long-term threat, while the Trump administration has pushed it sharply into the background, focusing instead on tough security and border control.

The author describes four future scenarios of the Transatlantic Alliance: “Friendly divergence,” “The collapse of the European consensus,” “Europe as a challenge to the US,” and “A restarted alliance.” The most optimistic scenario is considered to be the last one: the US remains in NATO, but with a less dominant role; Europe is finally building up its defence capabilities and taking on more responsibility for its own security; a new burden-sharing is taking place: the US is concentrating more on China and the Indo-Pacific region, while Europe is focusing on Russia. The alliance remains intact, but in a new format. However, such a scenario is only possible if Europe can overcome internal differences and coordinate its actions on defence issues.



Transatlantic relations; European security

Praise from Brussels: Ukraine and Moldova make progress on the path to the EU

Kacper Sienicki, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Poland
07.11.2025

On 4 November, the European Commission published its annual reports on the progress of EU candidate states in their accession process. Ukraine received an overall positive assessment, confirming the consistency of its reforms despite the full-scale war and Russian hybrid attacks. Moldova was even highlighted as the state that demonstrated the greatest progress on its path toward integration.

Both countries have met the conditions for opening three out of six negotiation chapters: “fundamentals”, “external relations”, and “internal market”. The remaining chapters could also be opened by the end of the year if reform efforts are accelerated. At the same time, the report emphasizes that completing the negotiations by 2028 is a realistic but ambitious goal that requires sustained progress, above all in the area of the rule of law.

However, the report also identified problematic areas in Ukraine’s political system. The greatest concern relates to issues of the rule of law such as political pressure on anti-corruption bodies, including the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (SAP), the need to reform the Constitutional Court, ensure the participation of independent experts in the selection of judges, and repeal the “Lozovyi amendment.” Despite the criticism, the Ukrainian government focused mainly on the positive messages, publicly avoiding the complex issues. Such selective communication creates the risk that the authorities may interpret the Commission’s cautious wording as de facto approval for slowing reforms. According to the author, the recent incidents involving pressure on NABU and initiatives to restrict media freedom are particularly indicative.

Meanwhile, Moldova’s challenges include economic competitiveness, environmental standards, the agricultural sector, and local government reform.

For both countries, the key challenge is not the adoption of reforms “on paper,” but their real implementation. Without this, the goal of completing negotiations by 2028 will remain merely an ambitious declaration.



European Integration

EU enlargement momentum risks falling victim to veto power

Marek Dombrowski, Bruegel, EU-level think tank
10.11.2025

The study analyzes how Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has triggered the strongest push for EU enlargement over the past two decades, while simultaneously exposing systemic weaknesses within the enlargement mechanism itself. After 2022, the accession of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia was reconsidered as a strategic tool to counter Russian influence. On 4 November 2025, the European Commission for the first time announced indicative completion dates for negotiations for four countries: Montenegro – 2026, Albania – 2027, Moldova – early 2028, and Ukraine – 2028.

Despite this, the political will for enlargement has begun to crack. Unanimity remains a prerequisite for enlargement, and the process is increasingly subject to the influence of the domestic politics of member states. The author provides four illustrative examples: the blocking of North Macedonia (initially by Greece, now by Bulgaria over historical issues); in Ukraine's case, Hungary is slowing certain negotiation chapters, hindering assistance, and, in parallel, affecting Moldova's path, which is linked to Ukraine in the accession process.

Against this backdrop, two reform options are discussed: moving to qualified majority voting for opening negotiation chapters, and introducing membership with limited voting rights. Both approaches carry significant legal and political risks.

The main conclusion is that enlargement is critically important for Europe's security, but its future depends on whether the EU can protect the process from internal blockages and make it more predictable.



European Integration

Black Sea Security as the White Knight for peace?

Yulia Soldatiuk-Westerveld, Ben Beckering, Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael), the Netherlands

10.11.2025

Russia's war against Ukraine has radically altered the balance of power in the Black Sea and turned the region into a key element of European security. The Black Sea has become both an arena of Russian aggression and a space on which Ukraine's economic resilience, global food security, and the EU's energy strategy critically depend.

The authors emphasize that the Russian Federation's dominance of the maritime domain, its hybrid operations, the blockade of ports, and sabotage of infrastructure undermine stability and create long-term risks for all coastal states. At the same time, Ukrainian strikes on the Russian fleet and the liberation of Zmiinyi Island have shifted the military balance, opening the way for the formation of a new regional security architecture.

The report argues that Ukraine's access to the Black Sea is a matter of survival: without functioning ports and the protection of maritime corridors, the country's economy will not be able to sustain either the war or reconstruction. Any future settlement will also be impossible without guarantees of freedom of navigation and protection for maritime infrastructure.

The authors propose a three-tier strategy for the EU: strengthening Ukraine's defensive and maritime capabilities; reducing the vulnerabilities of Moldova, Georgia, Romania, and Bulgaria to hybrid attacks; and establishing a regional maritime coordination mechanism for intelligence-sharing, monitoring, and infrastructure protection, with Turkey serving as a key guarantor under the Montreux Convention.

In conclusion, the authors note that Black Sea security is a central element of the future European security architecture, and the ability to deter the Russian Federation in the region will be decisive for lasting peace.



European security

Beyond Defence: A Proactive Strategy for the West in the Information Domain

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Estonia
10.11.2025*

The study shows that liberal democracies are rapidly losing the global information war, where the initiative has shifted decisively to authoritarian regimes, above all Russia and China. The closed nature of their information spaces, centralized decision-making, strategic coordination, and vast propaganda budgets create a structural advantage over the West's open societies. Russia and China are already operating as a single ecosystem of narratives, synchronizing messages about Ukraine, NATO, the West, and the "decline of democracies."

Russia employs a constant "firehose of falsehood" approach alongside networks of rapid amplifiers, financial support for radical political forces in the EU and the United States, and covert influence operations — for example, the Tenet Media \$10 million scheme targeting MAGA-aligned influencers in the U.S.

China projects its narrative influence through global media initiatives, especially in Africa and Latin America. While Russian and Chinese operations are funded at billion-dollar scales, EU programmes are financed at the level of only a few million per year, creating a strategic imbalance.

The author proposes shifting from defence to offence: building European strategic autonomy in the information domain, sharply increasing funding, developing prebunking systems, implementing continuous OSINT monitoring, and conducting offensive — but truthful — operations aimed at the vulnerabilities of Russia and China: corruption, demographic decline, and elite infighting.

Today the information war is arguably the principal theatre of contemporary confrontation, and the West can win it only when it begins to set the agenda again rather than merely reacting to others'.



[International Security; Hybrid threats](#)

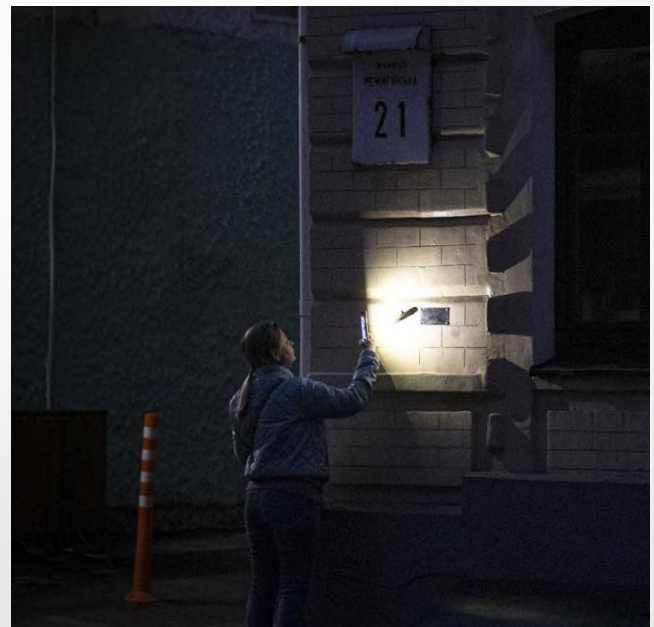
Ukraine's best defence against Putin's energy war is more attacks on Russia's oil refining sector

John Lough, Chatham House, United Kingdom
10.11.2025

The author analyses a new phase of energy war between Russia and Ukraine, which intensified in autumn 2025. Moscow significantly increased its attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, focusing on gas facilities and thermal power generation. In October, one wave of strikes resulted in the destruction of up to 60% of gas extraction capacity, while total losses in generation had already reached 9 GW, equivalent to around 15% of the pre-war system. The Kremlin aims to weaken social resilience before winter and increase political pressure on Kyiv.

At the same time, Ukraine showed the ability to conduct offensive operations deep inside Russian territory. Using domestically produced drones and missiles supported by Western targeting, Kyiv carried out systemic strikes against Russian refineries, terminals, and pipelines. By the end of October, more than half of Russia's 38 major oil refineries had been attacked at least twice. This has already led to a rise of over 10% in fuel prices, local shortages in Crimea and other regions, and forced the Russian authorities to subsidise oil companies.

The author stresses that although Russia still holds a resource advantage, the growing pace of Ukrainian strikes could impose high domestic costs on the Kremlin. This might push Moscow to accept at least a temporary "energy truce," giving Kyiv time to restore its energy system before winter.



Currently, the energy front has become one of the decisive elements of the war, and Ukraine has already demonstrated its capacity to exert economic and strategic pressure on Russia.

Energy Security

Flying Blind: How to Prevent Russian GPS Operations from Causing a European Air Disaster

Maria Martisiute, European Policy Centre (EPC), EU-level think tank
11.11.2025

Russian GPS/GNSS jamming and spoofing have become a systematic form of aggression against Europe, threatening aviation safety. According to the European Commission, more than 40% of European air traffic already regularly encounters deliberate interference. At the same time, incidents in the Baltic, Northern, Arctic, Black Sea, and Mediterranean regions have increased five to ten times. The main sources of such disruptions are located in Kaliningrad, on the Kola Peninsula, and in occupied Crimea.

These attacks lead to loss of navigation, false TAWS alarms, forced diversions to alternative airports, and an increasing risk of a major air disaster. Despite this, the response of international institutions remains fragmented: the UN is limited to symbolic statements, NATO lacks an integrated civil-military strategy, and the EU has only begun to develop a coordinated policy after the incident with Ursula von der Leyen's aircraft in September 2025.



European Security; Hybrid Threats

The author proposes creating a pan-European system to counter Russian GNSS operations, which should include: political recognition of these attacks as acts of aggression; expansion of the sanctions framework; development of the Galileo satellite navigation system (OSNMA, PRS); launch of a European RFI monitoring system; establishment of a Central Hub for GNSS Security in Eastern Europe with full participation of Ukraine; investment in new technologies (AI, quantum sensors, CRPA); and integration of anti-GNSS capabilities into EU and NATO defense planning.

In the author's view, without decisive action, the risk of a major aviation disaster in Europe will continue to grow.

Long-Range Precision Strike: Europe's Search for Extended-Range Missile Capabilities

Douglas Barrie, Zuzanna Gwadera, Fabian Hinz, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), United Kingdom

13.11.2025

The study examines the sharp transformation of European defense doctrines following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Europe is shifting from air-dominated strategies toward developing a broad arsenal of long-range precision strike (Deep Precision Strike, DPS) missiles with ranges of 1,000–2,000+ km. This has emerged as a systemic response to Russia's ability to deliver massive strikes against rear areas, critical infrastructure, and logistics.

Between 2024 and 2025, France, Germany, Poland, Italy, and later the United Kingdom and Sweden launched the ELSA initiative (European Long-Range Strike Approach), aimed at establishing common armament requirements, synchronizing R&D, and creating strike capabilities independent of the United States.

France is deploying the most ambitious programs: ballistic missiles over 2,000 km, V-MaX 2 hypersonic glide vehicles, modernized SCALP/MdCN, and the prospective Stratus system. Germany combines purchases of American Tomahawks with the development of its own systems (Tyrfin, JFS-M). Poland has announced a need for missiles ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 km and is investing in mass strike drones. The UK is restarting Storm Shadow production and developing new projects such as Nightfall, Brakestop, and joint programs with Germany.

Ukraine is the central reason for Europe's shift toward long-range precision missiles. European states have realized that even strong air defense does not provide absolute protection and that deterring Russia is impossible without the ability to strike deep into its rear. Consequently, long-range precision missiles are becoming a key element of Europe's future security architecture.



EU strategic autonomy; European security

The Future of Russia: The Balance Between External and Internal Transformations

*James Sherr, International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS), Estonia
13.11.2025*

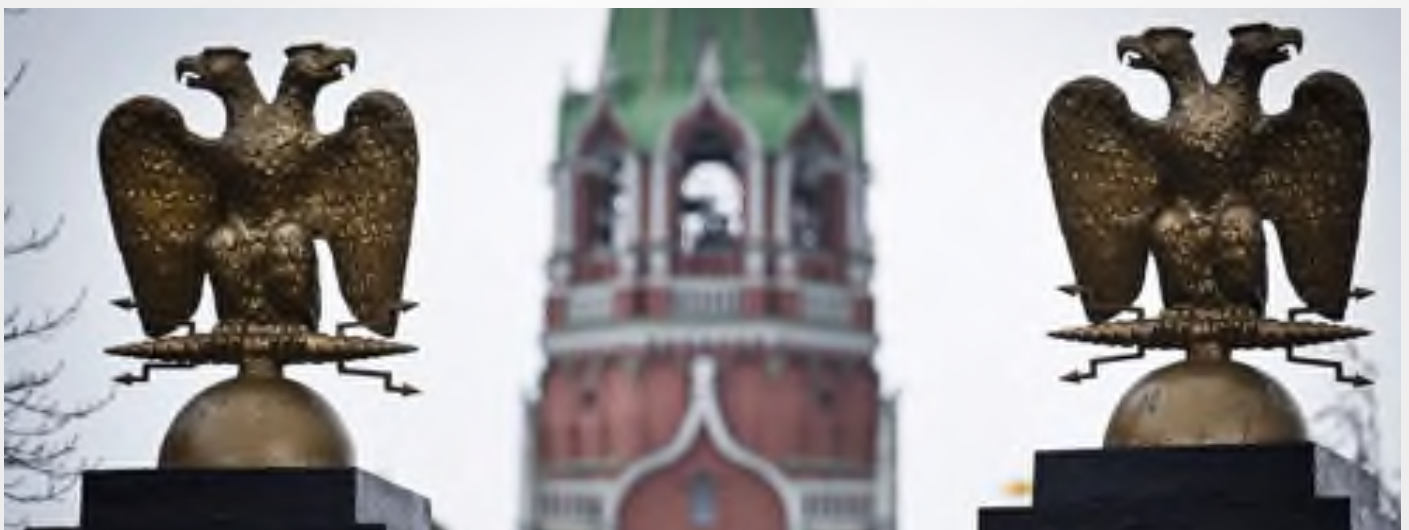
The author examines four possible scenarios for Russia's future, arguing that the key factor driving internal change in the Russian Federation will not be domestic opposition, but the outcome of its war against Ukraine. In the author's view, the belief that a stable democratic Russia will emerge after the fall of Putinism is overly optimistic, as Russian political culture has for centuries been rooted in absolutism, imperialism, and the absence of genuine institutions of freedom.

The first scenario is a Ukrainian victory. Importantly, victory occurs when the Russian leadership recognizes that it is unable to achieve its war aims. This would require breaking the combat capability of the Russian army and could trigger unrest, uprisings, and power struggles. A new leadership would be forced to end the war and withdraw troops at least to the lines of 24 February 2022. This is the most favorable but also the most fragile scenario.

The second scenario is negotiations. Russia would agree to negotiations only in the case of an almost guaranteed victory or a complete defeat. In its strategic logic, negotiations are merely the continuation of war by other means. If the negotiation process begins on Russian terms, it will be used as a pause to restore Moscow's strength.

The third scenario is a Russian victory. This outcome would entail the destruction of Ukrainian statehood, mass repression, prolonged resistance movements, and fear in Europe—fear that could push some European states toward a policy of appeasing the Kremlin.

The final scenario considered by the author is a never-ending war. Its essence lies in depriving Russia of the ability to achieve its military objectives across maritime, air, land, and informational domains. Ukraine is already partially achieving this, but success depends directly on sustained Western support.



[War in Ukraine; European security](#)

NB8: Masters of Adaptation in a Turbulent World

*Kristi Raik, International Centre for Defense and Security (ICDS), Estonia
17.11.2025*

The form of cooperation among the Nordic and Baltic states (Nordic Baltic Eight) gradually develops into an actual security block, which is forced to adapt to the dramatic deterioration of Europe's security, Russian revisionism and unpredictable nature of the USA. In 2025 Estonia's heading coincides with the moment when the region's states are compelled to revise their External policy, uniting idealistic protection of values with a tougher, more realistic approach towards security. Finnish definition "value realism" and Danish «pragmatic idealism» symbolize an adaptation attempt of the small states, which historically relied on international law, but now are forced to build defence in the world, where law yields to the power's logic.

Russian war against Ukraine became a catalyzator of the most profound transformation of this format: states, which for decades used to bet on dialogue with moscow, nowadays are among the biggest military and political Ukraine's donors. It was Ukraine that became the point, where idealistic defence of values and realistic imperative of Nordic Baltic Eight's security fully coincided. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO has completed the formation of a new strategic "outpost" in the Baltic Sea.

Simultaneously, distrust of the US is growing under Donald Trump's second presidency. Northern countries are forced to maintain transatlantic ties through pragmatic, even transactional mechanisms, while sharply increasing their own defense capabilities.

Thus, NB8 becomes an instrument of regional security, as well as a platform for the formation of a new common identity—an association of states that realize that in an era of global disorder, survival is only possible through joint action.



European security; the Baltic Sea region

Ukraine's arms deal with France faces major hurdles before it can be realized

Samantha de Bender, Chatham House, United Kingdom
19.11.2025

The author assesses the declaration signed by Zelensky and Macron on the intention to supply Ukraine with French defense systems, primarily up to 100 Rafale F4 fighter jets, SAMP/T batteries, missiles, guided bombs, and a joint drone production program. Although the agreement is presented as a historic breakthrough and a symbol of France's long-term belief in Ukraine's victory, it will have little impact on the situation on the battlefield in the coming years. Rafale aircraft require 4-6 years of production, and France is unable to transfer any aircraft from its warehouses. The SAMP/T systems, which Ukraine critically needs now, also cannot be provided quickly due to limited national stocks and a slow production base. Therefore, actual deliveries are only possible in 2026-2027.

The only element capable of having an immediate effect is the joint production of drones and anti-drone systems, which could start as early as the end of 2025. The rest is a strategic investment in Ukraine's strength in the 2030s, rather than a response to today's Russian strikes on the energy sector.

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The war in Ukraine; European security; the EU's strategic autonomy

The UK and Germany should combine their strengths to address weaknesses in European defense

General Richard Barrons, Chatham House, UK
19.11.2025

The UK and Germany are moving towards defense policy transformation at completely different speeds, creating a strategic imbalance in Europe. The UK's 2025 Strategic Defense Review outlines the most ambitious modernization of forces in a century, but in fact will not receive funding until 2027. This is forcing London to cut back on training, maintenance, routine activities, and delay the launch of new capabilities. Inflation, currency fluctuations, program management failures, and the need to address critical gaps in the 10-year Defense Investment Plan mean that around £2 billion needs to be saved now. This is compounded by staffing delays within the Ministry of Defense, which are causing the reforms outlined in the Strategic Defense Review to stall, and industry and investors are not seeing clear signals that would allow them to plan for innovation and capital.

As a result, Europe risks ending up with two flawed approaches: Britain cannot finance its own innovative military model, while Germany is spending record amounts on potentially obsolete capabilities. The author concludes that the continent will be less secure if these two approaches do not converge. The optimal option is to combine the British strategic and technological vision with German resources, in particular through deeper defense-industrial cooperation within the framework of the Trinity House Agreement.



European security

Defending Democracy: Putting Principles into Practice through Commitment, Capability, and Trust

Nadya Kovalchykova, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), an EU-level think tank

21.11.2025

The author examines the EU's new initiative — the European Democracy Shield, designed to counter hybrid campaigns, foreign interference, and disinformation operations. Its central institutional innovation is the creation of the European Centre for Democratic Resilience, expected to become operational by 2027. The author emphasizes that the success of this initiative depends on the EU's ability to shift from passive defence to active democratic resilience, built on three interconnected principles: coordination, capability, and trust.

At the coordination level, the Centre is intended to serve as an information-exchange hub for member states, national agencies, and structures countering hybrid threats. Its effectiveness will rely on voluntary but active participation of member states, as well as the involvement of partners such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The Centre may also become a tool for expanding the EU's influence in the Global South, where Russian structures are already actively capturing the information space and promoting pro-Kremlin narratives.

Within the capability pillar, the analysis highlights the need to strengthen early warning, analytical capacities, and monitoring of hostile operations, including cyber threats, information manipulation, political pressure, and the financing of subversive networks. The author underscores the asymmetry: the Kremlin spends roughly USD 1.5 billion annually on propaganda outside Russia — significantly more than what the EU allocates to defend its own information space.

The third element, trust, is linked to the effective implementation of key EU legislative acts such as the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act, and the AI Act. Weak oversight or incomplete implementation undermines the EU's authority and makes the European Democracy Shield less credible. The Centre could strengthen accountability by fostering sustained cooperation with researchers, independent media, and civil society.

The effectiveness of the European Democracy Shield will depend entirely on the political will of the member states and the EU's ability to move from reactive measures to a systematic response to hybrid attacks.



European security; hybrid threats; democratic values

Is Trump's Ukraine Peace Deal a Faustian Bargain?

Liana Fix, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), USA
21.11.2025

This analytical commentary focuses on the 28-point peace plan of the Donald Trump administration, which, despite the formal goal of accelerating the ceasefire, actually shifts the balance in favor of Russia. The plan appears at a time when Moscow is increasing pressure on the front line, and the US and the EU are finally approaching the adoption of critical decisions, among which is a large-scale sanctions package and the use of frozen Russian assets. That is why the Kremlin perceives this initiative as a tool for pressure on Ukraine and a way to shift responsibility for the “breakdown of peace” to Kyiv.

The author outlines the main “red lines” that are unacceptable for Ukraine and Europe. The most dangerous among them are the demand to recognize Russia's control over the part of Donetsk region currently held by the Ukrainian army; the limitation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to 600,000 personnel; the prohibition on deploying NATO/EU forces in Ukraine; as well as an effective Russian veto on the Alliance's future enlargement. The “security guarantees” proposed by the United States remain vague and contain no commitments comparable to NATO's Article 5.

At the same time, on the other hand, the author believes that Ukraine and European allies can find potential leverage, attentively reading this «peace agreement» and paying attention to what it says between the lines about Russian fears. For example, the surprisingly specific mention of Ukrainian strikes on Moscow and St. Petersburg as an action that would nullify the agreement demonstrates how much the Kremlin fears potential future long-range strikes.

The author believes that, as proposed, this peace plan is asymmetrical, punishes Ukraine and rewards Russia, and therefore cannot be the basis for a lasting peace.



Will Trump's Peace Plan for Ukraine Succeed?

Benjamin Jensen, Yasir Atalan, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

21.11.2025

The authors analyze whether Donald Trump's proposed «peace plan» could serve as a viable basis for negotiations, drawing on the annual analytics of the Strategic Headwinds project, which combines expert surveys with artificial intelligence models trained on dozens of historical peace processes. The authors' main conclusion is that the plan contains some potentially constructive elements, but its key provisions mirror Russian demands and are therefore likely to fail.

The principal obstacle is the issue of commitments: Ukraine and its partners cannot be confident that the Kremlin would comply with any agreements, since previous accords such as Minsk I and II did not serve as a framework for peace but rather as a prelude to the 2022 invasion. Both experts and the AI model assess the risk of this scenario recurring as critically high.

At the same time, some items appear negotiable. These concern the economic package - reconstruction of Ukraine, participation of Western firms in infrastructure modernization, the use of Ukraine's gas transmission system (GTS) in a new European energy architecture, and humanitarian issues (the return of deported civilians and children). These topics have the greatest potential for compromise. By contrast, provisions that align with Kremlin interests - such as recognition of occupations, freezing the front line, restrictions on the Armed Forces of Ukraine, amnesties for crimes committed by Russian forces, holding elections within 100 days, and the absence of meaningful security guarantees - are unanimously identified by both the AI model and experts as «red flags.»

In its current form, the plan weakens Ukraine, destabilizes European security, and cannot serve as a workable basis for further negotiations.



[The war in Ukraine; World order](#)

Focus Topic.

The Tipping Point: An Emerging Model of European Security with Ukraine and without Russia

Céline Maranger, Susan Stewart, Barbara Lippert, Nicolai von Ondarza, Barbara Koontz, Aino Esser, Kai-Olaf Lang, Marco Siddi, Sinem Adar, Yasar Aydin, Tomáš Strazai, András Rácz, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Germany

6 November 2025

Russia's war against Ukraine has marked a point of no return for the European security architecture. This thesis is convincingly demonstrated by a study from experts at the German think-tank SWP. Its key message is simple but fundamental: the visions that Ukraine and Russia hold for the future order in Europe are fundamentally incompatible, and the continent is therefore entering a new era of security in which the old model of coexistence with Moscow has lost its meaning.

Russia seeks an overhaul of the entire European system — a return to spheres of influence and power politics — while Ukraine is fighting for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and for the right to be part of democratic Europe.

Where Russia was once seen as a “complex but necessary” actor in European dialogue, after 2022 it is increasingly regarded as a long-term systemic threat. Against this background, a new consensus is emerging:

Russia is no longer part of the European security system.
Ukraine, by contrast, is becoming a central element of it.

This represents the largest and deepest shift in the European security paradigm since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The war has shown that Ukraine is not a buffer or periphery: it is an active and indispensable participant in shaping the new architecture. The Armed Forces of Ukraine — battle-hardened and possessing unique combat experience and practical skills — have become among the most capable militaries in Europe. This radically changes perceptions of Ukraine's role: it is no longer merely a recipient of assistance but a partner that strengthens the security of the entire region.



Source: deepstatemap.live
The infographic is best viewed in colour.
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), 2025 | © CC BY 4.0

Experts stress that Ukraine's integration into Western structures is not a political gesture but a strategic necessity. Without this integration, the new order will not be sustainable.

Out of this emerges a new concept - the European pillar of NATO. This is not about separating from the United States, but about creating a self-sufficient European dimension that assumes a greater share of responsibility for the continent's defence, maintains political and operational interoperability with Washington, and is built around a strategic core - Ukraine, Poland, France, the United Kingdom, the Baltic States and Scandinavia.

This process is accompanied by unprecedented increases in defence budgets (towards 3–5% of GDP), the deployment of joint production chains, and active strengthening of the defence industry.

Another key trend noted by the study is the growing role of minilateral coalitions. The EU's traditional consensus-based model is too slow to respond to security crises. Consequently, states increasingly form small, purpose-driven alliances capable of acting quickly outside bureaucratic procedures. Current examples include the Nordic-Baltic Eight, Weimar+, and the Joint Expeditionary Force. Such formats not only increase flexibility but also foster a stronger sense of real responsibility for the security of the continent.

The study argues that Europe is entering a phase of “post-Russian security,” where deterring Russia represents the necessary baseline, while the true strategic focus is developing greater European autonomy and integrating Ukraine.

The stability of the new model will depend on a single factor: how quickly the EU can incorporate Ukraine into its defence, political, and industrial structures. Otherwise, the “tipping point” will remain a turning point that Europe failed to consolidate.



Summing up...

Europe is entering a period in which decisions can no longer be postponed. Russia continues to expand its pressure tools: GPS interference, information operations, and attempts to reroute military-industrial supply chains through Belarus and North Korea. At the same time, research published this month clearly shows that these steps are taken not from a position of strength, but from a need to sustain the war at any cost. The Kremlin is trying to compensate for its structural weakness with tactical aggressiveness.

European states, by contrast, are no longer just reacting to danger - they are beginning to form their own deterrence system. The development of long-range missiles, new defense programs, regional formats like NB8, discussions on unified financial mechanisms to support Ukraine indicate that Europe is gradually moving from filling gaps to a long-term strategy.

This is not yet a completed system, but its contours are becoming clearer with each passing month. US support remains critically important, but its unpredictability is forcing the EU and individual European capitals to prepare for taking on greater responsibility for their own security. The idea of strategic autonomy now appears as a practical consequence of the political dynamics in Washington. At the same time, Europe is trying to maintain a balance by building new defense and industrial ties with the United States while also creating capabilities that do not depend on American changes of power.

Europe is still forming its new security order, but it is becoming clear: it is not being created over Ukraine, but together with it – and certainly not with the participation of Russia.

OUR EXPERTS



MARIA MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

Member of Parliament of Ukraine, Deputy Chair of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the EU, Chair of Ukraine's Permanent Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

The interest of young people in the context of international processes is incredibly encouraging. In a time when our political leaders are advocating for a just peace for Ukraine and strengthening the country's position on the global stage, nurturing a new generation of leaders, analysts, and diplomats is a crucial investment in the development of a pro-European Ukrainian society in the future.

The analytical journal “Think Tank Essentials” represents a synergy of knowledge, ideas, and the work of young people. It is such a pleasure to read their analyses! There is no room for criticism from my side, as I was impressed by the professionalism and deep understanding of the context presented in the articles. It is fantastic that young people are curious, that they write, and that they conduct research. I sincerely thank the amazing team that produced this issue. I believe it is appropriate to present it to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. On one hand, this will support young people and once again demonstrate that they are already drivers of change today; on the other hand, the materials provide an excellent analysis of current events.

Defending Democracy: Translating Principles into Practice through Commitment, Capability, and Trust

This article draws attention by going beyond a technical description of the EU's new “Democracy Shield” initiative and addressing the key question: can the Union transform its declared principles into real democratic resilience? For those of us working daily in the field of international politics, this is particularly relevant. The author subtly emphasizes that coordination, capabilities, and trust are not merely three conceptual elements—they are a test of the EU's maturity in countering hybrid threats. The material is useful for anyone working on issues of hybrid security and democratic resilience. It reminds us that democracies are protected not only by legal frameworks but also by consistency, transparency, and trust—criteria that will determine the success of the European Democracy Shield. The article stands out for its systematic approach to analyzing the EU initiative and clearly demonstrates that the European “Democracy Shield” has the potential to become not just a technical tool but also a political framework for active democratic resilience. This research serves as a valuable guide for those engaged with hybrid threats and democratic stability.

Can Trump's Peace Proposal for Ukraine Be Considered a “Faustian Bargain”?

The article clearly explains why Trump's plan contradicts the principle of a just peace: it entails de facto recognition of Russian control over parts of Ukraine's territory and limits Ukraine's defensive capabilities. The author also highlights the hidden signals of Kremlin fears, including the possibility of long-range Ukrainian strikes. This underscores that the plan offers no real security guarantees and creates a dangerous asymmetry that harms Ukraine while benefiting the aggressor.

For specialists in strategic communications and security, this text serves as a reminder that peace must be just, not achieved at the expense of a nation's sovereignty.

The magazine issue makes an impression as a thorough analytical product that not only reflects the key trends of November 2025 but also aims to shape a strategic vision for the future of Europe and Ukraine.

The publication demonstrates a high level of professionalism among its authors and editorial team. Particularly valuable is the fact that the magazine covers interconnected areas of security—military, energy, and informational—allowing readers to see a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing Ukraine and its partners, as well as the importance of deep international cooperation.

Notably, the analysis of the new model of European security with Ukraine and without Russia is particularly insightful. This is not just about predictions, but a reflection of the real transformation that is already underway. The magazine clearly shows that Ukraine is ceasing to be merely an object of international politics and is becoming an active shaper of it.



Energy Independence and Sanctions Pressure

The publication highlights issues of Europe's energy independence and the sanctions pressure on Russian companies. It examines steps to diversify energy supplies, develop renewable energy, and improve energy efficiency. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of sanctions in curbing Russia's aggressive policies and their impact on global energy markets.

Information and Hybrid Threats

The magazine also pays significant attention to information and hybrid threats, which are increasingly relevant in today's world. Individual articles explore methods of disinformation, cyberattacks, public opinion manipulation, and the use of social media for propaganda. The authors call for the development of a proactive Western strategy in the information space, including digital literacy initiatives, the creation of independent media, and enhanced preparedness for cyber threats. This approach not only helps protect public opinion but also strengthens democratic institutions in the face of hybrid challenges.

Conclusion: Ukraine's Role in Europe

Overall, the magazine deserves attention from both policymakers and the general public. Its content helps readers gain a deeper understanding of Europe's development trajectory and the role Ukraine plays in this process. Special attention is given to how Ukraine's experience in countering aggression, adapting to energy challenges, and actively participating in shaping continental security policy makes it an important EU partner. Thus, the magazine not only informs but also contributes to forming a strategic vision for cooperation and strengthening security in the European space.



ANNA DOROSH

Expert on European Integration (Government Office for Coordination of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine)

Today, Ukraine's European integration is shaped not only through negotiations or legislative work. It is a complex ecosystem of decisions, analyses, risk assessments, and strategic forecasts. That is why I perceive this issue of the magazine as a comprehensive map of how European security is evolving, which political and energy dynamics will define the coming years, and where Ukraine stands within this landscape.

This issue impresses with the depth of material selection and the balance of topics. You have compiled what is often lost in the daily news flow: a structured understanding of the situation, where each article forms part of a broader picture.

Particularly valuable is the logic that runs throughout the issue: Europe is moving from reactive thinking to the development of its own mechanisms for security, industrial policy, and strategic autonomy. As a specialist in European integration, I appreciate this approach, where information is not fragmented but builds a coherent framework for understanding the future.

Review:

1. "Brussels Welcomes the Progress of Ukraine and Moldova..."

The piece stands out for its honesty and professional focus on issues often left unaddressed by Ukrainian institutions—rule of law remains a key factor for successful negotiations.

The author accurately highlights the risks of selective communication, where the government emphasizes positive messages while ignoring the European Commission's warnings regarding NABU, SAP, and the Constitutional Court. This article is important because it distinguishes between "progress assessment" and "actual implementation"—precisely what is shaping EU enlargement policy today. For anyone working with the *acquis*, this text is a must-read.

2. "The EU Enlargement Pace Risks Stalling Due to the Veto Right"

One of the strongest articles in this issue. It does not merely criticize the unanimity mechanism—it explains why, without its transformation, the EU will be unable to integrate new members.

The issue of Hungary's vetoes concerning Ukraine and Moldova, alongside the example of North Macedonia, is not a technical detail. These are tectonic plates that can slow the entire enlargement process for years.

The article effectively demonstrates that enlargement is not only about political will but also an architectural challenge. It emphasizes that Ukraine must not only complete its homework but also advocate for reforming the enlargement mechanism itself.

The magazine issue clearly emphasizes that the modern world has moved beyond a clearly defined bipolar or even merely multipolar structure. We are living in a period of polycentrism, where international security, economy, and politics are shaped not only by the actions of traditional superpowers but also by networked interactions, regional blocs (such as the EU and NATO), transnational corporations, and global challenges (climate change, cybersecurity, migration).

The journal's articles underscore that classical armed conflicts are now complemented by hybrid wars, which include disinformation, economic pressure, cyberattacks, and energy blackmail. While the role of international organizations (UN, OSCE, WTO) remains important, their capacity for rapid crisis response is often questioned due to the national interests of member states.

The focus on European integration in this issue positions Ukraine not as a periphery but as a key geopolitical hub in Eastern Europe, situated at the forefront of crucial civilizational choices.



IVAN MARCHENKO

Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of International Relations, Director of the Center for Project Activities and Innovations at V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University

Ukraine's Active Role in European Security

It becomes clear that Ukraine must shift from “reactive thinking” to developing its own mechanisms. Ukraine is no longer a passive “buffer” between the West and the East but actively shapes Europe's security architecture. Its struggle is a fight to establish the principle of inviolable borders and the right to sovereign choice across the entire international system.

In practice, through its resistance and military experience, Ukraine has become an informal security donor for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. Its Euro-Atlantic integration (NATO, EU) is not merely a desire for protection but a strategic contribution to the stability of the regional bloc.

Reforms and Democratic Choice

As emphasized in the issue, the reforms Ukraine is undertaking constitute essential “homework” that matters not only for EU accession but also for strengthening democratic institutions globally. Ukraine's success demonstrates the viability of democratic choice even in the face of aggression.

Conclusion: A New Security Architecture

This issue of the magazine is particularly relevant as it allows readers to understand that Ukraine's complex path is not merely an internal process but a tectonic shift in international relations. It symbolizes a transformation in the security architecture and the formation of a new political landscape, where the principles of law and sovereignty prevail over the politics of force.



EEYES – a space for youth shaping the future today!

EEYES is the youth initiative of the International Charitable Foundation “UDONATION”. It is a platform that showcases talented young people and opens doors to new opportunities for growth, learning, and self-realization. Here, young individuals gain hands-on experience, unlock their potential, and actively contribute to building a vibrant intellectual and cultural community.

Within EEYES Insight Lab, analytical research is conducted, while events—such as house concerts, open lectures, panel discussions, and forums—serve as a platform for exchanging ideas. A key focus is cultural representation in Berlin, where international debates and meetings with partners take place. The Instagram feed highlights current events, and work on grant applications ensures the sustainability of projects. Each direction includes internship opportunities, so participants gain not only knowledge but also practical experience.

EEYES is an environment where young voices are heard and ideas are transformed into real action.



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