



**UNIVERSITY OF PIRAEUS  
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, BUSINESS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STUDIES  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN AMERICAN STUDIES: POLITICS, STRATEGY AND ECONOMICS**

**MSc THESIS**

***“Is American Power over Europe in decline? An assessment after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022”***

**AUTHOR: ANDRONIKI K. FATLE**

**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR ARISTOTLE TZIAMPIRIS**

**PIRAEUS, 2025**

Το έργο που εκπονήθηκε και παρουσιάζεται στην υποβαλλόμενη διπλωματική εργασία είναι αποκλειστικά ατομικά δικό μου. Όποιες πληροφορίες και υλικό που περιέχονται έχουν αντληθεί από άλλες πηγές, έχουν καταλλήλως αναφερθεί στην παρούσα διπλωματική εργασία. Επιπλέον, τελώ εν γνώσει ότι σε περίπτωση διαπίστωσης ότι δεν συντρέχουν όσα βεβαιώνονται από μέρους μου, μου αφαιρείται ανά πάσα στιγμή αμέσως ο τίτλος.

The intellectual work fulfilled and submitted based on the delivered master thesis is exclusive property of mine personally. Appropriate credit has been given in this diploma thesis regarding any information and material included in it that have been derived from other sources. I am also fully aware that any misrepresentation in connection with this declaration may at any time result in immediate revocation of the degree title.

Androniki K. Fatle

*To my beloved son and parents*

# **IS AMERICAN POWER OVER EUROPE IN DECLINE? AN ASSESSMENT AFTER RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE IN 2022.**

Androniki K. Fatle

**Keywords:** power, transatlantic relations, strategic autonomy, deterrence, security and defense.

## **Abstract**

The analysis presented in this thesis focuses on the evolution and resilience of American power over Europe in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 while clarifying the conceptual framework of power based on the distinction among hard, soft and smart power. The historical overview revolves around the progression of American prominence throughout Europe during the period 1991 - 2021, the phases of unipolar dominance, the tensions following September 11, the rupture after the five-day war in Georgia and the events in Crimea towards drawing conclusions with regard to the extent of US supremacy's maintenance and Europe's growing capabilities. Methodologically, the thesis is structured upon a literature review derived from academic research, official NATO and EU documents, US governmental reports, analyses and intergovernmental texts while it refers to the period between 1991 and 2025 with particular emphasis on the post-2022 sequence of incidents.

According to the thesis' conclusions, American power in Europe is not in decline but under reformation since the US retains its internationally leading role based to a large extent on the exertion of hard power, such as ISR, command and control, missile defense and nuclear deterrence with its institutional influence within NATO remaining pivotal. Nevertheless, political control appears to be increasingly conditional and subject to negotiation and legitimacy with European actors requiring more extensive autonomy on economic and diplomatic issues. Thus, the current war between Russia and Ukraine reveals a transition from US's former unchallenged hegemony to a reformed state of supremacy within which even though American leadership is retained it has to be constantly reaffirmed.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	p. 4
<b>Introduction</b> .....	p. 7
<b>Chapter 1: The concept of power</b> .....	p. 9
<b>1.1. Definitions of Power</b> .....	p. 9
<b>1.2. The role of power in the international system</b> .....	p. 11
<b>1.3. Hard, Soft and Smart Power</b> .....	p. 12
<b>1.3.1. Hard Power</b> .....	p. 13
<b>1.3.2. Soft Power</b> .....	p. 14
<b>1.4. Soft and Hard power in the International System</b> .....	p. 15
<b>1.5. Smart Power</b> .....	p. 16
<b>Chapter 2: A historical overview of American power over Europe (1991–2025)</b> p. 18	
<b>2.1 The timeline of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022</b> .....	p. 18
<b>2.2 Post-Cold War “Unipolar Moment” (1991–2001)</b> .....	p. 19
<b>2.3 Post -9/11 and transatlantic tensions (2001–2014)</b> .....	p. 21
<b>2.4 The turning point of Georgia (Crimea/Donbas, NATO adaptation)</b> .....	p. 23
<b>Chapter 3: U.S. Military Power in Europe following Russian’s Invasion of Ukraine in 2022</b> p. 26	
<b>3.1. US forces’ missions (Enhanced Forward Presence, EFP / Operation Atlantic Resolve - OAR) nuclear sharing and training programs</b> .....	p. 26
<b>3.2. Security and training for Ukraine: Composition and scale of US assistance and American involvement</b> .....	p. 28
<b>3.2.1 Air defense: Patriot and NASAMS</b> .....	p. 28
<b>3.2.2. Weapons, armor, and ISR capabilities</b> .....	p. 29
<b>3.2.3. Training Programs</b> .....	p. 31
<b>3.3. Contemporary relations (2023-2025) and the Second Presidency of Donald Trump (2025)</b> .....	p. 33
<b>3.3.1. Capacity and enlargement of the Alliance. The accession of Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024): implications for Baltic security and the influence of the US administration</b> p. 33	
<b>3.3.2. The Second Presidency of Donald Trump (2025): Leveraging the war towards establishing US supremacy over Europe</b> .....	p. 34
<b>Chapter 4: Is American Power over Europe in decline after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022?</b> .....	p. 36

<b>4.1. Military Supremacy and Hard power .....</b>	<b>p. 36</b>
<b>4.2. Control, policy and strategic autonomy .....</b>	<b>p. 37</b>
<b>4.3. Institutional leverage: NATO and the EU .....</b>	<b>p. 37</b>
<b>4.4. US leadership and legitimacy .....</b>	<b>p. 39</b>
<b>4.5. Is American power over Europe in decline following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022? .....</b>	<b>p.40</b>
<b>4.5.1 Biden's (2021-2025) and Trump's (2025-) Presidencies and their Effects on American Influence in Europe .....</b>	<b>p. 42</b>
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>p. 43</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>p. 45</b>

## Introduction

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has been widely interpreted as a turning point with regard to European security, reigniting questions concerning deterrence, NATO Alliance's cohesion and the Euro-Atlantic distribution of power. The sequence of incidents following the invasion reflects a complex restructuring phase. More specifically, European capabilities are being reinforced, NATO is being characterized by adaptation to the new geopolitical and economic conditions and the United States remains the leading power in sectors such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), command and control, integrated air and missile defense, strategic transport and nuclear security and deterrence with its political influence being increasingly conditional, contested and subject to negotiations.

The first chapter addresses the concept of power, a central framework for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of politics and international relations. Power, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective, reflects states' and institutions' capability to influence outcomes, form preferences and determine the structure of the international system geopolitically and economically. As the concept of power is multidimensional and often contested, the chapter's introductory paragraphs focus on analyzing its focal definitions, ranging from Robert Dahl's relational approach to Joseph Nye's emphasis on attraction, legitimacy and narrative control. These perspectives demonstrate primarily that power does not equal to the mere possession of resources and should be examined in terms of its efficiency, particularly with regard to its conversion into influence. Subsequently, the significance of power in the international system is analyzed, underscoring its role in relation to alliances' formations, institutional order and systemic stability. In addition, a distinction among hard, soft and smart power is drawn, alongside references to their respective mechanisms, limitations and strategic reciprocity, thus, providing the essential theoretical foundation for the thesis' analysis and conclusions.

The analysis continues with a timeline of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, focusing on the events occurred between 2022 and 2025 during the war in Ukraine with particular emphasis on the maintenance and further consolidation of US leadership within NATO, the profound rapid increase of European defense initiatives, further sanctions regimes and diplomatic strategies which complicate the concept of American leadership. During the third chapter, US military strategies in Europe following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), the Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) as well as nuclear sharing agreements and training programs for Ukrainian forces are examined within the scope of American and European approaches to the issue. The fourth chapter assesses focal indicators of power such as capability, control, institutional influence and legitimacy and their relation to the question under analysis. A historical review of America's influence throughout Europe is demonstrated in the following chapter and more specifically, with regard to the evolution of American power since the "unipolar period" after the end of the Cold War, transatlantic relations in the

post-September 11 era and the rupture of 2014 following Russia's annexation of Crimea, identifying the crucial factors determining US's leading role internationally as well as the periodic crises of legitimacy.

An approach based on the dimensions of institutional power (rules and agenda-setting within the NATO/EU), ideological legitimacy (soft power, reputation and prestige), realists' perceptions on hard power, institutional analyses regarding alliances' formations and constructivist theories on legitimacy and identity is adopted in this thesis. In the context of the current war between Russia and Ukraine, the US has played a crucially decisive role in reinforcing Ukrainian military operations, mainly owing to its multilateral air defense support alongside the integration of precision strikes and targeting reinforced by ISR. NATO's adaptation based on expanded combat forces, higher levels of preparedness and the institutionalization of training and assistance to Ukraine reflects American strategic patterns associated with doctrine, integration and logistics in warfare. Furthermore, the accession of Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) has strengthened NATO's collective security, defense and deterrence mechanisms and strategic presence in the European Arctic and Baltic Sea regions significantly, aligned with US priorities and policies. On the other hand, increased European action, EU-funding in favor of Ukraine's macroeconomic stability as well as diplomatic oppositions regarding the sequencing of sanctions, energy policy and the narrative related to the ceasefire reveal a transactional negotiation pattern between the US and Europe.

A distinction between structural dependence and political subordination is also highlighted in this analysis. More specifically, Europe remains reliant on US strategic assets (space ISR, integrated air and missile defense etc.), nevertheless, political subordination to Washington has decreased, as the EU examines US proposals through national and European filters, challenges rhetorical formulations and increasingly demands joint strategy planning. Consequently, the co-existence of dependence and reduced deference creates a pattern within which the United States retains its vital roles in the technological and operational core of European defense whereas its influence over the political periphery is mediated by the reinforcement of European capabilities and the fostering of institutions.

Moreover, further ambiguity appears to be arising from the aspect of legitimacy. The previously uncontested appeal of the US, primarily based on a broad liberal narrative, nowadays depends more on the credibility of performance, the implementation of its commitments and the equal distribution of responsibilities. The second presidency of Donald Trump since 2025 has emphasized this transitional phase by linking support for Ukraine to strict economic and strategic limitations, igniting European risk mitigation through dialogue on autonomy, further investment on its security and defense mechanisms and diversification of supplies.

## Chapter 1: The concept of power

### 1.1. Definitions of Power

Within the framework of the international system, power is often defined as a player's ability to exert a decisive direct or indirect impact on the potential sequence of others' actions or the rising of conflicts. Even though there are several academic approaches regarding the concept of power, American political scientist Robert A. Dahl's definition is considered to be one of the most significant and accurate ones, having been based on the study of observable relations and interactions. According to Dahl, power is relational, comparative and counterfactual, as A exerts power over B to the extent that A imposes on B by leading him to actions which would not otherwise proceed to. This approach focuses on both the ability to influence and the actual exercise of power, removing ambiguous abstractions and translating power into more measurable conclusions and in addition, his definition allows analysts to draw conclusions through the comparison of players' relative power in diverse situations as well as by monitoring the degree of their success in affecting others' behavior. Crucially, Dahl distinguishes power from resources as the possession of resources does not invariably translate into power unless it is effectively converted into influence over outcomes, pointing out that resources are not equivalent to power; on the contrary, power depends on the ability to utilize resources effectively. His theoretical framework also lays the foundation for ranking actors in terms of their ability to influence policies, alliances or negotiations. By underscoring observable behavior and decision-making processes, Dahl has contributed significantly to the evolution of power from a mere philosophical concept to an effective empirical tool for analysts (Dahl, 1957).

From American political scientist Joseph Nye's point of view, power is defined as the ability to achieve desired outcomes through inducing and forming others' decisions and actions, highlighting that influence - primarily in the contemporary digital era - increasingly derives from legitimacy, credibility and gaining control over the narrative rather than solely from coercion. In addition, he introduced the concept of "smart power" as a strategic compound of both hard and soft power in context - sensitive situations, claiming that in the majority of cases military supremacy is not equivalent to economic superiority while financial means are rarely sufficient in terms of political realignment without the reinforcement of status and reputation. Therefore, he concludes that leadership requires cultivating appeal through culture, values, and institutions alongside the development of coercive skills for deterrence and assurance purposes.

Nye also argues that the dissemination of information results in the redistribution of the ability to set agendas and play a prominent role regarding networks, NGOs, companies and individuals through attracting trust and attention as well as by gaining access to platforms of rare strategic assets (Nye, 2008). Subsequently, states benefit from investing in public diplomacy, cultural and educational exchanges and standard setting while aligning their policies with widely accepted norms. From this perspective, power is viewed as relational and executional while its effectiveness relies on credibility,

audience receptivity and the selection of the appropriate means required in relation to the issues at stake (Nye, 2008).

Moreover, Nye and Keohane challenge realists' assumptions of a single, militarily, dominant hierarchy by introducing complex interdependence according to which societies are interconnected through multiple, diverse channels, military power is often irrelevant to a wide range of issues arising while there is no specific order of agendas. Under such conditions, power is transformed into a context - specific concept since capabilities are not considered to be prerequisites for a dominant role in the geopolitical and economic scene whereas players experience interdependence and vulnerability which may reverse expected asymmetries. International regimes and institutions mediate interactions by providing information, reducing uncertainty and shaping expectations, thereby, crucially redefining interests and benefits (Nye & Keohane, 1977).

Consecutively, states benefit not solely from the accumulation of resources but also from creating and occupying institutional positions, establishing rules and setting agendas alongside standardization which, in effect, lead to a rapidly increasing exertion of influence and higher status. Since sanctions and similar counter-measures are not effective under all circumstances requiring immediate and drastic actions, Nye and Keohane introduced a strategic framework, highlighting the politics of inter-connections, reputation assets and credible commitments. This model reframes and redefines power as the ability to control agendas and issues as well as coordinate networks rather than the direct exertion of pressure, thus, explaining why smaller or less militarized states have extensive influence on trade, finance and governance (Nye & Keohane, 1977).

On the other hand, scholar of international relations Stefano Guzzini criticizes neorealism for reducing the concept of power to the distribution of capabilities, proposing a distinction between "power" focused on taking action and "governance" at a systemic level. More specifically, he argues that power is relational as actors utilize resources within the context of social relations while governance refers to interpersonal structures, practices and norms which produce outcomes beyond the scope of specific intentions. In essence, Guzzini focuses on structural power, clarifying its role of shaping capabilities and widely accepted strategies, therefore, forming what is considered to be reasonable before any interaction. On the basis of this theoretical approach, it is claimed that states benefit primarily by disseminating models of authority and by codifying expertise as well as through the institutionalization of widely accepted practices (Guzzini, 1993).

Methodologically, Guzzini redirects the analysis from "materialistic" perspectives to the processes through which concepts, expectations and identities are being established, highlighting the integration of means to social context. Conclusively, power is not perceived merely as the ability to impose specific behavioral patterns on others but also to define the scope of potential actions through historically established patterns of governance (Guzzini, 1993).

Philosopher Dorothy Emmet's definition of power highlights its conceptual complexity as well as its multiple and often contradictory connotations claiming that in political philosophy, theology and social theory the concept of power has been used interchangeably with terms such as strength, superiority,

influence and authority leading, inevitably, to several misinterpretations as well as obstacles regarding further analysis since each term refers to various social or political dimensions. Therefore, Emmet suggests that each of these concepts should be clarified, claiming that power should not be perceived as universal or transformative. In addition, by drawing analogies deriving from scientific concepts such as energy, she conceives power as the ability to produce measurable outcomes within the context of relations and interactions. In her analysis, power is central to politics as its role in the formation of players' relations is fundamental and does not exist independently of other factors whereas its meaning changes depending on the context (Emmet, 1971).

Political scientist David A. Baldwin's main contribution to the debate over the meaning and the conceptual dimensions of power is his clarification of the distinctions among power, influence and force. He criticizes definitions and conceptions of power as synonymous with military or economic superiority arguing that such simplifications obscure the dynamic processes correlated indispensably with power and highlighting its relational, issue-specific and context-dependent dimensions. Furthermore, Baldwin distinguishes power (legitimate, institutionalized authority) from influence (the ability to persuade or shape decisions and actions) and coercive power (exertion of force or threats), providing a framework for a thorough assessment and comparison among factors and strategies related to power without obfuscating fundamentally different concepts. Thus, his work alters the analysis of power towards a multidimensional perception acknowledging the influence of a wide range of factors – beyond materialistic and economic parameters - which determine the form of domestic and international relations (Baldwin, 1989).

## **1.2. The role of power in the international system**

From realists' and neorealists' perspective, power is viewed as the main and most crucial factor regarding states' survival within an international system characterized by anarchy. Nevertheless, their theoretical analysis differs as far as the source of power is concerned; realists focus on military and economic supremacy alongside diplomacy while neorealists' perspective lies primarily in power distribution and the international system's structure. Therefore, these views on power as a capability and a means for states to deter threats and exert influence over their rivals comprise the basis for policy decisions on alliance-building, deterrence, and competition in the security sphere (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

According to the aforementioned theories, power stems essentially from the anarchic state characterizing the international system and constitutes a central and fundamental principle in international relations, affecting to a large extent states' policies, the world order's structure and the prospects for alliances or conflict. As a result, it is argued that it is essential for actors to rely on their own capabilities in order to ensure their survival, thus, elevating power to a fundamental strategic resource (Waltz, 2011).

Furthermore, it is claimed that power constitutes the cornerstone of the international system's distributional structure which is often perceived within the scope of polarity or the dynamics of the balance of power. Whether a system is unipolar, bipolar or multipolar depends on the way power is

distributed among states with profound implications regarding stability, conflict and alliances. A hegemonic power may stabilize a system through law enforcement and welfare while power transitions or increasing multipolarity may induce instability or conflict. Therefore, analyzing the distribution of power is considered to be crucial for proceeding to predictions concerning the international order, coalitions' formation as well as systemic changes (Ijaz et al., 2024).

Besides the aforementioned, power's role is also considered to be decisive in the light of setting agendas' context, forming the institutional order as well as inducing law enforcement and establishing international regimes, thus, global affairs. This dimension, often called "structural" or "normative" power, affects to a considerable extent the ways states interpret legitimacy, how crises are managed as well as the actors who prevail in international negotiations (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

In addition, power influences the way in which non-state actors and global networks interact with states and contribute to the dissemination of influence. In the era of globalization and networked communication, power is scarcely monopolized by states. Transnational corporations and organizations, civil society and informative networks play an increasingly decisive role in shaping international outcomes and reinforcing, constraining or undermining state power, depending on their ability to mobilize resources or influence public opinion. Thus, within this framework, examining the interaction between state and non-state actors and the ways power is transferred through diplomacy, trade and ideological channels is considered to be a prerequisite for proceeding to the analysis of the concept of power within the international system (Castells, 2015).

Furthermore, power is often closely linked to processes of transition, stability and crises in international politics. More specifically, it is argued that rising and declining power-states may transform the existing order leading to the creation of new governance structures. Power differences and perceptions of relative gains play a significant role in forming strategies whether states seek balance or to challenge the existing systemic order. Therefore, the ways in which power increases or is challenged provide a significant background for an effective correlation of war and diplomacy to the international order as well as for analyzing the long-term evolution of world politics (Raimzhanova, 2015).

In conclusion, power remains essential to the analysis of international relations as a capacity for coercion and deterrence, a structural principle for global polarity, a force forming institutional and regulatory orders, a means through which networks and non-state actors exert influence and a driving force of systemic transition and instability. Gaining thorough insights of this multifaceted concept is claimed to be essential for the interpretation of states' strategies and assessments of the international order.

### **1.3. Hard, Soft and Smart Power**

One of the most significant approaches to power is its division into hard and soft. These two categories refer to different methods and strategies employed for achieving desired outcomes. More specifically, hard power is based on coercion and persuasion, primarily through military and economic means, soft power stems from attraction, persuasion, legitimacy and the dissemination of choices and preferences

through culture, rules and institutions whereas smart power is a combination of the aforementioned main division.

### **1.3.1. Hard Power**

In general, hard power refers to states' ability to ensure certain outcomes mainly through coercion, materialistic incentives, military force, economic supremacy and financial means. Conceptually, it includes deterrence alongside the power to impose sanctions which often counteract an adversary's strategies based on cost-benefit calculations. Despite the crucial role of hard power in cases of territorial defense and crises' management, its effectiveness is often very specific and time-limited since it provokes compliance without reinforcing consensus, thus, leading to risks of counteractions, legitimacy deficits and security dilemmas, especially in cases of incompatibility with political contexts. Consequently, it is considered to be of vital importance that contemporary strategies are adopted by adapting the implementation of coercive methods to political objectives, taking into account the limits of cross-sectoral convertibility from military or economic superiority to stable political influence (Smith-Windsor, 2000; Nye, 2008).

This form of power remains focal in realists' international relations theories according to which states prioritize their survival, security and defense mechanisms through military preparedness due to the international system's anarchic structure (Mearsheimer, 2001). From this perspective, the exertion of power serves as the ultimate guarantor of dominance and deterrence against external threats. In addition, economic power expressed through sanctions, trade restrictions or control over financial systems aims at compelling rivals to compromise, retreat or surrender as evidenced, for instance, through the sanctions regimes against apartheid in South Africa or similar contemporary measures targeting Iran and Russia. Such examples demonstrate the ways tangible resources enable states to have a direct, constraining impact on their rival states' strategies and countermeasures (Baldwin, 2016).

Nevertheless, a state's sole reliance on hard power may lead to structural dilemmas since military reinforcement often provokes countervailing measures by adversaries which gradually may undermine stability, a phenomenon which is described as the "security dilemma" (Jervis, 1978). Furthermore, economic pressure is often undermined by asymmetries in interdependence and the ability of target states to adapt, diversify or seek alternative alliances. Consequently, while hard power may induce the exertion of direct and immediate influence, its sustainability and legitimacy remain limited, especially in the contemporary era of globalization during which pressure is increasingly controlled by international institutions, mass media and transnational actors (Kirshner, 1997).

Furthermore, military interventions, economic embargoes and generally coercive enforcement often do not encompass voluntary compliance or legitimacy with underlying oppositions often remaining unresolved. For instance, the punitive measures imposed on Germany following World War I led to short-term suppression, however, long-term resentment was provoked, thus, exacerbating conflicts. Conversely, strategies which integrate coercion into measures reinforcing legitimacy tend to lead to more stable political outcomes (Gallarotti, 2011).

In general, hard power remains the prevailing form of influence in international relations and it is considered to be essential for defending territorial rights in relation to immediate response to crises and deterring adversaries. For instance, American President Donald Trump's governance may be viewed as a demonstration of hard power's exertion by prioritizing trade disputes, reinforcing military capabilities and using sanctions as a means of pressure against adversaries such as Iran, North Korea and China. On the other hand, Ivanov's article (2020) highlights the limitations of hard power. More specifically, it is argued that the use of conventional types of force against dispersed or "invisible" enemies, such as terrorist groups, often leads to counterproductive results and in addition, the systematic adoption of means is usually followed by the risk of backlash, isolation and loss of legitimacy. Hard power may lead to short - term compliance, however, it rarely results in sustainable cooperation or long-term alignment since coercive methods restricts it from confronting the 21st century's multidimensional challenges effectively (Ivanov, 2020).

### **1.3.2. Soft Power**

According to Joseph Nye's definition, soft power is the skill to shape preferences and choices by means of attraction, persuasion and legitimacy rather than coercion, exploiting resources such as cultural appeal and political values (Nye, 2004). Its mechanisms are consensual rather than violent and incorporate agendas' setting and the dissemination of rules and practices. In essence, soft power relies primarily on credibility and perceptions of legitimacy, therefore, governments are not the only source of soft power; civil society, universities, industries and international media networks play a vital role in the formation of narratives and reputations (Cooper, 2004). A crucial element of this form of power is consistency, since it is argued that contradictions between the rhetoric sphere and reality undermine credibility (Nye, 2019).

In the contemporary, saturated with information, international environment attention and trust emerge as rare and valuable strategic resources. As Nye (2019) points out, soft power acts as a force multiplier, enhancing the efficiency of military and economic power, reducing resistance and inducing voluntary compliance and realignment. For instance, the appeal of American culture and democratic ideals played a decisive role in undermining the legitimacy of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, a victory achieved less through direct confrontation and more through the attraction of values and alternative ways of life. Unlike hard power which imposes action but provokes resistance, soft power creates a fundamental network which fosters long-lasting cooperation through voluntary consent (Nye, 2019).

The contemporary rapid technological progress and information revolution have increased the importance of soft power to a large extent, democratizing access to communication platforms and allowing multiple actors, such as states, companies, NGOs and individuals to form the global narrative. Due to the dramatic reduction in the cost of transmission and information storage and dissemination, political influence increasingly relies on credibility as well as the ability to attract attention in the global arena. Nowadays, information spreads at unprecedented speed alongside misinformation and propagandas, therefore, the necessity for resilience and trust fostering arises. In this context, public diplomacy has evolved into a more interactive process while multilateral exchanges, educational programs and collaborative projects play an increasingly decisive role in soft power strategies, as they

gradually create and form international state networks based on mutual trust (Cooper, 2004). Furthermore, according to Ivanov (2020), soft power is linked to attraction, persuasion and legitimacy, thus, shaping the preferences of other states.

Joseph Nye's theoretical background is considered to be of crucial significance, as it refers to culture, values, diplomacy and legitimate policies as the fundamental pillars of soft power. For example, former US President Barack Obama's governance demonstrated this approach by investing primarily in alliance reinforcement and international diplomacy which proved to be prevailing both domestically and internationally. Nevertheless, soft power is not "immediate", as it depends on credibility, reputation and long-term consistency between stated values and actions. It is argued that civil society, universities, the media and industries can contribute to a larger extent to shaping international order through soft power than governments, as legitimacy cannot be constructed exclusively by state institutions. In addition, the information revolution has enhanced the importance of soft power by democratizing communication and allowing non-state actors to form global narratives. However, over-reliance on soft power is accompanied by the risk of making states appear weak or ineffective in their defense. Thus, while soft power is enduring and consensual, it requires reinforcement by other means in order to remain effective (Ivanov, 2020).

Unlike hard power, through which compliance can be proven to be immediate in the absence of coercion, soft power requires patience. Its accumulation is gradual and depends on the alignment of domestic values alongside the implementation of certain foreign policy strategies and the credibility of commitments (Nye, 2004). Furthermore, the effectiveness of soft power depends on a specific context; cultural exports or political ideals which resonate in a certain region may not be applied in the same or similar way in other geographical areas due to historical legacies, different social norms or competing ideological narratives (Nye, 2019).

Nevertheless, according to the aforementioned theory, soft power has been proven to be essential in an interconnected global order where legitimacy, cooperation and reputation form outcomes alongside economic supremacy. More specifically, it provides states with a means of influence which requires the exploitation of far less financial resources than the financing of a state's armed forces and in addition, it is more sustainable and often more effective than the exertion of mere coercive power. As a result, several contemporary international relations analysts view soft power not merely as an alternative to hard power but as a complementary strategic dimension of states' policies which enhances resilience and legitimacy in global politics.

#### **1.4. Soft and Hard power in the International System**

First of all it should be mentioned that hard and soft power are not distinct categories; they co-exist within a spectrum ranging from coercion to persuasion. The effectiveness of each means depends on the specific context, the target audience, and the issue at stake (Smith-Windsor, 2000). Military or economic superiority, for instance, may be proven to be an advantage in deterrence or conflict situations, however, this form of power does not lead under all circumstances in influence or dominance over trade regimes, environmental governance or politics based on culture and identity (Gallarotti,

2011). Conversely, cultural appeal or normative influence is difficult to replace hard power as far as security guarantees under conditions of direct military aggression are concerned (Nye, 2008).

Moreover, an additional significant aspect to consider has been argued to be the principle of non-substitutability of resources. Coercive tools, such as the use of force or sanctions, often lead to the desired outcomes promptly, however, they tend to lead to fragile compliance, as the coerced actor remains resistant. In contrast, soft power strategies, for instance cultural influence, may develop gradually but tend to result in long-term and voluntary alignment. Therefore, the degree of effectiveness of hard or soft power does not solely depend on the possession of financial or materialistic resources but on the skillful application through strategies which are highly relevant and applicable to a specific situation (Smith-Windsor, 2000; Gallarotti, 2011).

### **1.5. Smart Power**

Smart power is presented as the analogical synthesis of coercion and attraction, combining hard and soft power in a mutually reinforcing manner. Nye (2004; 2019) defines it as a strategic framework encompassing military and economic power, alliances, public diplomacy and institutional cooperation, aiming at global leadership (Nye, 2004; 2019).

Smart power refers to the strategic combination of hard and soft power resources in order to maximize a country's influence in the international system. Conceptually, when states rely exclusively on coercive means, such as military force or economic sanctions, their marginal productivity often declines leading to their diminishing influence and increasing resistance by their rivalries. Conversely, over-reliance on persuasion and attraction may result in resorting to soft power, under which states usually lack the ability to coerce or defend themselves under urgent circumstances or crises. In both cases, influence is limited, demonstrating that the optimal balance lies in a differentiation between these two forms of power (Armitage & Nye, 2007; Wilson, 2008).

The concept of smart power highlights the effectiveness of balancing resources according to relative productivity since in cases where coercive power becomes less effective, the exertion of soft power may restore legitimacy and credibility. On the other hand, when attraction proves to be insufficient, means of coercion provide the required degree of force in order for compliance to be ensured. For example, U.S. strategies regarding nuclear non-proliferation have often resorted to sanctions alongside diplomatic engagement while China has combined naval deployments in the South China Sea with cooperation and regional assistance. These cases demonstrate the way an inter-twinned approach may enhance both the credibility and sustainability of influence (Gallarotti, 2015). Therefore, smart power emerges more as a practical necessity for achieving long-lasting and legitimate influence in a complex global order than as a theoretical compromise (Nossel, 2004). For instance, Obama's foreign policy is viewed as a demonstration of smart power by proceeding to counterterrorism operations alongside international diplomacy and economic integration. Nevertheless, Ernest Wilson considers smart power less as a strategy and more as a capability, questioning whether any state may effectively institutionalize it as a balance, taking into consideration the economic, political, and informational requirements (Ivanov, 2020).

In addition, Leslie Gelb criticizes Nye's model defining it as a mechanical combination rather than a genuine synthesis, while Paul Cammack argues that it diminishes hard power provoking the undermining of sovereignty. Despite the aforementioned arguments, Ivanov's article (2020) concludes that smart power provides the most flexible and constructive balance as it prevents potential backlashes deriving from the exertion of coercive power while addressing challenges and conflicts with caution. In practice, it allows states to deter their rivals while maintaining legitimacy and cooperation in a multipolar, post-pandemic international system (Ivanov, 2020).

## **Chapter 2: A historical overview of American power over Europe (1991–2025)**

The evolution of American power in Europe since the end of the Cold War demonstrates the enduring, central and crucial role of the United States in the formation and establishment of Euro-Atlantic security, as well as during the multilateral conflicts challenging occasionally transatlantic cohesion. Since the unipolar period of the 1990s, while American hegemony had reached its peak, to the turmoil of the post-9/11 era and the geopolitical rupture after Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 as well as in 2014 following Russia's annexation of Crimea, the US remained indispensable to European stability. Each of these phases, which reveal distinct dynamics, will be analyzed below. The consolidation of American leadership in the 1990s was followed by a series of transatlantic tensions in the early 2000s over legitimacy and strategy as well as by the subsequent reaffirmation of US military engagement in response to Russian aggression. A thorough examination of this historical retrospective may be viewed as a cornerstone, essential for gaining a deeper understanding of the resilience, adaptability, and potential limits of American power in Europe during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war which broke out on February 24, 2022 up to the present day.

### **2.1 The timeline of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022**

Russia's full-scale armed forces' invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 marked a significant turning point in European and international security. The attack caused an immediate military and diplomatic response. More specifically, Ukraine declared martial law, mobilized its forces and applied for EU membership while Western states imposed sanctions and expanded their military support in favor of Ukraine. International organizations such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Atomic Energy Agency became involved, reflecting both humanitarian concerns and fears of escalation, especially following the incident at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. During 2022, the war intensified leading to several civilian casualties and the illegal annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson by the Russian armed forces. At the same time, NATO expanded its strategic measures, granting accession protocols to Finland and Sweden while the European Union upgraded Ukraine to candidate member status (Kusa, 2022; Walker, 2025; Erameh et al., 2023; Fella, 2022).

In 2023, the conflict entered a more consolidated and escalated phase. Western support was reinforced further by the supply of long-range missiles and relentless diplomatic contacts with Ukraine towards gaining NATO membership as well as by NATO's establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Council in Vilnius. Furthermore, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for Vladimir Putin's arrest demonstrating, as a result, the legal dimension of the conflict. Russia kept fostering its cooperation with Belarus, China, and North Korea whereas Western countries proceeded to the intensification of their sanctions. In addition, Prigozhin's rebellion in June failed to alter Moscow's strategy; Russia maintained its territorial claims, Ukraine resisted concessions and Western powers incorporated their support for Kiev into long-term security and reconstruction frameworks (Walker, 2025; Konończuk & Menkiszak, 2023; Kim, 2025; NATO, 2025).

During 2024, further consolidation of alliances and institutional reforms took place. More specifically, Ukraine secured bilateral security agreements with key Western countries, the European Union approved a €50 billion aid package and NATO welcomed Sweden as its 32nd member. At the same time, Ukraine ratified the Rome Statute, strengthening its legal means against Russian hostility whereas Putin was re-elected in a tightly controlled vote, thus, extending his power despite international accusations against him. From a diplomatic perspective, the Peace Conference in Switzerland revealed substantial support in favor of Ukraine's sovereignty. However, certain countries in the Southern Hemisphere such as China did not provide their consent while Donald Trump's return to the US presidency at the end of 2024 was accompanied by uncertainty regarding transatlantic unity (Defence Intelligence Agency, 2024; Allen & Ravid, 2025; Polityuk & Balmforth, 2024).

The events during 2025 depict ambiguous strategies and mainly diplomacy, tactical pressure and peace initiatives which, in general, reflect reluctance. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer signed a 100-year cooperation agreement with Ukraine while American President Donald Trump resumed dialogue with Putin including a major summit meeting in Alaska. However, these efforts led to strained relations with Kyiv with the latter rejecting any further negotiations taking place in the absence of Ukrainian participation. Furthermore, controversy arose between Zelensky and Trump over the terms of a potential ceasefire in spite of certain humanitarian agreements which were reached such as the exchange of prisoners. NATO and EU continued to provide Ukraine with assistance, however, divergent strategies between Washington and European capitals complicated the process of reaching a consensus on a sustainable solution (Roth, et al., 2025; Jordan, 2025; Shahid & Qaisar, 2025).

On the whole, the current war between Russia and Ukraine appears to have been transformed into a protracted confrontation redefining European and international security, marked by a series of incidents of major significance such as Ukraine's reinforcement of its integration into Western institutions, Russia's reliance on authoritarian allies, the unprecedented scale of Western military and economic support alongside continuous, however, not highly efficient diplomatic initiatives. By 2026, the conflict remains unresolved, symbolizing both the fragility of the international order and the constant struggle related to sovereignty, territorial integrity and the strategic politics of power - states.

## **2.2 Post-Cold War “Unipolar Moment” (1991–2001)**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was of crucial significance in the international geopolitical and economic scene, transforming the former bipolar order which had shaped the world map since 1945 into a new international system characterized by the overwhelming superiority and hegemony of the United States. Scholars, researchers and policymakers have been referring to this period as a “unipolar moment”, a term invented by Charles Krauthammer in order to capture the unprecedented power gap between the United States and all other states. Unlike previous historical hegemonies, American supremacy in the 1990s extended to the economic, military and cultural spheres, creating an international environment without the emergence of powerful rival states (Krauthammer, 2003, p. 5-6).

Following the end of the Cold War, the early 1990s was signified by unparalleled opportunities for the United States as its economy dominated global production and innovation while its military and defense

expenditure exceeded those of all other power states. This dual advantage allowed the US to project its power and influence on an international level in contrast to the Cold War period during which the Soviet Union kept imposing restrictions on American policies. The 1990s was also marked by American interventionism in areas of secondary strategic importance, particularly in the Balkans. For instance, the settlement of conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo highlighted NATO's essentiality and efficiency alongside the role of the US as a catalyst accompanied by its leverage effect in this context, confirming that European stability remained dependent on American leadership (Cobaleda, 2020, p. 8-15).

Beyond its hard power, the United States exercised significant soft power, as well, a term initially used by Joseph Nye in 1990, underscoring attraction, persuasion and cultural influence as complementary to traditional forms of coercion. More specifically, American cultural influence, political ideals and the capability to form institutions reinforced the consolidation of the liberal international order (Flockhart, 2014). Initiatives such as the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) integrated the former Warsaw Pact states and non-aligned countries into Euro-Atlantic structures, expanding, as a result, American influence to Eastern Europe. For many post-communist states, alignment with the US-led order was synonymous with security, modernization and the consolidation of democracy (NATO, 2022).

A further dimension of this unipolar condition lies in the ideological dispute over "legitimate" forms of power. As Grazia (2021) notes in her article, the 1990s was characterized to a significant extent by the prevalence of the American concept of soft power. American institutions, the mass media and cultural exports promoted constantly the values of liberal democracy and free trade, thereby, reinforcing the perception of America as both a hegemonic power and an international regulatory leader (Grazia, 2021).

Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union, alongside with Eastern threats, altered the European defense and security scene radically. Without having to confront any powerful rival states, the US assumed its role more in conflict resolution and crises management rather than in defending Western Europe. In addition, the American government emphasized the significance of nuclear non-proliferation, ensuring successfully the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995. The aforementioned policies highlighted that competition among states, "rogue states" and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction were American supremacy's major threats (European Leadership Network, 2024).

At the other end of the scale, Europe gradually began to develop its own opposing concept as the regulatory power of the Continent. Even though this perception only gained significance in the early 2000s, its roots may be traced to the decade following the Cold War during which the European Union sought to expand its influence by integrating states into a community governed by common values, legal frameworks and institutional procedures rather than military conflicts. While the United States identified and positioned itself as the guarantor of international security and order, Europe gained a significant role by representing democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This divergence had not yet been transformed into a source of conflict in the 1990s as US dominance kept overshadowing

European ambitions, nevertheless, it led to tensions in transatlantic relations in the following years (Carr & Ifantis, 1996).

Consequently, it appears that the monopolization of the international system in favor of the US provided it with the opportunity to shape the post-Cold War international order according to its own perspectives, policies and strategies. Its leadership was widely accepted, especially in Europe, where American involvement was considered vital for regional stability. However, while this decade was characterized by the culmination of American hegemony, several researchers and analysts were already questioning its sustainability and maintenance. Krauthammer pointed out that US' major threat was not external rivalry but a potential erosion of its economic foundations. Nevertheless, between 1991 and 2001, the United States remained the undisputed leading power in the sector of international politics, exercising a form of hegemony, unprecedented in contemporary history (Krauthammer, 2003).

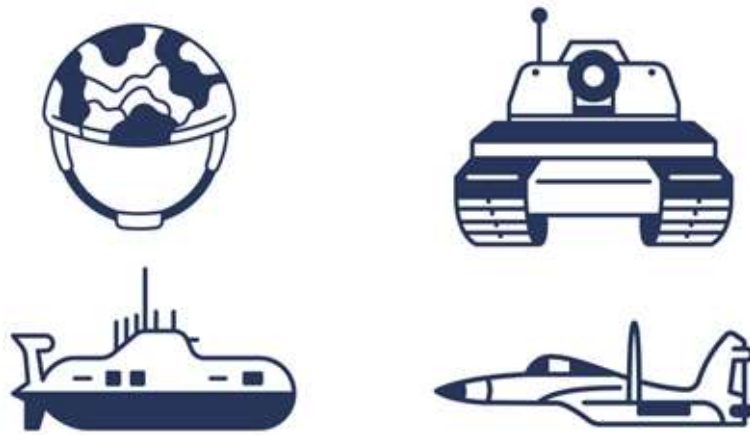
### **2.3 Post - 9/11 and transatlantic tensions (2001–2014)**

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 altered American foreign policy dramatically and, consequently, transatlantic relations. For the first time in NATO's history Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) was invoked with all members recognizing the attack on the United States as an attack on the Alliance as a whole. More specifically, Article 5 forms the basis of collective defense, specifying that any armed attack against one Ally is considered to be an attack against all NATO members, which, in turn, are obliged to provide assistance including the use of armed force (European Parliament, 2022). In addition, it should be noted that the phraseology of Article 5 is deliberately vague: member states are required to take whichever measures are deemed necessary without being legally bound to resort to military force in advance, which often raises ethical issues. Furthermore, it is at each member-state's discretion to select the measures for contribution and assistance they will proceed to take, whether they involve military action, provision of equipment or imposing sanctions (Yon Ebright, 2022).

Therefore, following the collective activation of Article 5 in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, several NATO and European Union member states, such as Britain, France and Germany, demonstrated cohesive cooperation and solidarity. Consequently, they provided political, diplomatic and, to a certain extent, armed forces assistance to the military campaign – Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, reflecting the circumstantial cohesion of the Euro-Atlantic relations. Even though the Alliance initially appeared to have restored its unity, tensions between Washington and its European allies were escalated over the next decade (Rynning, 2003).

The aforementioned Euro-Atlantic tensions arose mainly due to opposing strategic approaches. More specifically, the United States promoted more aggressive military policies while European states, such as Germany and France, sought majority legitimacy and, most frequently, diplomacy. Consequently, the events following September 11, 2001 undermined US - European relations, mainly due to divergent political perspectives and policies as well as Europe's aiming at autonomous political identity and its constant efforts for gradual independence from the US (Rynning, 2003). Furthermore, as documented in the work of Biava et al (2011), the inconsistency and discordance among strategic approaches were also evident before and during the US-led invasion in Iraq in 2003 during which opposing arguments

within the EU emerged regarding the form and extent of employing military force as well as its legitimacy (Biava, et al., 2011). Former President George W. Bush's had adopted a unilateral and military approach to the war, prioritizing preventive action against rogue states resulting in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, justified by the existence of alleged weapons of mass destruction and connections with the terrorist group Al-Qaeda (Andréani, et al., 2001).



## Article 5

### United Defense

**"an armed attack against one or more of them  
in Europe or North America shall be  
considered an attack against them all"**

Source: <https://cepa.org/article/willfully-vague-why-natos-article-5-is-so-misunderstood/>

While Britain and several Central and Eastern European countries had supported the invasion, key – influential European states, particularly France and Germany, had expressed their opposition, arguing that it lacked legitimacy, multilateral consensus and explicit authorization from the United Nations. The discordance over the conflict in Iraq led to a rupture in transatlantic relations with several European critics questioning the legitimacy of the US' intervention in the Middle East without irrefutable evidence in support of their allegations (Andréani, et al., 2001).

Nevertheless, European security remained reliant on US military power. NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan explicated the asymmetry between American and European forces. Even though European states provided military support, they often imposed restrictive policies

regarding their operations while remaining deficient in the required and essential infrastructure and resources – prerequisites for conducting extended, high-intensity operations. A similar dynamic emerged during NATO's military intervention in Libya in 2011 during which European states, particularly France and Britain, sought US assistance in state intelligence, air refueling and precision guided munition. These incidents revealed Europe's inadequacy in acting without being dependent on US support, thus, reinforcing the enduring prevalence of American military power within the Alliance (Howorth, 2014).

In addition, one of the European Union's main priorities appeared to be the advancement of its security and defense mechanisms, mainly through the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), later renamed to Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). While the US initially promoted, to a certain extent, a more robust, resilient and self-reliant European Union, successive US administrations and their subsequent related policies were proven to be not entirely in accordance with this approach, depicting apprehensiveness concerning a potential weakening of American leadership within NATO by a powerful, united Europe. Thus, at the dawn of the new Millennium, European determination to proceed to the implementation of their initiatives was evident, nevertheless, at the same time, considerable skepticism over such initiatives regarding Europe's autonomy arose (Hyland, 2001).

It is therefore concluded that the period following September 11 2001 highlighted a paradox in transatlantic relations; in spite of the United States remaining indispensable to European security, its legitimacy and leadership were being increasingly questioned. Disputes over the Iraq military intervention, controversies over issues such as missile defense and climate policy alongside with underlying perceptions of American unilateralism were undermining the political cohesion which had been characterizing the first decade following the Cold War. Nevertheless, NATO remained the focal factor ensuring Euro-Atlantic security, reflecting the limits of European strategic autonomy as well as the dominance of American power in global and regional affairs (Jones, 2007).

## **2.4 The turning point of Georgia (Crimea/Donbas, NATO adaptation)**

The impact of the war in Georgia in August 2008 was of decisive significance with regard to the relations between Russia and NATO following the Cold War. The five-day war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia reflected NATO's relatively protracted operational response, thus, "signaling" to Moscow that the moderate use of military force could lead to altering the situation more rapidly in comparison to Euro-Atlantic diplomatic - strategic proceedings. Russia's rapid and efficiently organized intervention repelled Georgian forces near Tbilisi, undermining, thereby, Georgia's territorial integrity and consolidating Russia's sphere of influence in the Caucasus' and the Black Sea regions. From certain European analysts' perspectives, the conflicts and divergencies of opinions within the EU alongside the strategic policies of the US acted against a collective and efficient settlement of the crisis. In addition, according to this interpretation, the war in Georgia in 2008 encouraged hybrid methods of conflict and provoked the following incidents in Crimea and Donbas (Nichol, 2009).

Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 has been claimed to be the most direct challenge to Europe since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to this

perspective, it was an explicit violation of the fundamental principles of international law, including the prohibition of the use of force at external borders, which was promptly condemned by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 68/262, therefore, reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well (European Parliament, 2014-2019). From European and American politicians' point of view, the aforementioned annexation symbolized a severe attack on the solid cooperative defense and security structure which had been established as the fundamental foundation of US' and EU's relations since the early 1990s, reigniting concerns over a new geopolitical confrontation. It also raised questions with regard to the inadequacy of existing defense mechanisms, such as the NATO-Russia Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), concerning effective restraints against Russia's actions (NATO, 2009).

This crisis was further exacerbated by the armed conflict in Donbas, thereafter. Despite Moscow's presentation of the use of force as a justified response to the uprising of Russian-speaking populations against Kyiv, there has been considerable evidence implying that Russian support, in the form of armament, funding and recruitment, strategically instrumental towards sustaining and escalating the conflict (United Nations, the United 2014). In response to Russian aggression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe established the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) on March 21, 2014, committed to impartial monitoring and constant report on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, mandated to contribute to the fostering of peace in the region (OSCE, 2015).

Subsequently, the Minsk Protocol in September 2014 aimed to establish a ceasefire between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatist groups/paramilitaries in the Donbas region as well as mediate a truce and lay the foundations for a settlement of the conflict. The war in Donbas has been claimed that it was not merely the outcome of local protests, but also a part of Russia's more extensive and thoroughly planned strategy in order to destabilize Ukraine, prevent its integration into the West, and restore its influence in neighboring countries. From this perspective, the historic events in Crimea and Donbas marked the end of the European dependency in terms of its security as well as the forceful presence of Russia as a rising power, willing and determined to challenge US hegemony as it had been demonstrated during the Cold War (Wilson, 2016).

The European Union and the United States acted immediately imposing restrictive measures, for instance Regulation 269/2014, imposing restrictive measures on actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine as well as corresponding sanctions such as the freezing of funds and entry restrictions into the EU. These were subsequently maintained and adapted accordingly in line with the implementation of the aforementioned Minsk Protocol. At the same time, the US proceeded to controlling policies, creating a transatlantic sanctions' regime aiming at demonstrating non-recognition of the change in territorial sovereignty through force deployment (Eur-Lex, 2014).

Furthermore, NATO re-considered its strategic plan at the Wales Summit in September 2014. The Allies adopted the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), a package of assurance and adaptation measures as a means of decisive response, deterring further aggression and countering future hybrid threats. The creation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a brigade-sized force within NATO's

Response Force capable of deploying within days, was a key-innovation. The official summit documents and related NATO press releases referred to the aforementioned measures as urgent adjustments to the rapidly changing security environment and the indistinct hybrid warfare taking place, including advanced technological means and contemporary, highly advanced means of warfare (NATO, 2025).

In June 2014, in Warsaw, the President of the United States announced the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), which aimed at reassuring its allies that the US would provide them with its support in the context of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Through the ERI, the presence of US forces in Europe, joint military exercises, pre-positioning of equipment and infrastructure development along NATO's eastern borders were strengthened (The White House, 2014). Furthermore, ERI funded Operation Atlantic Resolve, a series of military actions in early 2014, with the purpose of deterring potential Russian aggression and ensuring stability in Central and Eastern Europe. ERI, subsequently, evolved into the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), underscoring the shift towards a more aggressive deterrence series of measures against Russia, accompanied by a significant increase in funding reaching \$3.4 billion in 2017 (EUCOM, 2014).

## **Chapter 3: U.S. Military Power in Europe following Russian's Invasion of Ukraine in 2022**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a critical turning-point in the transformation of the form and evolution of American military power in Europe. USA responded to the invasion by fostering deterrence across the Alliance, doubling the size of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence armed forces and reinforcing the rotational deployments of Operation Atlantic Resolve significantly, including air assets and support units and aiming at strengthening defense forces in the east (Carlough, et al., 2025). At the same time, US military assistance to Ukraine increased through state-of-the-art air defense systems such as Patriot and NASAMS, large quantities of ammunition, ISR capabilities and the expansion of training platforms both within NATO and in Ukraine (Congress.gov, 2024).

The aforementioned measures were implemented alongside strengthened commitments to end the use of nuclear weapons and intensified joint training initiatives with NATO allies, reflecting the US's renewed strategic commitment. America's direct military involvement, NATO's efforts to expand over strategically important countries, such as Finland and Sweden and the implications for Baltic security and Russia's potential countermeasures will be presented alongside an analysis of the impact of President Trump's return to the White House (2024-2025) regarding the relations between the US and Europe.

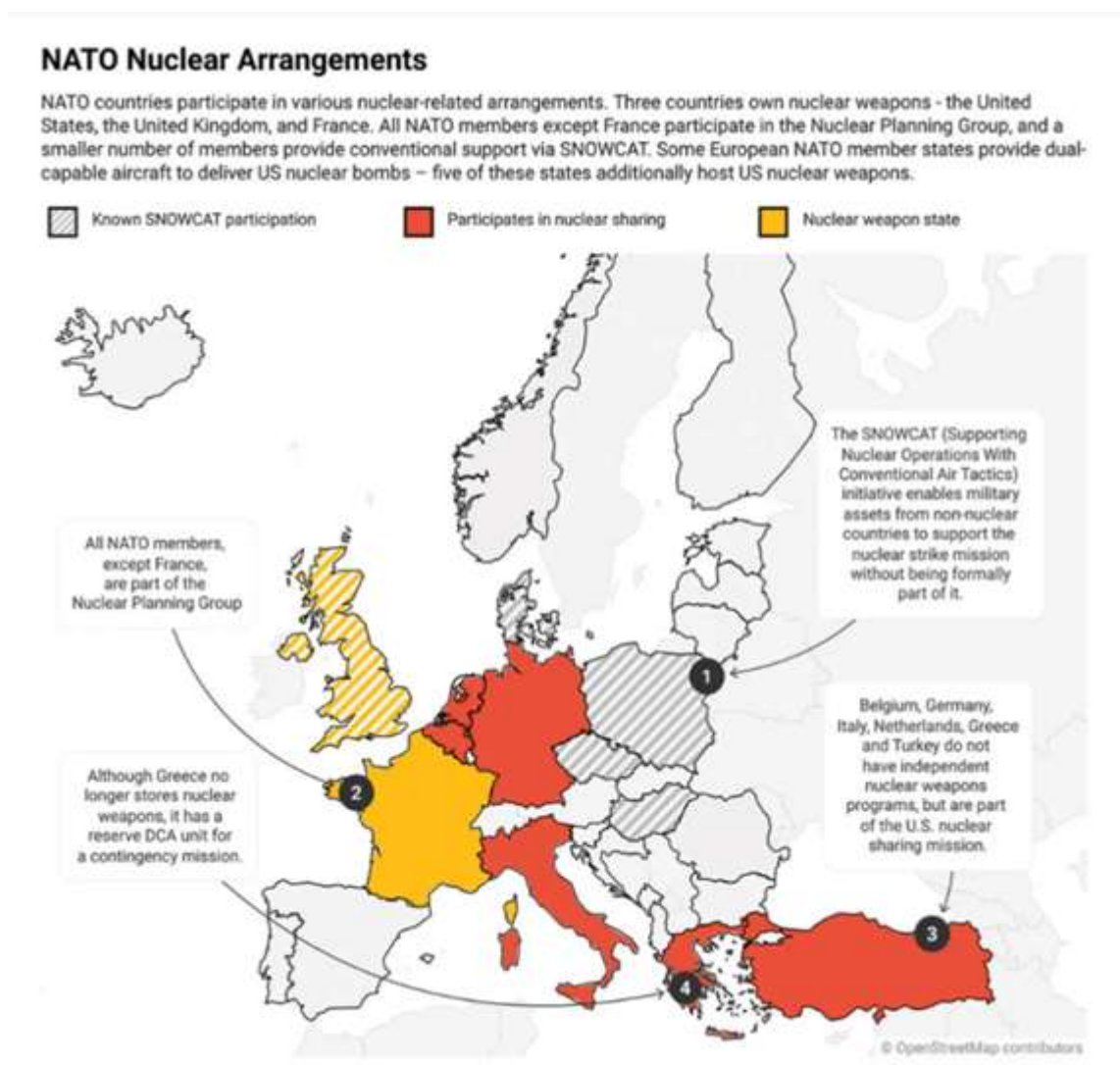
### **3.1. US forces' missions (Enhanced Forward Presence, EFP / Operation Atlantic Resolve - OAR) nuclear sharing and training programs**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 allowed the USA to consolidate its leading role in NATO's collective security framework by relying primarily on NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) and Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) which mediated as deterrents against Russian aggression, essential during crises (NATO, 2024). Enhanced Forward Presence is NATO's most immediate and effective measure of reassurance for Allies on the eastern flank. Since 2017, multinational task forces have been deployed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, expanding to Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia after the Russian invasion in 2022. These groups are supported by US forces, they are thoroughly integrated into NATO's command structure and operate on a rotational basis. The United States serves as the framework nation in Poland where its forces provide weapons, air defense and logistics capabilities. By 2025, they evolved into brigade-level formations, providing permanent, combat-ready forces capable of immediate defense and rapid reinforcement (NATO, 2024).

In addition, the Operation Atlantic Resolve – a U.S. Department of Defense program – was established in 2014, following the annexation of Crimea, which expanded rapidly during 2022. Under OAR, the US European Command (USEUCOM) maintains a rotating deployment of armored combat brigades, air units and support systems throughout Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, Romania and the Baltic states. In mid-2025, approximately 81,600 members of the US military were positioned in Europe with two armored brigades and an infantry brigade participating in OAR, indicating substantially significant US presence and power over Europe (OAR, 2025).

These forces conduct joint exercises, simulation fire exercises and readiness training, ensuring interoperability with European allies while providing a credible deterrent to Russia and demonstrating American unity and cooperation with Europe. In addition, the OAR mission includes the reinforcement of partner capacity as well as infrastructure development and counter-disinformation campaigns, underscoring the multidimensional scope of deterrence in periods of both war and peace (OAR, 2025).

Another crucially significant aspect of US military presence in Europe is nuclear weapons' sharing. The United States continues to maintain a large amount of nuclear warheads in Europe with approximately 100 B61 gravity bombs stationed at bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. These weapons, which are managed by NATO under nuclear sharing agreements, symbolize the indivisible nature of transatlantic security and ensure that nuclear deterrence remains credible against potential Russian aggression and strategic countermeasures. The US Air Force conducts regular training missions with Allied pilots, ensuring readiness and operational cohesion in the event of an escalation (Kristensen & Korda, 2023).



Source: <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2023-11/nuclear-weapons-sharing-2023/>

In general, nuclear deterrence remains a security strategy of vital importance for NATO, based on the principle that the threat of retaliation prevents adversaries from considering the use of nuclear weapons, as this would result in their own destruction, as well. NATO's Strategic Plan for 2022 confirms that nuclear weapons serve the fundamental purpose of preserving peace, deterring coercive force and preventing aggression. The United States' strategic arsenal, complemented by nuclear weapons, deployed under NATO's nuclear sharing agreements, acts as a fundamental security guarantee for the Allies (Κουσκουβέλης, 2001). The crisis of autumn 2022, as described in Kühn's article (2025), during which US intelligence agencies assessed that there was an increased risk of Russian nuclear escalation in Ukraine, demonstrates the prevalent significance of deterrence. As he argues, Russia's abstinence from the use of nuclear weapons during this period may be explained through a combination of rational calculations and institutional constraints (Kühn, 2025). Nevertheless, nuclear deterrence was of crucial importance since it is claimed that Moscow eventually avoided an escalation fearing a catastrophic nuclear response by the US and NATO.

Since 2022, the US nuclear guarantee in the East symbolizes both deterrence against Russia and the central role of US leadership in maintaining security order in Europe (Kühn, 2025). In addition, US forces in Europe play a decisive role in training and cooperation programs in the field of security. The National Guard Partnership Program connects US units with Central and Eastern Europe's armies while specialized training centers in Germany and Poland provide training in combined arms warfare, cyber defense and integrated air and missile defense. Under the OAR, mobile training teams in 2025 specialized in unmanned aerial vehicle countermeasures, electromagnetic warfare and anti-armor tactics, strengthening Ukraine's defense and reinforcing Allied cohesion and long-term resilience (Dubie, 2002).

### **3.2. Security and training for Ukraine: Composition and scale of US assistance and American involvement**

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked the beginning of an unprecedented flow of US security assistance to Kyiv. Between 2014 and early 2025, the United States were committed to providing approximately \$70 billion in military aid, \$66.9 billion of which was provided after February 2022. This massive effort, coordinated through the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) and the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), provided advanced weapon systems and, in addition, created the essential training infrastructure for Ukrainian forces in order integrate these systems into their operational activities, thus, increasing their efficiency while confronting Russia. The scale of this assistance reveals the extent of the US commitment to the provision of assistance to its allies as well as the increasing reliance of Ukrainian defense systems on American technology and expertise (U.S. Department of State, 2025).

#### **3.2.1 Air defense: Patriot and NASAMS**

One of America's most vitally significant contributions to Ukraine was in the field of air defense through the transfer of Patriot batteries and NASAMS (National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems).

More specifically, Ukraine received three Patriot batteries and twelve NASAMS alongside thousands of Stinger missiles, HAWK systems, Avenger platforms and anti-UAS technologies creating, for the first time, a multilateral and integrated air defense strategy for Ukraine, efficient in intercepting cruise missiles, drones and even hypersonic threats, which are sophisticated missile systems, extremely difficult for traditional defense systems to trace (U.S. Department of Defence, 2024; Schmidt, 2024).



Source: <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Sep/06/2003538814/-1/-1/1/UKRAINE-INFOGRAPHIC-08AUG2024.PDF>

Patriot systems, with their specialized PAC-3 interceptors, provide high-level protection against ballistic and hypersonic missiles while NASAMS are more flexible and cost-effective, excelling at intercepting cruise missiles and aircraft. Their integration into warfare highlights NATO's approach to multi-layered defense, reinforcing Ukraine significantly against Russia's extensive missile campaigns - an asymmetric threat to Ukraine. Reports indicate that NASAMS achieved a 94% interception success rate while Patriots intercepted more than twenty Russian Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, undermining Russia's claims regarding their superiority (Kovalenko, 2025).

### 3.2.2. Weapons, armor, and ISR capabilities

Beyond air defense, US assistance played a crucially significant role in reforming Ukraine's artillery and tactical capabilities. More than forty HIMARS systems and millions of 155 mm shells provided precision capabilities across the war field. Hundreds of mortars, anti-tank defense radars and small-diameter bombs extended Ukraine's strike depth. On the battlefield, more than 300 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, 31 Abrams tanks and over 5,000 HMMWV vehicles were positioned, demonstrating NATO's significant contribution to providing assistance to Ukraine and transforming its into units compatible with its capabilities (U.S. Department of Defence, 2024).

The provision of advanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems was equally important. The United States supplied multiple UAS platforms including Switchblade, Phoenix Ghost, ScanEagle and Raven drones as well as secure satellite communications, electronic warfare equipment and commercial imaging services, ensuring almost real-time situational awareness and enhancing Ukraine's operational planning and targeting accuracy (U.S. Department of Defence, 2024).

UNCLASSIFIED // AS OF: 06 AUGUST 2024

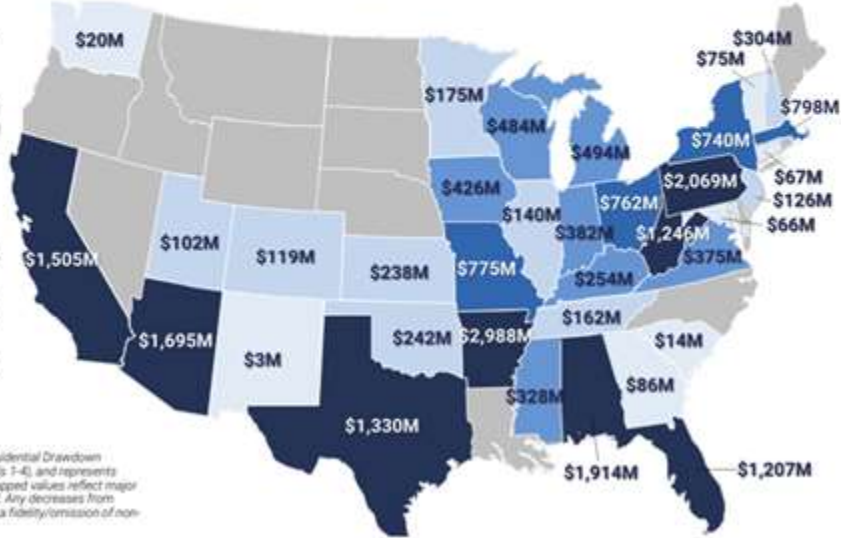


# UKRAINE SECURITY ASSISTANCE

## INDUSTRIAL BASE IMPACTS

**USAI + REPLACEMENT OBLIGATIONS**  
**\$36.8B**

- \$1.0B +
- \$500M–\$999M
- \$250M–\$499M
- \$100M–\$249M
- < \$99M



Data includes USAI obligations and Presidential Drawdown Replacement obligations (Supplementals 1-6), and represents prime vendors and critical suppliers. Mapped values reflect major systems only; not all funds are reflected. Any decreases from previous publications reflect greater data fidelity/omission of non-major systems.

Source: <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Sep/06/2003538814/-1/-1/1/UKRAINE-INFOGRAPHIC-08AUG2024.PDF>

## DIRECT INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENTS

**SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS**  
**\$4.9B**

- \$500M +
- \$100M–\$499M
- \$50M–\$99M
- < \$49M



Data includes Ukraine Supplemental Funds directly invested to improve industrial base production capacity (Supplementals 1-4), and represents government- and contractor-owned facilities and critical suppliers. Mapped values reflect major systems only; not all funds are reflected.

UNCLASSIFIED

### 3.2.3. Training Programs

The pre-war period was one of the most important phases with regard to the Ukrainian army's increase of resilience and flexibility, which had been relatively inflexible and insufficient compared to its Russian counterpart. Following Crimea's annexation in 2014 and the commencement of warfare in Donbas, the US established the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U) in Yavoriv with the support of US National Guard units and NATO Allies. At that time, thousands of Ukrainian soldiers received group training aimed at developing leadership skills and a wide range of small unit tactics in accordance with NATO standards, representing a fundamental shift from the inflexibilities and hierarchical doctrines inherited by the Soviet Union (Gallagher, 2020). The emphasis on the training of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), whom US and allied trainers considered the core of Western-style armed forces, was of equally crucial significance since the Soviet doctrine promoted a centralized command strategic system. US training sought to cultivate decentralized decision-making, thereby, empowering soldiers to respond flexibly to battlefields, a capability which proved to be decisive in 2022 (Grisé, et al., 2025).

In addition, the US Special Operations Command led the Resistance Operational Concept (ROC) contributing significantly to the preparation of Ukrainian special forces and civil society for warfare. The training included sabotage, intelligence gathering and the creation of political support networks for military operations which were of crucial importance with regard to gaining a strategic advantage over Russia's asymmetric threat. Consequently, the ROC emerged as a fundamental framework following Russia's launching its full-scale invasion as it coordinated insurgent activity and allowed Ukraine to maintain organized resistance in occupied territories. These measures resulted in significant complications in relation to Russia's efforts towards prevalence and provided Kyiv with the means required for exerting asymmetric pressure even in areas beyond the immediate reach of conventional Ukrainian forces (Murauskaite, et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Ukrainian logistics and support units received comparatively minimal training as US assistance programs appeared to prioritize combat weapons, special operations and tactical units over basic strategies such as supply, maintenance and repair operations. Furthermore, the scope of US security assistance - even though significant in both scale and aspiration – proved to be insufficient for preventing a conventional Russian attack of the February 2022's scale (Murauskaite, et al., 2023).

By the onset of the invasion, Ukraine had developed competent and adept military forces, nevertheless, they still had to rely to a large extent on Soviet-era equipment such as unsophisticated artillery systems and short-range defense systems. The lack of extensive integration with advanced NATO weaponry prevented the Ukrainian army from conducting high-intensity military operations. Consequently, even though Ukraine had managed to evolve into a more resilient force compared to its state in 2014, its overall preparedness remained constrained due to limited resources revealing an uneven

modernization process alongside the strategic risk of external support being reinforced after the outbreak of large-scale hostilities (Szőke & Kusica, 2023).

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the United States proceeded to an urgent restructuring of its military training framework. All American trainers were withdrawn from Ukrainian territory before the outbreak of hostilities. Approximately 150 members of the Florida National Guard, who had been involved in training Ukrainian forces, left the country in mid-February 2022 as a precautionary measure. A few weeks later, on March 13, 2022, the Yavoriv International Peace and Security Center, located near Poland's border, was attacked by more than thirty Russian missiles. These incidents highlighted the vulnerability of training centers within the country and necessitated the relocation of US-led training operations to safer NATO-aligned territories such as Germany, Poland and Spain (Idrees, 2022; Murauskaite, et al., 2023).

Therefore, training programs had to be re-adjusted rapidly in order to be more efficient. Sophisticated systems such as HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System), an American medium-range multiple rocket launcher system mounted on a wheeled chassis for high mobility capable of firing rockets and strategic missiles with accuracy over long distances, were ready for use in approximately three weeks instead of the conventional ones requiring several months for their preparedness (Parsons, 2022).

At the same time, the US established a "train the trainers" model, according to which a selected group of Ukrainian soldiers received rapid training abroad, disseminating their knowledge after their return to their countries. However, despite reinforcing training capabilities, this approach revealed certain structural weaknesses. For instance, several of the recently acquired M777 howitzers were often malfunctioning due to misuse, lack of spare components and maintenance deficits, highlighting the negative consequences of intense training for very short periods of time (Zabrodskyi, et al., 2022).

Moreover, in order to improve front-line maintenance, the US implemented an innovative remote assistance system. More specifically, through virtual repair missions, Ukrainian units were able to consult with American technicians stationed in Poland via encrypted communication to address weapon system malfunctions in almost real time (U.S. Department of Defence, 2022; Zabrodskyi, et al., 2022). Therefore, despite certain restraints and obstacles, Ukrainian forces demonstrated remarkable performance and adaptability. Within a few months, units used the HIMARS system efficiently while conducting precision attacks against Russian logistics corridors and strategically significant headquarters, altering the dynamics of operations on multiple fronts radically. Such outcomes highlight the flexibility of Ukrainian forces under pressure as well as the vital role played by the US overseas training infrastructure and the American involvement in general (Grisé, et al., 2025).

Since 2023, training for the US and its allies has been reinforced with institutionalized programs. In Germany, the US Army launched combined arms training, preparing 600-800 Ukrainian soldiers per month. In contrast to the aforementioned rapid and intensive courses of 2022, these exercises focused on joint operations, warfighting strategies and logistics coordination, thus, addressing previous deficiencies in sustainment and operational planning. The decision to train for the first time Ukrainian forces in the United States, especially on Patriot systems, was equally significant since, traditionally, the

US avoided long-term foreign soldiers' training on American soil before the end of a war. The six-month program for Patriot operators demonstrated US's strategic commitment to Ukraine's long-term air defense capabilities (Lopez, 2023).

### **3.3. Contemporary relations (2023-2025) and the Second Presidency of Donald Trump (2025)**

#### **3.3.1. Capacity and enlargement of the Alliance. The accession of Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024): implications for Baltic security and the influence of the US administration**

The implementation of American training programs by Ukraine aimed, to a certain extent, at adapting and expanding NATO towards the East. By 2023-2024, the training provided under the Ukraine Security Initiative (USAI) and the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U) was not merely related to the resilience's strengthening but to integrating Ukrainian operational culture into NATO's sphere and scope of influence, as well. The constant focus on mission commands, interoperability and joint operational planning aligned the Ukrainian armed forces with the Alliance's strategies (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2024).

Apart from Ukraine, the institutionalization of training programs occurred alongside NATO's expansion. The accession of Finland in 2023 and Sweden in 2024 contributed to the re-formation of the strategic scene in the Baltic region, thus, creating a coherent NATO defense space from the Northern to Central Europe. In addition, this enlargement reinforced Baltic states' security which had long been considered vulnerable due to their proximity to Russia. From the US's perspective, the synchronization of Ukraine's training and the enlargement of the Scandinavian countries reflected the establishment of a Euro-Atlantic defense perimeter under US leadership, acting as a deterrent against Russian aggression (Filipović, 2024).

The accession of Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) into NATO is considered to be particularly significant both strategically and geopolitically since it re-defined the European defense network while consolidating the presence and influence of the United States in Europe. Geopolitically, the aforementioned expansion led to the doubling of NATO's border with Russia to approximately 2,500 kilometers, extending the range of US deterrence mechanisms in the Baltic and Arctic regions. Even though it stemmed from the Alliance's official and collective decision, the process reflects to a considerable extent the supremacy of US leadership regarding setting NATO's enlargement agenda, its exertion of power over Europe as well as the integration of the Scandinavian states into its security sphere (Jaber & Al Momani, 2022).

Furthermore, this accession promoted the US strategic objectives, consolidating its influence over Northern Europe and the Arctic. As Stanojević (2025) emphasizes, US' strategy in October 2022 in relation to the Arctic area was highlighted by the accession of Finland and Sweden as extremely significant with regard to the confrontation of Russia and China. Consequently, this integration resulted in the reinforcement of the US's projection of power over both the Baltic and the Arctic, establishing its position as the Alliance's undisputed military leader (Stanojević, 2025).

In addition, Finland and Sweden contributed significantly to the Alliance owing to their military capabilities which are consistent with US defense planning. More specifically, Finland occupies one of Europe's largest reserves alongside supreme territorial defense forces while Sweden's sophisticated naval and air systems are considered to be of crucial significance regarding Baltic security (Meleshchenko, 2024). At the same time, however, these two countries' dependence on US's commands, intelligence and logistics systems has increased. US defense agreements, such as the Defense Cooperation Agreement with Finland (DCA), allow the pre-positioning of US equipment and the rotation of US military forces, thus, the institutionalization of American presence on the territory of Scandinavian countries (Stanojević, 2025).

As Jaber and Al Momani (2022) note, NATO's enlargement served not only European security interests but also US' geopolitical objectives, ensuring that NATO would continue to function as the main means of American supreme influence over Europe (Jader & Al Momani, 2022). Furthermore, official statements in Brussels, Washington and the capitals of Scandinavian countries characterized the accession of Finland and Sweden as vital catalysts of collective defense and regional stability while confirming that the United States is the essential and primary deterrent through air transport, ISR, and advanced air and missile defense. In addition, the Pentagon's celebrations in 2024 emphasized that Sweden's and Finland's capabilities are now directly integrated into allied planning and arrangements under the commands of NATO (Clark, 2024).

In addition, the 2024 Washington Summit codified a long-term division of labor among allies for Ukraine. Allies created the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine program (NSATU), a three-star command based in Germany designed for coordination of equipment supply and training of armed forces with the ultimate purpose of Ukraine being thoroughly interoperable with NATO (NATO, 2024). This initiative led to stability regarding the region's security through institutionalizing NATO's role. NSATU's duties and responsibilities, encompassing training in Allied countries, structured channels of assistance and incorporation of US operational standards into NATO resulted in the expansion of the US doctrine's supremacy and influence over eastern Europe (Belkin, 2024).

### **3.3.2. The Second Presidency of Donald Trump (2025): Leveraging the war towards establishing US supremacy over Europe**

According to certain analysts, US policy, especially following Donald Trump's second election in January 2025, appears to be focusing on the exploitation of the war in Ukraine in favor of consolidating its influence throughout Europe. Following the recent 2025 Trump - Putin summit meeting in Alaska, senior officials have urged EU's capitals to adopt a series of severe sanctions including an embargo of Russian oil and gas while statements of the White House's representatives refer to US' resolution expressed with utter determination to even suspend high-level diplomatic contacts in case the parties involved do not demonstrate flexibility towards any threat attempting to undermine America's role as the supreme power during negotiation processes (Allen & Ravid, 2025). The general conclusion arising from Trump-Putin's summit meeting in Alaska is claimed to be diplomatic reinforcement in favor of Putin, increasing concern for Ukraine and European apprehension (Giagkinis, 2025).

Furthermore, senior US officials have stated to their European counterparts that they will contribute to strategic assets with the aim of establishing a European security force for Ukraine - following the ceasefire - which will have to be reinforced not by US armed forces but by sole strategic provision based on intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and air defense support, without which European missions would lack deterrent capabilities. European leaders acknowledged the appeal of such a strategic plan leading to the preservation of the US' central role in the deterrence strategy while underlining the significance and powerful role of American influence and presence throughout Europe (Foy, et al., 2025).

The accession of the Scandinavian countries (Finland in 2023 and Sweden in 2024) extended the scope of US air and naval control over the Arctic and the Baltic, which, in practice, appears to be feasible with US support (The White House, 2024). President Trump's administration combines mediation while persisting on specific demands with the purpose to intensify European sanctions and suspend US diplomatic involvement, Therefore, it is concluded that the US positions itself as the indispensable actor in any peace process, reflecting a more decisive shift towards bilateral negotiations focused on sovereignty (Patrick, 2025; Jakupec, 2024). Furthermore, it is argued that President Trump is pursuing constant engagement in the war between Russia and Ukraine without actual participation, through provision of sophisticated, high-tech means, such as ISR and air - missile defense which would be of vital significance for European countries in order to deter Russia after a ceasefire.

Consequently, it is concluded that European stabilization missions remain technologically and operationally reliant on US systems and doctrine (Kavanagh, 2025), thus, expanding and establishing US role in Europe's rearmament and digital infrastructure (EUISS, 2025) and setting standards on specific strategic technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence systems and high-end semiconductor controls) which expand America's influence further in the field of financial security in Europe (Brands, 2025). European leaders appear to be attempting to re-integrate US initiatives into a rules-based framework based on international law, nevertheless, the public reception of US strategy fosters the perception that American support remains decisive (Kozyrev, 2024).

## **Chapter 4: Is American Power over Europe in decline after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022?**

### **4.1. Military Supremacy and Hard power**

US power throughout the Euro-Atlantic area continues to lie primarily on a range of strategic capabilities such as information sharing, advanced surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), integrated air and missile / nuclear defense systems, as they rely heavily on space/sensor-based infrastructure and constitute the core of its deterrence mechanisms. In the context of the current Russia – Ukraine war, it is evident that the US strategic transport capacity, networked battlefield awareness and technological reinforcement have played a crucially significant role in favor of Ukraine (Barry, 2025).

Despite its reinvestment in defense, Europe remains dependent on US's sophisticated technological means, particularly in the areas of missile defense, cyber warfare and space-based targeting mechanisms (Cohen, 2025). In addition, increasing European defense investment, when consistent with NATO protocols, result in the expansion of US influence and power throughout Europe. As NATO Allies rely on US-compatible platforms, adopt US-style data links and integrate ammunition and logistics systems based on US supply chains, they are tacitly reinforcing American standards in Europe (Ollongren & Van Rij, 2025).

In terms of equipment and capabilities, claims of an overall decline of American power in Europe are concluded to be exaggerated and unsubstantiated. On the contrary, a shift towards a “reshaped supremacy” - i.e., less traditional influence, more effective European capabilities - alongside increasing reliance on US technologies, standard-setting and nuclear deterrence emerge from this analysis. Thus, American influence remains focal, especially from strategic and technological aspects of defense (Barry, 2025).

Consequently, hard power remains the primary means through which the United States maintains and extends its influence over Europe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 underscored the enduring necessity for credible military power and economic influence as pillars of American leadership. The deployment of additional US armed forces in Eastern Europe, the rotation of armored brigades and the reinforcement of missile defense systems throughout Poland and Romania demonstrated the US' strategic pattern of exploiting coercive power as a core method of reassuring allies and deterring adversaries. This proactive stance reaffirms US commitments under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, reinforcing the irreplaceably vital role of the US with regard to Europe's defense and security, as well (NATO, 2023).

The US' economic dimension of hard power is equally significant as it played a fundamental role in coordinating sanctions regimes against Russia, targeting banking systems, energy revenues and imports of technological equipment. Leveraging its dominant role in the global financial arena,

particularly through the dollar-based system and the SWIFT network, Washington limited Moscow's options and forced European allies to align with American policies, thus, extending its influence in the European political scene (Baldwin, 2016; European Council, 2023).

## **4.2. Control, policy and strategic autonomy**

US power, in relation to setting the agenda in Europe, has been presented to be fragile, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. As a result, Washington's ability to set Europe's security priorities has been narrowed to negotiations on a case-by-case basis rather than as a reflexive alignment. European capitals are increasingly subjecting US proposals to domestic political filters such as legislatures, industrial interests and judicial review before proceeding to the implementation of their policies. EU's sanctions, ammunition transfers, decisions regarding energy supply and broader geopolitical positioning are no longer implemented as defaults under US leadership but appear to be increasingly subject to protracted and often time-consuming consultations. Therefore, this strategic shift reflects the EU's reinforcement of its role as an autonomous policymaker rather than a US follower (Helwig, 2023; Genini, 2025). In recent years, European states have reacted to the extensive sanctions proposed by Washington, partly due to European defense industries' interests in export markets, supply chain resilience and avoiding escalation (Helwig, 2023).

Subsequently, divergent statements in multilateral forums, such as in the United Nations votings, ceasefire agreements or declarations concerning territorial recognition, underscore a partial consensus on American policy preferences. European leaders may support funding for Ukraine's defense and deterrence measures, nevertheless, they often refuse to adopt US rhetoric which explicitly refers to Russia as the aggressor / invader or maximum escalation. This suggests that Europe is increasingly in favor of adopting its own rhetoric in spite of remaining operationally coordinated with the US (Genini, 2025; Lepeu, 2025). This model of "negotiated alliance" represents reduced unilateral influence and a more transactional transatlantic system with the United States' role to gradually being transformed from an undisputed international leading power-state to a mediator on equal terms in alliances (Simón, 2022).

In conclusion, while US influence remains decisive on fundamental issues regarding European security, deterrence and cooperation on military issues have been contested in terms of its means of influence. It can be argued that this shift implies that American power in Europe is not declining but readjusting. Therefore, the subsequent question arising is whether this readjustment reflects a gradual but steady adaptation to a new strategic environment or it presages a more profound strategic division, in the occasion European actors ultimately adopt an autonomous or alternative policy and support frameworks with regard to the balance of power in the global international system (Chytoupoulou, 2022).

## **4.3. Institutional leverage: NATO and the EU**

The assumption that NATO remains the coordinator of the European defense system with the US at its core reflects both structural and political frameworks. NATO continues to promote the development of doctrinal collective defense, military preparedness and crises' response planning in Europe, based on the concept of Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area in 2020. With most key command

positions, particularly in the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and the Allied Command Operations, held by American officers, US leadership remains central regarding the Alliance's military planning and its execution in Europe. The technological channels for crisis response, combined arms planning and supply chain coordination are often subject to US-led NATO command networks, thus, reinforcing the organization's function as a coordination hub rather than a means of bilateral cooperation (Covington, 2023; NATO, 2025).

From this perspective, EU defense instruments, including procurement incentives, joint financing and mobility support, are viewed as complementary to NATO. The European Parliament's White Paper on defense in 2025 explicitly emphasizes that EU-NATO cooperation remains vitally significant as well as that it is essential for EU's capabilities to be developed within the Alliance's architecture, particularly in sectors such as air and missile defense, logistics and emerging sophisticated technologies. Therefore, through aligning European procurement and infrastructure planning with NATO objectives, the EU contributes to capability and resilience without altering the transatlantic command structure (European Parliament, 2025).

Small defense groups, including the European Intervention Initiative and the Nordic or Baltic defense forums are often presented as means for a more flexible European response rather than as substitutes to NATO's collective defense role under the US. Instead, they appear to serve as mediating channels concerning speed and specialization, often reverting to NATO or US command structures when interoperability, logistics or information coordination are required. The intention of strengthening cooperation in the field of information exchange and scenario planning within Europe exists, however, advancing them within the framework of NATO or under UN command is often essential in order for institutional disruptions to be avoided (Iso-Markku & Karjalainen, 2022).

Consequently, the conclusion emerging is that the more European states develop new defense mechanisms the more they confirm the value of US' integration services and agreements on the sharing of nuclear deterrents. As a result, Europe's growing defense strategies paradoxically increase the demand for US platforms and sophisticated data networks. NATO's Communications and Information Agency, for instance, remains a crucial mediator for the Alliance's C4ISR and cyber operations, underscoring that even technologically advanced defense systems often rely on transatlantic surveillance, standardization or training (NATO, 2022). In addition, certain analysts have argued that European defense initiatives should gradually reduce Europe's reliance on the US, acknowledging a potential shift in American strategic policies. The development of an independent European Defense Force is often presented to be compatible with NATO's operational framework, however, it would implicitly challenge the assumption that the Alliance's center of gravity lies in US-originated systems (Bélanger, 2025).

Furthermore, EU's initiatives and resolutions may enhance capability, innovation and political flexibility, nevertheless, they have not replaced NATO's structural centrality. The supremacy of US leadership in technological and organizational integration has not been diminished but enhanced through Europe's efforts towards upgrading its defense mechanisms and extending their autonomy. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO is considered to be a representative example of the way institutional

dynamics from American influence patterns throughout Europe. Finland joined the Alliance formally on April 4, 2023, followed shortly thereafter by Sweden on March 7, 2024. From the US perspective, both accessions are strategically beneficial as they are expected to strengthen NATO's northern flank considerably, extend the Alliance's border with Russia and include highly competent and trained military formations at the region as a deterrent (Beaver & Lapporte, 2024).

Furthermore, these accessions demonstrate the form of the readjustment of US influence over Europe. Finland's NATO membership was largely based on US support and formal endorsement as the accession document was submitted to the United States, emphasizing Washington's focal role in this process. In addition, in spite of the broader strategic autonomy having been acquired by Finland as a NATO member, its defense planning remains closely intertwined with the US and NATO policies, particularly with regard to joint exercises and schemes for further deployment along the Arctic and Russian borders (Archick et al., 2024).

Similarly, Sweden's accession appears to be the outcome of negotiated integration rather than an autonomous strategy. Even though Sweden is formally a member of the Alliance and contributes to collective defense, its decisions related to military reinforcement and procurement, such as the acquisition of air defense systems, are coordinated with NATO partners and based on the degree of compatibility with US systems (Dorman, 2024).

Relations between the US and Sweden in the defense sector remain close, reflecting that Washington continues to exert considerable influence on decisions and choices concerning weaponry, security cooperation and interoperability. Furthermore, the Alliance's enlargement enhances the value of US integration services, from command structures to certification and the development of US-linked training and planning mechanisms. The accession of new members increases operational complexity which often requires US-led coordination on issues such as networked missile defense, supply chains, and maritime operations in the Arctic and the Baltic (U.S. Department of State, 2025).

Besides the aforementioned, NATO's expansion process highlights the limits of unilateral US control, as European states are currently playing a leading role in setting priorities on defense and procurement issues while accession discussions are shaped by their internal governmental and institutional resolutions. Therefore, the reinforcement of European capabilities paradoxically increase the demand for US planning, standard-setting and command (Koops et al., 2025).

#### **4.4. US leadership and legitimacy**

The legitimacy of US leadership in Europe remains functional, however, increasingly fragile. Europe continues to cooperate with Washington on common security priorities, nevertheless, its confidence in US credibility has become more conditional, mainly due to incidents of domestic instability and abrupt policy reversals. According to recent polls, trust and confidence in American global leadership has decreased in several European countries since Trump's return to the White House in January 2025 (Wike et al., 2025; Puglierin et al., 2025). Consequently, Europe's growing economic, military and political power reinforces demands for joint decision-making and counteraction against unilateral US moves, such as ceasefire proposals, export controls and extraterritorial sanctions.

It appears that European governments have become more assertive, expressing their views with regard to the necessity for negotiations and internal consultation prior to approval of US initiatives on war and peace issues (Robinson, 2025). Moreover, the appeal of US' soft power is presented to be more contingent, shifting from ideals and morality to performance-based legitimacy. On the other hand, Europe assesses the US primarily on its reliability in ensuring security, technological cooperation and tangible outcomes (Stokes, 2023).

#### **4.5. Is American power over Europe in decline following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022?**

The evidence demonstrated in relation to US capabilities, consensus, institutional influence and legitimacy indicate a pattern of constant restructuring rather than decline. Even though the United States' demonstration of supremacy is different compared to its form during the unipolar decade of the 1990s, its crucially essential role regarding deterrence and defense in Europe ensures that American power remains structurally embedded in the European security order (Spatafora, 2025). The decisive parameters as far as warfare in the modern era is concerned, such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), command and control, integrated air and missile defense alongside nuclear security and deterrence, remain firmly within the purview of the United States. Despite its significance, the revival and expansion of European defense since 2022 has not superseded the qualitative advantage of US assets, as US capabilities remain vitally essential for European defense's operational efficiency and, in addition, the integration of systems into NATO combat networks continue to rely on US standards, data networks and supply chains. This powerful dynamic does not imply decline but rather a reshaping of supremacy with the US focusing on irreplaceable operations and systemic patterns (European Defence Agency, 2022).

On the other hand, European states demonstrate a higher degree of caution primarily in the areas of sanctions' sequencing and imposition, weaponry and ammunition supply and energy policies, thus, negotiations, concessions in the allocation of industrial labor and technological dissemination are required by the US in order to ensure European integration. Nevertheless, this transition from American unilateral to negotiated leadership does not indicate structural decline since in the vast majority of cases the United States enforces its policies even, occasionally, through more painstaking diplomacy. (Rutigliano, 2023).

Institutionally, NATO remains European defense's leading organization, ensuring and reassuring, at the same time, US's integrated influence despite the evolution and advancement of EU defense mechanisms such as the European Defense Fund, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and joint procurement programs which have strengthened the European security network. Similarly, small Scandinavian, Baltic or Weimar alliances act as accelerators rather than substitutes, reinforcing NATO structures further. Far from diminishing the institutional influence of the US, these arrangements underscore the value of American services and operations as well as the enduring centrality of the United States (NATO, 2025).

Furthermore, Finland's accession to NATO in April 2023, supported by the US-Finland Defense Cooperation Agreement of December 2023, demonstrates both European initiatives and American integration as it not only shifted the balance in Northern Europe, extending NATO's border with Russia and fostering Finland's defense capabilities, but it also linked Finland's strategic planning and operational preparedness to US and NATO standards including training sessions such as the Dynamic Front which involve large-scale artillery integration with US units. Thus, the aforementioned indicate that while Finland has gained considerable strategic autonomy, it remains reliant on US training, logistical support and institutional arrangements for conducting deterrence operations (NATO, 2025).

Moreover, European air defense initiatives, such as the European Security and Defense Initiative (ESSI), represent systematic and coordinated efforts towards the advancement of European air and missile defense capabilities beyond US's influence. ESSI, which was launched in 2022 with the participation of several European states, aims to jointly procure systems such as the IRIS-T, Patriot and Arrow interceptors as well as to coordinate operational planning, logistics and training. Nevertheless, the underlying command, control, targeting, radar and support systems of these initiatives remain closely attached to the US and NATO, underscoring that domestic European defense efforts are complementary rather than substitutes to US's policies and strategies. Sweden's recent purchase of IRIS-T SLM systems through ESSI reveals that rearmament is increasingly European but interconnected with US command and sensor networks (Olsson, 2025).

European-led educational missions and post-war reconstruction efforts in Ukraine provide further perspectives for analysis regarding the reforming of transatlantic relations and balance of power. The Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome in 2025 and EU-funding mechanisms demonstrate increasing European involvement and exertion of influence regarding efforts towards stabilization and settlement of the Russia – Ukraine crisis. However, the majority of them rely on US technologies and US-led training structures including American investment in the reinforcement of Ukrainian forces (Ukraine Recovery Conference, 2025).

Moreover, it should be noted that even though European states support NATO and Ukraine's defense systems actively, European officials' reactions to unilateral or transactional US policies have increased, whether they involve ceasefire proposals, export licensing or sanctions imposition. President Trump administration's transactional approach to peace negotiations alongside its warnings of suspending diplomacy until European capitals meet specific economic conditions and requirements have intensified demands for co-decision-making and increased risk-sharing, including the reinforcement of European reserves and independent statements on defense policy (Becker & Kempin, 2025).

However, alongside its hard power demonstration and implementation, the US has consistently exerted soft power, as well in order to preserve and extend its influence over Europe. For instance, educational exchange programs and transatlantic university partnerships have cultivated long-term intellectual and cultural ties, ensuring that Europe remains connected to American academic and political traditions (Cooper, 2004). Similarly, the promotion of democratic values, human rights and the freedom of the press has served as a normative framework aligning European with US objectives. In the context of the war in Ukraine, Washington's public diplomacy has contributed significantly in shaping narratives of

mutual responsibility, highlighting the concept of solidarity and presenting the transatlantic alliance as the leading defender of the liberal order (Nye, 2019).

#### **4.5.1 Biden's (2021-2025) and Trump's (2025-) Presidencies and their Effects on American Influence in Europe**

Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s presidency (2021-2025) has been marked by a coordinated strategy of restoration and reassurance. Following the turmoil of the preceding Trump's presidency, Biden presented himself as a reliable representative of American values, committed to collective defense and the liberal international order. His administration placed significant emphasis on soft power methods such as diplomacy and multilateral cooperation, complementing them occasionally with targeted hard power initiatives. This combination exemplifies Joseph Nye's "smart power," the effective integration of attraction and coercion. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted Washington to coordinate the sanctions' impositions towards targeting Russia's energy, financial and technological sectors as well as lead a transatlantic effort for the provision of intelligence, cyber defense and military equipment to Kyiv. Biden also invested significantly in NATO unity, describing it as more united than ever (Bouliakoudi, 2024).

In contrast to the aforementioned, Biden's strategic methodology has been criticized due to his exertion of hard power, on certain occasions, at the expense of diplomatic negotiations or compromise. The considerable US military aid packages in combination with prolonged sanctions' imposition undoubtedly contributed significantly to the strengthening of Ukraine's resilience, nevertheless, it has been claimed that it reinforced Moscow's perception of an existential threat, entrenching, thereby, a high-intensity, escalating crisis. Critics argue that Biden's preference for containment and deterrence has strengthened solidarity, resulting, at the same time, in limiting the scope for negotiation aiming at a ceasefire, thus, binding Europe further to America's military capabilities and supremacy. Therefore, his presidency fostered US leadership through multilateralism and smart power, but at the cost of prolonging Ukraine's confrontation with Russia while Europe remained reassured by US guarantees but also strained by its reliance on American defense technological means (Aimen, 2024; Tocci, 2025).

Donald Trump's return to American presidency in January 2025 marked a sharp opposition to Biden's policies. In contrast to Biden's reliance on soft and smart power, Trump's strategies' main features encompass the exertion of hard power, coercive negotiations and transactional diplomacy. His rhetoric portrays the European Union as a competitor and converted US involvement in Ukraine into conditional on the assumption of responsibility for its own security. At the 2025 Munich Security Conference, it was evidently implied through Vice President J.D. Vance's speech that Washington would no longer act as Europe's unconditional guarantor. This approach demonstrates Trump's emphasis on coercive influence alongside launching threats of withdrawing or reducing US commitments in order to extract concessions, in contrast to the consensual legitimacy which used to characterize Biden's multilateralism (Siebold & Heine, 2025).

Trump's stated intention to create a narrowly defined channel of communication between the US and Russia while shifting security guarantees towards Europe has broadened the policy gap between the

allies (Simonet, 2025). As a consequence, while the United States retains the primary military and technological advantages, such as anti-missile defense and nuclear deterrence, Europe, which has been excluded from direct negotiations, has accelerated discussions on the EU's strategic autonomy and defense financing (World Bank, 2025; European Council, 2025). In this context, Trump's current presidency is characterized by a dual role; on the one hand, the credibility of US commitments and the symbolic superiority of American leadership are being challenged and on the other hand, US transactional policies have urged Europe to increase its defense investment seek its autonomy within NATO structures (Blanc, 2024).

## Conclusions

The evidence collected in this thesis reveal a reformation of American power into three correlated dimensions: hard, soft and smart power, accompanied by long-term strategic advantages alongside contested influence in the political sphere. Hard power remains the core of US supremacy, demonstrating advanced capabilities, primarily in the sectors of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as well as integrated air and missile defense which reinforce Ukraine's defense mechanisms significantly in its operations during the current Russia-Ukraine war and have also supported NATO's adaptation after 2022 (i.e. expansion of forward presence, higher degree of preparedness, institutionalized training and assistance). Furthermore, Europe has increased its investment in its security and defense, nevertheless, it remains reliant to a considerable extent on US advanced deterrence and defense systems, sophisticated data networks, supply chains and certifications. Therefore, in terms of capabilities, US power over Europe is not declining but is increasingly revolving around crucially significant strategic issues.

On the other hand, US' exertion of soft power is characterized by increasing fragility since former American President J. Biden's extensive liberal narrative is being gradually replaced by legitimacy on more conditional terms. During D. Trump's current American presidency, diplomacy over negotiations on the war between Russia and Ukraine is being combined with strict economic and strategic demands. Consequently, Europe appears to be seeking counterbalances, requiring collaborative decision-making and asserting rhetorical autonomy, despite its close cooperation with the US at an operational level.

Therefore, smart power has shifted from Biden's multilateral reassurance to Trump's transactional influence. More specifically, during Biden's presidency (2021–2025), smart power integrated allies' cohesion and sanctions' coordination with targeted military aid, expanding US power through institutions. Under the current Trump's presidency (2025- ), smart power leans towards coercive negotiations, upgrading US's competitive advantages and diplomacy while limiting direct US exposure and military involvement in the war between Russia and Ukraine. This approach enhances the US's essential and vital role regarding defense, technological and economic superiority, it increases the political risks concerning its alliances and urges Europe to mitigate risks through industrial policies, supply diversification and selective strategies towards its self-reliance and autonomy.

At the institutional level, NATO remains the pivotal international organization, implicitly fostering the US's expansion of influence over Europe and among its allies. EU fundamental strategic means (EDP, PESCO, joint procurement) reinforce European capabilities considerably, nevertheless, they appear to complement rather than challenge US power. Moreover, the accession of Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) has strengthened regional deterrence and increased their dependence on US capabilities, broadening Europe's scope for policy negotiations, at the same time.

The commencement of the war between Ukraine and Russia in February 2022 highlighted both the resilience and transformation of American power in Europe. On the one hand, the conflict has underscored the crucial significance of America's hard power since the US has played a decisive role in reinforcing Ukraine's military performance and in NATO's adaptation confirming the United States' role as the cornerstone of deterrence and security globally.

At the same time, the war reflects the evolution of American exertion of soft and smart power; while US leadership remains internationally fundamental, its legitimacy - especially towards Europe - depends increasingly on the prompt provision of security measures, feasible commitments and the equal distribution of responsibilities. Biden's multilateral reassurance has strengthened transatlantic cohesion, whereas Trump's transactional diplomacy focuses on conditional support, forcing Europeans to assume a larger degree of responsibility. Thus, the outcome of the aforementioned is not US's decline of power throughout Europe but a restructuring of its influence. Europe has expanded its capabilities and autonomy concerning diplomacy and economic support, nevertheless, it cannot replace US strategic functions. Thus, the war between Russia and Ukraine reveals that American power is indispensable and increasingly negotiable, as well, shifting from its unchallenged hegemony to a reshaped supremacy.

## References

- Giagkinis, I. (2025) Τρία συμπεράσματα από την Αλάσκα: Θρίαμβος Πούτιν, βολική ικανοποίηση Τραμπ, αμηχανία ΕΕ και Κιέβου. Euronews.com. Available at: <https://gr.euronews.com/2025/08/16/tria-simperasmata-apo-tin-alaska-thriamvos-putin-voliki-ikanopoiisi-trump-amixania-ee-kiev>
- Κουσκουβέλης, Ι. (2001). Θεωρία διεθνών σχέσεων: αποτροπή και πυρηνική στρατηγική στον ψυχρό πόλεμο. Αθήνα: Ποιότητα.
- Waltz, K. (2011) Θεωρία Διεθνούς Πολιτικής. Μπφρ: Κολιόπουλος Κ. Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Ποιότητα.
- Allen, M. & Ravid, B. (2025) Scoop: White House believes Europe secretly undoing Ukraine war's end. AXIOS.com. Available at: <https://www.axios.com/2025/08/30/trump-accuse-european-leaders-prolong-ukraine-war>
- Andréani, G., Bertram, C. and Grant, C. (2001) Europe's Military Revolution. London: Centre for European Reform. [https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/p22x\\_military\\_revolution-1955.pdf](https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/p22x_military_revolution-1955.pdf)
- Aimen, B.M. (2024) US Foreign Policy towards Russia during Trump and Biden Tenures: A Comparative Study. Master Thesis. University of Biskra.
- Archick, K., Belkin, P. & Bowen, A. (2024) NATO Enlargement to Sweden and Finland. Congress.gov. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN11949>
- Baldwin, D.A., 2016. Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barry, B. (2025) Potential European mission in Ukraine: key military factors. IISS. Available at: <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/03/potential-european-mission-in-ukraine-key-military-factors/>
- Barnett, M. and Duvall, R. (2005) 'Power in International Politics', International Organization, 59(1), pp. 39–75. doi:10.1017/S0020818305050010.
- Baldwin, D. A. (1989) Paradoxes of Power. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Barry, B. (2025) Potential European mission in Ukraine: key military factors. IISS. Available at: <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/03/potential-european-mission-in-ukraine-key-military-factors/>

- Beaver, W. & Lapporte, E. (2024) The NATO Accession of Finland and Sweden: A Strategic Advantage for the Alliance and the U.S. The Heritage Foundation. Available at: <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-nato-accession-finland-and-sweden-strategic-advantage-the-alliance-and-the-us>
- Becker, P. & Kempin, R. (2025) 'Strengthening Europe's Defence Capabilities through Clear Tasks and Objectives', German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 38. Available at: [https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2025C38\\_StrengtheningEuropeDefense.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2025C38_StrengtheningEuropeDefense.pdf)
- Bélanger, J.-F. (2025) A Blueprint for a European Defense Force. Carnegieendowment.
- Belkin, P. (2024) NATO's July 2024 Washington, DC Summit: In Brief. Congress.gov. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48121>
- Brands, H. (2025) Trump Is Opening a New Chapter in US Foreign Policy. AEI.org. Available at: <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/trump-is-opening-a-new-chapter-in-us-foreign-policy/>
- Blanc, E. (2024) 'Crisis in EU-US relations under Trump: an emotional contemptuous double game of misrecognition', Journal of European Integration, 46(5), pp. 685–705. doi: 10.1080/07036337.2024.2360154.
- Biava, A., Drent, M. & Herd, G. P. (2011) 'Characterizing the European Union's Strategic Culture: An Analytical Framework', Journal of Common Market Studies, 49(6). DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02195.x.
- Bouliakoudi, M. (2024) Resetting the US - EU defense relationship: how war in Ukraine is affecting the transatlantic bond. Master Thesis. American Studies: Politics, Strategy and Economics. University of Piraeus.
- Bouliakoudi, M. (2024) Resetting the US - EU defense relationship: how war in Ukraine is affecting the transatlantic bond. Master Thesis. American Studies: Politics, Strategy and Economics. University of Piraeus.
- Castells, M. (2015) 'A Network Theory of Power', International Journal of Communication, 5.
- Carr, F., Ifantis, K. (1996). Europe and America in the 1990s. In: NATO in the New European Order. Palgrave Macmillan, London. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230379114\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230379114_2)
- Carlough, M., Harris, B. & McGowan, A. (2025) Where Are U.S. Forces Deployed in Europe? Council of Foreign Relationships. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/article/where-are-us-forces-deployed-europe>
- Clark, J. (2024) Pentagon Welcomes Sweden, Finland in Ceremony Marking NATO Anniversary. U.S. Department of Defence. Available at: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3731771/pentagon-welcomes-sweden-finland-in-ceremony-marking-nato-anniversary/>
- Chytoupoulou, E. (2022) 'The Eu as a Global Actor Addressing the Challenge of Contested States', Open Journal of Political Science, 12, pp. 337-362. DOI: 10.4236/ojps.2022.123020.

- Cobaleda, S., Kouliopoulos, A., Kissack, A., Bradley, R. & Sánchez, D. (2020) Case study of the European security architecture: NATO and OSCE. Deliverable 4.2, GLOBE – The European Union and the Future of Global Governance. Horizon 2020, GA 822654. Available at: [https://www.globe-project.eu/case-study-of-the-european-security-architecture-nato-and-osce\\_11317.pdf](https://www.globe-project.eu/case-study-of-the-european-security-architecture-nato-and-osce_11317.pdf)
- Cohen, J. (2025) The Future of European Defense. Goldman Sachs. Available at: <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/articles/the-future-of-european-defense>
- Cooper, R. (2004) Hard power, soft power and the goals of diplomacy. In: D. Held & M. Koenig-Archibugi, eds. American Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 167–180.
- Congress.gov (2024) Defense Production for Ukraine: Background and Issues for Congress. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48182>
- Covington, S. R. (2023) 'NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA)', Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School. Available at: <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/natos-concept-deterrence-and-defence-euro-atlantic-area-dda>
- Dahl, R. A. (1957) 'The concept of power', Behavioral Science, 2(3), 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303>
- Defense Intelligence Agency (2024) North Korea: Enabling Russian Missile, Strikes Against Ukraine. Available at: [https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military\\_Power\\_Publications/DPRK\\_Russia\\_NK\\_Enabling\\_Russian\\_Missile\\_Strikes\\_Against\\_Ukraine.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military_Power_Publications/DPRK_Russia_NK_Enabling_Russian_Missile_Strikes_Against_Ukraine.pdf)
- Dorman, A. (2024) 'Sweden brings benefits for NATO but accession delay raises difficult questions', Chatham House. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/02/sweden-brings-benefits-nato-accession-delay-raises-difficult-questions>
- Dubie, M. (2002) The National Guard, Promoting United States National Security: A Case Study. Master's thesis. Defence Technical Information Center.
- Emmet, D. (1971) The concept of power. In Paradigms of Political Power (pp. 27–46). London: Routledge.
- Erameh, N. I., Ojakorotu, V., Odu Odor, D. & Anabiri, E. (2023) 'In the Shadow of Empire: Putin's Expansionism, Russia-Ukraine Conflict and the Limitation of United Nations Security Council Veto Power', African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies. Available at: <https://journals.co.za/doi/full/10.31920/2634-3665/2023/Sin1a1>
- European Leadership Network (2024) Protecting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in turbulent times. Available at: [https://europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/24\\_07\\_23\\_Commentary-pack\\_online.pdf](https://europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/24_07_23_Commentary-pack_online.pdf)

- European Parliament (2022) A comparative analysis of Article 5 Washington Treaty (NATO) and Article 42(7) TEU (EU). Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/739250/EPRS\\_ATA\(2022\)739250\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/739250/EPRS_ATA(2022)739250_EN.pdf)
- European Council (2025) Special European Council, 6 March 2025. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2025/03/06/>
- European Defence Agency (2022) EU's Strategic Compass, Follow the ambition. Issue 23. Available at: [https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-magazine/full-edm-23-\(final\).pdf](https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-magazine/full-edm-23-(final).pdf)
- European Parliament (2022) Russia's war on Ukraine: Russia ceases to be a member of the Council of Europe. Members' Research Service PE 729.296.
- European Parliament (2024) Russia's 2024 presidential election: What is at stake and what is not. European Parliamentary Research Service. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760358/EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)760358\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760358/EPRS_BRI(2024)760358_EN.pdf)
- European Parliament (2025) EU–NATO cooperation. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/772922/EPRS\\_BRI\(2025\)772922\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/772922/EPRS_BRI(2025)772922_EN.pdf)
- European Commission (2024) EU Leaders agree on €50 billion of reliable financial support for Ukraine until 2027. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac\\_24\\_621](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac_24_621)
- EUCOM (2014) Operation Atlantic Resolve Fact Sheet. Atlantic Council. Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/operation-atlantic-resolve-factsheet/>
- Eur-Lex (2014) COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) No 269/2014 of 17 March 2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014R0269>
- Fella, S. (2022) The EU response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. House of Commons Library, UK.
- Filipović, A. (2024) 'Finnish and Swedish NATO membership – a path towards more regional security or instability?', Institute of European Studies, Belgrade. DOI: 10.5937/spm85-44956.
- Flockhart, T. (ed.) (2014) Cooperative Security: NATO's Partnership Policy in a Changing World. DIIS Report 2014:01. Danish Institute for International Studies. Available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177617/WP2014-01\\_NATO-partnerships\\_TFL\\_web.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177617/WP2014-01_NATO-partnerships_TFL_web.pdf)
- Foy, H., Miller, C. & Chávez, S. (2025) US offers air and intelligence support to postwar force in Ukraine. Financial Time. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/66ec25a0-4af8-467f-9fbe-cf42de890a7e>
- Gallarotti, G. M. (2011) 'Soft power: what it is, why it's important, and the conditions for its effective use', Journal of Political Power, 4(1), pp. 25–47. DOI: 10.1080/2158379X.2011.557886.

- Gallarotti, Giulio. (2015) 'Smart Power: Definitions, Importance, and Effectiveness', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 38,3. 38. 245-281. DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2014.1002912.
- Gallagher, M. S. (2020) *Mission Ukraine: U.S. Army Leads Multinational Training Group to Counter Russian Threat*. Association of the United States Army. Available at: <https://www.ausa.org/articles/mission-ukraine-us-army-leads-multinational-training-group-counter-russian-threat>
- Genini, D. (2025) How the war in Ukraine has transformed the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, *Yearbook of European Law*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/yel/yeaf003>
- Grazia, V. (2021) 'Soft- Power United States Versus Normative Power Europe: Competing Ideals of Hegemony in the Post- Cold War West, 1990- 2015', in Baykurt, B. and de Grazia, V. (eds) *Soft-Power Internationalism: Competing for Cultural Influence in the 21st-Century Global Order*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, pp 19-59. <https://doi.org/10.7312/bayk19544-003>
- Grisé, M., Gozad, M., Dowd, A., Hvizda, M., Kennedy, J., Kepe, M., De Lataillade, C., Marcinek, C. & Woodworth, D. (2025) *Russian's Military after Ukraine-Potential Pathways for the Postwar reconstitution of the Russian armed forces*. RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.. ISBN: 978-1-9774-1-4151.
- Guzzini, S. (1993) 'Structural power: The limits of neorealist power analysis', *International Organization*, 47(3), 443-478.
- Helwig, N. (2023) 'EU Strategic Autonomy after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Europe's Capacity to Act in Times of War', *Journal of Common Market Studies*. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.13527.
- Heywood, A. (2011) *Global Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howorth, J. (2014) *Security and defence policy in the European Union*. 2nd edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hyland, W. G. (2001) *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*. Westport: Praeger. Available at: [https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9780313002069\\_A47347366/preview-9780313002069\\_A47347366.pdf](https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9780313002069_A47347366/preview-9780313002069_A47347366.pdf)
- Idrees, A. (2022) U.S. removing about 150 military trainers from Ukraine. Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/exclusive-us-remove-military-trainers-ukraine-officials-2022-02-12/>
- Ijaz, S., Tehseen, S., Shah, F.A., Ahmed, S. and Tabani, T., 2024. Power dynamics and balance of power in international relations. *Migration Letters*, 21(S11), pp.1750-1759.
- Iso-Markku, T. & Karjalainen, T. (2022) *Flexible Defence Cooperation in Europe: FNC, JEF and EI2. EU Integration and Differentiation for Effectiveness and Accountability*, EUIDEA. Available at: [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/euidea\\_pb\\_6.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/euidea_pb_6.pdf)

- Ivanov, I. (2020). Reshaping U.S. Smart Power: Towards a Post-Pandemic Security Architecture. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 13(3), 46–74. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26936545>
- Jakupec, V. (2024) 'Trump-Proofing Ukraine Aid: NATO and EU Geopolitics', in *The West's Response to the Ukraine War. Contributions to Security and Defence Studies*. Cham: Springer, pp. 47–68. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-83428-8\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-83428-8_3)
- Jader, H. M., & Al Momani, H. M. (2024) 'The Geopolitical Implications of NATO's Enlargement in The Nordic Region: The Accession of Finland and Sweden 2022 A Case Study', *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 51(6), pp 49–64. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v51i6.5430>
- Jervis, R., 1978. Cooperation under the security dilemma. *World Politics*, 30(2), pp.167–214.
- Jones, S. (2010) *The Rise of European Security Cooperation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: [https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9780511275937\\_A23690933/preview-9780511275937\\_A23690933.pdf](https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9780511275937_A23690933/preview-9780511275937_A23690933.pdf)
- Jordan, D. (2025) 'Army of Europe' needed to challenge Russia, says Zelensky. *BBCnews.com*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvql27x74wpo>
- Kavanagh, J. (2025) Why Putin is winning: Last week's summit revealed just how little leverage the US has, while Europe looks panicked, and Zelensky is painted into a corner. *ResponsibleStatecraft.com*. Available at: <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/trump-ukraine-putin/>
- Kirshner, J., 1997. *Currency and Coercion: The Political Economy of International Monetary Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Konończuk, W. & Menkiszak, M. (2023) *The calm after the storm: Russia Following Prigozhni's Mutiny*. OSW's Russian Department. Available at: [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/OSW-Report\\_The\\_calm-after-the-storm\\_net.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/OSW-Report_The_calm-after-the-storm_net.pdf)
- Koops, J., Costea, S., Pelosi, G., Rishko, V., Strelkov, A. & Tentler, M. (2025) 'Parliaments in the EU enlargement process: Strengthening capacities of accession country parliaments under the evolving enlargement methodology', *European Parliament*. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO\\_STU\(2025\)754467](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_STU(2025)754467)
- Kovalenko, I. (2025) Can Ukraine Survive Without the US Military Aid? *Ukraine World*. Available at: <https://ukraineworld.org/en/articles/analysis/us-aid-impact-and-alternatives>
- Kozyrev, V. (2024). 'The War in Ukraine and Its Impact on the US Perspective of Europe', in Biba, S. (ed.) *Europe in an Era of US-China Strategic Rivalry*. Cham: Springer, pp. 21–45. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48117-8\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48117-8_2)
- Kim, P. (2025) Xi Jinping's Moscow visit highlights China's strategic vulnerabilities. *Brooking.edu*. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/xi-jinpings-moscow-visit-highlights-chinas-strategic-vulnerabilities/>

- Krauthammer, C. (2010) Understanding America's Contested Primacy. Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School. [https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/pantheon\\_files/files/publication/krauthammer.pdf](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/pantheon_files/files/publication/krauthammer.pdf)
- Kristensen, H., Korda, M., Johns, E. & Knight-Boyle, M. (2023) 'Nuclear weapons sharing', Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist. Available at: <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2023-11/nuclear-weapons-sharing-2023/>
- Kühn, U. (2025) 'The Fall Crisis of 2022: why did Russia not use nuclear arms?', Defense & Security Analysis, 41(2), pp. 280–300. doi: 10.1080/14751798.2024.2442794.
- Kusa, I. (2022). Russia-Ukraine War: Harbinger of a Global Shift A Perspective from Ukraine. Policy Perspectives, 19(1), pp. 7–12. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48676292>
- Lepeu, J. (2025) 'Ukraine, the de-targetization of EU sanctions, and the rise of the European commission as architect of EU foreign policy', International Politics. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-024-00649-7>
- Lopez, T. (2023) Ukrainian Troops Headed to U.S. for Patriot Missile Training. U.S. Department of Defence. Available at: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3264235/ukrainian-troops-headed-to-us-for-patriot-missile-training/>
- Mahmood, R. (2025) 'Power in International Relations: Insights from Realist and Liberal Theories', European Scientific Journal. 21. 27-47. DOI: 10.19044/esj.2024.v21n8p27.
- Mearsheimer, J.J., 2001. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Meleshchenko, T. (2024). Transformation of the European security system in the light of Sweden and Finland's accession to NATO. Foreign Affairs. DOI:10.46493/2663-2675.34(2).2024.36.
- Murauskaite, E.E. (2023) 'U.S. military training assistance to Ukraine: Impact assessment', Western Tools Short of War: Impact Assessment of Selected Use Cases in Ukraine (February). Available at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/publication/us-military-training-assistance-ukraine>
- NATO (2009) Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm)
- NATO (2022) North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991–1997). Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69344.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69344.htm)
- NATO (2022) NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCI Agency). Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69332.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69332.htm)
- NATO (2024) Secretary General in Kyiv: Ukraine is on an “irreversible path” to NATO, support will continue. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_225160.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_225160.htm)

- NATO (2024) Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). Available at: <https://lc.nato.int/operations/enhanced-forward-presence-efp>
- NATO (2024) Washington Summit Declaration. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_227678.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm)
- NATO (2025) NATO-Ukraine Council. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_217652.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_217652.htm)
- NATO (2025) Readiness Action Plan. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_119353.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_119353.htm)
- NATO (2025) NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and forces. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50068.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm)
- NATO (2025) NATO Defence Planning Process. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49202.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm)
- NATO (2025) Multinational capability cooperation. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_163289.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_163289.htm)
- Nichol, J. (2009) 'Georgia [Republic] and NATO Enlargement: Issues and Implications', CRS Report for Congress, 13.
- Nossel, S., 2004. Smart Power. *Foreign Affairs*, 83(2), pp. 131-142.
- Nye, J. S. (2008) *The Powers to Lead*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0199754136.
- Nye, J. S. (2004) *Soft Power: the means to success in world politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Nye, J.S. (2019) Soft power and public diplomacy revisited. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, (online first), 22 April.
- Nye, J. S., & Keohane, R. O. (1977) *Power and Interdependence*. Pearson. ISBN-13: 978-0-205-08291-9.
- OSCE (2015) Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/documents/sede/dv/sede140715oscecommissionukraine/sede140715oscecommissionukraine\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/sede/dv/sede140715oscecommissionukraine/sede140715oscecommissionukraine_en.pdf)
- Ollongren, K. & Van Rij, A. (2025) The EU must enable its defence industry to boost capabilities and reduce dependence on US systems. Chatham House. Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/eu-must-enable-its-defence-industry-boost-capabilities-and-reduce-dependence-us-systems>
- Olsson, J. (2025) 'Sweden inks \$900M IRIS-T air defense deal through European Sky Shield Initiative', *Breaking Defence*. Available at: <https://breakingdefense.com/2025/06/sweden-inks-900m-iris-t-air-defense-deal-through-european-sky-shield-initiative/>

- Operation Atlantic Resolve (2025) U.S. Government activities related to Ukraine. Available at: [https://media.defense.gov/2025/Aug/14/2003780477/-1/-1/1/OAR\\_Q3\\_JUN2025\\_FINAL\\_508.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2025/Aug/14/2003780477/-1/-1/1/OAR_Q3_JUN2025_FINAL_508.PDF)
- Parsons, D. (2022) 'Ukraine situation report: More HIMARS on the way once Ukraine shows it can use them in combat', The War Zone. Available at: <https://www.twz.com/ukraine-situation-report-more-himars-on-the-way-once-ukraine-shows-it-can-use-them-in-combat>
- Patrick, S. (2025) 'Trump has launched a second American revolution. This time, it's against the world', Emissary (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2025/03/trump-foreign-policy-second-american-revolution-nato-un?lang=en>
- Polityuk, P. and Balmforth, T. (2024) 'Germany's Scholz pledges new military aid to Ukraine during rare Kyiv trip', Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germanys-scholz-arrives-kyiv-surprise-visit-zdf-reports-2024-12-02/>
- Puglierin, J., Varvelli, A. & Zerka, P. (2025) 'Transatlantic twilight: European public opinion and the long shadow of Trump', European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR). Available at: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/transatlantic-twilight-european-public-opinion-and-the-long-shadow-of-trump/>
- Raimzhanova, A. (2015) POWER IN IR: HARD, SOFT, AND SMART. Thesis, Institute for Cultural Diplomacy and the University of Bucharest.
- Rutigliano, S. (2023) 'Ukraine Conflict's Impact on European Defence and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)', European Papers, 8(2). DOI: 10.15166/2499-8249/686.
- Roth, A., Sabbagh, D. and Sauer, P. (2025) 'Trump says he has spoken to Putin and agreed to negotiate Ukraine ceasefire', The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/12/trump-putin-ukraine-ceasefire>
- Rynning, S. (2003) 'European Union: Towards a strategic culture?', Security Dialogue, 34(4), pp. 479–496. doi: 10.1177/0967010603344007.
- Schmidt, A. (2024) Hypersonic capabilities: A journey from almighty threat to intelligible risk. Army University Press. Available at: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/March-2024/Hypersonic-Capabilities>
- Shahid Jan Afridi and Qaisar Ali (2025) 'Trump new approaches (ceasefire agreement) toward Russia-Ukraine conflicts and its implications for regional security', Social Science Review Archives, 3(2), pp. 214–229. doi: 10.70670/sra.v3i2.607.
- Smith-Windsor, B.A. (2000) Hard power, soft power reconsidered. Canadian Military Journal, 1(3), pp. 51–56.
- Spatafora, G. (2025) 'Fit for purpose? Reforming NATO in the age of Trump 2.0', European Union Institute for Security Studies. Available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/briefs/fit-purpose-reforming-nato-age-trump-20>

- Simón, L. (2022) 'European strategic autonomy and defence after Ukraine', Elcano Royal University. Available at: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/european-strategic-autonomy-and-defence-after-ukraine/>
- Siebold, S. & Heine, F. (2025) 'Exclusive: German ambassador warns of Trump plan to redefine constitutional order, document shows', Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/german-ambassador-warns-trump-plan-redefine-constitutional-order-document-shows-2025-01-18/>
- Simonet, L. (2025) 'The 'geopolitical' European Union and the new Transatlantic relation 100 days after Donald Trump's inauguration: How to navigate the storm?', SSOAR. Available at: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-103003-9>
- Stanojević, N. (2025) 'The security implications of Finland's accession to NATO', in European security order, integration and modernization: Perspectives and challenges in the Central and Eastern European Region. China-CEE Institute. ISBN: 978-615-02-2788-7.
- Stokes, B. (2023) 'In new poll, Europeans express little faith in America's future influence', German Marshall Fund of the United States, GMF. Available at: <https://www.gmfus.org/news/new-poll-europeans-express-little-faith-americas-future-influence>
- Szöke, J. and Kusica, K. (2023) 'Military assistance to Ukraine and its significance in the Russo-Ukrainian war', Social Sciences, 12(5), p. 294. doi: 10.3390/socsci12050294.
- The White House (2024) Fact sheet: The 2024 NATO Summit in Washington. Available at: <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/07/10/fact-sheet-the-2024-nato-summit-in-washington>
- Tocci, N. (2025) 'Trump or no Trump, Europe's relationship with the US will never recover', The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/sep/11/donald-trump-europe-transatlantic-alliance-never-recover>
- United Nations (2014) Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014. General Assembly. Sixty-eighth session, Agenda item 33.
- United Nations (2025) General Assembly debates Russian Federation's Security Council veto of European amendments seeking 'just' peace in Ukraine. Available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12677.doc.htm>
- U.S. Department of State (2024) Ukraine security assistance. Available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Sep/06/2003538814/-1/-1/1/UKRAINE-INFOGRAPHIC-08AUG2024.PDF>
- U.S. Department of State (2025) U.S. security cooperation with Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-political-military-affairs/releases/2025/01/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine>

U.S. Department of Defence (2022) U.S.-provided HIMARS effective in Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3095394/us-provided-himars-effective-in-ukraine>

U.S. Government Accountability Office (2024) Ukraine: DOD could strengthen international military training coordination by improving data quality. Q&A Report to Congressional Committees.

U.S. Department of Defence (2025) U.S. Security Cooperation with Sweden. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-sweden>

Ukraine Defence Conference (2025) 10-11 July 2025-Rome, Italy. Available at: <https://www.unc-international.com/>

Walker, N. (2025) Conflict in Ukraine: A timeline (current conflict, 2022–present). House of Commons Library, UK.

World Bank (2025) Updated Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Assessment Released. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2025/03/06/>

Wike, R., Poushter, J., Silver, L. & Fetterolf, J. (2025) 'U.S. Image Declines in Many Nations Amid Low Confidence in Trump', Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/06/11/us-image-declines-in-many-nations-amid-low-confidence-in-trump/>

Wilson, A. (2016) 'The Donbas in 2014: Explaining civil conflict perhaps, but not civil war', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68(4), pp. 631–652. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43965002>

Yon Ebright, K. (2022) NATO's Article 5 collective defense obligations, explained. Brennan Center for Justice. Available at: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/natos-article-5-collective-defense-obligations-explained>

Zabrodskyi, M., Watling, J., Danylyuk, O. and Reynolds, N. (2022) Preliminary lessons in conventional warfighting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine: February–July 2022. RUSI. Available at: <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/special-resources/preliminary-lessons-conventional-warfighting-russias-invasion-ukraine-february-july-2022>