



Research Article

Ukraine's Bilateral Security Assistance Agreements: Implications for a European 'Reassurance and Deterrence' Force for Ukraine?

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Abstract: When identifying potential sending states and the mandate of a European multinational stabilization force—and its mission in Ukraine following the cessation of hostilities between Kyiv and Moscow—much will be determined by the nature of any agreed future ceasefire, as well as by the general willingness of European states to support Ukraine's military and broader national defense objectives. Here, previously signed bilateral security assistance agreements are indicative of political will and commitment. An analysis of these agreements, considering associated political mandates and identified and envisioned military tasks, reveals that they could underpin a future coalition of the willing in a multinational force in Ukraine, in both mission and execution. These agreements also point to its likely membership. Such a deployment could help defend Ukraine and deter Russia, as well as strengthen—and Europeanize—the European conventional pillar of NATO.

Keywords: NATO, Ukraine, Russia, collective security, security guarantees, transatlantic defense.

Introduction

On February 12, 2025, at the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth noted that once the United States and the Russian Federation had negotiated a ceasefire, it would be up to Europe, Russia, and Ukraine to implement it. Hegseth suggested that European and non-European "peacekeepers" would be part of the implementation, but that this peace-implementation force would not operate under a NATO mandate and that

U.S. troops—"U.S. boots on the ground"—would not be present.¹ U.S. "critical enablers," including "air defense systems, support for missile targeting systems, real-time intelligence, and certain parts and ammunition," would also not be provided by the United States.²

At the same time, Hegseth ruled out Ukraine's future NATO membership and suggested that Ukraine would have to trade territory to secure peace. "Stark strategic realities prevent the United States of America from being primarily focused on the security of Europe." The endurance of the transatlantic alliance would require "European allies to step into the arena and take ownership of conventional security on the continent."³ The Trump administration made it clear that the United States would not accept security commitments that left it with long-term liabilities in Ukraine. In the view of the administration, Ukraine was not seen as a NATO member or a vital U.S. interest; any "backstop" or guarantee would have to come from Europe.⁴ Germany's future chancellor, Friedrich Merz, stated that it was uncertain whether, in a few months, "we will still be talking about NATO in its current form."⁵

¹ "Opening Remarks by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at Ukraine Defense Contact Group (As Delivered)," Speech, U.S. Department of War, February 12, 2025, www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/4064113/opening-remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-at-ukraine-defense-contact. See also: Julia Struck, "'UN Will Not Protect from Putin's Desire to Return – Zelensky on Peacekeeping Mission,'" *Kyiv Post*, March 21, 2025, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/49377>.

² Andriy Zagorodnyuk, "Ukraine Without America: How Kyiv Can Persist in the Face of a Hostile Washington," *Foreign Affairs*, March 4, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/ukraine-without-america>. See also: Mark Edele, "A New Theory of Victory: How Ukraine Can Fortify and Prosper in the Age of Trump," *The Interpreter* (blog), Lowy Institute, April 7, 2025, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/new-theory-victory-how-ukraine-can-fortify-prosper-age-trump.

³ Hegseth, "Opening Remarks at Ukraine Defense Contact Group."

⁴ Rym Momtaz, "Taking the Pulse: Will Strong U.S. Backing Materialize for European Security Guarantees in Ukraine?," *Carnegie Europe*, March 6, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/03/taking-the-pulse-will-strong-us-backing-materialize-for-european-security-guarantees-in-ukraine>; Vaidas Saldžiūnas, "What Trump Is Really Up To and How It Could All End: Four Scenarios — from Worst to Best," *Delfi*, February 21, 2025, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/ko-istikruju-siekia-trumpas-ir-kuo-viskas-gali-baigtis-keturi-scenarijai-nuo-blogiausio-iki-geriausio-120088178>. — in Lithuanian

⁵ Mark Leonard, "Independence under Merz Is Entirely Possible," *The Strategist*, Austrian Strategic Policy Institute, March 1, 2025, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/independence-under-merz-is-entirely-possible/>. See also: Claudia Major, Carlo Masala, Christian Mölling, and Jana Puglierin, "How to Prevent the Next War in Europe: A Five-Point Plan," European Council on Foreign Relations, February 25, 2025, <https://ecfr.eu/article/how-to-prevent-the-next-war-in-europe-a-five-point-plan/>; Nathalie Tocci et al., "Trump and Vance Have Smashed the Old Order — How Should Europe Respond?" *The Guardian*, February 18, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/18/trump-vance-smashed-old-order-realignment-europe-response>.

Hegseth, U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance, and President Donald Trump delivered a unified message: the United States wanted Europe to take the lead on Ukraine's defense outside of NATO. Subsequently, informal meetings were held on February 17–19 among Europeans and like-minded partners—without the United States—to discuss new options for maintaining a ceasefire as a prelude to a peace settlement. Washington also signaled that it was assessing its military force posture in Europe and considering a drawdown to allow for the strategic prioritization of China. In addition, the United States was seeking to normalize diplomatic relations with Russia that included, among other goals, mediating a ceasefire and peace between Russia and Ukraine, Iran's denuclearization, Arctic cooperation, and arms control. By referencing Canada as the fifty-first U.S. state and raising the specter of annexing Greenland, Trump questioned the principle that security among all NATO members is indivisible, thereby eroding long-standing confidence and trust in NATO.⁶ More generally, with the introduction of tariffs, the perception increased in Europe that “Trump seeks to exploit Europe's economic, technological, political, and security vulnerabilities for coercive ends.”⁷

In this context, Wolfgang Ischinger suggests: “France, Germany, Poland, and other like-minded neighbors should launch a major defense initiative, shaped around a core group of powers that are prepared to speak with one voice on security issues. This European Defense Union—the EDU—would agree on majority decision-making and include as close participation from the United Kingdom as possible.”⁸

While there is a large literature on peacekeeping, with notable theorists and seminal works,⁹ this article seeks to focus more narrowly on and unpack the notion of a peacekeeping deployment to Ukraine following Hegseth's raising of the prospect in February 2025 and the subsequent meetings and discussions on this issue by UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, among others. It appears that

⁶ Ivo H. Daalder, “NATO Without America: How Europe Can Run an Alliance Designed for U.S. Control,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 28, 2025, www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/nato-without-america. See also: Jack Watling, “Europe's War in Ukraine: The Continent's Risky Task of Keeping Kyiv in the Fight – and Defending Itself,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 24, 2025, www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/europes-war-ukraine.

⁷ Tobias Gehrke, “Brussels Hold'em: European Cards Against Trumpian Coercion,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, March 20, 2025, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/brussels-holdem-european-cards-against-trumpian-coercion/>.

⁸ Wolfgang Ischinger, “Europe's Moment of Truth: The Transatlantic Alliance Is Under Grave Threat – but Not Yet Doomed,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 2, 2025, www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/volodymyr-zelensky-trump-europes-moment-truth.

⁹ For example, see: Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton University Press, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7rtn4>.

peacekeepers would be deployed to Ukraine to “reinforce a ceasefire” between Russia and Ukraine, in the words of UK Defense Minister John Healey.¹⁰

However, from a Russian perspective, this conditionality creates perverse incentives not to agree to a ceasefire and thus avoid European military deployment in Ukraine. As Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated on April 12: “By discussing deployment of something military, call it peacekeeping, call it stabilization force, on the remaining part of Ukraine, they [European sending states] want to use this force not to keep peace, but to keep and protect the Nazi regime, and this is the key.”¹¹

Conversely, were Putin to agree to a ceasefire, he would likely claim the deployment of such peacekeepers to be escalatory and use it as a reason to break any ceasefire agreement. Nonetheless, pressure for a ceasefire increased on July 14 when Trump issued an ultimatum following a meeting between Zelenskyy and Putin: Russia had 50 days (until September 2) to announce a ceasefire. Two weeks later, in late July, Trump shortened the deadline to mid-August. Indeed, during the summer of 2025, the issue of a ceasefire and peacekeepers came much more sharply into focus.

When identifying potential sending states and defining the mandate and mission of a multinational stabilization force, much will be determined by the nature of any agreed future ceasefire, as well as the general willingness of European states to support Ukraine’s military and broader national defense objectives. Here, previously signed bilateral security assistance agreements are indicative of political will and commitment. This article first identifies and analyzes the 29 security assistance agreements signed between Ukraine and its partners in chronological order. Second, it offers an assessment of content commonalities with a view to identifying the potential political mandate (authority) of these “peacekeepers” (“deterrent force”) and the military mission or tasks that such a force could adopt to help Ukraine defend itself and deter future Russian attack. Third, the article examines current discussions on the likely relationship between force size and capabilities and the associated military tasks. Theoretical options range from sending military experts and limited troops to non-conflict zones inside Ukraine to more frontline and kinetic peace-enforcement duties. Lastly, it offers a conclusion and points to future research avenues.

Bilateral Security Agreements for Ukraine: Overview and Analysis

The model of bilateral security treaties for Ukraine was initiated and developed by the negotiating group headed by former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh

¹⁰ Yuri Zoria, “UK Is Ready for Ukraine Peacekeeping Mission—If There’s Ever Peace to Keep,” *Euromaidan Press*, July 10, 2025, <https://euromaidanpress.com/2025/07/10/uk-is-ready-for-ukraine-peacekeeping-mission-if-theres-ever-peace-to-keep/>.

¹¹ “Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Answers to the Media Questions during His Remarks at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Antalya, April 12, 2025,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/2008763/.

Rasmussen and Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak. This initiative, named the “Kyiv Security Compact,” was published on September 13, 2022, and served as a model for subsequent bilateral security treaties.¹² Since then, 28 other agreements have been signed between January 12, 2024, and January 16, 2025.¹³

Among the most significant points highlighted by the 29 agreements under study are the following:

- The security system for Ukraine will be based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, which concerns the right of states to self-defense.
- The successful exercise of this right hinges on Ukraine's development of its own defense-industrial capacity, backed by lethal assistance from its partners, and on conducting military exercises for the Ukrainian army under NATO auspices.
- Potential partner states include NATO, EU, and G7 member countries.¹⁴

Table 1 highlights the military and nonmilitary broader defense and national security assurances Ukraine would need from its partners, including financial support during and after Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, the provision of weapons and technology, training for Ukrainian military personnel, and cooperation in cybersecurity and intelligence sharing. The core idea of this strategy is a series of bilateral security treaties between Ukraine and its partners, operating within a broader global agreement or initiative.

It should be noted, however, that under this document, Ukraine does not receive security guarantees comparable to the obligations under Article 5 of the NATO Charter, which has prompted some skepticism in Ukraine about the long-

¹² Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Andrii Yermak, “The Kyiv Security Compact,” *Rasmussen Global*, September 13, 2022, <https://rasmussenglobal.com/read-the-kyiv-security-compact/>.

¹³ The proposed Ukraine rare earths mineral deal was excluded from this list, as it has yet to be signed. It may be considered to constitute a de facto U.S. security-assistance agreement, as President Trump has indicated that the presence of American workers in Ukraine would provide a security guarantee for the country because “we’ll be working there.” Pippa Crerar, “Trump Says Putin Would Keep His Word on a Ukraine Peace Deal,” *The Guardian*, February 27, 2025, www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/27/trump-says-putin-would-keep-his-word-on-a-ukraine-peace-deal. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda has stated: “The very fact that America will have an interest in the minerals in Ukraine is a very good deterrent, because America will also have an interest in its presence and in a certain amount of security, or guarantees of security, for Ukraine.” “Lithuanian President Welcomes Ukraine’s Mineral Deal with US: ‘This Is the Right Path’,” *LRT*, February 28, 2025, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2500214/lithuanian-president-welcomes-ukraine-s-mineral-deal-with-us-this-is-the-right-path>.

¹⁴ Oleksandr Merezhko, “Bilateral Security Guarantee Agreements Ukraine Can Sign Not Only with G7 Participants but Also with Most NATO Member States,” Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, February 18, 2024, <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/246682.html>. – in Ukrainian

term effectiveness of these agreements. Moreover, although the agreements reference Ukraine's desire for NATO cooperation and integration, there is no guarantee Ukraine will eventually become a NATO member.¹⁵ NATO membership is a slow process, as it necessitates the approval of 32 parliaments and is subject to national vetoes.¹⁶

Table 1. Bilateral Security Agreements between Ukraine and Partner Countries (2024 – January 2025).

Country, Date	Military (including financial allocation for 2024)	Defense Cooperation
United Kingdom-Ukraine Agreement, Jan 12, 2024	GBP 2.5 billion (drones, equipment) Air defense, artillery, long-range firepower, armored vehicles; navy development (mine clearance, patrols, navigation)	Maritime Security Coalition leadership; support for local defense industry production and technology protection; defense research
Germany-Ukraine Agreement, Feb 16, 2024	€7.1 billion Air defense, artillery, armored vehicles, and ammunition	Lead in Integrated Air & Missile Defense Coalition; defense industry investments and localized production; potential joint weapons and ammunition manufacturing
France-Ukraine Agreement, Feb 16, 2024	€3 billion Air defense, artillery, armored vehicles, long-range firepower	Lead in Artillery and Air Defense Capability Coalitions; defense industry investments and localized production of artillery, air defense, and armored vehicles; innovation and military R&D
Denmark-Ukraine Agreement, Feb 23, 2024	€1.8 billion Denmark's €8.5 billion Ukraine Fund (2023-2028) Air Force & F-16 support Focus on forces and air defense, maritime security, mine clearance, technology, drones	Co-lead in Air Force Capability Coalition; joint defense tech and industry cooperation; localized production, advanced military tech development (drones, radars, communications)
Canada-Ukraine Agreement, Feb 24, 2024	CAD 3.02 billion (~\$2.2 billion) Armored vehicles, artillery, and air force capabilities	Joint production, localized repair facilities, arms and ammunition expansion, supply chain support

¹⁵ Sergiy Sydorenko, "Ukraine Will Not Receive the 'Security Guarantees' That Many Expect. Here's Why," *European Pravda*, July 28, 2023, www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2023/07/28/7166569/. – in Ukrainian

¹⁶ Graeme P. Herd, "Russia's War Against Ukraine: Is 2025 the Year of Peace?" Special Edition *Munich Security Conference 2025* (Bonn: Mittler Report Verlag, 2025): 39-42, https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/MSC_Sonderheft_V6.pdf.

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Italy-Ukraine Agreement, Feb 24, 2024	Continuation of the military aid Air defense, artillery, long-range firepower, armored vehicles, demining, UAVs, EW, and maritime security	Joint production of weapons and ammunition, investment in Ukraine's defense industrial base, supply chain support
Netherlands-Ukraine Agreement, Mar 1, 2024	€2 billion Air defense, artillery, long-range firepower, and armored vehicles	Lead in Air Force Coalition; major contributions to Maritime Security Coalition; joint defense industry roadmap, including investment in unmanned aerial and maritime systems
Finland-Ukraine Agreement, Apr 3, 2024	23rd aid package: €1.88 billion (total ~€2 billion) Long-term multi-domain support (land, air, sea, cyber, space)	Prioritization of ammunition and heavy weapons production; cooperation on ammunition production and strategic stockpiles; support in maritime security and naval development
Latvia-Ukraine Agreement, Apr 11, 2024	0.25 % of GDP annually (~€112 million in 2024) €2 million annual contributions to NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP)	Co-lead in Drone Coalition (goal: 1M drones for Ukraine); collaboration on defense logistics, military education (for Ukrainian security forces, including border and law enforcement personnel), and strategic stockpiling
Spain-Ukraine Agreement, May 27, 2024	€1 billion Artillery, armored vehicles, maritime security	Cooperation on military logistics, training, and joint exercises; involvement in mine clearance; military medical support
Belgium-Ukraine Agreement, May 28, 2024	At least €977 million in 2024 30 F-16s by 2028 (first explicit fighter-jet commitment) Support for air defense, maritime security, demining, and artillery ammunition procurement	Co-lead in Air Force Capability Coalition (pilot training, maintenance); joint ventures in defense tech; specialized training (CBRN, underwater drones, mine clearance)
Portugal-Ukraine Agreement, May 28, 2024	€126 million military aid; includes Leopard 2A6 tanks, UAVs, APCs, and medical evacuation vehicles	Co-leader in Maritime Security efforts; structural support for Ukraine's defense governance and modernization
Sweden-Ukraine Agreement, May 31, 2024	SEK 75 billion (about €6.5 billion) in military assistance for 2024–2026 CV90, Archer artillery, ASC 890 surveillance aircraft	Cooperation in military training (combat medics, UAVs, demining); supporting Ukraine's defense procurement and industrial base development (CV90 production in Ukraine)

Iceland-Ukraine Agreement, May 31, 2024	ISK 4 billion (~\$30 million) yearly (2024–2028) Defense-related equipment and transport support, including cargo plane deliveries Funding for uniforms and protective gear for service-women	Strengthening Ukraine's maritime capabilities through industrial co-operation and training
Norway-Ukraine Agreement, May 31, 2024	Nansen Support Programme: €6.4B (2023–2027), €1.2 billion in 2024 F-16 jets, NASAMS air defense, tanks, artillery, drones, and ammunition	Leads the Maritime Security Capability Coalition with the UK; efforts to bolster Ukraine's Black Sea and Azov Sea security; joint production, R&D, and supply chain security
Japan-Ukraine Agreement, June 13, 2024	Non-lethal support: trucks, drones, medical equipment (within constitutional limits) Nuclear safety support via IAEA & OPCW	Participates in IT and Demining Coalitions; maritime security: upholding UNCLOS & free navigation
United States-Ukraine Agreement, June 13, 2024	Air defense (Patriot, NASAMS), F-16 jets, artillery, drones, and long-range fires	Co-production, investment, and strengthening Ukraine's self-sufficiency; enhancing Black Sea naval capabilities and modernizing Ukraine's integrated air defense
Estonia-Ukraine Agreement, June 27, 2024	At least 0.25 % of GDP for military aid (2024-2027) €500 million total military aid (1.3% GDP); €100 million in 2024 Howitzers (122mm, 155mm), Milan and Javelin anti-tank missiles, mines, Carl-Gustaf rifles, grenade launchers, road and water vehicles, communications, and medical equipment	Co-production opportunities for military hardware; supply chains, and high-tech development support
Lithuania-Ukraine Agreement, June 27, 2024	€500 million in military aid since 2022 (aims for 0.25 % of GDP/year); €80 million in 2024 Air defense assets, lethal support, military training, and medical rehabilitation for wounded Ukrainian soldiers	Co-leads the Demining Capability Coalition; joint research and development for new defense solutions, including drone warfare, counter-drone systems, and advanced sensor technologies

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Poland-Ukraine Agreement, July 8, 2024	Over €4 billion in military aid since 2022, including 44 arms packages (tanks, jets, air defense, UAVs, artillery, and ammo) 44 defense aid packages since invasion (as for mid-2024) + several new packages in 2024 "Ukrainian Legion" to train Ukraine's security and defense forces in Poland	Leads Armored Capability Coalition; expands arms manufacturing, supply chain security, and military innovation (drones, counter-drone tech, space cooperation); strengthens arms transfer controls and defense innovation (quantum & AI tech); feasibility of intercepting Russian missiles and UAVs targeting Poland from Ukrainian airspace
Luxembourg-Ukraine Agreement, July 10, 2024	€80 million in military aid for 2024 (€96 million in 2023, €74.4 million in 2022) Provides ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) capabilities	Co-leads IT Capability Coalition; co-production of defense equipment (joint manufacturing with Luxembourg-based SMEs); space-based intelligence-sharing mechanisms; investment in dual-use technology projects (quantum computing satellite defense applications)
Romania-Ukraine Agreement, July 11, 2024	PATRIOT air defense system donation F-16 pilot training Facilitates the transit of military equipment through Romanian territory	Joint industrial production lines for ammunition; maritime security in the Black Sea (demining and freedom of navigation); Joint Ukraine-Romania Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation
Slovenia-Ukraine Agreement, July 18, 2024	13 military aid packages delivered (2022-2024), with continued support in following years	Supports Ukraine's entry into the European Defense Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB); identifies funding sources for Ukraine's defense industry
Czech Republic-Ukraine Agreement, July 18, 2024	Provision of military materiel across all domains Training of 4,000 Ukrainian troops annually Czech-led initiative for urgent procurement of large-caliber artillery ammunition in third countries	Expanding production capacity for ammunition, UAVs, EW, small arms, heavy equipment, maintenance & repair; establishing joint ventures
Ireland-Ukraine Agreement, Sep 14, 2024	€250 million in non-lethal aid (2022-2024), focusing on mine clearance, transport vehicles, ambulances, body armor, and cyber security funding Training support under EU-MAM-Ukraine	Maritime security cooperation, promoting freedom of navigation & sea safety under UNCLOS

	Support via European Peace Facility (EPF) & Ukraine Assistance Fund (UAF)	
Croatia-Ukraine Agreement, Oct 9, 2024	Continued military aid, building on 11 packages of assistance since 2022 Ensuring rapid transit of military equipment through Croatia	Senior-level Strategic Defense and Security Policy Dialogue to enhance security coordination; supporting joint production and localization in Ukraine
Greece-Ukraine Agreement, Oct 17, 2024	Accelerating Ukrainian F-16 pilot/tech training	N/A
Albania-Ukraine Agreement, Jan 21, 2025	Provision of military equipment and supplies based on Ukraine's evolving needs	Support for demining efforts in Ukraine, leveraging Albania's expertise in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)
United Kingdom-Ukraine 100-Year Partnership Declaration, Jan 16, 2025	Annual military assistance of at least £3 billion until 2030/31 Support for modern fighter jet coalition, including F-16 training & supply	Joint naval operations and maritime security cooperation (joint flotillas, port visits); joint production & development of advanced weapons and ammunition; integrated air and missile defense cooperation; development of defense infrastructure in Ukraine; "Quadriga" format permanent security dialogue; shared defense R&D and innovation task force

Each signed treaty has its own specific features, but beyond military, security, and defense commitments, they share the following common elements:

- A 10-year duration, ensuring long-term support and stability
- Nonmilitary assistance, including cybersecurity cooperation, intelligence sharing, and efforts to counter Russian hybrid warfare and organized crime
- Establishment of a compensation mechanism for damages caused by Russia, ensuring accountability for its aggression and war crimes
- Commitments to an immediate response in the event of any new act of aggression by Russia
- Support for Ukraine's postwar reconstruction, including economic recovery, infrastructure rebuilding, and humanitarian assistance
- Endorsement of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, including support for its NATO and EU integration and the facilitation of Ukraine's defense industry's integration into NATO/EU frameworks
- Commitment to Ukraine's reform process in the legal, political, economic, social, and defense spheres

- Promotion of a just and lasting peace based on Ukraine's Peace Formula, ensuring an ethical and sustainable resolution to the war
- Support for achieving a just peace based on Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders as of 1991
- Increasing costs to Russia for its aggression through continued sanctions and restrictive measures.

Additionally, each agreement is based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, which provides for the right of self-defense and forms the legal basis for actions to aid Ukraine.¹⁷ According to the text of these treaties, no state is formally required to enter the war directly to repel Russian aggression against Ukraine. However, in the event of a new Russian attack, they must, within 24 hours, hold consultations with Ukraine on approaches and measures for deterrence and response.¹⁸

Despite the absence of direct security guarantees for Ukraine, these agreements significantly reduce the likelihood of a repeat of the events of February 24, 2022, by enabling Ukraine to strengthen its defense capabilities and secure immediate, multifaceted support from signatory states. Consequently, Russia would be forced to consider these enhanced conditions in any future invasion scenario. In essence, these agreements formalize the existing cooperation between Ukraine and its partners while clearly articulating intentions—and, in some cases, explicit commitments—to deepen and expand such collaboration. By emphasizing phrases such as “security cooperation” and “long-term support,” the documents underscore the sustained, strategic nature of this partnership.

The ultimate, practical goals pursued by the Ukrainian leadership and its partners in developing and signing these bilateral agreements will be shaped by the degree of Ukraine's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, in particular:

1. Ukraine's governmental representatives have clearly and publicly stated and documented a desire to use the bilateral agreements as a stepping stone into the European Union and NATO, serving as a framework and mechanism for joint responses to external threats from Russia. In other words, the strategy is meant to act as a “bridge” for Ukraine's transition into NATO, ultimately resulting in Ukraine's full membership.
2. Alternatively, given both the absence of explicit provisions guaranteeing Ukraine's NATO entry in these agreements (only “support” and “facilitation” of that aim are mentioned¹⁹) and the Trump administration's

¹⁷ Hans von der Burchard and Victor Goury-Laffont, “Ukraine Signs Security Pacts with Germany, France,” *Politico*, February 16, 2024, www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-signs-security-pacts-with-germany-france/.

¹⁸ Dmytro Mikola Kolos, “Strategy of Bilateral Security Agreements of Ukraine: Advantages and Disadvantages,” *Modern Historical and Political Issues: Journal in Historical & Political Sciences*, no. 49 (2024): 27-43, <https://doi.org/10.31861/mhpi2024.49.27-43>. – in Ukrainian

¹⁹ Kolos, “Strategy of Bilateral Security Agreements of Ukraine.”

lack of support for Ukraine's NATO membership, the system of bilateral security treaties could be understood by Ukraine as a temporary alternative to NATO membership.

3. A further rationale for concluding these bilateral security treaties is to secure external military support and assistance to maintain the status quo in Ukraine after a potential ceasefire negotiation between Ukraine and Russia. Evidence of this includes the use of phrases such as "future" and "potential" Russian aggression in these treaties and the public rhetoric of officials in both Ukraine and its partner countries.²⁰
4. For those European NATO member states that would join a multinational task force coalition of the willing, the bilateral security assistance agreements serve as their mandate, helping to shape the mission and indicating its likely membership. Such a deployment could help defend Ukraine and deter Russia, as well as strengthen and Europeanize the European conventional pillar of NATO.

European Multinational Task Force

Hegseth's remarks on February 12, 2025, mentioned European "peacekeepers" in Ukraine operating without a NATO mandate, without U.S. troops or "critical enabler" support (not least regarding Europe's integrated air-defense and communications networks), and with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. The United States has played a pivotal, unifying, and dominant leadership role within NATO's "headquarters, an integrated command structure, common funding, and joint defense planning, training, exercises, and operations."²¹ Analysts have focused on whether Europe could field a credible multinational task force in Ukraine and, if so, how—without U.S. leadership and command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I)—it might stabilize Ukraine and introduce risk into Putin's calculus.

The terms of a ceasefire and subsequent peace agreement will clearly determine the military tasks assigned to a multinational task force, the level of its commitments, and therefore its size and capabilities. The task force will, at a minimum, have to protect its own forces, which will require air defense and logistics support. It may be tasked with restoring a violated peace if it is assigned a deterrent role. It may be asked to monitor ceasefire violations and pass such violations to third-party adjudicators, or simply train Ukraine's Armed Forces.

To examine these options, the United Kingdom (UK) held a London Summit consisting of an informal intergovernmental coalition of the willing to act for the security of Europe with Ukraine by enforcing a potential ceasefire. Credible responses to possible Russian breaches and violations were discussed. Numerous meetings followed, including one on April 4, 2025, when the chiefs of the French

²⁰ Kolos, "Strategy of Bilateral Security Agreements of Ukraine."

²¹ Daalder, "NATO Without America: How Europe Can Run an Alliance Designed for U.S. Control."

and British General Staffs, Thierry Burkhard and Antony Radakin, visited Kyiv to discuss with the Ukrainian political and military leadership the needs and objectives of the Ukrainian army. Their goal was to support the Ukrainian army's long-term development by forming an international coalition to conduct reassurance operations that would deter another large-scale Russian invasion once peace is restored.²² As Watling and Kofman state, "The force would serve two functions. First, assure Ukraine. With Western backing, Ukraine should be able to maintain a force sufficient to man, or patrol, key sectors of the front line. Second, enhance deterrence against future aggression from Russia through both the capability deployed and the inherent risk of directly engaging Western forces."²³

This reassurance and deterrence force would be additive; it would backstop and enhance, rather than replace, the existing military capabilities of Ukraine's 1-million-strong military – Ukraine's own ultimate security guarantee. If the force were to act as support echelons backing Ukrainian forces, it could be deployed to the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Mykolaiv/Kherson vectors and would need to manage its footprint to be a hard target for Russian precision-strike weapons. Andriy Zagorodnyuk notes that in European capitals, "Military planners and analysts are already working on the design of this future force. ... but their rules of engagement must be clearly defined, and it is vital that they have the authority to intervene in case of an emergency."²⁴

Kofman and Watling suggest that the force could comprise a multinational division of between 15,000 and 20,000 military personnel in Ukraine, "with another 30,000 to 40,000 required for sustained rotation, for a total of 45,000 to 60,000 troops. A notional force structure would include a divisional headquarters, three maneuver brigades, a logistics brigade, and a fires brigade. Conversely, nations could set up their own national support elements in place of a logistics brigade."²⁵

An IISS report addresses three deployment options, highlighting the relative strengths and weaknesses of each. A small-scale force might be brigade-level (10,000 troops) land component with limited air and naval support under a combined joint expeditionary force, which is the easiest and fastest to deploy and maintain but has limited combat and deterrent capability. For IISS, a medium-scale force would consist of a division (25,000 troops) with expanded air and

²² UATV English (@UATV_en), "Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with UK and French army chiefs in Kyiv to discuss long-term support for Ukraine," X, April 5, 2025, 10:15 a.m., https://x.com/UATV_en/status/1908544910728249524.

²³ Jack Watling and Michael Kofman, "Willpower, Not Manpower, Is Europe's Main Limitation for a Force in Ukraine," *War on the Rocks*, March 3, 2025, <https://warontherocks.com/2025/03/willpower-not-manpower-is-europes-main-limitation-for-a-force-in-ukraine/>. See also: Watling, "Europe's War in Ukraine: The Continent's Risky Task of Keeping Kyiv in the Fight."

²⁴ Zagorodnyuk, "Ukraine Without America: How Kyiv Can Persist."

²⁵ Watling and Kofman, "Willpower, Not Manpower, Is Europe's Main Limitation." See also: Zagorodnyuk, "Ukraine Without America: How Kyiv Can Persist."

maritime components. Greater resources generate stronger self-protection and combat readiness but require more time and resources to deploy. A large-scale force at the corps level (60,000–100,000 troops) would have substantial air and naval support, provide the highest military credibility and deterrence effect, but be the most demanding in terms of logistics, time, and coordination.²⁶

Jean-François Bélanger argues that the Franco-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force²⁷ might be enlarged into a “European Union Plus” plan. This would bypass NATO’s consensus-based decision-making while still allowing Canada, Norway, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine to participate. South Korea, Japan, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand might also contribute to intelligence gathering.²⁸ An experienced command structure would utilize the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe to initially lead the deployment (under the Berlin Plus agreement, this position is double-hatted), and the EU Military Staff could support this task force. Command could, in the future, rotate between France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Finland, and Poland. Compromises could mirror the spirit of the Nordic Air Defense Force and adjust the European Sky Shield Initiative²⁹ to operate without U.S. Patriot systems.³⁰

²⁶ Ben Barry et al., “A European Reassurance Force for Ukraine: Options and Challenges,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 31, 2025, www.iiss.org/research-paper/2025/03/a-european-reassurance-force-for-ukraine--options-and-challenges/. See also: Benjamin Jensen, “Guarding the Frontier: Options for a Post-Conflict Security Force in Ukraine,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, D.C., February 26, 2025, www.csis.org/analysis/guarding-frontier-options-post-conflict-security-force-ukraine.

²⁷ UK Government, “UK and France Able to Deploy a 10,000 Strong Joint Military Force in Response to Shared Threats,” November 3, 2023, www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-france-able-to-deploy-a-10000-strong-joint-military-force-in-response-to-shared-threats.

²⁸ Interestingly, in an effort to signal its stakeholder status in the UN and among Global South countries, as well as to capitalize on post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, China may also consider deploying peacekeepers to Ukraine. Justyna Szczudlik, “Chinese Peacekeepers in Ukraine Would Be a Win-Win for Beijing,” *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, July 22, 2025, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chinese-peacekeepers-ukraine-would-be-win-win-beijing.

²⁹ Anna Desmarais, “How Sky Shield, Europe’s Proposed Iron Dome, Would Work and Why It’s Becoming Controversial,” *Euronews*, July 28, 2024, www.euronews.com/next/2024/07/28/how-sky-shield-europes-proposed-iron-dome-would-work-and-why-its-becoming-controversial.

³⁰ Jean-François Bélanger, “A Blueprint for a European Defense Force,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Europe, March 13, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/03/a-blueprint-for-a-european-defense-force>. See also: Ben Barry, “Potential European Mission in Ukraine: Key Military Factors,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 7, 2025, www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/03/potential-european-mission-in-ukraine-key-military-factors/; Michael Peck, “European NATO: Combat Air Patrols for Ukraine,” Center for European Policy Analysis, March 17, 2025, <https://cepa.org/article/european-nato-combat-air-patrols-for-ukraine/>.

What might the bilateral security assistance agreements suggest in terms of mission? It is evident that eight of them do not provide any financial assistance, while most others allocate military funding only for 2024. Only Denmark, Latvia, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Estonia, Lithuania, and the United Kingdom (through its 100-year declaration starting in 2025) have committed financial support extending beyond 2024. This funding approach is primarily shaped by national budgetary processes and available resources, highlighting potential vulnerabilities in the stability and continuity of military assistance, particularly those arising from internal political dynamics.

The general and often vague language across these agreements suggests a framework-oriented and security-focused intent, leaving many cooperation mechanisms poorly detailed. Nonetheless, the agreements explicitly allow for the later development of technical documents to clarify specific areas of cooperation. They feature Ukraine's defense-industrial development and cooperation, although specifics are frequently lacking. Terms such as "Defense Industry Investments and Localized Production" are used broadly without detailing the targeted sectors. European future-proofing involves strengthening Ukraine's capacity to defend itself by frontloading military assistance and increasing Europe's and Ukraine's defence production (particularly ammunition and air-defence interceptors). Having Ukraine as a fourth defense center, alongside France, Germany, and Poland, helps Europe future-proof itself.³¹

The strength of these agreements lies in their capacity to form structured "capability coalitions." In such coalitions, Ukraine's partners can assume leading roles or actively contribute to specific military-modernization sectors, including air and missile defense, maritime security, artillery, drone technologies, cybersecurity, and demining. Collectively, this cooperation enhances Ukraine's defense capabilities and interoperability with allied forces, further integrating it into the global security system.

However, the agreements lack clearly defined strategic objectives, stating broadly intended outcomes such as liberating occupied territories or deterring aggression without establishing clear goals for achieving military superiority or parity. They also do not include mechanisms for adjusting assistance in response to changing battlefield requirements. Ultimately, the scope of military assistance outlined in these documents remains dependent on available funding and the political decisions of partner countries. As a result, these agreements constitute limited political commitments, complicating their integration into a unified security architecture without additional institutional arrangements. Nonetheless, they possess substantial potential to catalyze broader collaborative defense initiatives.

³¹ Marie Dumoulin, "Asserting Agency: How Europeans Can Ensure Ukraine's Security," European Council on Foreign Relations, March 10, 2025, <https://ecfr.eu/article/asserting-agency-how-europeans-can-ensure-ukraines-security/>. Celeste A. Wallander, "The Key to Ukraine's Survival: How a United Europe Can Help Kyiv Keep Up the Fight," *Foreign Affairs*, March 17, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/key-ukraines-survival>.

In the context of a deployed multinational task force, we can envisage that the strengths of these bilateral agreements, derived from their broad collaborative mandates, will be accentuated and their weaknesses mitigated, if not eliminated. The multinational task force deployment will have a catalytic learning-by-function effect, forcing the willing coalition of states to clearly define the specific mission and goals tied to funding commitments. Before deployment, operational coherence requires an agreed set of rules of engagement, a consensus on acceptable risk levels—though deployment itself *ipso facto* suggests that the risks of not deploying are more significant than those of doing so—and the avoidance of restrictive national caveats.³² With regard to members of the multinational task force, it is likely that frontline states facing a more direct and proximate Russian threat will provide support, but the balance of forces and resources for the multinational division should come from Western European members.

Moreover, recent developments have revealed that the issue of deploying peace stabilization forces on Ukrainian territory was officially included on the agenda of a meeting of the Contact Group within the coalition of the willing.³³ This is significant, as the coalition includes over 30 countries from Europe and beyond, making it clear that the topic is no longer merely theoretical. The proposed peace-stabilization forces are expected to have four main tasks: securing Ukraine's airspace, maritime zones, and land territory, as well as supporting the development of a strong and capable Ukrainian military.³⁴ These aims closely align with the goals outlined in Ukraine's bilateral security agreements.

The main questions now concern the size of the contingent, its deployment locations, and the structure of its operations on Ukrainian territory. As of April 10, 2025, the discussion had moved beyond state leaders' political level to a more practical and technical phase. While it is still unclear whether the mission will take the form of a deterrence force, a monitoring operation, or another type of engagement, what is becoming more concrete is the number of potential contributors: six countries—France, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and another unnamed state—have already declared their readiness to deploy troops in Ukraine.³⁵

³² Barry et al., "A European Reassurance Force for Ukraine."

³³ UK Ministry of Defence, "UK and France Convene First Defence Ministers' Ukraine Coalition of the Willing Meeting," News Release, April 10, 2025, www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-france-convene-first-defence-ministers-ukraine-coalition-of-the-willing-meeting.

³⁴ Alice Tidey, "'Coalition of the Willing' Plans Now 'Well-Developed' but Timeline, Numbers Still to Be Worked Out," *Euronews*, April 10, 2025, www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/04/10/defence-ministers-from-coalition-of-the-willing-for-ukraine-meet-once-again-without-the-us.

³⁵ Martin Fornusek and Alex Cadier, "Updated: 6 Countries Ready to Send Troops for Ukraine 'Reassurance Force' so Far, AFP Reports," *The Kyiv Independent*, April 11, 2025, <https://kyivindependent.com/6-countries-ready-to-send-troops-for-ukraine-reassurance-force-afp-reports/>.

Conclusions

Discussions that began in February 2025 regarding European peacekeepers deployed to Ukraine following a ceasefire have moved from the abstract to the tangible with President Donald Trump's July 2025 imposition of a ceasefire ultimatum deadline (2 September), subsequently shortened to mid-August. Indeed, General Keith Kellogg, the U.S. Special Envoy to Ukraine, joined the European coalition-of-the-willing talks on peacekeepers in London on July 10 for the first time.³⁶ Rather than peacekeepers being deployed after a ceasefire, the prospect of a multinational stabilization force being deployed because Putin refuses to agree to a ceasefire can no longer be discounted. A shift in U.S. policy toward mediating a ceasefire may be underway, with greater pressure on Russia involving the use of tariffs, direct and secondary sanctions, and an empowerment of Ukraine to purchase defensive and offensive weapons with fewer restrictions on their use.

Ukraine's partners have chosen bilateral security agreements or accords as key foreign policy instruments to support Ukraine through military, technical, and economic assistance, significant in the current context of war and international instability. These security accords enhance Ukraine's defense capabilities, strengthen its infrastructure, and—through such cooperation today—support Ukraine's efforts towards strategic independence in the future. This approach has strengths: first, the sum of the parts being more than the whole; second, an alliance guarantee can be vetoed, but bilateral accords do not require multilateral consensus; third, if one or two countries from this coalition were to withdraw from their bilateral security agreements, Ukraine would still retain a broad coalition of other allies supporting its military efforts; and, fourth, coalition partners are partners on whom Ukraine can rely over the next decade.

Depending on how current strategic trends evolve, these agreements could be viewed from multiple perspectives: as a prerequisite for Ukraine's eventual membership in NATO; as a strategic tool whose decisive provisions and implementation facilitated Ukraine's "armed neutrality," aligned with NATO standards and, at the same time, strengthening of the European pillar of NATO; or, as foundational steps that hypothetically enable Ukraine to join the Alliance by 2049.³⁷

A European reassurance and deterrence force could draw its mandate, mission, and membership from the states that signed 29 bilateral security assistance agreements with Ukraine. A critical part of the European calculus might be posed as an open question: are the likely costs of not securing Ukraine after a ceasefire

³⁶ David Lynch, "US Joins Ukraine Peacekeeping Coalition Talks with Force Now 'Ready to Go'," *Independent*, July 10, 2025, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/donald-trump-keir-starmer-ukraine-emmanuel-macron-prime-minister-b2786669.html>.

³⁷ Anzhelika Halesevych, "These Are Not Security Guarantees: Political Scientist Analyzed the Agreements Ukraine Signs with Partners," *24 Kanal*, June 14, 2024, https://24tv.ua/bezpekovi-ugodi-ukrayini-partnerami-shho-naspravdi-tse-oznachaye_n2575772. — in Ukrainian

higher than the risks of deploying a multinational task force to act as the back-stop to Ukraine's ultimate security guarantee – the strength of its own military and the will of its people?

The success or failure of the multinational task force could also serve as a catalyst for different strategic futures facing Europe. Do we see a strengthened European pillar of NATO in which a U.S. burden-shifting process is ongoing as the capabilities of European partners grow—sufficient to fulfill the regional plans in support of NATO's deterrence and defense of Europe to which European leaders are committed—with Ukraine defended and Russia deterred? Or is the emergence of a new post-NATO European order possible? Here we can envisage two variants: an unstable and ineffective European collective security arrangement, in which Ukrainian statehood is further eroded and arises from a failed multinational task force deployment, or a strong and stable European collective defense order with Ukraine (but likely without Slovakia and Hungary), predicated on a successful deployment.

Disclaimer

The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Partnership for Peace Consortium, its participating institutions, or any governmental or international organizations affiliated with its governance structure.

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