



Research Article

Ukraine's Security Architecture After Ceasefire: U.S. Commitments and the Future of European Defense

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the security architecture of Ukraine, which evolved after the termination of hostilities and specifically, how the U.S. engagements with Ukraine affect their security. The first aims to examine the changing nature of Ukrainian security environment in the post ceasefire era, to examine the role played by the United States in the Ukrainian defence posture and to examine the consequences thereof to the structure of European defence systems, particularly NATO. The discussion is based on two theoretical approaches: Neorealism, which predicts the relationship of power and the desire of the states to find safety, and Complex Interdependence Theory, which emphasizes the cooperation of multilateralism and non-war aspects of security. The results show that there is a major change in the security architecture in Ukraine due to both the internal and external assistance, with most of this support coming through the United States and European supporters. The United States has a key role in modernizing the defence and aligning Ukraine strategic direction with NATO as the European defence approaches are shifting to greater independence and capability. Despite these developments, the paper identifies the ongoing threats due to Russian aggression, internal governance challenges and the need to have strong international collaboration to maintain stability. In summary, despite the fact that the security perspective of Ukraine has been enhanced by the process of reform and foreign support, the further stability on the long-term basis requires reduction of the internal vulnerabilities and the external threats. The European defence path will then be predominantly hinged on the balances between the NATO commitments and the strategic autonomy and technological innovations.

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Introduction

Started in 2014 and resulting in the further development of a protracted conflict in the newly annexed Crimea and the subsequent intensification due to the ongoing hostilities in the Donbas region, the Ukraine conflict has had a massive geopolitical impact on Europe and the global community on the whole. Not only has this conflict destabilised Ukraine, it has also led to a significant reorganisation of the world security dynamics, especially in the European arena. A possible ceasefire deal is one way of defuse these tensions, but it can only work in so far as the involved parties are ready to consider the negotiated conditions and to maintain permanent peace. The United States has played a key part in the conflict, both by offering military and financial support to Ukraine and balancing its overall strategic goals both in NATO and Europe. With the transition of the conflict to a post-ceasefire period, the security apparatus of Ukraine is set to be changed dramatically, as internal reforms and external commitments come together and influence the defence policies. The transforming obligations of the U.S and the potential realignment of the European defence systems are bound to have a long-term impact towards the stability of the region, especially with the issue of the involvement of NATO in the security of Ukraine being a debatable topic.

The Ukraine conflict has a long history of conflict between the two countries- Ukraine and Russia especially following the fall of the Soviet Union. The shift of Ukraine towards further integration with the West, which can be taken as the desire to join NATO and the European Union, has been viewed as the personal challenge to Russian power in the area. This geopolitical rivalry has triggered aggressive activities of Russia in Ukraine that include annexation of Crimea and aiding separatist groups in the Donbas region. With the ongoing conflict, the potential of a ceasefire agreement is a complicated issue, which demands the international community to negotiate the terms that will suit both Ukraine and Russia, in addition to the United States and the European Union (Mearsheimer, 2014; Pifer, 2017).

One factor that can be highlighted in the post-conflict environment is the changing security structure in Ukraine. An effective ceasefire would require significant changes to the defence policy of Ukraine and the country would have to restore its military capabilities and reinforce its institutions to provide long-term sustainability. The role of the United States in this change is especially crucial; the further support will most probably impact the orientation of Ukraine to the western defence systems, including NATO. The consequences of these promises are not

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limited to the Ukrainian territory because the future of European defence is likely to be determined by the outcome of the conflict and the strength of the transatlantic relations. The changing nature of the European defence will be directly connected to the U.S. commitments because the collective security system of NATO will have to be adjusted to face the threats of the aggressive actions of Russia and the overall situation in the European security (Keohane and Nye, 2001; Pifer, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Two key theories of international relations, Neorealism and Complex Interdependence Theory, can be used to base the study of the post-, ceasefire, security architecture in Ukraine and how the U.S. promises affect the planning of European defence. These systems offer complementary prisms through which state behaviour, alliance politics and the problem of structure of ensuring the stability of the region are analysed.

According to the neorealism which is also referred to as structural realism, the international system is anarchic; it is believed that states are mainly driven to ensure their survival by maximizing their security and relative power (Waltz, 1979). The theory comes in handy especially in the analysis of the strategic motivation of Russia, Ukraine, and the United States. According to the neorealist worldview, the actions of Russia in Ukraine can be explained by its reaction to the alleged threats posed by the increase in the power of NATO and Western penetration into its classical zone of influence. The post is also possible to analyze in terms of power balancing in Ukraine, as the country post-ceasefire security priorities can be seen in increasing military strength, NATO guarantees, and strengthening territorial sovereignty. Similarly, the U.S. military and economic assistance to Ukraine is directed at its strategic need to restrain the influence of Russia and maintain the beneficial balance of power in Europe (Mearsheimer, 2014). In its turn, neorealism explains the causes of the conflict as well as the hard-security factors that defined the post-war regional order.

By contrasting these theories, Complex Interdependence Theory authored by Keohane and Nye (1977) focuses on the importance of multiple channels of interaction among the states, the growing significance of non-military forms of power, and the reduced usefulness of coercion in international relations. The analysis is helpful in terms of the changing nature of U.S. Ukraine EU relations in post-conflict context. The process of integrating Ukraine into Western institutionalized systems, including energy relationships, economic assistance, military relations, and civil society support are examples of how interdependence determines the modern-day security systems outside traditional military unions. Complex interdependence also underscores the importance of the transnational institutions like the NATO, the OSCE and the EU in the process of building post-ceasefire stability by multilateral diplomacy and capacity building. This point of view supplements the assumptions of neorealism in that military threats are still relevant, but cooperative mechanisms and shared interests are also instrumental in determining the results of security (Keohane and Nye, 2001).

Combined, these theoretical frameworks provide a holistic way of analysing the security transformation in Ukraine. Neorealism offers understanding on the strategic necessities on which state actors operate, and complex interdependence introduces another dimension of analysing institutional and transnational aspects of security cooperation. These two paradigms are key to the mutual determination of the long-term importance of U.S. commitments and the future structure of European defence.

Literature Review: The Ukraine Conflict and Ceasefire Dynamics

The scholarly sources on the conflict in Ukraine underline the fact that its causes are deeply historical and geopolitical as they date back to the post-Soviet Ukrainian path and its attempts at fitting into the Western institutions. Mearsheimer (2014) is of the view that the pressure by the West to make inroads with NATO and the European Union into Eastern Europe, especially by being closer to Ukraine, was a major factor that led to the onset of the crisis. Russia felt that this realignment was a direct challenge to its strategic interests, which led to aggressive measures including the annexation of Crimea and the encouragement of separatist movements in Donbas. Applebaum (2017) gives the conflict a historical context by attributing the contemporary conflict to the established trends of Russian dominance and oppression in Ukraine and more so in the Soviet period. These views highlight the wider implications of the war on European security and the post-Cold War global system and make Ukraine a geopolitical battlefield between western liberalism and Russian authoritarianism.

Due to the conflict, a number of ceasefire agreements were negotiated and the most extensive ones include the Minsk I (2014) and Minsk II (2015) agreements. Under the Normandy Format, brokered by Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany and watched by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), these accords were meant to enforce a cease of hostilities, political decentralisation in Ukraine and give Ukrainian control over its borders. But these agreements have been generally failed according to the vague terms, distrust between the parties, and the inability to dislodge the Russian military and political presence in Eastern Ukraine (von Closen & Dembinski, 2021). Kivimaki (2017) also adds that structural power asymmetries and the lack of credible enforcement mechanisms have also compromised the ceasefires. These weaknesses have made the peace process something fragile and reversible where both parties are in the habit of flouting the deals and militarizing the diplomatic stalemate.

One of the main concerns of the literature on security implications in Ukraine in the post-ceasefire is security implications on the country, especially in the course of the country trying to move out of the active conflict state into the post-war stabilisation. There is agreement among scholars that the short-term aim needs to have the focus on ensuring territorial integrity, de-escalating armed factions and meeting humanitarian issues in the warring areas. Ukraine in the long term has a challenge of reorganizing its security structure to guarantee resilience in case of future aggression. Eke (2021) focuses on the changing role of NATO and the American commitment to assist Ukraine in defence modernisation as a key to the long-term stability. Also, Katchanovski (2017) emphasises domestic inefficiencies, including the lack of governance and the absence of balance between regions, which may hamper the ability of Ukraine to sustain peace once the external threats are eradicated. Shevchenko (2018) also adds to the discussion by focusing on the reforms in the defence sector in Ukraine and how the country requires long-term international assistance to develop an effective and responsible army. Taken together, these sources emphasize the fact that any post-ceasefire security policy should involve both external alliances and domestic domestic reforms.

The Role of U.S. Commitments to Ukraine

The US has been one of the key players in aiding Ukraine in the war providing a wholesome package of military, economic, and political support. The U.S. has been providing tens of billions of dollars' worth of security assistance, including sophisticated weapons, training programs, and intelligence information

sharing, since 2014, and more so since the full-scale invasion of Russia, aiming to build Ukrainian defensive capabilities against Russian aggression (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2023). On the economic front, Washington has provided significant monetary assistance to bail out the Ukrainian budget, humanitarianism, and energy infrastructure to stabilise the Ukrainian state during wartime. In the political sphere, the U.S. has been on the forefront initiating sanctions on Russia, alienating it, and advancing the sovereignty of Ukraine in the international arena. Such behavior is a demonstration of a wider set of strategic interests, including the desire to deter authoritarian expansionism, the need to keep the liberal international order intact, and the need to strengthen the credibility of America as a guarantor of global security (Brands & Gallo, 2022).

With the possible ceasefire, the path of U.S. commitments will most probably change, the active support of the war will be replaced by the long-term stabilisation and reconstruction operations. Although direct military assistance might lessen in intensity, the U.S. is likely to continue supporting it by selling arms, training and reforming the defence sector. Other guarantees that the Biden administration and further U.S. administrations can provide include bilateral or multilateral security guarantees, although the concept of Ukraine becoming a full-fledged NATO member is controversial (Kroenig and Ashford, 2023). Washington may have a high economic input in the rebuilding process after the war, especially in cooperation with the European countries and global money lenders. As well, the U.S. diplomatic activities will probably be aimed at maintaining peace, avoiding a new wave of aggression, and averting Russian control over the vast region. These changing commitments highlight the significance of a unified policy framework on implementing post ceasefire policy that corresponds with military deterrence and political and economic resilience.

This bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Ukraine will only improve in the post-conflict environment. As Ukraine considers to institutionalise its security relations, its future cooperation can resemble U.S. strategic alliances with nations like Israel or South Korea, where long term defence aid, coordination of intelligence and planning military operations are key elements (Friedman, 2023). This model would enable the U.S. to have been active in the security of Ukraine without escalating a direct conflict with Russia by formal expansion of NATO. Moreover, the U.S. may also become a mediator and guarantor in enforcing peace, assist Ukraine in political reconciliation and territory integration after the war. This would not only strengthen the security of Ukraine but also would be a U.S. strategic interest of advancing security and democracy in the Eastern Europe.

Lastly, the U.S. intervention in Ukraine has a wider consequence to NATO and the European security structure. Through the strengthening of the eastern flank of NATO by troop placements, military drills, and infrastructure improvements, the U.S has reiterated its dedication to collective defence as enshrined in Article 5 of NATO treaty. The war in Ukraine has spurred a revival of the trans-Atlantic solidarity by compelling European allies to invest more in defence and work closer on intelligence, logistics and crisis response (Stoltenberg, 2023). The U.S. leadership is necessary to keep this momentum going, particularly because Europe has long-term problems; energy insecurity, hybrid warfare, and the revival of geopolitical competition. As a result, the United States promises to Ukraine exceed the bilateral support, being the parts of the changing European defence system and strategic re-shaping of the NATO alliance.

Rebuilding Ukraine's Security Architecture

The reconstruction of the military and defence organizations of Ukraine is one of the primary priorities of the country after the

end of the hostilities. The war has revealed significant weaknesses in the defence institutions of Ukraine such as the old Soviet systems, bureaucracy, and lack of interoperability with NATO systems. During the post-ceasefire stage, Ukraine needs to accelerate the modernisation of the armed forces to make them operationally ready, better command control structures, and introduce more advanced technology, including cyber and drone warfare capabilities (Polyakov, 2023). Institutional changes are also paramount especially in the areas of procurement openness, civilian accountability and anti-corruption efforts in the military. Such reforms do not only enhance the security of Ukraine but also help to pursue more Euro-Atlantic integration goals, which makes the country a more practical partner in the future defence coalitions (Klein, 2022). The rebuilding operation will probably involve reworking the war-learned military doctrine in Ukraine, which will focus on the territorial defence, resilience, and deterrence.

The reconstruction of the defence architecture in Ukraine will not be possible without external security help. Specifically, the United States has become the largest military contributor, providing such vital assets on the battlefield as HIMARS rocket systems, Patriot air-defence batteries, and Abrams tanks. In addition to the material supplies, the United States has also provided a large scope of training and logistical assistance, thus professionalised Ukrainian troops and increased their strategic planning capabilities (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023). The European Union has also increased its assistance using tools like the European Peace Facility which covers military aid and long-term training missions in the framework of the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM). These projects are also designed not only to address the immediate defence requirements of Ukraine, but also to instill NATO-compatible standardization and build interoperability with the armed forces of the West. The coordination between the Western allies will be necessary in the long term to avoid fragmentation and make sure that the aid is concentrated on the priorities of Ukraine.

Although Ukraine has a strong international backlash, it has to face serious domestic obstacles on its way to developing a robust and independent defence force. The most crucial problem is the mitigation of structural vulnerabilities in governance and institutional coordination in the defence sector. The need to reinforce the civil-military ties is urgent to ensure democratic checks and balances towards the military institution and popular trust in the military institution. Also, there is the need to ensure sustainable funding models that support and develop defence capacity without over-dependence on the outside help. Capacity - building strategies such as education of officers, reserve force and local defence efforts are essential in building a layered and responsive security architecture (Sherr & Litra, 2023). Additionally, Ukraine will have to deal with reintegration of veterans and demobilised forces, and make sure that security-sector reform is an inclusive measure that will not be detrimental to the overall social cohesion. It is critical to address these internal dimensions to change the military of Ukraine into a modern, responsible, and strategically independent one that is able to prevent the emergence of threats in the future.

The Future of European Defense Post-Ceasefire

The Ukrainian ceasefire will trigger a major shift in the European security priorities. Even though the risk of direct military confrontation with Russia might be reduced in the future, the environment surrounding the strategy has changed fundamentally. European states are making a mindshift by focusing on territorial defence, protecting critical infrastructure, and becoming more resilient to hybrid warfare. In Central and

Eastern Europe, especially Poland and the Baltic States, there is a demand to have a more active forward presence of NATO troops and the reevaluation of their own military posture (Biscop, 2022). At the same time, the Western European states admit that the defence can no longer be considered as a secondary policy problem. The war has rejuvenated the European sense of their vulnerability, and despite the conditions of a post-ceasefire, the threat of a new war or a continued instability in Ukraine will remain an important factor in strategic thinking.

The partnership of the European Union and NATO has become more visible but at the same time, it exposes the latent strains. The two institutions have enhanced the level of coordination since the outbreak of the war, especially on the area of intelligence sharing, logistics coordination, and joint defence planning. The 2016, 2018, and 2023 NATO-EU Joint Declarations highlight the complementation and reinforcement of each other in such areas as cyber defence, counter-disinformation, and military mobility (European Commission, 2023). However, there still exist strategic and political differences. As an example, some member states of the EU propose having a more independent European security identity that occasionally clashes with the primacy of NATO. Moreover, the Turkish position in the NATO and the ambiguous attitude to the conflict cause tension in the trans-Atlantic unity and European one. However, in a situation whose ceasefire is already over, subsequent institutional convergence will be necessary to prevent duplication and to provide consistent responses to new threats.

There has been growing advocacy of the idea of European strategic autonomy, spearheaded by France in particular, of developing a self-sufficient European military capacity that is less reliant on American leadership. The war in Ukraine has triggered the discussion about the ability of Europe to protect itself by itself, and its readiness to assume a larger responsibility in the security of the region. Efforts like the EU Strategic Compass and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) are meant to bolster the joint defence capabilities and decrease the reliance on American assistance (Fiott, 2022). Nevertheless, the quest to gain independence should be weighted against the effectiveness of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Strategic independence when wisely implemented can strengthen the input of Europe to NATO instead of weakening it. On the other hand, conflict of interest between the objectives of EU and U.S. would create tension in the trans-Atlantic solidarity particularly when political orientation in Washington impacts on the long-term participation of the U.S. in Europe.

The European nations are particularly spending more on defence and reforming policy dogmas in the wake of the war. The historic policy of *Zeitenwende* (turning point) in Germany is a radical change in defence expenditure, which involves the allocation of a EUR 100 bn investment fund and the resolution to achieve the 2 per cent of GDP goal of NATO (Major 2022, pp. 2). There are other states like Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states that have also initiated massive procurement programmes and force expansion ventures. These shifts are not just immediate security requirements but they are also political changes that incline towards military preparedness and deterrence. The thing is that the challenge is to organize these national efforts to have interoperability, efficient spending, and European level strategic coherence.

Geopolitical and Strategic factors

Policymaking of Russia after a ceasefire will remain one of the key variables in the security calculus of Europe. Even in the case when active hostilities will be reduced, Russia will probably continue to maintain coercive pressure on Ukraine and its neighbours based on political influence, cyber activities as well as

control over occupied regions. Moscow can also use division among the NATO and the EU to weaken Western determination. As a result, European and transatlantic planners have to expect a long period of geopolitical rivalry, instead of a peaceful coexistence (Galeotti, 2023). It will be necessary to uphold deterrence and pursue selective diplomacy that will help to avert any further escalation and address the long-term risk of a revisionist Russia.

Outside of Europe, the approach of China to the conflict in Ukraine and the nature of the post-ceasefire solution are closely connected to the eventual success of the conflict, as well as to the strategic deliberations by the state. Weak and isolated Russia can turn into a more reliant Chinese partner, which will strengthen a more Eurasian axis that questions Western primacy. In turn, a stable and western oriented Ukraine would send the message of the soundness of the liberal international system and would have an effect on the calculation of Beijing concerning other issues like Taiwan. The geopolitical impact of the ceasefire at large stretches far beyond the European region and dictates the world power balance and challenges the principles of democratic and authoritarian models of government (Kroenig and Ashford, 2023).

There is also an increasing role of emerging technologies in developing the European defence strategies. The war on Ukraine has proven the importance of drones, cyber warfare, satellite communications, and artificial intelligence as a battlefield. European countries are also investing in next-generation capabilities, increasing situational awareness, and developing asymmetric capabilities that have the potential to negate traditional disadvantages (Fiott, 2023). These are centred on NATO Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and European Defence Fund by the EU. In the context of a post-ceasefire setting, technological innovation will have a role to play in the defence planning process in ensuring a strategic edge and preventing any future aggression.

Security Architecture Threats and Obstacles in Ukraine

Ukraine is facing serious domestic and international issues on its way to restoring its security structure. Political instability and corruption is one of the most urgent risks that may weaken the efficiency of defence reforms and destroy the confidence of people in the institutions. It is historically challenging to maintain reform momentum in time of peace and especially in a society that has been formed as a result of a long conflict. Politicisation of security institutions or elite capture of defence budget would undermine the strategic autonomy and credibility of Ukraine in the minds of the international partners (Transparency International, 2023).

On the domestic level, the secession movements and regionalism, particularly in the regions that once were under the control of the Russian forces, is an imminent danger to the cohesion of Ukraine. On the outside, Russia is still relatively strong in terms of its ability to restart hostility, launch destabilisation campaigns, or hamper the process of reconstruction. Furthermore, the closeness and orientation of Belarus toward Russia also complicates the security calculus of Ukraine. The combination of internal weakness and external aggression might create a gray zone of the lack of security that might extend the weakness of Ukraine even without open warfare (Charap and Colton, 2017).

Lastly, Ukraine has to juggle between conflicting global demands, as well as the domestic needs. Western partners can make conditionalities surrounding aid like institutional changes or transparency which may put national capacities under strain. In the meantime, there is an acute domestic demand of Ukraine on the quick development of recovery, justice, and economic regeneration. The need to manage these pressures necessitates that

there is a close coordination among the donors, inclusive governance mechanisms, and realist prioritisation of the reform objectives. The skill to negotiate them is crucial to cohesively securing Ukraine and maintaining the integrity of its post-war reconstruction.

Major Research Findings Discussion.

The study highlights that the security architecture in Ukraine is restructured structurally by internal reforms and external geopolitical factors after the onset of the ceasefire. One of the most important conclusions is the essential role of the United States in assisting Ukraine out of defence modernisation with military assistance, strategic planning and diplomatic support. This assistance effectively puts Ukraine on its feet in the short term, but it also has a very important effect on the overall trend in European defence posture.

The other significant revelation is that the war has led to the change in European thinking about security which has led to higher defence budgets, closer cooperation between the EU and NATO and a resurgence of the debate on strategic autonomy. The study also points out that the ceasefire offers a temporary relief, but the threat of Russian revisionism is still there and as such, a long-term decision to practice deterrence and resilience is necessary. On the inside, the Ukrainian experience of reestablishing its security frameworks depend on whether or not it can make institutional changes and fight corruption as well as bring society together.

Lastly, the increasing presence of new technology including AI, cyber defence and precision weapons is influencing how Ukraine and its European allies understand future war and national defence.

Gaps in Literature Review

Regardless of increasing amount of references on the conflict in Ukraine and European security, there are some important gaps that exist in the literature. First, the long-term sustainability of the U.S. security commitments to Ukraine is not well analyzed, particularly in the light of changing domestic politics in the United States. A significant majority of literature concentrates on the short-term military assistance without estimating the possible cases of decreased involvement.

Second, much has been said about EU-NATO cooperation, but there has been dearth of in-depth case studies on how this cooperation is put into practice policies into transforming into practical policies at the national level especially in the countries that are on the eastern flank of NATO.

Third, the domestic aspect of the defence reform in Ukraine is not well covered in the literature, especially the issue of bureaucratic stagnation, local politics, and civic responsibility. Moreover, despite the abundant literature concerning military technology, in general, little attention has been paid to the larger topic of how particular technological breakthroughs are being incorporated into the defence policies of Ukraine and Europe, on practice. The openings that need to be filled would give a more detailed picture of the changing security architecture in the region.

Summary, Conclusion and Policy Recommendations.

Summary

This paper examined the changing face of the security architecture in Ukraine following the possibility of cease-fire, and more specifically the U.S. commitments and their overall impact on European defence. The results of the analysis show that the country is experiencing a bilateral change, not only internally where Ukraine is carrying out vast changes to modernise its forces, improve institutional capacity, but also externally where the country remains largely dependent on western security aid,

especially the United States and the European Union. The war has also redefined the strategic perspective of Europe whereby there is greater expenditure in defence, enhanced EU-NATO integration and a revival of discussions on strategic autonomy. Regardless of such progress, Ukraine continues to be threatened by Russia, internal governance issues, and balancing international and national interests is a complicated undertaking.

Conclusion

The post-cess-fire regime provides the opportunities and dangers to Ukraine and its partners. With an appropriate combination of factors, sustained international aid and true institutional changes will be able to make the defence sector in Ukraine a strong, NATO-capable force. The transformation is pegged on political will, internal responsibility and sustained commitment by the western allies. Another aspect that will determine the future of European defence is how effectively the regional actors can co-ordinate their strategies, deal with the tension between autonomy and alliance and also integrate emerging technologies. Finally, the stability of Ukraine is not an issue only at national level, but also a key to more European stability.

Recommendations

- The United States and the European Union ought to go past the ad hoc assistance by creating long-term predictable security-cooperation commitments with Ukraine, including training, logistics and infrastructure assistance.
- To make reforms within the defence sector in Ukraine sustainable and ensure their integrity, the international partners ought to focus on anti-corruption practices, civilian control, and transparent procurement procedures in Ukraine.
- The coordination and collaborative planning between the EU and NATO should be improved especially in such areas as cybersecurity, intelligence exchange, and rapid-deployment operations.
- Joint research and development projects should be used to support the integration of advanced defence technologies, including AI, drones, and cyber tools, in Ukraine and its European allies.
- The regional initiatives that include Ukraine and neighbouring states as well as the main NATO members should be promoted to clear up the confusion, promote openness, and prevent future aggression by means of diplomacy and effective use of communication techniques.

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