

Europe's Evolving Order and the War in Ukraine

by Dario Cristiani



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ABSTRACT

The 14th edition of the Transatlantic Symposium, IAI's annual Rome forum on transatlantic security, focused on the long-term implications of the Ukraine War for Europe's security arrangements. The seminar brought together a group of about twenty experts and officials from the US, Europe and Turkey, and encompassed four sessions on major factors capable of shaping Europe's order: Europe's push to boost its common defence; Germany's *Zeitenwende*; Turkey's new centrality; and Russia's future position in Europe. Each session featured a chair and a paper-giver, who started the debate with a short presentation, followed by an open debate. The 2022–23 Transatlantic Symposium was realised thanks to the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the US Embassy in Rome and Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo.

Transatlantic relations | European defence | NATO | Russia | Ukraine | Germany | Turkey

keywords

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1. European defence and transatlantic relations

1.1 *The focus*

The year 2022 saw significant progress in European defence cooperation, primarily due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The conflict served as a wake-up call for Europe, leading to increased defence budgets, the adoption of the Strategic Compass, and other initiatives to strengthen European defence cooperation. However, several hurdles remain, including dependence on the United States for territorial defence, potential divisions among European Union member states, and the need to balance commitments to both NATO and the EU.¹

Key developments in European defence cooperation in 2022 include the Versailles Declaration, the establishment of the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) and the European Defence Investment Programme (EDIP). Additionally, many European countries have increased their defence budgets to meet NATO's 2 per cent of GDP target.

Challenges facing European defence cooperation include maintaining unity among EU member states, addressing the increased focus on collective defence while avoiding neglecting other security issues and improving the European defence industry's capacity to meet demand. Furthermore, the implementation of the EU Strategic Compass needs improvement, with issues arising regarding the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) and the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC).

¹ See Adája Stoitman, "European Security and Defence: Don't Get Your Hopes Up Just Yet", in *IAI Commentaries*, No. 23|09 (March 2023), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/16676>.

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To ensure a stronger European security and defence architecture, European countries must demonstrate long-term commitment to defence cooperation, both politically and financially. This includes maintaining increased defence budgets and adopting a framework based on specialisation to optimise defence investments and enhance efficiency and interoperability. By addressing these challenges, the EU can work towards achieving strategic autonomy in security and defence.

1.2 The debate

The transformation of European defence has not yet materialised, despite the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Although Europe has increased defence spending, provided arms to Ukraine, and maintained support for Ukraine, severe structural problems persist. European forces are in worse shape than previously thought, with depleted weapons stockpiles and defence industries unfit for purpose. Efforts to coordinate European procurements have failed, resulting in dysfunctional and fragmented defence forces and procurement systems.

The appalling state of European defence is due to underinvestment in armed forces over the past twenty years, leading to inadequate ammunition stockpiles, deteriorating tank fleets, and insufficient artillery. In summary, European armed forces are currently in a precarious state. Although NATO can coordinate and integrate forces, it has not managed to encourage effective defence spending harmonisation among its European members. The EU, on the other hand, is well-suited to integrate, coordinate and supplement European defence spending but has not yet demonstrated the necessary ambition to do so. The European defence industrial base suffers from low spending and the lack of a common defence market, leading to fragmented spending directed at national military industrial complexes.

Efforts to improve defence industrial cooperation have been met with some opposition from the US, which benefits from European defence contracts and lobbies for access to European defence funds. This opposition has stifled attempts to improve coordination, leading to a decline in European defence cooperation over the past decade. The result is a fragmented European defence sector with forces using different equipment, making it difficult for them to operate together and increasing their dependence on the US.

If Europeans do not reform their defence forces and procurement systems, they risk losing the opportunity to transform European defence.

Europe needs a comprehensive plan to increase defence integration and jump-start its own defence industrial base. However, the US has not pushed for any major structural reforms to European defence and has been sending mixed messages about its support for European defence integration.

To achieve this goal, the US should stop lobbying for access to EU defence funds and instead use its influence to push European countries to support more funding for EU procurement programmes. Additionally, the US should consider the impact of American arms sales on the defence industrial base of the NATO alliance when advocating for such purchases. Ultimately, it is crucial for the US to encourage European military cooperation and coordinated defence planning efforts between NATO and the EU in order to promote a more self-sufficient and capable European defence structure.

The US, under President Joe Biden, has shown a strong commitment to Europe. The role of the US is crucial in strengthening transatlantic relations. The Biden administration should continue its engagement with Europe to foster deeper integration. However, big defence companies in the US still has an interest in keeping the EU defence market fragmented.

However, there are hurdles to overcome in terms of European security and defence cooperation, such as internal cohesion, differences in the rule of law and freedom of the press and EU-NATO relations.

The EU's deployment capacity is still hindered by fragmentation within the European Defence industry. While there have been efforts to coordinate procurement, development and production, these initiatives have had little impact so far. The indispensable role of the US has confirmed the EU's dependence on the US for security.

It is important to note that in Washington there is not only a shift in focus toward the Pacific but also a generational shift in perspectives on security. NATO has demonstrated its strengths in coordination and integrating European armed forces. The EU must find ways to add value to this, particularly by integrating markets such as the defence market.

In the long term, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) will require a larger budget and member states willing to invest more. Challenges to be addressed include financial and bureaucratic constraints, as well as issues related to hi-tech capabilities, domestic suppliers, and defence relations.

In order to make progress, European defence cooperation needs to be prioritised, with decisions being made today to shape the future of European defence. The European Defence Industrial Policy (EDIP) should focus on improving interoperability between European armed forces and personnel, as well as addressing transatlantic interoperability concerns.

The boost in EU defence efforts due to the war is understandable, but there is no such thing as absolute autonomy. It is important to balance spending on defence with other priorities, recognising the importance of shared interests and motivations in shaping European foreign policy.

In conclusion, transatlantic interoperability is vital for European defence. Strengthening Europe's defence capabilities will ultimately strengthen NATO as well. Cooperation and interoperability can be achieved even within a fragmented market, but efforts must be made to address the risks of duplication and to meet pressing deadlines. The evolving German security policy and its impact on transatlantic relations should not be overlooked, as no EU defence can truly succeed without Germany's full involvement.

2. The German *Zeitenwende* and its impact on transatlantic relations

2.1 *The focus*

In his speech three days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz introduced the term *Zeitenwende* ("historic turning point") to describe the new European security situation. The term represents a paradigm shift in Germany's foreign and security policy, challenging two main assumptions: that European security was only possible with Russia, and that mutually beneficial economic relations would transform adversarial relations. The Russian invasion invalidated both ideas.

In response, Germany has made sweeping policy changes, particularly in energy policy, becoming independent from Russian gas and investing in green energy. However, security and defence policy changes have been more challenging. Germany has taken steps to enhance its defence capabilities, including a 100 billion euro special fund for the Bundeswehr and procuring F-35 fighter jets from the US. Germany has also provided significant aid to Ukraine.

Despite these steps, four major obstacles remain: lack of coherent strategic language and documents, capped defence budgets, slow bureaucratic reform, and no long-term vision for German defence industrial policy.²

For Germany to become a guarantor of European security, it must:

- Keep Germans engaged: Maintain public support as defence costs rise.
- Keep the Russians out: Develop a long-term containment and deterrence strategy, while managing domestic voices calling for reconciliation.
- Keep Europe united: Address mistrust from both Western and Eastern Europe by demonstrating commitment to defence and reforming the Bundeswehr.
- Keep the Americans in: Continue transatlantic risk-sharing and enhance Germany's military capabilities to secure US involvement in European security.

² See Pia Fuhrhop, "Germany's *Zeitenwende* and the Future of European Security", in *IAI Commentaries*, No. 23|08 (March 2023), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/16673>.

2.2 The debate

Chancellor Scholz set high expectations with his speech. The commitment made was based not only on the speech but also on the coalition agreement between three German political parties, which mentioned increased European defence. Comparing the speech to the coalition agreement, there was great anticipation for what would come.

There have been issues with this approach over the past year. A fundamental change in Germany's mindset is needed, and there is a significant lack of understanding in the US regarding Germany's actions in the current geopolitical and security environment. Germany is often perceived as being feckless and unable to follow through on commitments. Turning the situation around will take time.

Nonetheless, there is hope as Germany has made commendable progress over the last year. While the debate over the provision of Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine was frustrating, it ultimately resulted in the decision to ship the tanks. Germany must work on improving its communication and explaining its positions in a way that the US can understand, particularly as the 2024 election season approaches. It is crucial to prevent Germany from becoming a political punching bag. The 100 billion euro special fund for defence spending is a great start, but Germany must also find a way to increase defence spending in its base budget.

The standards applied to Germany's progress can be viewed through two lenses: comparing it to pre-2022 Germany or contrasting it with the changing security situation in Europe. The former shows impressive progress, while the latter might be disappointing. The expectation horizon plays a significant role in determining whether the glass appears half full or half empty.

Secondly, the concept of leadership is often implied in these conversations. German voters generally reject the idea of military leadership, but they do support increased defence spending and NATO commitments. A German leadership style should differ from that of the US, focusing on forging proactive alliances in Europe. This approach aligns with Germany's post-World War II history.

Thirdly, optimism surrounds the change in Germany's approach to Russia. There is a growing realisation within Germany's political parties that the assumptions underpinning previous Russia policies no longer hold true.

Lastly, regarding communication, the current explanation for Germany's cautious messaging is that it is primarily aimed at a domestic audience, which the chancellor perceives to be less supportive of the actions that allies expect of Berlin. This results in communication that downplays Germany's role and avoids creating the impression that the country is overstepping its boundaries.

Scholz's domestic audience encompasses the coalition parties, the Social Democratic electorate and the general public. Critics of Scholz argue that he is

primarily signalling to the left wing of his party, but broader public scepticism also exists regarding the topic of leadership. However, it's important to note that public opinion can change when strong arguments are made, as demonstrated by the Leopard tank issue.

Regarding the National Security Strategy, there may not be any surprising announcements or major excitement in the document. The fact that there has not been a previous National Security Strategy is interesting in itself. The document is expected to outline the main tenets of German foreign and defence policy, emphasising the idea of never acting alone. Therefore, it might be perceived as a sensible, albeit not particularly exciting, document.

The process of drafting the National Security Strategy has been beneficial for the involved agencies, as it has allowed them to assess their actions, identify areas for improvement, and consider potential steps forward.

Communication remains a significant challenge, both within the coalition and more broadly. The lack of transparency in certain areas, such as the tank debate, complicates matters further. However, the working relationship between President Biden and Chancellor Scholz has been observed as positive, with Biden effectively managing their interactions.

It's important to maintain pressure on Germany, as it can encourage the country to take necessary actions and continue to grow in its role within the international community. This pressure can help Germany adapt and respond to changing geopolitical situations and security challenges.

2.3 The European views on Germany's shifting approach

France: France starts from the assumption that many countries are currently reconsidering their foreign policy, with a lack of multi-partisan consensus on foreign policy in several nations. This is likely due to the changes in the geopolitical landscape since the end of the Cold War. The main challenge with the term *Sicherheitswende* (security transition) is the lack of clarity about what it will be replaced with. While there is a focus on what cannot be done anymore, there is less emphasis on the alternatives. This is an issue with not just Germany, but several countries. A focus on defence spending outputs rather than inputs is necessary for effective strategy development. There are similar issues with Germany's economic relations with China, which are more visible in Germany but still present in other countries.

It is essential for countries to communicate and address issues collaboratively, as demonstrated by the AUKUS situation. After the Afghanistan withdrawal, countries should have approached the US with their concerns and shared their assessments. The ability to discuss and have their own means, resources, and interests is crucial for better decision-making. There were questions raised about why German officials discussing defence commitments did not mention Franco-German

cooperation. The perception of the Franco-German relationship is important, as it affects NATO and other European allies.

Poland: From a Polish perspective, *Zeitenwende* can be traced back to the 1990s, although it began under a different name. The core issue now is how to rebuild German leadership in Europe. Despite Germany's strong economy and position within the EU, there is a lack of clear communication and effective leadership. There are visible problems with communication, such as conflicting messages from various German officials. The situation with the tanks in the context of the Ukraine war exemplifies the lack of German leadership. Instead of taking charge, Germany reacted to pressure from Eastern Europe, which in turn led to action from the US. Many are waiting for clear and meaningful statements on Germany's position and approach, as well as the release of the National Security Strategy and China strategy. While the process of developing these strategies has been lengthy and involved, there is optimism that they will provide clarity on Germany's direction. However, the delayed release of the National Security Strategy has led to some concerns about Germany's vision for its leadership role in Europe. It is important for Germany to establish a solid position and clear directions, as the circumstances have changed and demand strong leadership.

Netherlands: The Netherlands is particularly welcoming of increased cooperation with Germany. Recently, Germany and the Netherlands announced the joint Coleman Army vision, which incorporates Dutch land forces into the German 43rd Panzer Division. In the Dutch defence strategy published in June 2022, a few months after the Ukraine crisis, there was an emphasis on working closely with Germany and integrating their land forces. The Netherlands' perspective on Germany's *Zeitenwende* is generally positive and welcomed.

Italy: Italy's assumptions were somewhat alike Germany's, as Italy also relied on the "change through trade" formula and was heavily dependent on Russian energy. There are several reasons why Italy has not embarked on its own *Zeitenwende*. Firstly, Italy does not have Germany's financial resources. Secondly, Italy is also politically fragile, which makes long-term planning difficult. There is a cautious attitude towards confrontational approaches. Additionally, there are people in Italy who believe that Russia will not be an adversary forever. There is some scepticism about what will happen in the future, but overall, German leadership is taken for granted and is perceived positively.

3. Turkey and NATO: A complicated, necessary relationship

3.1 *The focus*

The relationship between Turkey and Russia has a strategic dimension. The issue is not with Turkey continuing trade with Russia; the issue is with Turkey becoming a platform to circumvent sanctions.

When the Biden administration took office, there were big debates on whether it should put pressure on Turkey. One of the reasons the US did not do so is that the Biden administration could not sort out which issue to prioritise. Is the main problem with Turkey about human rights? Is it the circumvention of sanctions on Iran? Is it the cohesion in NATO? Is it the relationship with Russia?³

3.2 *The debate*

Not all European observers have been involved in studying Turkey since the early 2000s and can therefore lack an appreciation of the extent to which Turkey has changed under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rule and also the extent to which Erdoğan's leadership itself has evolved.

In early 2000s the mistake Europeans made, in hindsight, in placing too much hope in Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party. At that time, they were modernising the country and taking legislative steps that made it more open, inclusive, and democratic. Then, there was the period between 2007 and 2013 when Turkey transitioned from a modernising nation to a different kind of leadership. Erdoğan was no longer just the prime minister of an important country; he was becoming more of an autocratic ruler, working on consolidating his role in Turkey against internal enemies, including through the constitutional shift towards a presidential system.

Erdoğan and Putin share a worldview and the same kind of paranoia about the West constantly seeking to undermine their power. Putin has undoubtedly become unable to distinguish between Russia's interests and his own, while we are not certain about the extent to which Erdoğan does the same: Perhaps he is similar in that regard.

Looking into the future, there is a natural agenda for cooperation between the EU and Turkey, despite their many differences. The bilateral relationship can be strengthened by upgrading the Customs Union, revisiting the migration deal, and offering a better visa liberalisation package to Turkey. Even in foreign policy there is potential for cooperation. The Europeans can accept a Turkey that has a pragmatic or transactional relationship with Russia. The EU can nonetheless coordinate and cooperate on matters like Libya, Syria, and Iran.

Both sides must acknowledge their roles in shaping the current situation and work together to create a mutually beneficial partnership. This might involve addressing past mistakes, finding common ground on issues like Libya and Syria, and being open to redefining the relationship between Turkey and the EU.

³ See Özgür Ünlühisarcıklı, "Turkey vis-à-vis Russia's War against Ukraine", in *IAI Commentaries*, No. 23|11 (March 2023), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/16680>.

Part of Turkey's grand strategy is indeed the pursuit of strategic autonomy and balancing great powers. This approach dates back to the Ottoman Empire's final two centuries and is deeply ingrained in Turkey's survival instinct. Consequently, this strategic approach will likely persist with a new government and in the long run as well. As for NATO, Turkey could as a committed NATO ally on issues concerning the organisation while exercising its autonomy in other areas.

Regarding Turkey's response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it is essential to consider the upcoming elections and Turkey's current economic situation. With the Turkish economy on the brink of bankruptcy and Erdoğan lagging in the polls, his priority is to keep the Turkish currency afloat and control inflation. A currency crisis would almost certainly result in a loss for Erdoğan in the next election.

To keep the economy stable, Erdoğan desperately needs foreign capital inflows into Turkey. His need for financial support is so dire that he is willing to engage with leaders he has previously been at odds with, such as Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and even considering meeting with Syria's President Bashar al-Assad. In this situation, Erdoğan might also seek Russia's financial assistance, which could explain Turkey's cautious response to Russia's actions in Ukraine. Russia helps Turkey financially by not hurting its economy, as it did in 2015, and by providing financial support in various ways, such as upfront payments for projects, and possibly not pressing Turkey for gas payments. This assistance is crucial for Erdoğan, as he needs to keep the economy afloat to have a chance in the upcoming elections.

Considering these factors, it is understandable why Turkey might be cautious in responding to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. The complex relationship between Turkey and Russia, along with Erdoğan's need to secure his position in the upcoming elections and stabilise the economy, makes it challenging for Turkey to take a strong stance against Russia.

If Erdoğan wins the upcoming election, he will be a president who has won his last election. Erdoğan's primary concern after winning the election would be his legacy. This might change his approach to politics and international relations, potentially leading to new opportunities for cooperation with the EU and other global partners. The possibility of a new government may create further opportunities for improved cooperation between Turkey and the EU, and other global partners.

Competition between Turkey and Western countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, and in various other regions is not beneficial for either side, and it would be much more productive if Turkey and the EU could find a way to cooperate on foreign policy issues. Such cooperation could cover areas like counter-terrorism, migration, energy security, trade, and conflict resolution. By working together, Turkey and the EU could address common challenges and promote regional stability. This would also help to rebuild trust and improve the overall relationship between Turkey and the UAE for Turkey-US relations; similar efforts should be made to strengthen cooperation and rebuild trust. Areas of mutual interest, such

as security, trade, and regional stability, could serve as starting points for improved dialogue and collaboration. Again, this would require openness and pragmatism from both sides.

In order to improve Turkey–EU and Turkey–US relations, it is essential for all parties to engage in open dialogue, identify areas of cooperation, and establish pragmatic approaches to address shared challenges. Here are some steps that could be taken to foster better relationships:

1. **Foreign policy dialogue:** The EU should actively involve Turkey in foreign policy discussions and consultations. This includes inviting the Turkish foreign minister to attend relevant meetings, and giving Turkey a voice in shaping policies that it is expected to comply with.
2. **Identifying areas of cooperation:** Turkey, the EU, and the US should work together to identify common goals and areas of collaboration. This could include efforts to address migration, terrorism, energy security, trade, and conflict resolution in the region.
3. **Establishing realistic expectations:** All parties should recognise that there will be areas of disagreement and focus on finding ways to work together on issues where cooperation is possible. This requires pragmatism and a willingness to set aside differences in pursuit of shared objectives.

Specifically to the US–Turkey relationship here are some steps that could be taken to:

1. **Open dialogue:** Establish channels of communication to discuss areas of disagreement and cooperation openly. This includes having regular meetings, consultations, and exchanges between officials from both countries.
2. **Agree to disagree:** Recognise that there will be areas where both countries will not reach a consensus. Instead of letting these disagreements undermine the entire relationship, both countries should accept these differences and work together in other areas.
3. **Focus on areas of potential agreement:** Identify issues where both countries may currently hold different positions but could find common ground through dialogue and negotiation. This could include regional security, counterterrorism, trade, and energy cooperation.
4. **Address the S-400 issue:** The S-400 missile system is a significant point of contention between Turkey and the US, with implications for NATO as well. Instead of presenting ultimatums, both countries should engage in a conversation about how they can address this issue in a way that supports the interests of both sides and NATO. The US could offer assistance or alternatives to Turkey, which could open the door to a productive discussion.
5. **Minimise spillover effects:** Both countries should work together to ensure that areas of disagreement do not negatively impact cooperation in other areas. This requires a pragmatic approach and a willingness to compartmentalise issues.
6. **Strengthening bureaucratic relationships:** Although the public perception of Turkey-US relations might be strained, it is important to maintain strong bureaucratic ties and communication channels between the two countries. This can help facilitate cooperation on shared challenges and promote mutual

understanding.

7. Focusing on areas of potential agreement: Turkey and the US should explore opportunities for collaboration on issues where they may currently hold different positions but could find common ground through dialogue and negotiation. If the US ended its relationship with People's Defense Units (YPG) if the US or would extradite Fethullah Gülen to Turkey, things for Turkey would be better. And then, if Turkey did other things that would appease the US life would be so much easier, right? But none of these things is going to happen. So, Turkey and the US need to find a pragmatic way to cooperate even with these problems still burdening the relationship.
8. Accepting differences: It is essential for all parties to accept that there will be some areas where agreement is not possible. Instead of allowing these differences to derail the entire relationship, they should be acknowledged and managed in a way that minimises their impact on broader cooperation efforts.

4. Russia's position in Europe's future order

4.1 *The focus*

The provocative paper produced for this session argues in favour of Russia's total defeat in Ukraine.⁴ This is the refrain of the US, the Baltics and Poland. What does Ukraine's victory mean? Returning to the borders of 23 February 2022, or even those before March 2014. The paper also argues in favour of Ukraine becoming a full NATO member. Moreover, Ukraine should be repaid for the destruction it has incurred using the Central Bank of Russia's frozen funds as reparations, and Russian leaders should be tried before an international tribunal for war crimes.

The debate thus focused on Russia's defeat, Ukraine's territorial settlement, Ukraine's NATO and EU membership prospects. The discussant claimed not to have any answer to the question of Russia's place in future Europe. However, taking some distance from the paper, the discussant expressed the frustration that discussions about the West's relationship with Russia often focus solely on the war, its outcome and the path to that outcome. There are other topics worth discussing when it comes to Russia. Of course, the war is important, as is Western support for Ukraine and the war's ultimate outcome, but we also need to ask other questions.

According to the discussant, Western countries can learn from our previous mistakes. The Europeans initially misjudged the cost-benefit calculation for Russia, although they accurately estimated the costs of military action. They believed that military action would alienate the Ukrainian people, lead to a strengthening of NATO and nullify ongoing discussions about arms control. Consequently, many in Europe thought that it would be in Russia's best interest to avoid war, and that the

⁴ Stephen Blank, "The War against Ukraine and Russia's Position in Europe's Security Order", in *IAI Commentaries*, No. 23|10 (March 2023), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/16679>.

financial and human costs would be too excessive for Putin to take that route. Yet, he proceeded with the invasion.

Several factors contributed to wrong assumptions about Putin's cost-benefit calculation. The first was the overestimation of Russia's military potential, not taking into account the differences between the country's involvement in Syria and a large-scale offensive like the one in Ukraine. Putin clearly made the same mistake.

Additionally, many in Europe did not consider changes in Russian governance and decision-making, nor were they aware of the significant paradigm shift within the Russian regime since 2020, which saw a more conservative, authoritarian, and aggressive approach both domestically and internationally. Moreover, mistakes were made concerning Putin's objectives, overestimating his interest in European security issues and underestimating his determination to regain direct control of Ukraine. The events of 24 February marked a shift from using frozen conflicts to maintain leverage over neighbouring countries to a strategy of imperial restoration.

As we look into the future, there are numerous known unknowns that we should be mindful of. These include the duration and outcome of the war, the state of Russia's military following the conflict, and the economic, demographic and societal impact of the war. The consequences of these factors for Russian society and politics are uncertain, as is the country's regional and international post-war role. The war's outcome will undoubtedly influence the domestic trajectories of post-Soviet countries and the behaviour of "middle ground" nations.

Furthermore, we must consider the war's impact on the larger global balance of power between China and the US and Russia's place within that context. While we know that these are important questions to ask, we do not yet have the answers. We currently face a complete lack of predictability and effective leverage to influence Russia's trajectory. Thus, we must learn to live with and navigate these challenges.

4.2 The debate

A comparison was made with the situation we experienced with Covid-19. The comparison may not be entirely relevant, but looking back three years ago, the world learned to live with the virus because we did not know how it would mutate. Governments had very little capacity to influence its evolution and had to build collective immunity and unity. That is pretty much what the US and European countries need to do with Russia now – be aware that Russia will continue to display subversive or aggressive behaviour towards Europe, and they should minimise its ability to hurt them.

The first thing to do is make the EU "Russia-proof" by addressing its dependencies, particularly energy, and vulnerabilities. One of these is war fatigue. The US and European governments should never stop explaining the rationale for their policies in the war, why they support Ukraine, why it will take time and why a

Russian victory would have a negative impact on our societies and economies. Other vulnerabilities include migration, the resilience of critical infrastructure, cyber defence, intelligence, counterintelligence and, of course, the strengthening of defence capacities. All of this also means promoting European solidarity.

Another aspect the Europeans, in particular, should consider is the sanctions policy. Even in the event of a rapid end to the war, there may be some sanctions the Europeans will need or wish to maintain because they constrain Russia's capacity to launch further offensives and undertake actions detrimental to Europe. So, some sanctions should remain. However, the US and Europe should also think about what sanctions they could accept lifting in the event of a fair and sustainable settlement of the war. This discussion may not be urgent, but the US and Europe should consider sanctions as one element of our policy for building collective immunity.

A third element of Western policy could be strengthening the independence and resilience of EU neighbours. If a settlement involves compromises from Ukraine, the US and Europe should be aware that this could have extremely destabilising effects on the Ukrainian government. The same is true for other neighbouring countries, such as Moldova and Armenia. The US and the EU should adopt long-term assistance policies for these countries, including military assistance, possible security assurances, ongoing support for reforms, and fighting corruption.

There is also the need to develop a more focused policy towards Belarus, rather than always considering it as an extension of Russia. With formally independent borders, a specific Belarus policy should be part of a regional strategy aimed at preserving the possibility of an independent and democratic Belarus in the future. This is crucial for the security of Poland, the Baltic states and overall European stability. Decoupling Belarus from Russia's strategic sphere will be a key element for Europe's security.

The US and the EU should pursue a global Russia policy to maintain and increase support across the world. This includes addressing the impact of the war on emerging countries. Food and energy issues are only one aspect, while countering Russian influence operations and engaging with countries most susceptible to the Russian narrative, without patronising them, is another important factor.

When considering European security, the US and Europe should adopt a more pragmatic approach, rather than focusing on a grand architectural order based on treaties and institutions. They must accept that there will not be a clear security border in Europe for the time being. The challenge is how they can manage the relationship with Russia in the best interest of European security. On some issues, a level of engagement may be necessary.

Lastly, the US and Europe should be prepared for the possibility of change. As much as possible, they should continue supporting Russian independent civil society organisations. They can achieve this by creating synergies among the

scarce resources that remain inside Russia. Additionally, they should develop an inclusive approach towards the Russian diaspora in the EU, based on a better understanding of this community. By promoting awareness, engaging in open dialogue and pragmatically addressing the situation of Russians in the EU, they can achieve both political and practical benefits.

Regardless of one's views on the war and the role of Russians in it, an essential aspect of the Western narrative should be that the West is not waging war against Russians. Russia is waging war against Ukraine, but the West does not have any animosity against the Russian people.

4.3 The debate in Washington on the Russian war in Ukraine

A participant knowledgeable of the US debate on the war said that the US government is not aiming for total Ukrainian victory. At best, from the impressions gathered through conversations, the US seeks a return to the pre-24 February lines, with Crimea not currently being part of any serious discussions. If the US were genuinely committed to a total and complete victory, its support for Ukraine would look different. Regarding NATO membership, the conversation about Ukraine joining NATO is not being taken seriously in Washington. A few weeks ago, there were meetings with representatives from the Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian parliaments, who emphasised the need for Washington to lead this discussion. However, it is unlikely to happen.

That is why the discussant thinks that it is more productive to change the framework slightly and discuss long-term security assistance to Ukraine without including NATO as part of the conversation right. This approach could make it easier for the US to lead the discussion. These are the impressions gathered from talking to people both within and outside the US government based in Washington, and this approach is unlikely to change with a potential new administration from 2025 onwards.

Regarding NATO and security assurances, the discussion should be focused on providing Ukraine with the necessary guarantees rather than NATO membership. These assurances would enable Ukraine to negotiate, attract investors for reconstruction, and allow refugees to return. While NATO membership may or may not happen, it won't occur before the war's end, making Ukrainian security a more pressing concern.

4.4 The debate in Europe

A common element that came up in the discussion was the parallel between Russia and post-WWII Germany and Italy. They were reintegrated into the international order in a workable manner, which has led to some paradoxes today, such as the difficulty in holding a public debate about sending weapons to Ukraine or taking a leadership role in military engagements and peacekeeping missions. This relates to the discussion about Russia and what should be done with it after the war is

over.

In the opinion of one participant, the disastrous transition from the USSR to the Russian Federation in the 1990s is fundamentally at the root of what is happening today. It was not managed well, resulting in feelings of resentment and the sense that Russia's great power status was no longer acknowledged by the West, without any serious attempt to reintegrate Russia into a multilateral order. This issue lingered in the 1990s and the early years of Putin's presidency, eventually leading to conflicts in Georgia, the events of 2014, and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

This should make us think that – regardless of how the war ends – there needs to be a long-term plan for re-establishing ties with Russia and reintegrating it into a European security order, or at least maintaining an open channel for dialogue. To completely cut off Russia from Europe is not a good idea, as it is, in part, a European nation. This is why the idea of becoming completely independent or severing all interdependence with Russia in the long term may not be a viable strategy for ensuring a peaceful order and long-term security in Europe.

One of the participants criticised this comparison. In this view, post-war Germany could be re-integrated because it was a demilitarised and occupied country without nuclear weapons. We cannot ignore Russia's nuclear arsenal; we are not starting from the same position at all. There were fantasies, in hindsight, about Russia integrating more into the transatlantic alliance, becoming more connected with Europe, and perhaps turning into a sort of "Canada with nukes". Additionally, we must consider the narrative within Russia after the war. Even if Russia loses the conflict, it is unlikely to be discussed as a devastating war that was lost. Instead, it may be portrayed as a stand against the West and NATO expansion that was narrowly lost, but with a commendable effort.

A participant noted that Russia's history, starting from Ivan the Great, has been characterised by aggression and hunger for power. There have been only two brief examples of democratic changes in Russia: between February and October 1917, and between December 1991 and October 1993. These periods were marked by anarchy and the beginning of kleptocracy, respectively. The participant insisted that the prospect of a democratic Russia is doubtful, and any hope for a strong civil society in Russia seems wishful thinking.

The question of Russia's future is essential, and defining what a Ukrainian victory or a Russian defeat means is also crucial. A defeated Russia is one that lacks the resources to carry out aggressive plans. Russia's war against Ukraine is not just a war against one country; it is a war against the whole system of European security.

Comparing the current situation to 1945 may not be the best analogy; a better comparison might be 1919, after the First World War. The challenge lies in imagining the world after this conflict and learning from past mistakes, such as the American intervention in Europe in 1919 and their subsequent withdrawal.

4.5 Russia and the spheres of influence

Russia's position presents two alternatives: one in which Russia maintains a sphere of influence, which is not an acceptable option for the West, and another which involves long-term friction with Russia due to its desire for a sphere of influence. The bad news is that friction with Russia will persist; however, the good news for the rest of the world, although not for Russia, is that Russia is a slowly declining power.

Russia suffers from an aging society and decreasing birth rates. While Europe also experiences declining birth rates, it attracts talented young people from around the world, which is not the case for Russia. In fact, educated individuals are increasingly leaving Russia, a trend that has accelerated since the war.

Russia's economy is not diversified, with heavy reliance on natural resources, particularly fossil fuels, and valuable minerals. As fossil fuels become less relevant, Russia will face significant economic challenges. Additionally, the Russian state does not depend on taxpayers due to its natural resource revenues, making it difficult for democracy to flourish in Russia.

In the long term, Russia will continue to be a declining, authoritarian power. The short-term focus should be on deterring Russia. In the long term, the challenge will be to manage and adapt to Russia's decline and the potential loss of its great power status, as this could also create global instabilities.

4.6 Is Russia post-1991 transition over?

The transition after 1991 is still ongoing, and the full consequences of the Soviet Union's collapse are just beginning to surface. While Russia is currently not a democracy, it is impossible to predict the future. There are people in Russia who desire a more predictable legal environment and a setting where they can conduct business without fear. These individuals should be the focus of engagement, though working with foreign actors in Russia is now dangerous. Moreover, it is a challenging task for Western governments to decide how and with whom to interact. We must take these matters seriously without implying a "decolonise Russia" approach and encourage to speak more about civil society engagement in this context.

Russian civil society is not a monolith, and there are grassroots solidarity movements. Although it may not transform into a democracy overnight, aiming for a functioning, non-aggressive Russia is crucial. Turning Russia into North Korea would not be the best approach.

Conference Programme

Rome, 13 February 2023

Introductory Remarks

Giuliana Del Papa, Head, Policy Planning Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Shawn Crowley, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Embassy of the United States to Italy

Riccardo Alcaro, Research Coordinator and Head of Global Actors Programme, IAI

European Defence and Transatlantic Relations

Chair **Dario Cristiani**, Associate Fellow, IAI, and Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States

Paper-giver **Adája Stoetman**, Research Fellow, Clingendael - the Netherlands Institute of International Relations

Discussant **Sophia Besch**, Research Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

The German Zeitenwende and Its Impact on Transatlantic Relations

Chair **Nicoletta Pirozzi**, Head of EU Politics and Institutions Programme, IAI

Paper-giver **Pia Fuhrhop**, Associate Fellow, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Germany

Discussant **Rachel Rizzo**, Nonresident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council, USA

Turkey and NATO: A Complicated, Necessary Relationship

Chair **Leo Goretti**, Head of Italian Foreign Policy Programme, IAI

Paper-giver **Özgür Ünlühisarcıklı**, Director of Ankara Office, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Turkey

Discussant **Dario Cristiani**, Associate Fellow, IAI, and Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States

Russia's Position in Europe's Future Order

Chair **Riccardo Alcaro**, Research Coordinator and Head of Global Actors Programme, IAI

Discussant **Marie Dumoulin**, Director, Wider Europe programme, European Council on Foreign Relations

Discussant **Nona Mikhelidze**, Senior Russia Fellow, IAI

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