



The US and Europe: A Reality Check

By

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Europe divorced itself from reality long ago, but reality gets visitation. This was made evident like never before last month by American Vice President JD Vance. At the Paris AI Summit he emphasized [freedom for private individuals](#) and enterprises to innovate and take risks free from continuous government restrictions. Then with a coup de grace delivered days later at the annual Munich Security Conference, whose chairman concluded his tenure [literally in tears, Vance delivered](#) a realist assessment of issues affecting Europe.

Vance addressed the continents' hostile stance on freedom of opinion. He suggested Europe is becoming the enemy they opposed during the Cold War, and with elections coming, challenged Europeans to step up and take charge of their own defense. Vance also argued that the most urgent issue shared by all nations at the conference was mass migration.

Europe is Not Unified

Incidentally, in late 2024, *Global Security Review* (GSR) published an updated independent assessment of [European political uncertainties](#). It shows that JD Vance's statements made in February 2025 were factual and fully grounded, even if inconvenient.

The governments of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom are fractured and dysfunctional. Another late 2024 GSR independent assessment of [an endgame in Ukraine](#) suggested an uncomfortable realpolitik-driven negotiated settlement, even before the Trump administration offered its plan after the Munich Security Conference.

That suggests two observations. *First*, the complete terms will never be made public but are already known to powerbrokers. Present neutrality of Russian forces in Transnistria and a lack of attacks on Ukrainian leadership suggests some form of agreed limitation of the conflict. Recently both Vance [and Secretary of State Marco Rubio](#) remarked on Zelensky's duplicitousness. Apparently, he would agree to terms in meetings and then lie to the media about them. The ostentatious way Zelensky ended up confronting both President Donald Trump and Vice President Vance in the Oval Office, despite the rather realistic and transactional path to settlement, only reinforces this assessment.

The indignation and moral outrage over the conflict is mostly performative for the media and the public. It gives governments cover to prolong the conflict by providing aid, winning elections, and increasing the size of their bureaucratic apparatus, along with the corrupt mechanisms endemic to Ukraine. What online outrage does not do is enable a negotiated settlement of hostilities.

After the White House debacle, President Macron arranged an emergency meeting. While President Macron again pushed for "strategic autonomy" for Europe, the emergency meeting again showed that other European countries are not getting on the France bandwagon just yet. Together with the UK, France is the most likely to send troops to Ukraine, an idea that both Germany and Poland loathe. Italy is attempting a pragmatic balancing act between Europe and the US. Regrettably, the Baltic and Nordic countries, who are the frontline against Russia and invest the most in their defense, were not represented in a meaningful way.



Second, the claims of America “abandoning” Kyiv are hyperbolic, counterfactual, and premature. This is an ongoing negotiation. The facts are clear. The US provided [0.6 percent of its 2021 GDP](#) to Ukraine and more than [\\$160,000,000,000 in financial assistance and munitions](#), just about half of all assistance Ukraine has received. This aid, unlike European aid, has no strings attached and no expectation of repayment. The US also secured billions in loans from various banks for the benefit of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the US is strategically overextended and incapable of matching the more immediate threat (China). The Trump administration understands this. Many Americans know this, too, which is why [72 percent of registered voters](#) want a negotiated settlement. That does not mean President Trump is surrendering to Putin or “abandoning” Europe. Nor does it make him a tool of Putin.

The West is in a bad strategic and operational position. Even after three years of supporting the Ukrainian war effort, weapons production across all North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states cannot meet demand, let alone stockpile in case of war in the Pacific. While many speculate that Russia is in bad shape and is showing indicators of economic decline, they are stronger than Ukraine and its immediate neighbors.

For the West there are only two alternatives to a brokered peace: a dramatic escalation led by American conventional forces and resources or continuing to feed the war of attrition. Neither is a good scenario for the Ukrainian people who are dying by the thousands. President Trump understands this fact.

The Future of NATO

How Europe responds to the US remains to be seen. There are deeper fractures within and between the UK, France, and Germany than mainstream observers realize. The only ones significantly expanding their militaries and cooperating with the US are Poland, the Baltic states, and the [Nordic countries](#).

As for the United States’ participation in NATO, it should be scaled back over time and be contingent on shared values with partner nations, especially when it comes to freedom of conscience and speech. Countries like Denmark, who believe Russia [will invade Europe in 5 years](#), should expand their militaries and demonstrate not only commitment to liberal values but self-defense. The United States cannot fund its welfare state and those of Europe. Americans are not that wealthy.

American involvement in NATO should be primarily limited to (1) logistics (air and sea transport to Europe); (2) support in the form of weaponry, materiel, and war support materiel; (3) maintaining freedom of the seas; and 4) developing [missile defense systems](#) that can serve American and, when purchased, NATO. The United States also has unmatched space capabilities.

There should be no expectation of American boots on the ground simply because Europe neglected its security obligations for nearly 30 years. While there is still immense value in joint training and cooperation, the US should be seen as a rear guard and a last resort force. American taxpayers should not be the primary funder and provider of military forces and capability for Europe.

It is difficult to expect any long-term peace to be possible so long as NATO serves primarily as an anti-Russia platform funded by the United States. Europeans need to solve their own problems without vilifying the United States for solving American problems first. This



means Eastern Europe needs to secure the buy-in of countries like Italy and Spain, who do not feel the Russian threat. As Vice President Vance suggested in Munich, Europeans must reflect on what they are defending and not just what they are against.

Europe is their continent and their home. It is their responsibility and duty to be the primary protectors of their individual nations and European society. Unfortunately, Europe does not appear to be ready to make a unified effort. Nonetheless, the proposal by the newly elected German chancellor, which calls for France and the United Kingdom to share their nuclear deterrent, might be a first concrete step in the right direction.

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