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SHANGHAI INSTITUTES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# Reframing Common Security

## *Toward a Paradigm Shift in Resolving the Ukraine Crisis*

*Project Leader: Zhao Long*

*Authors: Zhao Long   Feng Shuai   Xue Chen   Su Liuqiang  
Li Hongmei   Tan Chenyi*



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# Executive Summary

*War is the continuation of politics by other means.* As the largest geopolitical and military conflict to erupt on the European continent since the end of the Cold War, the Ukraine crisis has not only highlighted the escalation of strategic rivalries among states but also exposed structural deficiencies in the prevailing regional security order and governance mechanisms. It has profoundly reshaped the balance of major-power competition and pushed both regional and global political-security frameworks into a period of deep restructuring.

With the Trump administration shifting its approach to push aggressively for a ceasefire, the battlefield dynamics between Russia and Ukraine has transitioned from a *total war* into a *limited war*, with both sides seeking to leverage military pressure primarily as bargaining chips in negotiations. At the same time, the protracted crisis has generated multiple spillover effects. Russia hopes to capitalize on U.S. involvement to break the deadlock, weaken *anti-Russian* transatlantic cohesion, and ease its own security pressures, but faces inherent risks due to the absence of mutual trust with Washington.

Europe has accelerated its pursuit of defense autonomy, bolstered military support for Kyiv, and advanced plans for the *ReArm Europe*. Yet in the short term, it remains unable to free itself from reliance on U.S. security commitments. Meanwhile, the Trump administration's transactional style of mediation lacks enforcement capacity and is ill-suited to address the deeper structural contradictions of European security. Moreover, the crisis has generated indirect linkages to other regional situations, including Northeast Asia and the Middle East.

At present, the core concerns of key stakeholders remain difficult to reconcile. The United States is eager to secure a ceasefire as a means of fulfilling President Trump's campaign promises, while simultaneously seeking to manage a gradual easing of U.S.–Russia tensions and to reallocate strategic resources toward the Indo-Pacific. Europe remains steadfast in defending Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but faces the dual challenge of retaining U.S. engagement while advancing defense autonomy. Russia, for its part, has no intention of negotiating over territories it already controls in Ukraine and continues to insist on Kyiv's neutrality and demilitarization, with the broader aim of reshaping the



Eurasian security order. Ukraine seeks security guarantees, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; although its bargaining position has been weakened by shifts in U.S. policy, it is unlikely to accept either an unconditional ceasefire or an unjust peace. The Global South largely favors an expedited ceasefire to mitigate the impact on global supply chains in trade, energy, and food.

However, profound divergences exist regarding priorities—between freezing the conflict and securing a sustainable peace. These differences in security logics have created structural contradictions. Fragile ceasefire mechanisms shaped by battlefield realities, the institutional limits of international judicial remedies, and the clash between competing visions of *European security* and Eurasian security have all compounded the challenges of rebuilding peace in Ukraine.

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. Eight decades ago, the war's devastation plunged Europe into the abyss. Today, Europe once again stands at a crossroads in determining how to construct a lasting peace order. From the 1975 *Helsinki Final Act* to the 1990 *Paris Charter for a New Europe* and the establishment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Europe has repeatedly sought ways to transcend a purely military logic and establish frameworks for coexistence. Yet the very multilateral mechanisms and arrangements that once carried such promise have gradually been marginalized amid renewed security anxieties and an intensifying arms race.

While Europe's pursuit of stronger self-defense capabilities is understandable given shifting geopolitical conditions, if such efforts are predicated on notions of *absolute security* or *exclusive security*, and if confrontation becomes normalized, the outcome will inevitably be a deepening security deficit.

China is neither a party to the conflict nor its instigator. Yet as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a responsible major power, Beijing has from the very beginning consistently called for dialogue and a political settlement. It has engaged in proactive diplomacy, participated actively in UN and Security Council deliberations on Ukraine, and, together with Brazil and other countries, launched the *Friends of Peace* initiative, pooling the collective wisdom of the Global South to contribute constructively toward de-escalation and political resolution.

In the longer term, a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis will depend on the exploration of a *new paradigm of common security*. This entails at five key dimensions:

- **Diversifying the Levels and Pathways of Political Processes.** Ceasefire arrangements and comprehensive negotiations should be advanced in parallel. It is crucial to find a workable balance between *synchronized and sequential* negotiations across multiple tracks—including ceasefire talks, monitoring and peacekeeping, security guarantees, and postwar arrangements. Clear distinctions must also be made among the roles of negotiation participants, guarantors, and implementers.
- **Balancing Sovereignty Principles with Innovative Non-Military Approaches.** While maintaining a firm commitment to sovereignty and territorial integrity, it is essential to explore phased, non-military solutions and innovate in ceasefire monitoring and peacekeep-

ing practices. This requires distinguishing between the *De-jure recognition and De-facto recognition* of territorial arrangements, clarifying the temporary versus permanent nature of provisions concerning sovereignty and territorial control, and reaffirming the principle that disputes should be resolved through political negotiations rather than military means. Mechanisms should ensure that parties retain *reservation clause* regarding territorial integrity in any interim arrangements.

In addition to traditional peacekeeping deployments, new approaches—such as satellite monitoring, fixed and mobile unmanned systems, and other technical surveillance tools—should be explored to prevent renewed conflict over peacekeeping. This approach would expand the role of non-belligerent stakeholders, including China. With UN authorization and the consent of the parties, they could help monitor ceasefire arrangements while minimizing the risks associated with the deployment of peacekeeping forces, thereby preventing external actors from being inadvertently drawn into potential conflict. Emergency consultation and enforcement mechanisms should be clearly established to address violations of ceasefire agreements, while encouraging participation from capable and willing states.

- **Initiating Postwar Arrangements and Reconstruction at an Appropriate Stage.** Postwar arrangements and reconstruction in Ukraine constitute an integral component of the broader political settlement process. The reconstruction agenda could be incorporated into follow-on negotiations after a ceasefire is established. Without undermining the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, discussions should explore how third-party actors—including China—might participate in infrastructure restoration and livelihood improvement projects free of political preconditions. Restoring cross-border energy corridors, reopening agricultural export routes, and facilitating broader economic cooperation can lay a tangible foundation for a sustainable post-crisis peace order.
- **Developing Dual-Track Security Guarantees Combining Hard and Soft Elements.** It is necessary to encourage Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and Europe to negotiate institutional arrangements for *security guarantees* and *security assurance*, grounded in the principles of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. Drawing upon the core ideas embedded in the Asian security initiatives, the Asian security model, and the Global Security Initiative, stakeholders should move beyond concepts of *exclusive security* toward *shared security*, and shift from the pursuit of absolute security to more pragmatic explorations of *relative security* within a rules-based institutional framework.
- **Collectively Rethinking Europe's Deeper Security Dilemmas.** Stakeholders must break free from entrenched *winner-loser* mentalities and recommit to the principles of the UN Charter—respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful resolution of disputes, and non-interference in internal affairs. This requires redefining both the meaning and scope of the concept of the *indivisibility of security*, while carefully balancing NATO's continued existence against the externalities of its *open-door* policy. Beyond a zero-sum mindset, the ultimate goal should be to negotiate a binding agreement that is fair, enduring, and acceptable to all parties. On this basis, Europe can work toward rebuilding a balanced, effective, and sustainable security framework founded on a sense of *security community*.

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# **PART I**

## **Trajectory and Spillover Effects of the Ukraine Crisis**

Since its outbreak, the Ukraine crisis has exerted sustained and profound impacts on the political, economic, and security landscapes regionally and globally. Currently, under the Trump administration's forceful push for a *ceasefire on the ground and negotiations to end the war*, the scale of military operations by both Russia and Ukraine has been reduced to a manageable level. Military actions have increasingly become political leverage, with both sides opting for a strategy of *Combat-Driven Negotiations*.

## (I) From Decisive Military Victory to Combat-Driven Negotiations

**1. Combat-Driven Negotiations has become a shared tactical choice for Russia and Ukraine.** Over the past three years, both Russia and Ukraine have repeatedly treated territorial gains or losses—block by block, city by city—and overall front-line advances as the primary means to achieve military or political objectives. This obsession with militarily crushing the adversary has repeatedly led to mutually destructive engagements and strategically marginal battles, exemplified by the campaigns in Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and the Ukrainian offensive in Kursk region.

Starting in 2025, with the Trump administration's strong intervention and the shared expectations surrounding ceasefire negotiations, the scale of ground operations by Russia and Ukraine has begun to decline. Air and maritime platforms, particularly drones and precision-guided munitions, have become the primary means of pressuring the adversary at the negotiating table, with target selection shifting from purely military assets to economic and civilian infrastructure, aiming to weaken the opponent's will to continue fighting. On May 16, Russian and Ukrainian delegations held their first direct talks in over three years in Istanbul, Turkey. **With the political process underway, future ground offensives are unlikely to exceed corps-level engagements, and the battlefield will increasingly serve as a tool for negotiation leverage.**

**2. Russia's recapture of Kursk and missile strikes on Ukrainian cities can be interpreted as pre-negotiation moves to secure leverage, whereas Ukraine's limited strikes into Russian territory aim to signal and bolster requests for military aid.** The so-called *White House dispute* between U.S. and Ukrainian leaders and the Trump administration's temporary suspension of military and intelligence support created a rare operational window for Russia. On March 8, shortly after the U.S. suspended intelligence support, Russian forces launched a comprehensive offensive in Kursk, seizing three strategic settlements and briefly capturing the core of Sudzha City. Ukrainian authorities emphasized that frontline situations remained controllable, with no encirclement threat to their ground forces.

For Russia, the U.S.'s reluctance to significantly increase military aid to Ukraine without signed miner-

al agreements not only contradicted Trump's expectation for a swift ceasefire but also reflected U.S. concerns that Ukraine might act contrary to American interests once it received support. By launching the Kharkiv offensive, Russia sought to deprive Ukraine of *territory-for-territory* bargaining chips. On May 9, prior to Victory Day celebrations, Russia claimed to have fully recaptured Kursk Oblast, a claim promptly denied by Ukraine.

Overall, Russia's advances in Kharkiv and gradual progress along the Donbas, Zaporizhia, and Kher-son fronts have not undermined Ukraine's resolve. Similarly, Ukraine's attacks on strategic bomber bases in Russia primarily serve psychological deterrence and aim to create conditions for sustained ceasefire and increased Western military support, with limited direct impact on the overall battlefield situation. Any large-scale Russian ground offensive concurrent with negotiations could prompt the U.S. to reauthorize enhanced Ukrainian capabilities, modify ceasefire terms, or even suspend the political mediation process. **Given Trump's urgency for a quick ceasefire, Ukraine—heavily dependent on U.S. military and intelligence support—is likely to acquiesce, while Russia is also reluctant to return to high-intensity warfare, potentially exhausting Trump's patience.**

## (II) Complex Gaming and Cross-regional Linkages

**1. Russia Seeks to Leverage U.S. Intervention to Reshape Regional Security.** The crisis has severely affected Russia's political, diplomatic, military, and overall national power status. Initially, Moscow sought a surgical *blitzkrieg* to eliminate pro-Western forces in Kyiv, but the plan devolved into a prolonged three-year war of attrition, leaving Russia without a clear exit strategy. Trump's return to office created a strategic window favorable to Russian objectives. Under the U.S. initial ceasefire plan, Russia could retain most of its territorial gains, mitigate geopolitical pressure from NATO's eastward expansion, transform eastern Ukraine into a buffer zone, and even potentially open a historic new phase in U.S.-Russia cooperation. **A ceasefire under U.S. intervention would allow Russia to exit the battlefield with dignity, reduce diplomatic isolation, ease sanctions, and improve Russian-U.S. bilateral relations.**

However, structural mistrust between the U.S. and Russia—spanning decision-making, strategic circles, and bureaucratic institutions—poses significant risks. After a 30-day ceasefire consensus was reached in Jeddah between the U.S. and Ukraine, Russia immediately expressed objections and raised security guarantee issues. The U.S. refusal to provide guarantees to Ukraine created leverage for Russia to raise her guarantee request, which inserted a wedge into the U.S.-Ukraine mineral agreement.

**Russia has thus exploited Trump's urgency to end the conflict, retaining flexibility in adjusting military and diplomatic actions. Yet this approach carries risks, particularly in calibrating maximum benefit without undermining relations with the U.S. .Meanwhile, the U.S. could alternately test Russia with ceasefire negotiations and maximum pressure, perpetuating uncertainty in the Ukraine crisis.**

**2. Europe Accelerates Security Transformation and Defense Autonomy.** The evolution of the crisis, along with the Trump administration's policy shift, has profoundly affected European security perceptions and structures:



- Major European states have strengthened political and economic support for Ukraine, with the EU pledging €30.6 billion in military aid for FY2025, temporarily easing *Ukraine fatigue*.
- At a special EU summit, leaders approved an €800 billion *ReArm* plan, allowing member states to exceed the 3% budget deficit cap to fund defense, including €150 billion in loans for national defense expenditures. The plan promotes joint procurement, interoperability, and private-sector investment.
- The extended deterrence role of French and UK strategic nuclear forces has been raised, with Germany supporting *nuclear sharing* proposals to mitigate potential U.S. withdrawal from European security commitments.
- Hungary was politically isolated after 26 EU member states passed Ukraine support resolutions despite its objections, marking the first EU decision without unanimous consent, with lasting institutional implications.

Despite these initiatives, Europe's current willingness and capacity remain insufficient to replace U.S. defense commitments. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen framed the *ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030* as a response to U.S. positions, emphasizing that effective peace through strength requires cooperation with the EU. Nevertheless, achieving true European defense autonomy remains a long-term and uncertain process.

**3. The U.S. Bears Both Benefits and Risks of Forcing a Ceasefire.** The Trump administration immediately prioritized resolving the Ukraine crisis upon taking office, committing substantial diplomatic resources. Trump initially believed that Ukraine's dependence on U.S. aid, combined with Russia's inability to break the stalemate, would allow a rapid resolution. He suggested the conflict could be ended *in 24 hours*. In reality, **the transactional approach could not compel Ukraine to surrender territory, resources, or security guarantees.** While Europe bears part of Ukraine's security burden, its defense autonomy and rising anti-U.S. sentiment exceeded Trump's expectations. France convened a Chiefs of Staff meeting with over 30 countries, notably excluding the U.S.—an unprecedented move in post–World War II Western military security history.

**On March 6, 2025, the EU special summit approved support for Ukraine, disrupting Trump's aim for a rapid resolution and U.S.-Russia reconciliation to enable redeployment of forces to the Indo-Pacific and "counterbalance China."** Russia, despite Trump's overtures, offered no reciprocal positive response. Following Jeddah, Moscow publicly expressed skepticism about U.S. mediation and Putin demanded full recapture of Kursk, heightening tensions and complicating Trump's political calculations. **The U.S. investment of diplomatic prestige in the Ukraine process, coupled with the risk of unexpected consequences, could make resolving the crisis a strategic burden, consuming more time, resources, and patience than anticipated, potentially replicating the U.S. experience in Afghanistan.**



**4. Indirect Spillover Effects in the Middle East and Northeast Asia.** The Ukraine crisis has also produced spillover effects affecting regional security in the Middle East and Northeast Asia. Under U.S. pressure, Israel was compelled to reach a first-phase ceasefire with Hamas, whose expiration left Prime Minister Netanyahu seeking pretexts to resume hostilities. U.S. ability to restrain Israel's renewed military action is closely tied to the progress of a political settlement in Ukraine; setbacks in Ukraine could embolden Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank, relieving U.S. political pressure and extending Netanyahu's domestic political tenure.

In Northeast Asia, North Korea's involvement in the Ukraine conflict has introduced new regional variables. Pyongyang has supplied weapons, ammunition, and combat personnel, suffering casualties in the process. North Korea's contribution exceeds obligations under the Russia-DPRK strategic partnership or the "food and oil-for-arms and soldiers" exchange agreement. With the onset of Russia-Ukraine negotiations, North Korea risks marginalization, potentially failing to realize anticipated returns on its investments. Meanwhile, NATO's possible exploitation of North Korean involvement to intervene in regional affairs, combined with Trump's disregard for NATO and reluctance to commit to European security, has left Europe politically constrained and without sufficient internal support or resources to address North Korean issues. European states have limited capacity to coordinate sanctions against Russia or enhance military assistance to Ukraine while simultaneously intervening in North Korea, a theater outside NATO's direct defense mandate yet targeted by U.S. strategic intentions.

# **PART II**

## **Stakeholder's Perception Gaps and Divergent Interests**

Although the Ukraine crisis has entered a preliminary phase of negotiations, the diverging interests and priorities among stakeholders suggest that a comprehensive, lasting peace agreement will not be achieved swiftly. The process will inevitably involve complex strategic bargaining. The Trump administration's approach markedly departs from that of the Biden administration, shifting from unconditional support for Ukraine's resistance to Russia toward pressuring Kyiv to accept mediation, which has created fissures between the United States and its European allies on the crisis. Russia leverages Trump's impatience and urgency for a ceasefire to enhance its bargaining position. Meanwhile, Global South countries, represented by China and India, advocate for a political resolution to the crisis and a rapid cessation of hostilities, with multilateral platforms such as BRICS playing an active role. Understanding the strategic intent, objectives, and choices of these stakeholders is essential for assessing the trajectory toward a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis.

## (I) The United States: Ambition for Rapid Conflict Resolution

Under the Biden administration, the U.S. in coordination with Western allies, provided substantial military and economic support to Ukraine to pressure Russia through a strategy of “maximum coercion” and sustained attrition, aiming to induce Russian concessions or even systemic collapse. With Trump's return to power, U.S. policy shifted sharply. On one hand, the administration bypassed Ukraine and European allies to engage Russia directly and ease bilateral tensions; on the other, it pressured Kyiv and European partners to abandon “unrealistic expectations” and accept a rapid ceasefire favorable to Russia.

**U.S. strategic objectives under Trump can be summarized in three dimensions:**

- **Fulfilling Campaign Promises.** Trump pledged to end the Ukraine war on his first day in office. Facing midterm election pressures in a four-year term, he is driven by a sense of urgency to deliver on this commitment. Rapidly brokering a ceasefire not only reinforces his image as a decisive political actor but also constitutes a potential cornerstone of his diplomatic legacy.
- **Strategic Reallocation from Europe to China.** The Republican right identifies China as the principal strategic adversary and seeks to withdraw U.S. commitments from Europe and the Middle East to focus resources on countering China and defending the U.S. homeland. On February 12, 2025, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth stated, “U.S. withdrawal from Europe is necessary. The United States must focus on homeland defense and deterring China. Scarce resources must be concentrated to

ensure deterrence against China does not fail.” The administration’s *link Russia to contain China* strategy envisions resolving the Ukraine crisis quickly to ease U.S.-Russia relations and counter the adverse geopolitics of China-Russia cooperation. Additionally, by withdrawing from Europe, **the U.S. pressures European countries to assume primary responsibility for regional defense, thereby creating a new strategic configuration: the United States addressing China, Europe containing Russia.**

**Nontraditional Value Considerations.** Trump and MAGA-aligned supporters hold

- worldviews and value systems that diverge sharply from conventional Western liberalism, often displaying antagonism toward U.S. and European establishment actors, while maintaining relative affinity toward Russia. Within this framework, Ukraine is not considered a core U.S. interest, Russia is not a principal adversary, and Europe is perceived as benefiting disproportionately from the U.S. As a result, normative constraints do not hinder efforts to ease U.S.-Russia tensions, pressure Europe, or sideline Ukraine.

The immediate strategic objective is conflict suspension and ceasefire. Diplomatic missions are being restored between Washington and Moscow, and bilateral talks have been initiated. Trump seeks to lead the negotiation process, bypassing Ukraine and Europe, with the intent of pressuring Kyiv and European allies to accept the outcomes of U.S.-Russia bilateral talks. Current negotiations suggest a willingness to prioritize rapid ceasefire and peace even at the cost of Ukrainian interests. On March 11, 2025, Ukraine, under U.S. pressure, proposed a temporary 30-day ceasefire, but Russia has yet to commit.

**Trump’s efforts aim to lay the foundation for improved U.S.-Russia relations and reshape the unfavorable dynamics of the China-U.S.-Russia strategic triangle.** Riyadh meetings indicated that U.S.-Russia relations could improve following progress in Ukraine, including potential political and economic cooperation. On March 3, 2025, the White House instructed the State Department and Treasury to draft plans for easing sanctions on Russia as part of bilateral rapprochement. On June 16, 2025, at the G7 summit in Canada, Trump remarked that Russia’s 2014 expulsion from the G8 was “a very big mistake,” signaling intent to ameliorate U.S.-Russia relations.

Trump’s mercantilist orientation emphasizes concrete economic gains. A Russia-Ukraine ceasefire could enable the United States to: (1) access Ukraine’s strategic minerals and resources, formalized in the May 1, 2025, *U.S.-Ukraine Reconstruction Investment Fund Agreement* granting U.S. priority in high-quality rare earths; (2) allow U.S., especially energy, companies to re-enter the Russian market; (3) stabilize oil prices, thereby reducing U.S. inflation; and (4) compel Europe to shoulder a greater share of NATO defense spending.

The U.S. holds the most advantageous position among crisis stakeholders, with multiple policy options: (1) leading bilateral negotiations for rapid ceasefire, potentially compelling Ukraine and Europe to compromise; (2) maintaining the status quo if negotiations stall, potentially resulting in a protracted low-intensity conflict (“Palestinization” of the crisis); and (3) re-escalation if talks fail due to Russian actions, with possible reinstatement of sanctions and military aid, likely at levels below

those under Biden. Trump's recent frustrations with stalled negotiations have led to suggestions of U.S. withdrawal from mediation, though rapid ceasefire remains the administration's priority.

## (II) Europe: Costs of Ceasefire and Peace

Trump's Ukraine peace initiatives have unsettled European states. First, proposals trading Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity for peace conflict with Europe's commitment to uphold Ukraine's independence. Second, U.S. withdrawal from Europe heightens European security anxieties. Third, bypassing Europe in negotiations risks marginalizing European interests, exacerbating fears of abandonment. These developments strain transatlantic relations, as U.S. overtures toward Russia are perceived as betrayal.

**The core of Europe's proposed Ukraine peace plan is to achieve a *Just and Lasting peace for Ukraine*.** European states view the peace plan proposed by Trump as an *early surrender* to Russia. Europe continues to provide assistance to Ukraine, aiming to exhaust or even weaken Russia, thereby placing Ukraine in a favorable position in any negotiations. Europe's objectives can be summarized as follows:

- Ensuring Ukrainian and European Participation. European states insist on Ukraine's direct involvement in negotiations and oppose any U.S.-Russia bilateral talks conducted without Ukraine or European participation.
- Upholding Ukrainian Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity. Europe firmly opposes any compromise with Russia that would sacrifice Ukraine's sovereignty or territorial integrity.
- Securing Strong Postwar Guarantees for Ukraine. European countries emphasize the need for robust security arrangements to prevent future Russian aggression against Ukraine.
- Peace Through Strength. Europe seeks to pressure Russia into negotiations by maintaining sanctions and leveraging economic and military means. Given Russia's reluctance to accept a 30-day unconditional ceasefire, on May 16, 2025, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the EU was prepared to tighten sanctions on Russia. New measures target Russia's energy and financial sectors, including Nord Stream 1 and 2, lowering the price cap on Russian crude oil exports, and further sanctioning Russia's shadow fleet and financial institutions.<sup>1</sup>
- Integrating Ukraine into the European Family. Europe seeks to ensure that Ukraine is incorporated into the European sphere rather than falling under Russian influence. To

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<sup>1</sup> "Von der Leyen pitches new EU sanctions on Russia's energy and financial sectors" , Euronews, May 16, 2025, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/05/16/von-der-leyen-pitches-new-eu-sanctions-on-russias-energy-and-financial-sectors>

this end, the EU has accelerated Ukraine's accession negotiations and promoted its integration into the EU single market.<sup>2</sup>

- Internal Debates within Europe. Despite shared goals, European countries remain divided on several issues, including whether to deploy troops to Ukraine, whether Ukraine should join NATO, and the scale of increased defense spending.

Similarly, the United Kingdom has expressed concern over U.S.-Russia negotiations. In response, the UK seeks to position itself as a leading force shaping Western responses to the ongoing conflict. London actively coordinates with European partners to strengthen European unity amid U.S. uncertainty, thereby reinforcing security commitments to Ukraine. Regarding U.S.-Russia negotiations, the UK simultaneously welcomes Trump's efforts to promote a ceasefire and urges that any lasting peace must safeguard Ukraine's sovereignty and security.<sup>3</sup>

On March 3, 2025, after consultations with France and Ukraine, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer proposed a four-point Ukraine peace plan:

- Continue providing military assistance to Ukraine while intensifying economic pressure on Russia.
- Ensure that any lasting peace guarantees Ukraine's sovereignty and security, with Ukraine participating in all negotiations.
- Strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities to prevent future invasions in the event of a peace agreement.
- Establish a *coalition of willing* among European countries, including the UK and France, to uphold the agreements and guarantee post-conflict peace.<sup>4</sup>

To implement these measures, the UK and France proposed deploying a “*guarantee force*” composed of 30 countries in Ukraine following a ceasefire, with the expectation that the United States would provide a security umbrella for this European-led force.<sup>5</sup> However, the U.S. and some European states are concerned that European troop deployments in Ukraine could provoke military confrontation between NATO and Russia. U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has explicitly ruled out sending U.S. forces to Ukraine.

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2 “Solidarity with Ukraine”, European Commission, May 2025, <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/attachment/881227/Narrative%20-%20Solidarity%20with%20Ukraine.pdf>

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4 “Starmer announces 'coalition of the willing' to guarantee Ukraine peace”, BBC, March 3, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9vygkzkkvrvo>.

5 “Britain and France working on plans for ‘reassurance force’ to protect Ukraine”, The Guardian, Feb 19, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/19/britain-and-france-working-on-plans-for-reassurance-force-to-protect-ukraine>.

Given the current geopolitical realities, Europe is at a disadvantage in negotiations. Confronted with U.S. “betrayal” and U.S.-Russia “divide-and-conquer” negotiations, Europe seeks to enhance its strategic autonomy through internal coordination and increased defense spending to elevate its role in the peace process. However, without U.S. support, Europe cannot militarily defeat Russia nor provide Ukraine with strong security guarantees. Europe fears that Trump might coerce both Europe and Ukraine into concessions that favor Russia at their expense. Europe is also concerned that Trump could withdraw from mediation entirely, leaving Europe and Ukraine to face Russia alone. Europe faces two primary options:

- **Concede to the U.S. in exchange for Security Guarantees.** If U.S.-Russia negotiations stall, Europe could increase defense spending and make significant trade concessions to the U.S., prompting Washington to restore a hardline stance against Russia, reaffirm security commitments to Europe, and continue military assistance to Ukraine (albeit at levels below those during the Biden administration). This option is relatively favorable to Europe, and current European efforts appear directed along this path. For instance, Europe has exercised restraint amid Trump’s tariff measures and engaged in active trade negotiations. At the NATO summit in June 2025, European countries committed to raising defense spending to 5% of GDP. However, it remains uncertain whether Europe’s concessions will elicit a sufficiently robust U.S. response, as Trump continues to prioritize rapprochement with Russia over a hardline approach.
- **Be Forced to Accept U.S.-Russia Negotiation Outcomes.** If U.S.-Russia negotiations succeed and achieve significant progress, Europe may be compelled to accept the results, incorporating only limited European demands, effectively acquiescing to U.S.-Russia-led agreements. If negotiations falter and Trump withdraws or sharply reduces military support to Ukraine, Europe would have to respond independently to Russia, supporting Ukraine under constrained circumstances. Ultimately, Europe might be forced to accept a ceasefire that favors Russia at the expense of Ukraine.

### (III) Russia: Pursuing a Reconstructed Eurasian Security Order

From the perspective of the international system, the Ukraine crisis is fundamentally the result of geopolitical competition between the U.S.-led NATO alliance and Russia, constituting a “proxy war.” John Mearsheimer, a prominent scholar of offensive realism, has long argued that the root cause of the Ukraine crisis lies in NATO’s eastward expansion. The West has turned Ukraine into a “fortress” on Russia’s border, threatening Russia’s survival and strategic red lines. Historically insecure, Russia perceives NATO expansion with significant anxiety. Consequently, it has resorted to military action to expand its strategic space and “security frontier,” thereby ensuring absolute security.

**Russia’s willingness to participate in negotiations and reach agreements depends on whether its strategic goals are met.** Ending the conflict is not Russia’s ultimate aim; rather, Russia seeks to use the conflict to expand its westward geopolitical space, reshape its power status across Eurasia, achieve a rebalancing of power vis-à-vis the U.S. and Europe, reconstruct the Eurasian security order, attain an international standing equal to that of the U.S.—the architect of NATO’s security system—and



restore Russia's former prestige. While national survival and development security are formally Russia's strategic goals, their essence lies in reconstructing the Eurasian security architecture and restoring Russia's great-power status in the international system.

Russia's ultimate solution to the Ukraine crisis is not a temporary ceasefire. Given its advantages in time, geography, and military capability, Russia enjoys stronger bargaining power, which enables a diversified set of strategic objectives. Public statements indicate at least four key demands:

- **Maintain control over Ukrainian territory.** Russia seeks international recognition of its sovereignty over Crimea and Sevastopol and the four eastern provinces of Ukraine—Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia.
- **Ensure Ukrainian neutrality.** Ukraine must not join any Western military or political alliance opposed to Russia, particularly NATO.
- **Demilitarize Ukraine.** Ukraine's defense capabilities should be reduced, and it should be prohibited from acquiring weapons from the U.S. or Western countries.
- **Lift all Western sanctions and expand U.S.-Russia trade.** On May 4, 2025, President Putin asserted that Russia has sufficient resources to achieve a reasonable solution to the Ukraine crisis without resorting to nuclear weapons, demonstrating strategic resolve and consistency in its negotiating position.

**Russia's comparative advantages allow it multiple strategic options:**

- **Leverage battlefield and negotiation advantages to raise demands.** Beyond territorial control and Ukrainian neutrality, Russia also seeks formal recognition of Russian language status in Ukraine, post-martial-law presidential and parliamentary elections, and increased influence over Ukrainian politics. If demands are rejected, Russia may continue "fighting to negotiate" or "negotiating while fighting."
- **Maintain strategic flexibility under the Istanbul Consensus framework.** Russia may accept limited compromises on non-core objectives, such as allowing UN peacekeepers or non-party monitoring forces to supervise a ceasefire, while preserving Ukraine as a de facto strategic buffer.
- **Delay negotiations if core objectives cannot be met.** Military action can continue to accumulate bargaining chips for future talks. Although both Russia and the U.S. have considered the 2022 Istanbul Consensus as a potential foundation for peace agreements, territorial concessions involve sovereignty issues, making any Ukrainian compromise politically costly domestically. The asymmetry of power and bargaining positions may thus lead to protracted negotiations.

## **(IV) Ukraine: The Dilemma of Establishing Security Guarantees**

From a political realism perspective, Ukraine's predicament stems from its position between great powers. By aligning with the U.S.-led NATO bloc, Ukraine provoked a strong Russian reaction, result-



ing in the outbreak of conflict. The return of Trump to the U.S. presidency introduced a *dramatic shift* in American policy on Ukraine, creating a new turning point. With diminished U.S. support, Ukraine has lost ground on the battlefield and further weakened its bargaining position. Trump, driven by domestic political considerations, prioritized a rapid *ceasefire achievement* regardless of Ukrainian costs, leaving Ukraine with limited strategic options—essentially forced to return to the negotiating table and accept unfavorable redistributions of interests.

On February 28, 2025, despite a tense and unproductive meeting between President Zelensky and Trump at the White House, U.S. military aid to Ukraine was paused on March 5. Zelensky subsequently sent a letter to Trump expressing Ukraine's willingness to resume negotiations to end the war—what can be described as a *choice without alternatives*. However, Russia's demands remain unacceptable to Ukraine. Ukraine seeks inclusion in a U.S.-led European collective security framework to achieve absolute security and ensure its survival and development rights.

**Despite its relative lack of bargaining chips and power, as a direct party to the conflict, Ukraine insists on the phased conclusion of a peace deal, a core demand not to be ignored.** Recently, Russia and Ukraine held two rounds of direct talks in Istanbul. The two sides agreed upon a prisoner swap, but little headway was made towards ending the war and making peace.<sup>6</sup> While actively seeking to talk with Russia for a final peace deal, Ukraine carried out a large-scale operation dubbed “Spider Web” against Russian airbases,<sup>7</sup> which further reduced Russia's reluctance to hold peace talks. Ukraine seeks: (1) **A phased peace agreement.** A 30-day ceasefire is demanded as a precondition;<sup>8</sup> (2) **Security guarantees from the West.** This is essential to alleviate Ukraine's “fear of Russia” and prevent repeated aggression; (3) **Preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty.** Any territorial concessions would create domestic legitimacy issues and high political costs.

This is because any cession of territory would mean that Ukrainian authorities would face the issue of lacking legitimacy, which would be costly politically. Europe supports Ukraine's stance. On May 1, 2025, the U.S. and Ukraine concluded the *Agreement on the Establishment of a United States-Ukraine Reconstruction Investment Fund*, under which the U.S. gained priority rights to develop Ukraine's natural resources, while Ukraine secured a U.S. commitment to establish a reconstruction investment fund in the country.<sup>9</sup> This was a result of Ukraine compromising to the U.S. To Ukraine, European support is an important strategic asset, but U.S. support is the key. The prolonged war of attrition between Russia and Ukraine, however, has been draining Trump's patience. Due to lack of anchors and cards, **facing U.S. pressure for a ceasefire, Ukraine lacks other options but to participate in peace talks, though it refuses to accept a ceasefire “at any price” and an “unjust” peace.**

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6 “Russia and Ukraine agree to prisoner swap but peace talks stall in Istanbul”, Aljazeera, June 3, 2025.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/2/russia-and-ukraine-agree-to-prisoner-swap-but-peace-talks-stall-in-istanbul>.

7 “How Ukraine carried out daring 'Spider Web' attack on Russian bombers”, BBC, June 2, 2025.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq69qnvj6nlo>.

8 “Ukraine sets out demands ahead of Russia negotiations”, ABC News, June 1, 2025.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-02/ukraine-sets-out-demands-ahead-of-russia-negotiations/105364044>.

9 “U.S. and Ukraine sign landmark minerals deal after months of fraught negotiations”, CNN, May 1, 2025.

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/01/world/what-we-know-about-trumps-ukraine-mineral-deal-intl>.

## (V) Global South: Urgency for Peace

The prolonged Ukraine crisis exacerbates global development, security, and governance deficits. Disruptions to global food, energy, and fertilizer trade severely affect the economic recovery of Global South countries. These countries also face geopolitical pressure from the West to take sides.

**Although the Global South does not hold a unified stance on Ukraine, pragmatic national interests have driven them to adopt policies divergent from the West. Global South countries refuse to follow the West to sanction Russia and call for the political settlement of the crisis, ready to play a constructive role as a bridge of peace.**<sup>10</sup> Global South nations seek peace and stability to safeguard national interests and mitigate spillover effects on domestic livelihoods. They emphasize fairness, justice, and root-cause resolution of the Ukraine crisis, generally hoping for a swift ceasefire and de-escalation to prevent further international fragmentation and supply-chain disruption. BRICS countries have played a particularly active role, “from facilitating the prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine to initiating the Group of Friends for Peace on the Ukraine crisis, BRICS countries have demonstrated positive responsibility and played an irreplaceable role.”<sup>11</sup>

As a natural member of the Global South, China has contributed Chinese solutions to the Ukraine crisis since its eruption by insisting on facilitating peace talks and actively sending a special envoy for shuttle diplomacy. As a representative of the Global South, India has also actively played a constructive role as a *mediator* in virtue of its close ties with Russia, Ukraine and European countries, taking a relatively neutral stance. India also met with Russian and Ukrainian leaders respectively, calling for the two sides to resolve the conflict peacefully.<sup>12</sup> India has refused to follow U.S. and European moves to sanction Russia, refused to criticize Russia as an invader and actively provided continuous humanitarian assistance to Ukraine,<sup>13</sup> hoping to help Ukraine cope with the pressure of war.

Although earlier U.S.-led Russia-Ukraine negotiations largely excluded Global South countries, the complexity of the conflict and repeated deadlocks have strained Trump’s strategic patience, creating space for the Global South to further mediate. In the future, China, India, and other Global South nations can leverage BRICS and multilateral platforms to propose new solutions for ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict and contribute to Ukraine’s reconstruction within their capacity.

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10 Roberto Rabel, Global South and western divergence on Russia's war in Ukraine: implications for world order, *International Affairs*, Vol.101, No. 3, May 2025, P.1017.

11 “Wang Yi on Experiences and Unique Advantages of BRICS Countries in Mediation and Conciliation”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P.R.C., May 1, 2025.  
[https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202505/t20250501\\_11614764.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202505/t20250501_11614764.shtml).

12 Himani Pant, and Aman Kumar, “Three Years of Ukraine War: An Overview of the Current Situation and International Peace Mediation Efforts,” *Indian Council of World Affairs*. March 4,2025  
[https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls\\_id=12554&lid=7666](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls_id=12554&lid=7666).

13 Prime Minister presents BHISHM Cubes to Ukraine, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, August 23,2024. [https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38217/Prime\\_Minister\\_presents\\_BHISHM\\_Cubes\\_to\\_Ukraine](https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38217/Prime_Minister_presents_BHISHM_Cubes_to_Ukraine).

# **PART III**

## **Key Divides and Institutional Dilemmas in Rebuilding Peace**

In the context of rebuilding peace in Ukraine, fundamental disagreements persist between Russia and Ukraine, rendering the durability of any ceasefire extremely fragile. Without robust institutional mechanisms to address these critical divides, the path toward a stable and lasting peace in Ukraine will remain exceptionally difficult.

## (I) Divergent Objectives: *Frozen Conflict vs. Lasting Peace*

Both Russia and Ukraine said that they wanted to solve the conflict and make peace, though the two sides have quite different goals on the path to peacebuilding. **Their fundamental differences of opinion over pathways to solving the conflict are essentially the clash of two security logics: Russia attempts to cement geopolitical reality through a *frozen conflict* and mitigate its growing economic distress through partial lifting of sanctions against it, so that it can also make its occupation of parts of east Ukraine permanent. While Ukraine insists on a *lasting peace*, which must be built upon its sovereign and territorial integrity and reliable security guarantees.** The incompatibility of these strategic objectives fosters a cycle of *tactical compromises* and *strategic distrust*, producing structural obstacles that hinder the peace process.

From the Ukrainian perspective, historical experience suggests that even signing a renewed agreement, such as a new *Minsk Agreement*, may simply provide Russia with time to consolidate occupied territories and prepare for subsequent military operations. Only by fully neutralizing the Russian threat—or by establishing institutionalized security guarantees, potentially through NATO integration—can Ukraine secure its national survival.

From the Russian perspective, Ukraine's potential NATO membership constitutes a direct threat to Moscow's security and is one of the underlying causes of the crisis. Military operations, by altering the facts on the ground, partially undermine the legal and political basis for Ukrainian NATO accession—the NATO Charter prohibits the admission of countries with active territorial disputes—and increase NATO's reluctance to engage directly with Russia. This dynamic serve Russia's objective of constraining NATO's expansion to include Ukraine, Georgia, and other post-Soviet states.

Thus, **while both parties have intrinsic incentives to pursue a ceasefire, they differ sharply regarding the meaning of such a ceasefire, the underlying logic of negotiations, and the political arrangements that should follow.** These differences constitute both a strategic divergence and a structural security contradiction, inevitably shaping—and complicating—any proposed negotiation agenda.

## (II) Battlefield Realities and the Fragility of Ceasefire Mechanisms

Generally, ceasefires in armed conflicts are most likely to be agreed upon when the battlefield reaches

a relative equilibrium, with neither side able to alter the front lines or secure substantial gains from continued operations. In such circumstances, the cost of military engagement is maximized while potential benefits are minimized—making negotiation a mutually rational choice when both sides are militarily exhausted.

Now, the struggle between Russia and Ukraine on the battlefield is still complex. **In 2024, Russian troops notably made more progress on the Ukraine battlefield than in 2023.** Throughout the year, Russian troops occupied about 4,168 square kilometers, or 0.69%, of Ukraine territory, an increase of seven folds from 2023. More than half (about 56.5%) of the said Ukraine territory was occupied in the final three months, primarily covering east Donbas (Donetsk, Luhansk), south Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. In 2024, Russian troops captured a few medium-sized cities and towns, including Avdiivka (February), Selydove (October), Vuhledar (October) and Kurakhove (December). In early 2025, they went further and occupied Dzerzhinsk and Velyka Novosilka. In the Donetsk direction, Russian troops have gradually approached Ukrainian troops' core area of defense Krasnoarmeysk (Pokrovsk), threatening Kramatorsk and other places of strategic importance. Despite the lack of massive offensives, Russian troops have been more resilient and held an upper hand in the lengthy war of attrition.

**Ukraine once made breakthroughs militarily, but its overall weakness can hardly change in the short term.** The most representative breakthrough on the side of Ukraine was its surprise attack on Kursk, a Russian oblast, in August 2024. At the peak, Ukrainian troops controlled about 1,300 square kilometers of Russian territory, which was largely recovered by Russian troops following April 2025. Russian troops soon attacked the Sumy region. On June 1, 2025, Ukraine launched "Operation Spider Web" targeting key Russian military assets, hitting Russia's strategic military bases hard with drones and artificial intelligence technologies.

**Under the new circumstances of intelligent war, the Russia-Ukraine battlefield has been mired in a strangling tug of war and saw the massive use of drones and other intelligent combat tools by both sides, along with various forms of "asymmetric warfare." Despite Russia's advantageous position on the battlefield, it suffered heavy casualties. Ukraine suffered heavier losses.**

As for the ceasefire plan pushed by U.S. President Trump, both Russia and Ukraine showed deep distrust. On the Russian side, Putin made it clear during his fifth phone call with Trump on July 3 that Russia would "never concede on the Ukraine issue" and stressed that prerequisites for a ceasefire, including the acknowledgment of its control over Crimea and four oblasts in east Ukraine, Ukraine permanently giving up accession to NATO and the lifting of all sanctions on Russia, had never changed. Ukraine also stated that it could hardly accept Trump's ceasefire plan, over which it disagreed with the U.S. frequently. Zelensky even had a public quarrel with Trump at the White House during his visit to the U.S.

The inertia and huge cost of such a military conflict dictate that any concession by either side on occupied territory or dominance would meet severe obstacles on their domestic political agenda. Also, given the lessons learned from the Ukraine issue over the past decade, both sides would be reasonably skeptical of the effectiveness and durability of a ceasefire mechanism. The U.S. mediation has made little headway. It is questionable if a fragile ceasefire can really ease tensions over Ukraine.

### (III) Institutional Limitations of International Judicial Relief

After the Ukraine crisis erupted, relevant investigations and proceedings were launched at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Procedurally, Ukraine attempted to prevent a wider conflict through provisional measures of the ICJ and other means. Substantively, it launched a debate over the legitimacy of the special military operation under international law and if relevant acts of violence constitute war crimes, among other issues concerning international crimes, with a view to holding Russia and relevant persons accountable legally. However, Ukraine's effort to seek legal relief did not go well because the actions of international judicial organs must be subject to consent from relevant states and are not enforceable.

**First, the ICJ could not try Russia's use of force due to jurisdictional restriction, so Ukraine's hope for "packaging the case" was dashed.** On the international plane, states enjoy sovereign equality. Only with the consent of States Parties can the ICJ exercise its jurisdiction over a case. After a dispute arose between Russia and Ukraine, Russia did not make any statement to recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ pursuant to Article 36(2) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, nor did it have the intention to file the dispute with the ICJ. As a result, by employing the compromissory clause of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG or the "Genocide Convention") attributing compulsory jurisdiction to the ICJ (Article 9), Ukraine requested the Court to adjudge and declare that the Russian Federation's use of force in and against Ukraine beginning on February 24, 2022 and its recognition of the independence of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and the "Luhansk People's Republic" violate Articles I and IV of the Genocide Convention. In this way, Ukraine "packaged" the case filed against Russia's special military operation as a dispute concerning the interpretation and application of the Genocide Convention, thereby founding the ICJ's jurisdiction over this case.<sup>14</sup>

However, this effort of Ukraine failed to get around the jurisdictional restriction of the ICJ. On February 2, 2024, the ICJ delivered its judgment on preliminary objections, deciding that it lacks jurisdiction over the said two litigation requests of Ukraine. The ICJ stated that "it had jurisdiction only if 'the acts of which the applicant complains fall within the provisions of the treaty containing the compromissory clause'". In other words, the ICJ must ascertain that the respondent State has violated a specific obligation incumbent upon it and the alleged violation falls within the scope of the Court's jurisdiction. In the present case, even if the Russian Federation had, in bad faith, alleged that Ukraine committed genocide and taken certain measures against it under such a pretext—which the Respondent contests—this would not in itself constitute a violation of obligations under Articles I and IV of the Convention. Moreover, with regard to Ukraine's argument that the actions undertaken by the Russian Federation on the basis of its false allegation of genocide go beyond the limits of international law and violate the Genocide Convention, the ICJ states that the alleged acts of Russian Federation should be governed by the relevant rules of international law applicable to the recognition of States and the use of force, which go beyond the scope of the Genocide Convention and thereby fall outside the scope of

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<sup>14</sup> *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, Memorial Submitted by Ukraine, 1 July 2022, paras.147-160.



the Court's jurisdiction *ratione materiae* in the present case.<sup>15</sup>

**Second, the provisional measures of the ICJ have limited effect.** To protect some of Ukraine's legitimate rights, the ICJ indicated the following provisional measures on March 16, 2022: the Russian Federation shall immediately suspend the military operations and ensure that it will take no steps in furtherance of these military operations, and both Parties shall refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, these provisional measures indicated in this ICJ order issued three years ago were not complied with in practice. The conflict continued to expand geographically, and parties to the conflict employed increasingly cruel methods, causing growing casualties. Even trickier, as regards the situation that the Court finds no jurisdiction over a dispute after provisional measures indicated by it are not complied with, the ICJ precedents so far have not yet given a clear explanation of the temporal validity of such provisional measures (especially if the judgment declaring no jurisdiction would render the provisional measures void retroactively). Instead, the ICJ has been equivocal on this matter. In *Georgia v. Russia*, after the ICJ decided it had no jurisdiction, it only stated that the order on provisional measures ceased to be operative upon the delivery of the judgment. Though the Court did not mention the temporal validity of the provisional measures, it repeated the following words in this order on provisional measures: "The Parties are under a duty to comply with their obligations under [the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination]."<sup>17</sup> For one thing, the ICJ did not declare that the judgment finding no jurisdiction would render the provisional measures void retroactively since they were indicated, i.e. void *ab initio*. For another, the Court did not explicitly confirm the validity of the provisional measures in this case.<sup>18</sup> In their joint dissenting opinion, Hisashi Owada and other Judges called this scenario an "awkward position."<sup>19</sup> This also reveals, to some extent, why the Court was compelled to use such equivocal words. In *Qatar v. UAE*, the ICJ did not mention the temporal validity of the provisional measures at all. Besides, the uncertain temporal validity of provisional measures would further affect Ukraine's right to relief, making it uncertain if Ukraine could secure relief on the ground that Russia has violated such provisional measures.

**Third, the arrest warrants issued by the ICC were difficult to enforce.** As of the end of 2024, the ICC had issued arrest warrants against six persons in the Situation in Ukraine, including Russian Presi-

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15 *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, Preliminary Objections, Judgment, February 2, 2024, paras.135-147.

16 *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, Provisional Measures, Order of 16 March 2022, I.C.J. Reports 2022, p.230, para.86.

17 *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Georgia v. Russian Federation)*, Provisional Measures, Order of 15 October 2008, I.C.J. Reports 2008, p.398, para.149; *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Georgia v. Russian Federation)*, Preliminary Objections, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2011, p.140, para.186.

18 Li Zhenni, "Autonomy of Provisional Measures or Autonomy of the International Court of Justice?" *Chinese Journal of International Law*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2023, p.47.

19 *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Georgia v. Russian Federation)*, Preliminary Objections, Judgment, Joint Dissenting Opinion of President Owada, Judges Simma, Abraham and Donoghue and Judge ad hoc Gaja, I.C.J. Reports 2011, p.168, para.86.

dent Vladimir Putin and Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova, who were charged with war crimes or crimes against humanity.<sup>20</sup> Lacking an enforcement body (e.g., a police agency), the ICC is unable to execute arrests directly in the territory of its States Parties. Instead, the ICC must request its States Parties to arrest suspects pursuant to Article 59 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Under such a mechanism, the ICC would face multiple obstacles to the arrest of suspects including Putin. For one thing, the ICC lacks the authority to impose the obligation of cooperation regarding the arrest and surrender of suspects to a non-State Party. After an arrest warrant was issued against Putin, he still paid visits to States not Parties to the Rome Statute, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Belarus. For another, though States Parties are obliged to execute the request to arrest and surrender suspects of the ICC under Articles 59 and 98 of the Rome Statute, States Parties in practice often question and disobey such requests on political or legal grounds. For example, Mongolia did not comply with the request from the ICC to arrest and surrender Putin upon receiving the letter. Rather, it explained why it failed to execute this request to the ICC after Putin ended his visit to the country. First, as a State not Party to the Rome Statute, Russia has not waived the immunity of its Head of State under Article 27, so under customary international law, Putin, as incumbent Russian President, is entitled to absolute immunity from criminal jurisdiction. Second, though the ICC does have arrested Heads of State and other government officials in situations involving non-States Parties, what is different is that this Situation was not initiated by a referral to the Prosecutor by the UN Security Council, and the Security Council did not adopt any resolution requiring States to fully cooperate with the ICC regarding this Situation pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter either. Therefore, Mongolia was not obliged to arrest Putin. Given this, Mongolia pointed out that if it had accepted the request of the ICC to arrest and surrender Putin, it would have violated its pre-existing legal obligations concerning the immunity of State officials from criminal jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup> In other cases, the ICC has met the similar conundrum when requesting cooperation in the arrest of Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir, the then President of Sudan<sup>22</sup> and in the surrender of Libya's former leader Saif Al-Islam

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20 "Situation in Ukraine: ICC Judges Issue Arrest Warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova," International Criminal Court, March 17, 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-is-sue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and>; "Situation in Ukraine: ICC Judges Issue Arrest Warrants against Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash and Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov," International Criminal Court, March 5, 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-sergei-ivanovich-kobylash-and>; "Situation in Ukraine: ICC Judges Issue Arrest Warrants against Sergei Kuzhugetovich Shoigu and Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov," International Criminal Court, June 25, 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-sergei-kuzhugetovich-shoigu-and>.

21 Pre-Trial Chamber II, *Situation in Ukraine*, Finding under Article 87(7) of the Rome Statute on the Non-Compliance by Mongolia with the Request by the Court to Cooperate in the Arrest and Surrender of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Referral to the Assembly of States Parties, October 24, 2024, ICC-01/22-90, paras.6, 18.

22 Pre-Trial Chamber II, *Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir*, Decision on the Non-compliance of the Republic of Chad with the Cooperation Requests Issued by the Court Regarding the Arrest and Surrender of Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir, March 26, 2013, ICC-02/05-01/09-151; Pre-Trial Chamber II, *Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir*, Decision on the Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Regarding Omar Al Bashir's Arrest and Surrender to the Court, April 9, 2014, ICC-02/05-01/09-195; Pre-Trial Chamber II, *Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir*, Decision on the Non-Compliance by the Republic of Djibouti with the Request to Arrest and Surrender Omar Al-Bashir to the Court and Referring the Matter to the United Nations Security Council and the Assembly of



Gaddafi.<sup>23</sup>

International judicial organs are special in nature compared with domestic courts, so they are subject to certain restrictions when performing their functions. For one thing, the fact that an international judicial organ is established upon state consent dictates that it is not an organ of power above states with any supranational, monopolistic enforcement power. For another, an international judicial organ possesses the dual identity of an international organ and a judicial organ.<sup>24</sup> This means that, when performing its functions, balance must be made among the functionality of the Court as an international organ, the maintenance of international peace and security and the maintenance of the integrity of judicial proceedings.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, all international disputes are in one sense judicial and in another sense political. This requires that judges resolve disputes with international law and political wisdom,<sup>26</sup> which undoubtedly adds to the complexity of work of international judicial organs.

#### (IV) Diverging Visions of *European Security and Eurasian Security Architecture*

**On the surface, the Ukraine crisis appears as a confrontation between Russia and Ukraine over territorial sovereignty and national identity. In reality, it reflects a deeper divergence between Europe and Russia regarding the post–Cold War security architecture.** The United States and Europe have sought to construct a “de-Russified” regional security system through NATO’s eastward expansion, whereas Russia aims to establish a broader Euro-Asian security framework that affords Moscow greater influence across the continent.

**Overall, NATO’s continuous eastward expansion following the end of the Cold War is one of the triggers of structural contradictions in Ukraine.** The military alliance advanced its frontier to 300 kilometers away from the Russian border over time, from the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO in 1999 to the inclusion of three Balkan states into NATO in 2004. On the eve of the 2014 Ukraine crisis, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen publicly stated that

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the State Parties to the Rome Statute, July 11, 2016, ICC-02/05-01/09-266; Pre-Trial Chamber II, *Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir*, Decision on the Non-Compliance by the Republic of Uganda with the Request to Arrest and Surrender Omar Al-Bashir to the Court and Referring the Matter to the United Nations Security Council and the Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute, July 11, 2016, ICC-02/05-01/09-267; Appeals Chamber, *Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir*, Judgment in the Jordan Referral re Al-Bashir Appeal, May 6, 2019, ICC-02/05-01/09-397-Corr.

23 Pre-Trial Chamber I, *Prosecutor v. Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi*, Decision on the Non-Compliance by Libya with Requests for Cooperation by the Court and Referring the Matter to the United Nations Security Council, December 10, 2014, ICC-01/11-01/11-577, para.4.

24 Alain Pellet, “Strengthening the Role of the International Court of Justice as the Principal Judicial Organ of the United Nations,” *The Law and Practice of International Courts and Tribunals*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2004, pp.161-169.

25 Li Zhenni, “Autonomy of Provisional Measures or Autonomy of the International Court of Justice?” *Chinese Journal of International Law*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2023, p.65.

26 Alain Pellet, “Strengthening the Role of the International Court of Justice as the Principal Judicial Organ of the United Nations,” *The Law and Practice of International Courts and Tribunals*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2004, p.160; “Presentation by Sir Robert Jennings,” in Connie Peck and Roy S. Lee, eds., *Increasing the Effectiveness of the International Court of Justice: Proceedings of the ICJ/UNITAR Colloquium to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Court*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1997, pp.78-79; Shabtai Rosenne, *The International Court of Justice: An Essay in Political and Legal Theory*, Leyden : A. W. Sijthoff, 1957, p.56.

"NATO's door is always open," a strategic pressure that directly touched Russia's security red line. Meanwhile, the EU intensified its economic penetration in Ukraine through the *Eastern Partnership Program*. The political turmoil caused by negotiations over the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement in 2013 triggered the ensuing Ukraine crisis. In this process, economic integration went hand in hand with political transformation. After the Yanukovych regime was overthrown by the Euromaidan movement, the strategic intent of gradually including Ukraine in the Western system became a clear reality. This, to Russia, amounted to driving a wedge into the heart of its traditional sphere of influence, posing a major threat to its own security.

To cope with the strategic pressure from NATO's further eastward expansion, Russia opted for a hard-line approach to preventing former USSR states from acceding to NATO while hedging the pressure by establishing a broader Eurasian security framework. By doing so, Russia aimed to build a new security framework on the Eurasian continent, within which Russia will continue to play a key role and hedge and relieve the strategic pressure from beyond the region. Guided by the concept of "Greater Eurasia", Russia kept facilitating the development of supporting mechanisms, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Union State of Russia and Belarus ("Union State"). It also leveraged other security conferences and mechanisms to keep promoting the idea of a new Eurasian security framework and boost its own economic and security influence in the Eurasian sphere while advocating relevant concepts.

To some extent, **the Ukraine crisis represents the collision between Western countries and Russia over regional security concepts and a clash of ideas between the democratic peace theory pursued by Europe and the multipolar world advocated by Russia.** Under the current circumstances, however, European countries cannot shape a de-Russified European security landscape by defeating Russia on the battlefield. Similarly, Russia's Eurasian security framework can hardly be accepted by European countries. The persistent conflict between competing security doctrines, coupled with the absence of effective dialogue mechanisms, continues to fuel the protraction of the Ukraine crisis. **Even if a ceasefire is achieved, the underlying ideological and strategic confrontation remains unresolved, leaving the root causes of the conflict intact.**

# **PART IV**

## **Exploring a New Paradigm of Common Security: China's Perspective**

The 2022 Ukraine crisis represents the largest-scale geopolitical conflict in Europe since the end of the Cold War. While the battlefield is located within Europe, its repercussions extend far beyond the regional context. Although the crisis has entered a *fight-and-talk* phase, stakeholders maintain differing understandings of the form, content, and preconditions for negotiation. Former U.S. President Donald Trump prioritized a *rapid ceasefire*, Russia emphasized addressing root causes, Ukraine insisted on robust security guarantees, and the European Union focused on achieving a just and lasting peace. As negotiations deepen, the United States faces both a deficit of patience for *facilitating a ceasefire* and willingness to preserve peace; Russia must maintain a delicate balance between *pressuring through combat and holding the U.S. in check*; Ukraine rejects a cost-free peace and seeks time for Europe's *coalition of the willing*; and Europe must navigate gaps between political consensus and the resilience required for collective action. Given the substantial divergences across issues including territorial sovereignty, security guarantees, ceasefire monitoring, peacekeeping mechanisms, and post-war reparations and reconstruction, the negotiation process and its externalities remain volatile, accelerating shifts in both international and regional order.

China is neither the initiator nor a party to the Ukraine crisis. It has never provided lethal weapons to any party to the conflict. Nonetheless, China has been a passive victim of this crisis as it is one of the key players in global economic, trade, logistics, energy and food cooperation. Misperceptions of China's role, accompanied by narratives accusing it of *shirking responsibility, colluding or tolerating, or profiting from the conflict* have persisted. In July 2024, NATO's *Washington Summit Declaration* even falsely labeled China as a *decisive enabler* of the Ukraine crisis, attempting to assign responsibility for the protracted conflict. Disinformation, political manipulation, and groundless accusations have severely strained China-Europe relations, reinforcing perceptions among some European states that China is a *systemic rival* and amplifying grievances toward Beijing.

In fact, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a responsible major country, China has never been an onlooker to the Ukraine crisis. The day after the outbreak of the crisis, China indicated its basic position that "China supports and encourages all diplomatic efforts conducive to a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis."<sup>27</sup> President Xi Jinping put forward four points about what must be done: the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected; the purposes and principles of the UN Charter observed; the legitimate security concerns of all countries given due regard, and all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis supported. The Chinese government released the position paper *China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*.<sup>28</sup> The special representative of the Chinese government on Eurasian affairs conducted four rounds of shuttle diplomacy visiting Russia, Ukraine, European countries and Global South countries and coordinating the positions of relevant parties. In September 2024, China and Brazil formed the Group of Friends for Peace together with some GS countries to create the ambience and conditions for the political settlement of the crisis. Relevant parties including Russia and Ukraine recognize the

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27 "Wang Yi Expounds China's Five-Point Position on the Current Ukraine Issue", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P.R.C., February 6, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/oz\\_678770/1206\\_679110/xgxw\\_679116/202202/t20220226\\_10645790.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/xgxw_679116/202202/t20220226_10645790.shtml).

28 The Position includes twelve points: 1) respecting the sovereignty of all countries; 2) abandoning the Cold War mentality; 3) ceasing hostilities; 4) resuming peace talks; 5) resolving the humanitarian crisis; 6) protecting civilians and prisoners of war (POWs); 7) keeping nuclear power plants safe; 8) reducing strategic risks; 9) facilitating grain exports; 10) stopping unilateral sanctions; 11) keeping industrial and supply chains stable; 12) promoting post-conflict reconstruction.

balanced, constructive nature of China's proposal. In a joint statement, the Russian side welcomes China's willingness to play a positive role in the political and diplomatic settlement of the Ukraine crisis and welcomes the constructive proposals set forth in China's Position paper.<sup>29</sup> Even if it is reported that the U.S. is likely to legally recognize Crimea as Russian territory,<sup>30</sup> China's commitment to Ukraine's sovereign and territorial integrity has not changed—and there is no reason to believe that it will change.

As Karl von Clausewitz writes in his treatise *On War*, “War is the continuation of politics by other means,” yet politics also constitutes the endpoint of war. The Ukraine crisis not only highlights the intensification of strategic contradictions among states but also exposes structural weaknesses in existing regional security order and governance systems.

As early as in 2014, at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), President Xi Jinping called for a concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in the Asia-Pacific region. At the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries held in April 2025, President Xi proposed the “model of security for Asia that features sharing weal and woe, seeking common ground while shelving differences, and prioritizing dialogue and consultation,”<sup>31</sup> charting out a practical approach to safeguarding Asian security.

**Asian states' experience in eschewing Cold War-era zero-sum thinking and security bloc mentality, and in achieving cooperative security through dialogue and consultation, offers lessons that can be applied to the Ukraine crisis. Such experience provides a reference for initiating a multi-layered, stepwise political settlement process, facilitating innovative pathways to reconcile key differences, and exploring a regional security architecture grounded in a consciousness of security communities. This model emphasizes mutual interdependence, coordinated governance, institutional arrangements, and shared responsibility, offering a blueprint for building a cooperative regional security community.**

## (I) Exploring a Multi-Layered, Stepwise Political Process

**1. Concurrent Promotion of Temporary Ceasefires and Political Negotiations.** It is critical to advance temporary ceasefires in tandem with political negotiations. Although the Trump adminis-

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29 “President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin Sign Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era and Stress Settling the Ukraine Crisis Through Dialogue” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P.R.C., March 22, 2023, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/oz\\_678770/1206\\_679110/xgxw\\_679116/202303/t20230322\\_11046079.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/xgxw_679116/202303/t20230322_11046079.shtml).

30 “Trump administration ready to recognize Russian control of Crimea as part of framework to end Ukraine war, source says”, CNN, April 19, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/04/19/europe/trump-administration-crimea-peace-talks-intl>

31 “Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech at the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries Held in Beijing”, The State Council, P.R.C., April 9, 2025, [https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202504/content\\_7017717.htm?comments=1](https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202504/content_7017717.htm?comments=1)

tration has made efforts to promote a ceasefire and the resumption of talks, no substantive progress has been achieved to date. U.S. Secretary of State Rubio emphasized that both Russia and Ukraine must demonstrate compromise and good faith in negotiations; otherwise, U.S. mediation efforts could be scaled back. Both Moscow and Kyiv have expressed a willingness to initiate negotiations without preconditions, experimenting with policy measures such as the “30-hour Easter ceasefire,” the “72-hour Victory Day ceasefire,” and the “30-day comprehensive ceasefire.”

Since May 16, the parties have conducted two rounds of direct talks in Turkey, clarifying negotiation levels and formats, exchanging draft memoranda on ceasefire and peace, and reaching limited consensus on issues such as prisoner exchanges. In the face of Trump’s threat to *walk away* if ceasefire negotiations fail to progress, neither Russia nor Ukraine has been willing to reject or suspend talks, seeking to avoid being labeled as the *spoiler* in negotiations and thereby facing U.S. pressure unilaterally. However, significant divergences remain regarding the modalities and conditions of ceasefires. Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and Europe continue to hold differing expectations for a peace plan. At present, a pattern is gradually emerging that resembles a *Russia-U.S. vs. Ukraine-Europe* alignment of opposing positions. (See Table 1).

**Table 1: A comparison of peace proposals**

	U.S. proposal	Russian proposal	Ukrainian (European) proposal
<b>Territorial issues</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To legally recognize Crimea as Russian territory</li> <li>2. To recognize Russia’s partial control over Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Russian claims of Crimea already settled and beyond the scope of talks</li> <li>2. Ukrainian troops to withdraw from Russia-occupied four oblasts (or at least Donbas) and Russia to complete de facto control</li> <li>3. To set up “buffer zones” (demilitarized) in border areas, including Bryansk, Belgorod and Kursk</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refuse to legally give up any part of territory</li> <li>2. Refuse to recognize Russian control over Ukrainian territory and reserve the right to reclaim such territory by non-military means</li> <li>3. To shelve territorial issues and secure a ceasefire first</li> </ol>
<b>Security guarantees</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Europe and other friendly countries to give Ukraine “strong security guarantees”</li> <li>2. Ukraine not to accede to NATO</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ukraine to go back to a neutral status</li> <li>2. NATO to pledge in writing to stop expanding eastward (give up Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova)</li> <li>3. Reject Europe’s proposal to station troops or deploy weapons in Ukraine</li> <li>4. To limit the size and equipment of Ukrainian troops</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To further strengthen the military and the defense sector</li> <li>2. Europe to send military personnel to the non-contact line in the form of a “coalition of the willing”</li> <li>3. To offer a security deal similar to NATO’s Article 5</li> </ol>
<b>Economic measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To lift the sanctions imposed on Russia since 2014</li> <li>2. To return to the Russian market</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To lift the sanctions imposed on Russia since 2014</li> <li>2. U.S. companies to return to the Russian market</li> </ol>	To retain sanctions on Russia for now and phase out such sanctions following a ceasefire and peace, subject to resumption in the event of a breach
<b>Post-war reconstruction</b>	To provide financial compensation to Ukraine, with sources identified	No accountability and no compensation	To hand over Russia’s frozen assets overseas to Ukraine for reconstruction purposes



Regardless of whether ceasefires are temporary or phased, two major obstacles between Russia and Ukraine must first be addressed. **The first is bridging the trust deficit and maintaining open channels of communication.** Currently, both sides assess the implementation of ceasefires primarily through the lens of military gain, making either party reluctant to cooperate if it perceives that a ceasefire could undermine battlefield advantages. Ukraine fears that Russia could redeploy mechanized units along the contact line during a ceasefire, while Russia worries that Ukraine could use the ceasefire to consolidate defenses, accept and deploy external military assistance, and strengthen its positions. Establishing a baseline of trust requires ensuring that the direct negotiation format resumed in Turkey is maintained and, crucially, producing a jointly agreed written document outlining the conditions and procedures for ceasefires and negotiations. **The second obstacle concerns the supervision and enforcement of temporary ceasefires.** It is necessary to clearly define the supervising and guaranteeing parties, establish comprehensive oversight mechanisms, deploy the appropriate technical and personnel resources, and implement enforceable sanctions for violations.

**Second, coordinating a negotiation process acceptable to all parties.** Negotiations represent the starting point for a political resolution of the Ukraine crisis. While ceasefires along the military contact line may be achievable, several critical issues remain unresolved, including territorial sovereignty, the scope and function of demilitarized zones, Ukraine's NATO aspirations, and the design of peacekeeping and broader security architectures. Beyond these substantive disputes, parties differ over negotiation formats and focal points. The Trump administration abandoned a multilateral peace process in favor of a dual-track approach, seeking separate U.S.-Russia and U.S.-Ukraine negotiations to incrementally force parties to accept an American framework. Russia emphasizes that negotiations must address the root causes of the Ukraine crisis, including restructuring regional security frameworks and advancing substantive U.S.-Russia relations.

Ukraine insists on full, equal participation in negotiations and refuses to accept any “offers” predicated solely on U.S.-Russia agreements, placing verifiable and enforceable security guarantees from major powers—particularly NATO states—at the center of its negotiating priorities. Europe, meanwhile, emphasizes its essential role in negotiations and its responsibility to ensure a just and lasting peace, not merely temporary ceasefires. Against this backdrop, **parties must find a shared approach to synchronizing or sequencing negotiations on ceasefire oversight, peacekeeping, security guarantees, and post-conflict arrangements while clearly delineating their respective roles as negotiators, guarantors, or implementers.**

**Third, diversifying negotiation tiers and pathways.** The long road from localized (temporary) ceasefires to demilitarized zones, the establishment of monitoring mechanisms, ceasefire agreements, security guarantees, and ultimately durable peace requires multilayered engagement. Building on the restoration of direct Russia-Ukraine negotiations, multilateral platforms such as the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) should be leveraged, and shuttle diplomacy—including engagement by Global South actors—should continue on an equal basis to explore a range of potential peace frameworks, avoiding monopolization of the agenda by any single state. Parties should also be encouraged to decouple negotiation topics, distinguishing military and strategic issues related to battlefield operations and security guarantees from functional issues such as the restoration of Black Sea shipping routes, nuclear facility security, refugee repatriation, and post-conflict reconstruction, thereby gradually constructing a stepwise political resolution framework.



**Fourth, reinforcing the necessity of a comprehensive package approach.** Unlike security achieved through zero-sum competition or confrontation, a concept of cooperative security must rest on dialogue and negotiation to resolve systemic security dilemmas. On one hand, Russia and NATO need to restore or develop alternative regular dialogue mechanisms, particularly through the revival of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Open Skies Treaty, or by re-engaging in related negotiations, in order to enhance military transparency, build trust, and mitigate risks associated with forward deployments and deterrence. On the other hand, Russia and the United States need to engage in broader dialogue on global strategic stability and nuclear arms control, encompassing a wider set of security guarantees.

## **(II) Balancing Principle and Innovation to Bridge Position Gaps**

**First, uphold principles regarding sovereignty and territorial integrity.** Resolving differences over Ukraine's sovereign and territorial integrity is a prerequisite for a possible ceasefire and a cornerstone of moving from ceasefire to peace. Relevant parties should, following the principles and purposes under the UN Charter, **operationally differentiate de-jure recognition from de-facto recognition of territorial claims and identify temporary and permanent differences of clauses governing sovereign and territorial claims in the deal.** In light of territorial changes over time in 2014 and 2022 Ukraine crises, **identify the principle of resolving differences through political negotiation, not military means, so as to ensure the right of the Parties to include territorial integrity in the reservation clause,** avoiding negative precedent for territorial disputes worldwide.

**Second, explore innovative approaches to ceasefire monitoring and peacekeeping.** As the longest-running, highest-casualty, and most geographically extensive postwar conflict in Europe, the Ukraine crisis places unprecedented pressure on ceasefire monitoring and peacekeeping operations. Traditional UN Security Council-mandated, major-power-led peacekeeping models are difficult to achieve in terms of consent from the parties and the scale of personnel required for over a thousand kilometers of contact line.

On the one hand, coordination of ceasefire monitoring and peacekeeping under the UN framework should be maintained, with clear delineation of operational responsibilities and geographic scope. **Innovative approaches beyond direct troop deployments should be explored, including satellite surveillance, fixed and mobile unmanned monitoring platforms, and other technological monitoring tools to reduce the risk of ceasefire violations triggering renewed conflict. Such approach would also broaden the scope for engagement by non-belligerent stakeholders, including China,** which strikes a balance between ensuring credible oversight and reducing the likelihood of escalation, offering a pragmatic pathway for responsible international participation. On the other hand, emergency consultation and enforcement mechanisms should be clearly defined with the consent of the parties, and participation by capable and willing states should be encouraged.

**Third, initiate discussions on post-conflict arrangements and reconstruction at the appropriate stage.** Postwar arrangements and reconstruction constitute a critical component of

the political resolution process. **The post-conflict reconstruction agenda can be incorporated into subsequent negotiations after a ceasefire, provided that principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected.** Third-party states, including China, could participate in infrastructure restoration and civilian livelihood projects without attaching political preconditions, helping to restore cross-border energy corridors, agricultural export routes, and other cooperative channels, thereby laying tangible foundations for a post-crisis peace order.

### (III) Establishing Combined Soft Security and Hard Security Mechanisms

Determining security guarantees represents the most significant divergence among parties beyond territorial and sovereignty disputes. **From Russia's perspective,** Ukraine must remain neutral, cannot join NATO, and should not host NATO member states as long-term peacekeeping forces. Russia also opposes continued Western military assistance to Ukraine after a ceasefire and seeks limitations on the size of Ukrainian forces. These demands reflect Russia's distinct security outlook, which emphasizes, beyond internationally recognized sovereignty and territorial integrity, **the concept of a geostrategically defined strategic security space.** **NATO's continued eastward expansion generates profound insecurity in this framework, prompting Russia to respond with forceful military measures.**

**From Ukraine's perspective,** in the absence of immediate NATO membership or clear assurances, the presence of European NATO members in some form on Ukrainian territory, coupled with long-term, comprehensive support from the U.S. and Europe, constitutes essential security guarantees. The signing of the U.S.-Ukraine Reconstruction Investment Fund Agreement represents a compromise satisfying domestic political requirements while offering a form of "soft" security assurance. U.S. military aid is integrated into the fund as *commercially structured support*, backed by long-term mineral revenue, avoiding additional security obligations. While Ukraine's most desired security guarantees are not explicitly codified, the arrangement binds the United States as a *stakeholder*, providing incentives to exert pressure on Russia, maintain intelligence sharing, ensure continued aid, and leverage U.S. corporate presence in Ukraine as an indirect deterrent against future aggression.

**Building a new paradigm for common security should take into consideration Russia's special awareness of the strategic security space and cannot ignore security guarantees concerning Ukraine's survival in the future.** Therefore, relevant parties, including Russia, Ukraine, the U.S. and Europe, should be driven to plan institutional arrangements, including *Security guarantees and Security assurances*, under a defense-first approach based on the basic principle of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

**Security guarantees primarily target Ukraine.** Efforts can be made to explore the development of Ukraine's *defense resilience* by a European *coalition of the willing* under the guidance of non-combatants and technical officers, to help Ukraine restore its defense industry in west Ukraine far away from the contact line, and to develop medium to long-term assistance plans that limit the deployment and use of weapons. In the meantime, work should be done to accelerate the accession of Ukraine to the EU,

turning political, economic and interest ties with the EU into *soft* security guarantees for Ukraine.

**Security assurances primarily target Russia.** Relevant parties can discuss security assurances involving military mutual trust and transparency, have talks over the creation of *demilitarized zones* and *security adjacent areas* in east Ukraine and Russia-Ukraine border areas, and strictly limit the deployment of assault weapons in relevant areas. Such efforts can avoid being trapped in the cul-de-sac of Ukraine's full *demilitarization*. Moreover, relevant parties can, based on the Russia-U.S. and Russia-NATO draft treaties on security guarantees developed at the end of 2021, push for a series of talks over restoring strategic stability and the INF Treaty, factoring in Russia's urgent demand for the so-called "strategic security space."

#### (IV) Reshaping a Regional Security Framework based on a *Sense of Community*

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. Today, the Yalta system and a bipolar system, once integral parts of the post-WWII international order, have long ended. Mechanisms formed during the Cold War, including the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon/CMEA), are also gone. World multi-polarization and economic globalization have become the main feature of the evolving international order since the end of the Cold War.

At the same time, the world faces a concentrated outbreak of **peace, development, security, and governance deficits**, which has generated deep-seated concerns regarding the authority of the United Nations, the effectiveness of international law, and the utility of multilateralism. In this context, **the political resolution of the Ukraine crisis cannot rely solely on temporary ceasefire agreements or military deterrence. It must also take into account the transformations and evolving security concepts of relevant states.** The ability to reconstruct a European security architecture that balances the legitimate concerns and interests of all stakeholders is central to achieving **sustainable and durable peace.**

**The creation of a new paradigm of common security requires that all parties go back to redesign the regional security structure, pull off the renewal of concept from *exclusive security to common security*, and shift institutional arrangements from pursuing *absolute security to exploring relative security*, ultimately moving toward a regional security framework based on a *sense of community*.**

On the one hand, the new paradigm again makes the principle of "indivisibility of security" contained in a few important documents, including the *Helsinki Final Act of 1975*, the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990*, the *NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997* and the *Charter for European Security of 1999*, a cornerstone of building a regional security framework, and emphasizes that the security of a country should not be ensured at the expense of another country. In September 2023, a political declaration published by the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations, initiated and founded by UN member states, also included the core ideas of global security initiatives, including the principle of indivisibility of security. On the other, when pursuing its own security, a country should take into account the reasonable security concerns of relevant parties and meet security needs through

absorption, embedding and cooperation. Relevant parties should, with an eye on inter-linked security interests of countries, advocate a balanced, effective and sustainable security framework built through absorption and embedding, so as to avoid broader insecurity caused by “exclusive security.”

Since the end of the Cold War, peace and development have been dominant global themes. Yet, when political and economic orders become unbalanced, some states have resorted to military means to protect their interests. Achieving consensus on the **underlying drivers of crises** and building institutional mechanisms to manage them is critical. Moreover, some states are undertaking a process of *retransformation*—moving from learning primarily from Western models toward developing autonomous approaches—which raises the question of whether domestic institutional reforms could trigger uncontrolled external conflict, a challenge that must be addressed.

**The future of European security cannot rely on the uncertainties of U.S. policy swings nor on the anxieties of *ReArm Europe* driven by fear of renewed conflict. The only sustainable path is to break the vicious cycle of arms buildup—deterrence confrontation—increasing insecurity, engaging Russia—Europe’s largest neighbor—in institutionalized dialogue addressing legitimate mutual concerns, and reconstructing a balanced, effective, and sustainable European security framework grounded in a post-crisis perspective and a *sense of community*.**

After four years of conflict, **there are no true winners** in Ukraine. The tens of thousands killed on the battlefield, millions of displaced persons, and cities reduced to ruins attest to the human cost of the crisis. Stakeholders must confront the underlying **structural security dilemmas in Europe**, move beyond Cold War-era winner-loser mentalities, adhere to the principles of the UN Charter, and reaffirm respect for **sovereignty, territorial integrity, peaceful dispute resolution, and non-intervention**. Redefining the meaning and scope of *indivisible security*, balancing NATO’s continued relevance with the externalities of its *open-door* policy, and transcending zero-sum thinking are essential steps toward crafting **binding agreements that are fair, enduring and acceptable to all sides**.

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