

# Policy Report



## The Resurrection of Lazarus, or the Second Youth of NATO: The Consequences of the Russian Invasion on NATO

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On February 24, 2022, when most experts believed that a significant but limited Russian attack on Eastern Ukraine was likely – at least in terms of war aims – the Russian government launched an invasion of Ukraine with the aim of taking Kyiv and installing a client regime. This Russian decision caused a number of upheavals in Europe and in the transatlantic community (e.g., massive increase in defence budgets; referendum on the Danish opt-out, speech of the German Chancellor in the Bundestag on February 28, creation of new international NATO battalions in Eastern Europe, etc.). We are thus witnessing changes/evolution within the European and transatlantic structures, particularly within the EU and NATO. The objective of this policy report is hence to analyze more precisely the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the transatlantic security architecture. Although many [tweets](#) on the subject underline the irony of the situation and the obvious failure of the Russian president to weaken or even dislocate NATO, it remains true that Vladimir Putin has resurrected NATO, and this for several years, if not at least one or two decades. One could almost speak of a miracle here, since the situation was so bleak, even desperate, in recent years, especially under the Trump administration.

At the beginning of the 2010s, deeply involved in Afghanistan, then partially in Libya, NATO was looking for a new *raison d'être*, as the Cold War and the end of the USSR were almost twenty years old. The explicit [conquest](#) of Crimea and the implicit conquest (through the establishment of pro-Russian secessionist movements) of a portion of the Donbass regions by Russia in 2014, however, offered a new impetus and breath of fresh air to NATO, particularly following the decisions taken at the [Wales Summit](#). In addition to doubling the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF), a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) comprising 5,000 troops that can be deployed in two to five days was created. In addition, it was decided to deploy four battalion-level multinational battle groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland on a rotating basis through the [NATO Enhanced Forward Presence](#). But Donald Trump's inauguration into office ushered in four years of turmoil for the Alliance, with the Alliance fearing that its [70th anniversary](#) in 2019 would turn into its funeral. It must also be recognized that the [actions](#) of Erdogan's Turkey during this period (in Syria against the Kurds, allies of the international coalition against Daesh; against the EU, using migrants as a pressure tool; and against Greece in the Mediterranean) contributed equally to NATO's acute state of strategic and political decay, to the point that French President Macron [spoke](#) provocatively of its brain death. If the election of Biden gave glimmers of hope, these were quickly obscured by the Afghan [debacle](#) and the surprise announcement of [AUKUS](#) in the summer of 2021.

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In short, as NATO was sinking, an "unexpected saviour" appeared, Russian President Vladimir Putin. This resurrection is manifested in terms of cohesion, but also on certain issues such as the amount of defence budgets or the deployment of troops on the eastern flank of the Alliance.

Although tensions remain, the Russian invasion succeeded in creating a strong understanding and coordination between the Allies, even contributing to the emergence of consensus (still precarious, however) on the internal political scenes of the member states (Part I). Several measures to strengthen NATO's capabilities were thus quickly decided and implemented (Part II), such as increases in the defence budgets of several countries and the deployment of new troops in Eastern Europe. Moreover, we are witnessing the definitive settlement of the question of the 2% of GDP to be invested in defence: this amount can no longer be contested, at least not without significant political risks for its opponents. The developments at work will therefore bring about possible changes within NATO, more precisely with regard to its military hierarchy and the different positions that make it up (Part III). This does not, however, negate certain risks (Part III) in the short and medium term for the organization, in particular in the event of a prolonged conflict. Since the invasion also has repercussions for the EU and China, given the Alliance's links with the former and its concerns about the latter, although the focus is on NATO, this report will deal with these two aspects in a final part (Part IV).

NATO's return to strength is undeniable, including vis-à-vis other organizations such as the European Union. It is part of a new context created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that of a new "Cold War" rather than a Third World War. Certainly, several characteristics differ between this new "Cold War" and the political and international context that prevailed between 1949 and 1989. Nevertheless, it remains true that there is once again a power across the Arctic and east of Europe that clearly represents a threat to the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of its immediate neighbours.

## I. A Newfound Cohesion

Although there have been a few [false notes](#) since February 24, it is quite surprising to see how harmonious the orchestra played by the members of the Alliance is, especially when one analyzes the behaviour of certain countries such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Turkey. Even if certain rivalries remain, most of the major countries – especially those that have distinguished themselves in recent years by controversial or even questionable actions or measures – are each taking their share of responsibility and are succeeding for the moment in acting in concert (or at least in giving this impression for the most part). This newfound cohesion is also present in the national political scenes of the member states. In more than one country, the political positions of certain anti-NATO, anti-American or pro-Russian political parties have been greatly attenuated. Other political movements that were not previously suspected of being sympathetic to the EU and NATO are tending to take public positions in favour of them.

### *A Faded American Leadership*

While the debacle in Afghanistan and the AUKUS affair revealed an absence of leadership on the part of the United States and the new Biden administration, the Russian-Ukrainian war constitutes in this respect a reactivation of the latter within the transatlantic community. Although one cannot speak of [Leading from Behind](#), the management by the United States and the strong roles it is leaving in this crisis to some of its allies – in particular the United Kingdom, France, and Poland – is quite singular. While Washington naturally remains the *primus inter pares* within the Alliance, its current management favours

the prominence of London, Paris, and Warsaw on this issue, and in so doing succeeds in increasing the effects of drive and cohesion within the Alliance.

While the United States has been pursuing its [strategy of pivoting](#) towards the Pacific for more than ten years, the Russian invasion has clearly [suspended](#) this movement, with troops once again being sent to Europe. Over the past month, several American [statements](#) have helped to reaffirm the American commitment to the defence of Europe in the face of the threat posed by Moscow. For its part, contrary to its [long-standing reputation](#) as a reluctant ally within NATO, Paris has taken several [measures](#) in favour of the Alliance. Taking advantage of the French presidency of the Council of the European Union, President Macron has taken on the [role of coordinating](#) the Europeans with the Ukrainian president, but also, at Zelensky's request, a contact role with the Russian president. Although some [voices](#) continue to criticize the French position, although still advocating for European strategic autonomy, Paris has so far managed to avoid distinguishing itself negatively from its allies, while assuming a leadership role on a European scale in partnership with other capitals. However, this role is somewhat neglected in the final phase of the campaign for the French presidential election. Yet, it is likely to become stronger again after the election (if Emmanuel Macron is re-elected). At the same time, the war in Ukraine offers [Boris Johnson](#) the opportunity to put forward London's leadership on an issue it has championed since 2014. The [agreement](#) between the UK, Poland and Ukraine reached days before the British invasion (though still in the making) is a demonstration of Britain's commitment to remain, in the words of the [Integrated Review](#), "the key European ally in NATO."

The case of Turkey further illustrates the return of strong cohesion within NATO. An ambivalent ally, Turkey had been under U.S. sanctions since 2019 following the purchase of Russian S-400 anti-aircraft systems, as well as under European sanctions for humanitarian reasons and because of its positioning in Syria. Strong tensions and incidents had even occurred with [Paris and Athens](#) in recent years. However, [without supporting Western sanctions](#) against Russia, Turkey has strongly condemned the Russian invasion and reiterated its support for the physical integrity and independence of Ukraine, but also for NATO's "open door" policy. Ankara has also blocked the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits to Russian warships in accordance with the [Montreux Convention](#) of 1936. Even more surprisingly, the French president announced on March 25 the [launch of a humanitarian operation to evacuate civilians](#) from Mariupol in close coordination with Turkey and Greece. However, the operation could not take place due to the decisions taken by Moscow.

### *Persistent Tensions*

Whether on the issue of arms and equipment deliveries to Ukraine or on the issue of sanctions, there is still a great deal of cohesion among the allies. While the European Union has already pledged [one and a half billion euros](#) in military supplies, the United States has just pledged [a package](#) of 14 billion dollars for the Ukrainian crisis, although half of it is intended for the deployment of American troops in Europe. Coordination on economic sanctions, however, involves more intensive exchanges between the allies, with some differences remaining, although much has already been accomplished in the space of a few weeks. For example, Germany has taken the symbolic decision to suspend the [Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project](#), which was intended to increase Russian gas deliveries to Germany. However, some European countries, including Germany and Italy, remain heavily dependent on Russian imports. While [Berlin, Paris and London](#) are still reluctant to deprive themselves of Russian hydrocarbons, [Washington](#) has ordered an embargo on American imports of Russian oil and gas. The United States is thus pushing Europeans to [reopen the debate on energy independence](#).

While even countries such as [Germany](#) and [Italy](#), which traditionally showed understanding or even leniency towards Moscow, have since changed their stance, one country still stands out as regards both sanctions and arms deliveries: [Victor Orban's Hungary](#). However, its capacity for influence is limited and for the moment it is not in a position to block the measures taken by other countries. Its position could change, however, as a result of pressure from its usual allies in the [Visegrad Group](#), and the risk of complete [isolation](#) for Budapest is not without danger, both within the EU and in NATO.

### *A New Consensus*

A certain consensus is also emerging on the Russian threat and the need to maintain NATO. Despite the strength of the Trumpist current, support for Ukraine is one of the rare points where there is still consensus in the United States, even if the modalities of this support remain debated. In France, the Russophile and pro-Kremlin rhetoric - including that of several major candidates in the presidential election - [tends](#) to be forgotten, masked, or at least strongly attenuated, the entire political class condemning Russian aggression.

Traditionally, Germany had always been a reliable and faithful member of the Alliance. However, the arrival in power of a government comprising the SPD and the Greens raised fears that this position would change, with some members of these two parties being fiercely critical of both [NATO](#) and [nuclear weapons](#). Although there are still [dissenting voices](#), the Russian invasion has put an end to any strong questioning of [this characteristic feature of German defence policy](#) in recent decades. Thus, a strong consensus in favour of the Alliance is now returning, despite the absence of the Christian Democrats of the CDU/CSU in government.

Similarly, Italy, which used to be ambivalent about its relationship with Russia, has now become aware that Russia can no longer be a reliable partner on the international scene, and now seems to be fully asserting its Europeanist and transatlantic identity, which guides its foreign policy and defence choices. If initially the main pro-Russian and anti-militarist party, the 5-Star Movement, did not want to explicitly name Russia as responsible at the beginning of the conflict, it now fully [supports](#) the government on sanctions against the country as well as on the increase of military personnel within NATO on the eastern front.

## II. Towards A Strengthening of NATO's Capabilities

However, the rediscovered cohesion is only one illustration of NATO's resurrection, and the current developments in armaments budgets are another eloquent example, as is the deployment of troops on the eastern flank.

### *The Programmed End of the Burden-Sharing Debate*

The war in Ukraine is indeed [accelerating](#) the increase in defence spending in many Alliance member countries. It also marks the likely end of the nearly 20-year-old debate over the 2% defence spending within NATO. Dating back to [NATO's 2006 Riga Summit](#), this less binding commitment by allies to spend 2% of their GDP on defence has been [a regular bone of contention](#) between Europeans and Americans. Given the generally low estimate of the Russian threat in recent years and U.S. pressure - especially under Donald Trump's tenure - for some states the issue simply came down to [buying new F-35 fighter jets](#).

The Russian invasion, however, mostly puts an end to this procrastination and debate. In fact, it is likely that in the near future the debate will no longer be about 2% that almost all states will have reached, but rather about [the reality of each state's military power](#), given the expenses incurred. Among the major NATO states, three groups seem to be forming at the moment: those that have radically changed their position; those that are not changing their spending forecasts; and those that are increasing their spending a little, or for whom this is beginning to be considered.

Germany and Italy best illustrate the change of position on this issue in some states. The Russian invasion caused an electroshock on the question of the means allocated to the Bundeswehr, and [the public statements of the Chief of Staff of the Army](#) indicating that the army he was leading was running dry, completed the disillusionment of a number of officials in Germany. The most obvious illustration of this shock was [the Chancellor's speech to the Bundestag on 27 February](#), announcing a sustainable increase in the military budget to exceed the 2% of GDP allocated to defence, as well as the creation of a restructuring and acquisition fund for the Bundeswehr worth 100 billion euros. However, as a reminder, the three parties in the government coalition have until now contested – even vigorously in their political program – [the objective of 2% of GDP for the defence budget](#). Some are now even talking about a [return to the military service](#) that was abolished under Merkel's second government a decade ago. Although it has more resources than Canada for a defence budget and a GDP [comparable](#) to Canada's, Italy has until now been one of the countries reluctant to increase its spending on defence, which represents only 1.4 per cent of Italian GDP. Now, however, the Italian Prime Minister is [calling](#) for an "unprecedented" increase in the defence budget, as well as for a European consultation on future security investments.

Alongside Berlin and Rome, Warsaw and Ankara stand out for the absence of any change or even a hint of change in their forecasts. This can be explained, however, by the fact that their defence spending is already well above 2%. Even before the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Warsaw had decided to increase its [military budget](#) and had planned to double the number of its troops in order to become more autonomous in security matters. For Turkey, its defence budget was also already a [priority](#) and should reach 17.5 billion dollars (USD) in 2025.

The United States, France, the United Kingdom and Canada form the third group, where there has been a slight increase ([United States](#) and [Canada](#)) or the first indicators of a desire to further increase the defence budget, which is close to 2% ([France](#)) or even higher ([United Kingdom](#)). The announcement of planned investments by Germany will most certainly trigger this increase in France and the United Kingdom in the short/medium term. Indeed, it is unlikely that the two countries behind the European Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) will accept being outclassed militarily by Berlin.

Within this group, however, Canada stands out, with [announcements](#) of increases in the defence budget remaining very modest (at best only 1.4% of GDP). The Russian invasion has provoked a change of the Canadian [perception](#) of the international environment, both at the [public](#) and [political](#) levels. Many [experts](#) have called in recent weeks for an increase in the Canadian defence budget to [improve defence capabilities](#). The Conservative Party is also [pushing](#) for the Trudeau government to accelerate its own arms strategy. Conversely, the leader of the NDP, who now supports Justin Trudeau's minority Liberal government, continues to [challenge](#) the 2% target for the time being. Thus, while the invasion is profoundly changing the political calculus of defence spending in Europe, Canada could be [isolated among its allies](#) because of its low defence budget, especially if the debate shifts from the amount of spending to the [effectiveness of the means available](#).

### *Strengthening NATO on Its Eastern Flank*

On the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall, [400,000 troops](#) from NATO countries were stationed in West Germany (60 per cent of them American), plus Bundeswehr forces, as well as 60,000 U.S. troops deployed [elsewhere](#) in Europe. While it is unlikely that NATO will deploy a comparable number of troops to its eastern flank (including the three Baltic states, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania), there has been a significant increase in the number of troops in these countries.

Since the Russian invasion, the Pentagon has acknowledged that it must change its [defence posture](#) in Europe to increase permanent troop stationing, but also rotational deployments to deal with Russia. An additional [14,000 U.S. troops](#) have been sent to the Baltics, Poland and Hungary, for a total of 100,000 U.S. troops in Europe, up from 80,000 before the war. The Pentagon also [repositioned troops and equipment](#): 800 soldiers left Italy for the Baltics, 20 Apache helicopters went from Germany to the Baltics, 12 from Greece to Poland and 8 F-35s were transferred from Germany to Lithuania, Estonia and Romania. This is in addition to the [12,000](#) U.S. troops on alert as part of NATO's 40,000-strong NATO Response Force (NRF).

[In terms of deployment](#), Britain has almost doubled the number of troops in Estonia from 900 to 1,700. The number of armoured vehicles will increase to 48 and tanks to 24. Also, 350 soldiers [will be added](#) to the 100 already present in Poland. Two British [ships](#) also joined the eastern Mediterranean in February to conduct monitoring operations alongside other NATO members. France, which is leading the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) this year, has announced that it will lead [a new NATO battalion](#) in Romania. To this end, [250 French soldiers](#) (the final number is expected to be twice as many) have recently taken up position on a Romanian base near the Ukrainian border. At the end of February 2022, Italy confirmed the [deployment](#) of about 1,350 military personnel in Hungary and Latvia within the framework of NATO, the dispatch of 130 military personnel and 12 combat aircraft to Romania, as well as 235 personnel, 2 ships and a combat aircraft in the Black Sea. In recent days, Berlin has also announced the upcoming deployment of several hundred troops to the Alliance's eastern flank: [350 soldiers](#) are to join the 500 German troops already present in Lithuania; [several ships](#) are to be deployed in the Baltic Sea in the near future; a [Patriot missile battery](#) will be deployed in Slovakia and integrated into a NATO battle group similar to those in the Baltic States. Germany also plans to deploy [half a dozen Eurofighter](#) aircraft to Slovakia. As for Canada, on February 22, before the invasion began, Prime Minister Trudeau had already [announced](#) the deployment of [460 additional troops](#) to reinforce the alliance in Eastern Europe. This includes an artillery unit of about 100 soldiers in Latvia, which will join 540 other members of the Armed Forces leading a NATO battle group ([Operation REASSURANCE](#)), as well as a second frigate – the HMCS Halifax – and a CP-140 Aurora patrol aircraft.

Currently, there are nearly [25,000 military personnel](#) from NATO member countries deployed on the Alliance's eastern flank, not counting the national armies of the eight countries that make up the Alliance. A year ago, however, there were barely half that number. This number is likely to increase in the coming months, especially if the conflict continues. This, together with the desire of [Sweden and Finland](#) to join NATO, raises the question of a possible reorganization of the Alliance's structures.

### III. Likely Reforms and Risks

In addition to possible changes in NATO's internal structure, NATO's resurrection is still threatened by certain risks of tension and divergence. New plans for the defence of the Alliance's territory – especially in the event of its enlargement into Scandinavia – are likely to emerge and may be accompanied by

negotiations on the military hierarchy within the Alliance (more specifically, on the automatic allocation of this or that position to certain countries). Moreover, a new Trump administration in 2025 could bring this new youthfulness of the Alliance to a premature end, especially if it were to take up Donald Trump's erratic positioning on European defence issues or relations with Moscow.

### *Towards Reforms of the NATO Structure?*

While the last major structural reform of NATO dates back to the [2002 Prague Summit](#), it is not impossible that a new restructuring will take place both in terms of command and in terms of the nationalities occupying a given position. Several factors already militate in favour of this, not to mention those that could be added (for example, the accession of Sweden and Finland, which would mean that their territory would be taken into account in the Alliance's defence plans): the increase in the number of troops stationed in Eastern Europe; the major role played by Poland in Eastern defence; and the Brexit and its consequences on the so-called [Berlin + arrangements between the EU and NATO](#). Indeed, the so-called Berlin + agreements of 2003 strengthened the role of the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), making him a key player in NATO-EU cooperation, the position having been held almost continuously since 1949 by a British national. The United Kingdom's membership in both organizations and its strong ties with Washington argued for keeping this position in the hands of a Briton. However, the Brexit changes this. A first French attempt to take this position would have taken place as early as [2017](#). It is likely that others will follow, especially in the event of a partial weakening of the United Kingdom if [Scotland](#) were to become independent. It is also possible that the position of DSACEUR will be duplicated or split into two functions: this was the case in the 1980s, when for more than ten years there were two DSACEURs, one British and one German.

The question of the future nationality of the next NATO Secretary General could be another issue, as the current Secretary General's term is coming to an end, although it has recently been [extended](#) for a few months in view of the war. Some want to see a woman appointed to the post for the first time. At the same time, however, other countries may insist that the position be given to a European from an EU member state participating in CSDP, which has not been the case since 2009.

### *Risks of Fractures and Potential Tensions*

The longer the conflict continues, the more it potentially risks undermining NATO's cohesion. For the time being, the scenario of [a direct military response](#) has been ruled out by the allies because of the absence of a legal obligation to intervene and because of the risks of a direct confrontation with Russia. If this attitude can be explained by Russia's status as a nuclear power (and is comparable to the behaviour of Western countries during the Budapest uprising of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, or the Russian invasion of Afghanistan during the Cold War), indirectly it may encourage an increase in war crimes committed by Russia. Therefore, it is not certain that this position of non-intervention will hold if Moscow uses chemical weapons, especially because of public pressure in the West.

In view of the arms deliveries, not to mention the influx of volunteers transiting the border between Ukraine, on the one hand, and Poland, Slovakia and Romania on the other, Russian actions against convoys cannot be ruled out either, which again would entail the risk of both escalation with NATO military involvement and disunity over such an escalation among Alliance members. Moreover, overwhelming Ukraine with weapons could [facilitate non-state violence, arms trafficking and terrorism](#) in the long term in Europe. Consequently, there may be short/medium term dissension over the right way to deter Russia and support Ukraine. The [Polish attempt](#) to transfer MIG-29s to the Ukrainian

armed forces, the debate on a [no-fly zone over Ukraine](#), or the unilateral U.S. embargo on [Russian hydrocarbons](#) are all signals of potential future divergence in this regard.

In the medium term, cohesion within the alliance both on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and beyond remains dependent on American domestic politics. In the event of a Trumpist Congress in 2022, or even a Trumpist president in January 2025, NATO's resurrection could then be seriously compromised, especially in the event of an American exit from the Alliance, even if this no longer seems to be discussed in the United States, at least for the moment.

#### IV. Consequences of the War on the EU and China

The war in Ukraine is also provoking developments and reactions both within the EU, NATO's close partner in Europe, and in China, and by extension raises the question of the division of tasks between NATO and the EU in Europe, but also of NATO's possible involvement in the Indo-Pacific.

##### *A Surprising European Union, But Still a Military Dwarf*

Although territorial defence in Europe is not yet a real part of its competences – and this despite the presence of [Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty](#), which is the reinforced counterpart of NATO's Article 5 of the now defunct WEU – the EU has surprised more than one expert by its reaction since the beginning of the invasion. The extent of the EU's reaction has indeed been surprising, whether on the issue of economic sanctions or, more strikingly, on the issue of arms supply. This point is most surprising given the activation by the EU of the [European Peace Facility](#) mechanism created less than a year earlier and not initially designed for this type of expenditure. Thanks to this mechanism, the EU contributed with [500 million euros](#) to the Ukrainian war effort in the early days. This amount has now been [tripled](#). Is the EU putting an end to the [capabilities-expectation gap](#) from which it suffers?

While it has just adopted its [Strategic Compass](#), the process of validating it, which was initially [accelerated](#) following a French desire to take advantage of it for the presidential campaign, may in the end be detrimental to the EU, as the fallout from the Russian-Ukrainian war is far from over. Nevertheless, there is a certain coordination and understanding among member states, as well as an easing of tensions on certain issues, such as the reform of the rule of law in Poland.

Indeed, just as within NATO – despite strong initial differences on Nord Stream 2 and sanctions – it is surprising to note the existence of a fairly strong cohesion between EU member states (with the exception of Hungary). The measures mentioned in relation to arms deliveries and the use of the European Peace Facility for this purpose, one of the most recent instruments and initially designed for African armies, demonstrate the effectiveness of coordination between EU states.

Although logical given the context, we are also witnessing a return to grace of Poland among the Member States, this one being by its geographical position, but also its commitment to Ukraine, passed from pariah state, archetype of what some call [illiberal democracies](#), to the model of a state defender of democracy. As a reminder, relations between Poland and other states – with the particular exception of Hungary – have deteriorated since the [crisis of the rule of law](#) in Poland and the contested reforms carried out by the ruling party. Now, in the [words of](#) the Polish president, “the priority is the security of the continent, the security of the Western world, the security of Ukraine and the security of Poland.”



At the same time, since the invasion, the EU and its policies are certainly experiencing a new attraction. While in just a few days three new countries – [Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia](#) – have applied for EU membership, Denmark may also give up its [derogation](#) from the Common Security and Defence Policy after 30 years of attachment to it. The next few months could also see the end of [Austrian](#) and [Irish](#) neutrality, even though Vienna and Dublin have always vigorously reiterated their attachment to their neutrality (even though they participate in the CSDP).

However, given the situation and the context, it is likely that the EU's military capabilities will remain relatively weak, with NATO remaining the preferred forum for most European states. The early adoption of the strategic compass has prevented it from truly taking into account the ongoing and future consequences of the war in Ukraine. The [latest version](#) of the project for a [new European rapid reaction force](#) is indicative of this gap. Based on the existing European Union battle groups, it provides for only a limited number of troops (around 5,000), far from [reaching the initial CSDP objectives](#) set in Helsinki (around 50,000). Moreover, everything seems to indicate that its field of action would remain outside the national territory of the EU member states. It is true that the CSDP is part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), not the internal one. However, refusing to change the possible theatres of operation of the rapid reaction force amounts to condemning it, as the Eastern European states give priority to their territorial defence over external operations in Africa or the Middle East. This position of the Eastern Europeans, which existed before the Russian invasion, can only be strengthened following it. By extension, it is likely that this will [also affect the development of the EU's military headquarters](#), a headquarters developed from the current Military Planning and Conduct Capability. Better coordination and understanding with NATO could avoid this scenario, but would require Paris to propose closer collaboration between the two institutions.

However, the supply of arms to Ukraine shows that the EU is beginning to become aware of its indirect military resources, the first of which is precisely its financial resources. The forthcoming increase in the overall defence budgets of the EU member states to 2% or more of their GDP will also give the EU [a military budget roughly equivalent to half that of the United States and equal to or greater than that of China](#). Paradoxically, this financial windfall [risks undermining cooperation projects](#) in the field of armaments within the EU, with certain industrial players hoping to escape what they consider to be an unpleasant constraint at best. This financial contribution could, however, encourage the development of a strong defence industrial capacity in Europe, provided that this contribution is not sucked in by American industries.

An EU developing its capabilities and power is not impossible. Fortunately for the EU, the Russian invasion follows Donald Trump's tenure in the United States and the events of the summer of 2021, which were the [AUKUS](#) pact and the [debacle in Afghanistan](#). These have diminished the desire for absolute dependence among some European leaders on Washington. Will they be able to avoid falling back into this trap? That is the question now. The EU still benefits from the attraction it exerts beyond its borders, as illustrated by the membership applications of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Finally, it has another as yet untapped advantage, namely that of also potentially being a military alliance thanks to [Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty](#). The fact that the current negotiations between Russia and Ukraine seem to automatically exclude Ukraine's membership in NATO, but not in the EU, could once again allow Ukraine to assert itself as a key player, including from a security point of view, thanks to this same article. However, here again, judicious use of this article will not be possible without closer coordination on the military level between the EU and NATO. In this respect, the choice of [the future NATO Secretary General](#) could be a major issue in the future, as well as the nationality of the [next DSACEURs](#).

### *Consequences for NATO's Role in the Indo-Pacific*

Although considered to be Russia's great "[ally](#)", China has adopted an [ambiguous position](#) since the beginning of the conflict. It is likely that it will maintain this position in order to [favour](#) its position at the international level. In economic terms, Russia's growing isolation could enable it to acquire Russian oil and gas at lower cost despite very high international prices. On the diplomatic front, China's position was reflected in its abstention from the United Nations General Assembly vote to denounce Russian aggression in Ukraine. China will not do more to support its neighbour, fearing that it will be isolated on the international stage and that Xi Jinping's reputation will be tarnished in the way that Putin's is now – both at home and abroad. Xi Jinping's [statement](#) on February 4 that "China's friendship with Russia has no limits" now seems a long way off. On the military front, China is also in observer mode. It is taking note of the blind spots in Russia's strategy and the [operational difficulties](#) it is encountering in the face of a Ukrainian army that no one thought capable of such a performance on the ground. The question is whether events in Ukraine will serve as a warning against the prospect of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

During a Congressional Intelligence Committee hearing on March 8, 2022, the CIA Director [noted](#) that China was surprised by the turn of events in the Ukrainian crisis, both in terms of the West's [coordinated response](#) and the poor performance of Russian forces on the ground. By fostering a rapprochement between Western states, Russian aggression is greatly undermining Beijing's long-standing efforts to drive a wedge between Washington and the European Union. Following a series of interviews with Pentagon officials, Bloomberg [concluded](#) that Russia's difficulty with its offensive, its isolation from the global economy and the anti-war protests among the Russian population would certainly give the Chinese Communist Party pause in its plans to invade Taiwan.

The way China tacitly approves of Russia's conduct, however, should ring alarm bells in Western chancelleries, especially in Europe. All Alliance members must be prepared to make Beijing understand that supporting Moscow will come at a cost. This may mean revising the way NATO members conceive of their presence in the [Indo-Pacific](#) region or limiting the interconnections between European and Chinese technological systems.

Events in Ukraine, however, are likely to have two consequences for NATO and U.S. engagement in the Pacific. Much to Washington's displeasure, the other members of the Alliance could push for a refocusing of NATO strictly on its immediate environment – especially on the Russian threat – much to Beijing's delight. However, this could go hand in hand with an increased ability of the other Allies to provide for their own security and defence against Moscow. The political authorities in Moscow in 2022 no longer have the firepower of their Cold War counterparts. In the medium term, the forces of the allies on the eastern flank could potentially do without the 100,000 American troops in Europe, making it easier than in the past to refocus the majority of American forces in the Indopacific. Moreover, the scale of European rearmament could even, in the medium term, allow the other allies to take their share of the burden in the Indo-Pacific as well, since the Russian threat is no longer – by far – equivalent to that posed by the USSR.

### Conclusion

If speaking of a [Third World War](#) is largely exaggerated – not to say erroneous – current events mark the beginning of what could be called [a second Cold War](#). It is in this context that we are witnessing a second youthfulness in NATO, a youthfulness that is taking the form of renewed cohesion and strong measures to strengthen its capabilities, including defence spending and deployments on the eastern flank.

However, there are still risks of divergence and tension between the allies in the event of an escalation in the conflict, but also on the issue of economic sanctions. Moreover, although isolated, the case of Victor Orban's Hungary remains problematic for cohesion within the Alliance. The major risk in the medium term, however, lies in the domestic policies of the member states, and more particularly in the United States, in the event of a Trumpist victory in Congress or in the next presidential election.

It is not impossible that NATO will evolve in its structures, while deepening its ties with the European Union, which even if it remains a military dwarf for the moment, has several assets. Alliance involvement in the China Sea or in Indo-Pacific issues is now unlikely, at least in the short and medium term. However, all members of the Alliance (including Europeans) will have an interest in paying attention to Beijing's behaviour in the Russian-Ukrainian war – and if necessary, sanctioning it – as China and Russia's actions are aimed at challenging the current international order, which for the time being remains fundamentally influenced by the liberal democracies.