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Europe's Pathway to Ending Russia's War on Ukraine

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Ongoing shuttle diplomacy between Kyiv, Washington and Moscow over a potential ceasefire agreement in Russia's war on Ukraine presents Europe with an urgent challenge. European states need to ensure that a ceasefire is a first step to a sustainable resolution to the war, and hence a contribution to the future security of the continent as a whole, rather than an opportunity for Russia to improve its position at Ukraine's and Europe's expense. This demands swift and resolute action by the "coalition of the willing" currently being formed. This action must necessarily include the presence of European armed forces in Ukraine to uphold peace, and the provision of an integrated air protection zone for part or all of the country. Both of these depend entirely on capability and resolve to respond firmly to inevitable Russian challenges.

Introduction

Ukraine's European supporters have repeatedly stated their commitment to achieving a viable and durable peace there – even if the previous aspiration for peace also to be just is now heard less often. But the routes by which that peace could be achieved, and the constraints imposed by other actors, are changing on a daily basis while shuttle diplomacy between Ukraine, the United States and Russia continues. If European nations are to play a relevant part in shaping the settlement imposed on Ukraine as a price of a temporary end to the fighting, this would require the kind of swift and resolute action that does not come naturally to many of their capitals. This paper proposes a route for European states to become relevant to a peace settlement in Ukraine, and thus to their own future security.

The best and most promising pathways to a lasting peace for Ukraine were of course closed off long ago. Options to deter Russia's full-scale invasion of February 2022, or once it was already under way, to provide full, prompt and unrestricted backing for Ukraine in order that it could take greater advantage of Russia's initial setbacks, would have left Ukraine in a very different position today. But both of these options were headed off by the

unwillingness of key players to fully back Ukraine.

Refusal to back a multinational force presence in Ukraine before February 2022 – in much the same form as is being discussed today – and the subsequent incrementalism and timidity in supporting Ukraine at war were based on an assessment prevalent in too many Western capitals that allowing a defeat of Russia was more dangerous than allowing the destruction of one of Russia's neighbours. The inevitable result today is that Ukraine, and Europe, are seeking the least worst of a number of very bad options.

Actors, Priorities and Interests

Those options are bounded by parameters set by actors other than Ukraine; namely Russia, the United States, and Europe. In discussing those actors, a degree of generalisation and shorthand is essential. The term "Europe" covers a vast range of different degrees of national willingness to act, and even now after extensive promises of defence investment, willingness to fund the rebuilding of armed forces.¹ And referring to "the United States" at present means the decisions of the very top level of administrations – the current and previous ones – as opposed to the

¹ Wester van Gaal, "Defence industry to EIB: We don't need money, we need contracts," *EUobserver*, March 2025,

<https://euobserver.com/Green%20Economy/ara84eddcc>

broader extent of the United States government, in particular its intelligence agencies and armed forces.² The actions of a Norwegian fuel oil supplier in taking out its frustration with US policy by refusing to cooperate with the United States Navy are bizarre and counterproductive, and it is reassuring that so far this seems to be an isolated instance of blaming American friends and colleagues supporting the defence of Europe for policy decisions taken a very long way away.

The third external actor is of course Russia: the only party involved that is able to end the war at any moment. While it has repeatedly been stated that only Donald Trump can bring peace to Ukraine (repeated most frequently of all by Donald Trump himself), this overlooks the fact that a unilateral change of policy by Russia would end the war. When senior Russian figures like Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov insist that any negotiations aimed at bringing peace must "eradicate the root cause of the war", they fail to mention that the proximate root cause – and hence by their logic prime candidate for eradication – is in fact Russia.³

Ukraine, as the victim of the conflict, must be the one to decide when, and if, it ceases to fight. That simple principle should not even need to be re-stated; but it appears essential at a time when the United States administration appears still to be attempting to negotiate an outcome with the aggressor, Moscow, and enforce it on the victim, Kyiv. It is for Ukraine alone to decide whether fighting on despite the enormous cost of doing so is a less bad outcome than giving in to the combined demands of Russia and the United States.⁴

² Julian E. Barnes, "Russia's Spies and Diplomats: A Growing Concern for the US," *The New York Times*, 9 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/09/us/politics/russia-spies-diplomats.html>

³ Sergey Lavrov, "Interview with the New Regions of Russia Magazine," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, 10 March 2025,

There are indications that that decision may already have been taken. The precursor to agreement on a ceasefire in negotiations with the United States in Jeddah was President Zelenskyy adopting the language of Trumpworld, and displaying public contrition and repentance for having offended the Trump court – and pandering to a version of reality which is well understood to be distant from the facts but which is essential in order to engage with that administration, instead of attempting the reality-based approach that so enraged Trump and Vice President JD Vance in the Oval Office on 28 February.

The precursor to agreement on a ceasefire in negotiations with the United States in Jeddah was President Zelenskyy adopting the language of Trumpworld

It may be that President Zelenskyy has made the judgement that this is what it takes to ensure the future survival of his country. But the time at which Ukraine needs to make that decision may in fact not be discernible from the outside. Apparent success in holding Russia back on the battlefield can mask deeper and far more systemic difficulties which make it impossible to carry on.

There are examples of similar circumstances from the 20th century: for instance, Finland in the 1940s and Rhodesia in the 1970s, facing existential threat without externally visible imminent danger of total collapse but making a choice to end the war and accept defeat in order to preserve what could be saved at that point.

https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/international_safety/regprla/2002214/

⁴ Dan De Luce, "Trump Wants to See 'Just Minerals' Deal Restart Aid, Intel to Ukraine," *NBC News*, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/trump-wants-see-just-minerals-deal-restart-aid-intel-ukraine-rcna195508>

It's only for Ukraine to assess when to give into the Russian and US demands in order to preserve what remains. That is still the case even if that decision is forced by the United States bringing to bear all of the leverage that it can, as already demonstrated by withholding military aid, intelligence support, assistance in regenerating critical infrastructure, and more. Some of those lines of support could conceivably be replaced over time by Ukraine's other backers, but others definitely cannot.

Another variable is Russia. Russia's aims remain far more consistent over time than those of the United States, but Moscow's ability to achieve them had been increasingly questioned over the course of 2024. Assessments of Russian capacity, whether it is economic, personnel, or materiel, and its likely exhaustion during this year or next may still have been optimism – we have heard predictions of Russia's impending collapse before – but now we may never know, given the United States' determination to rescue Putin from the consequences of his own misguided misadventure.

Russia has the luxury of comfortably sitting back and waiting to see what the United States will gift it next, and whether Europe can get its act together or not

At the time of writing, there remains no visible effort to exert any leverage on Russia to bring about the peace that the US states as its aim. That absence may reflect a long-standing mental paralysis when it comes to dealing with Moscow, which has affected not just Washington but many of our other allies as well. There has been a common learned helplessness when confronted with what Russia does which results from overlooking or ignoring the fact that Russia *can be*

deterred, and *has been* deterred on other occasions.⁵

Russia is not a force of nature that has to be contemplated helplessly as it delivers its damage and destruction, because decisions in Russia are taken by people who can be influenced. By contrast, what we have seen up until now is not a failure to deter Russia, but a failure to exercise deterrence in terms that are meaningful for its leaders. That means, as it has done consistently through history, that the costs of deterring the aggressor when the decision is finally made to do so will be much greater than if the same decision had been made three, five, or 10 years earlier.

For now, Russia has the luxury of comfortably sitting back and waiting to see what the United States will gift it next, and whether Europe can get its act together or not. We can assume that Russia will oppose any proposals for European peace enforcement forces in Ukraine, because any force in Ukraine which is intended to preserve peace is by definition an obstacle to Russia. So we can expect Russia to decry it with all the dire threats that it can muster. Moscow will attempt to deter any such plan through nuclear intimidation, plus stepping up its sabotage and murder campaigns across Europe. And if Russia remains firmly opposed to any plan, based on past performance we can anticipate that the Trump administration will back Moscow's demands.

Why has that not happened yet? Simply because it is not necessary. There is at the moment no plausible plan for Russia to object to.

Transatlantic relations

Meanwhile the interplay between Europe and the US is developing on a live basis minute by minute. For European leaders, dealing with the United States is now an exercise in risk assessment.

⁵ K Giles, "What deters Russia: Enduring principles for responding to Moscow", Chatham House, September 2021,

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-deters-russia>

If Europe wants and needs a durable peace in Ukraine, and not a temporary and disadvantageous ceasefire, this may involve throwing Europe's full weight behind Ukraine and thus risking losing the support of the United States for collective defence of the continent sooner than might otherwise have been the case. Europe is faced with the need to try to keep the United States on side by whatever means possible for as long as possible, including through paying homage at the Trump court, while being fully prepared for this not to work. For all of the assurances that we have heard so far, there is no full guarantee of US cooperation even if all demands are met. Canada and Mexico provide examples of what happens when US demands are made with threats, the demands are met, and the threats are carried out anyway.

But regardless of the success or failure of bridge-building efforts, plans for preserving Ukraine and thus for preserving Europe have to be structured now around recognition that the interests of the US administration and those of Europe diverge fundamentally in several significant ways.

It's worth thinking about what that means and how it came about. We hear the word "incomprehensible" a lot at the moment, describing the current decisions of the US administration. On 4 March, then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave a speech addressing Canadians, Americans, and Donald Trump personally, recapping the US approach to international relations and bilateral relations with Canada and then asking Americans to "make it make sense".

Unfortunately, there is a simple bottom line that does "make it make sense". The single common factor to all of the vast

range of actions that we have seen undertaken by the Trump-Musk programme since 20th January is the destruction of United States capacity: specifically, the capacity of its government to protect US national interests.⁶ Domestically, the purges, the shutdowns, the firings, add up to the removal of a system of national government that prevents the seizure of power by a small group of individuals not constrained by or concerned with the rule of law, with preparation for redirection of national wealth to an oligarchy.⁷ Internationally, it means taking a fire axe to the international system that prevents the expansion of power by America's adversaries at America's expense, and knocking the foundations out from underneath the relationships that have kept not just foreign partners in Europe and beyond prosperous and secure but the United States itself - not least through picking meaningless fights with neighbours that will make Americans poorer.

Why is all of this relevant to a path to peace in Ukraine? The relevance lies in the Russia-specific elements of the programme, all of which meet Russia's long-standing goal of removing the United States as an obstacle to Russian ambition and instead reaching a grand bargain over the heads of the countries in between. Everything that we have seen so far leads toward this goal: the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Russia, the promise of the lifting of sanctions, surrender (subsequently denied) in cyber confrontation with Moscow, the dismantling of US defences against information warfare and malign influence from Russia, the erasure of the United States's levers of soft power like USAID and Voice of America, and finally,

⁶ Shane Harris, "Trump's Justice Dept Ousts National Security Officials in Latest Purge," *The Washington Post*, 8 March 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/03/08/trumps-justice-dept-ousts-national-security-officials-latest-purge/>
Ellen Nakashima, "CIA and NSA Dodge Layoffs Amid Firing Spree," *The Washington Post*, 6 March 2025,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/03/06/cia-nsa-doge-layoffs-firing/>

⁷ Jonathan Freedland, "Under Trump, America Is Becoming a Mafia State," *The Guardian*, 7 March 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/07/donald-trump-america-mafia-state>

of course, enforcing Russian terms on Ukraine.⁸

That process is going to set hard boundaries on what Europe can do to ensure that Ukraine salvages the least worst outcome, because of the levers the United States has to compel not only Ukraine but Europe as a whole to comply.

This is not to overlook that compliance with some of what the United States is urging is and always has been in Europe's own best interest, and so much of the shock that European nations now feel is because of their cozy sheltering under the American security blanket while pretending that defence was somebody else's problem.

The continued presence of US forces in Europe, especially on NATO's eastern flank, is the most obvious indicator of US support and assurance that it will continue

Be that as it may, the continued presence of US forces in Europe, especially on NATO's eastern flank, is the most obvious indicator of US support and assurance that it will continue. So far, despite plans for scheduled reduction, there's no indication of a swift and total withdrawal of US forces that would thrust the problem once again in the faces of Europe.

But as we have seen repeatedly over the previous few weeks of this administration's time in power, there are no indicators of destruction until it happens. There were no signs that USAID, for example, would be swiftly demolished until it happened. There are indications that the small group of individuals forcing through destructive

⁸ Anthony Capaccio, "Pentagon Denies Report of Halt in Cyber Operations Against Russia," *Bloomberg*, 4 March 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-03-04/pentagon-denies-report-of-halt-in-cyber-operations-versus-russia>

change in the United States have limited bandwidth and are tackling one target at a time.

We also shouldn't underestimate the visible willingness of the Trump-Musk administration to inflict chaos and misery on their own side and on their own people. Any precipitate withdrawal of US forces from Europe would disrupt thousands of American lives, careers and families in addition to the direct impact on the defensive capacity of the continent. But in addition, with such dependence by European militaries not just on the physical presence of US troops, but on American-made weapons and equipment and on integration with American plans, Europe is now acutely vulnerable to the possibility of withdrawal of US cooperation. Less visible ties are also vital, like intelligence support including the closely integrated signals intelligence relationship with for example the UK, and the very mundane and boring ways in which the United States is integrated into European defence through command and administration functions at various NATO headquarters and organisations.

The United States can exploit these dependencies if it is not happy with what European states choose to do in order to protect themselves and preserve their future security from Russia. This exploitation need not even take the form of deliberate and hostile obstruction: the chaos wrought in overseas military units by the current US arbitrary limitations on government spending, including travel, shows how easily the functionality of US support for Europe can be neutralised through bureaucratic means alone.⁹

So, we have to hope that European countries and European militaries are now rapidly inventing what can possibly be done without United States support, or indeed with active US

⁹ Lisa Rein, "Government Credit Card Limits Tightened Amid Spending Concerns," *The Washington Post*, 9 March 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/09/doge-government-credit-card-limits/>

opposition.¹⁰ This is, plainly, not something that can be done publicly. But it is a process that might eventually lead to much greater prominence for those partners which have diversified and have taken more of an interest in their own independent defence. Can we foresee a future at the moment where it is Poland and France, those countries that are spending on defence and are not fully reliant on the United States, that begin the process of haranguing Western Europe and demanding that Western Europe meet its share of defence spending for the continent as a whole, because it is now not the United States but Poland that has had enough of carrying the load for the whole continent?

Options for lasting peace

Any constructive solution for Ukraine has to navigate between Russia's capacity to do damage and the United States' determination at the moment to prioritise achieving a ceasefire over constructing a lasting peace. And that solution will have to use military force – delivered by armed forces that west of Warsaw are not only affected by decades of atrophy but also now subject to the question of how much of their functionality is viable at all without US support and cooperation.¹¹

Within those constraints, what might in fact be possible? There are logical gaps in many of the proposals that we have heard put forward so far.¹² The suggestion from British Prime Minister Keir Starmer that nothing is feasible without US backing runs into the quicksand immediately because the United States has stated so clearly that it does not wish to give this backing. And as noted above, making

anything at all contingent on Russian agreement immediately rules out any genuine lasting security solution, because that is not what Russia wants.

One way to thread the needle would be to build a solution around the principle that it is time finally to say to Russia that the war must stop, or things will happen that Russia genuinely does not wish to see.

European nations can, and should, and must steadily and incrementally build their support to Ukraine by providing what they can as soon as they can, including the overt presence of European military forces inside Ukraine. This must be accompanied by a promise that the stepping up of direct assistance will continue and accelerate, and as Europe slowly rebuilds the capacity to achieve political directives through military means, this support will spread and become steadily more important until

Rapid learning by European militaries of how to fight Russian forces in an ongoing process of transformation is also an outcome that Russia would not like

Russia takes genuine steps toward a lasting peace settlement rather than a temporary ceasefire.

This could be a process of foreign assistance gradually replacing Ukrainian forces in functions and roles freeing them up to fight. At first, this would be very far from the front line, but with the prospect of eventually relieving Ukrainian troops closer and closer to it.¹³ It would have to

¹⁰ David Axe, "France to the Rescue: French-Made Mirage 2000 Jets Could Become Ukraine's Most Important Aerial Radar Jammers," *Forbes*, 7 March 2025, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2025/03/07/france-to-the-rescue-french-made-mirage-2000-jets-could-become-ukraines-most-important-aerial-radar-jammers/>

¹¹ Sam Jones, "Can the US Switch Off Europe's Weapons?" *Financial Times*, 8 March

2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/1503a69e-13e4-4ee8-9d05-b9ce1f7cc89e>

¹² Ed Arnold, "Back to the Future: Applying the Chilcot Checklist to Ukraine," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*, 10 March 2025, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/back-future-app>

¹³ Michael Kofman, "Willpower, Not Manpower, Is Europe's Main Limitation for a

be a very small, possibly token, start. The limiting factor is not just the minute numbers of deployable forces that even some of Europe's largest militaries possess, but the ability to defend themselves against the inevitable Russian testing and probing. For the avoidance of doubt: any foreign troop presence in Ukraine must be structured on the assumption that Russia *will* attack it, through "deniable" or overt means, and therefore it must be willing and able to defend itself. Crucially, that must include visible and convincing capability and resolve to inflict casualties on Russian forces or proxies if they attack. If a coalition of the willing arrives to support Ukraine, and its soldiers are killed by Russia without response in kind, this would in multiple ways be worse than not arriving in the first place. For this reason among others, the prevalent description of any such presence as "peacekeepers" should be abandoned. While perhaps technically accurate, the term risks misleading European publics by implying very different duties to those that foreign forces protecting themselves against Russia will have to perform.

This also implies that any foreign troop presence would necessarily include protection against air and missile threats. But as the pockets of air protection these contingents bring with them expand, they would naturally begin to cover Ukrainian cities and infrastructure facilities as a by-product of the process.

The absence of the United States will place severe capability limitations on what European air power can achieve, but it will also remove political limitations

This would be a modest start for foreign presence, and the tasks that presence accomplishes would need to be at first both small and basic. For all of the lessons that have been passed back to European forces over the preceding three years of

war, there is still a major opportunity to absorb from Ukraine lessons learned in how Russia is currently fighting and how to withstand it, and the lessons from Ukrainian adaptation and innovation – including, prominently, the mass production and rapid development, evolution and integration of drones.

The rapid learning by European forces of how militaries can transform, and how to fight Russian forces also in an ongoing process of constant transformation, is also an outcome that Russia would not like.

But then of course, if Russia doesn't like it, it has a choice.

Moscow can slow or stop this gradual creeping incremental process by ceasing its own attacks – whether in breach of whatever ceasefire regime is in place in Ukraine at the time, or more broadly in covert actions against Europe. Russia would be presented with a choice to make: the best possible way to make the presence of European troops in Ukraine redundant would be to remove altogether the Russian threat to that portion of Ukraine that remains free. In other words, the European response is directly linked to the Russian threat and forms part of a deterrence conversation with Moscow that has been largely absent in the current decade.

Air protection of Ukraine is a necessary element of this process. A no-fly zone (again, a shorthand for a protection regime that will necessarily be more complex than the name implies) is another measure that should have been in place two weeks before the full invasion of Ukraine, rather than something that was agonised over two weeks afterwards.

The absence of the United States will again place severe capability limitations on what European air power can achieve, but it will also remove political

limitations.¹⁴ Comparing the protection extended to Israel against drone and missile threats, mobilising a multinational coalition to interdict them over third countries rather than over the target itself, with the refusal to protect Ukraine in a similar manner makes it clear that there are benefits to coalitions of the willing not including the unwilling.¹⁵ Self-removal of the United States from the equation removes vital elements of the air power on which such a coalition is built but also removes one of the obstacles to building it.

Extending land and air protection to Ukraine in this way may sound like a bold plan. Two immediate objections may be raised to its practical implementation. There may be military advice that this is simply impossible; it cannot be done. That would force even deeper and more serious strategic choices. If it is the case that European forces are so atrophied by self-induced dependence on the United States that an enormously wealthy continent cannot deploy a small military force in its own neighbourhood and expect it to survive if Russia does not want it to be there, then there is a reasonable question from European taxpayers overall: what exactly are European armed forces for?

The second objection is speed of movement. If the United States succeeds in forcing through agreement on a non-viable ceasefire which explicitly excludes the presence of peace enforcement forces, this may happen far faster than Europe can get itself organised. That brings us back to the primary dilemma. Europe, together, has to choose whether to submit to imposed terms or whether it

can take the risk of attempting to determine its own future - in the first instance through protection of Ukraine and later through protection of itself.

In any such attempt to do so, we should expect dire threats from Russia including a revival of the campaign of nuclear intimidation. Those threats may be vastly less effective without the United States as the primary and very receptive audience for them, but they will still happen and they will affect less robust European countries who do not know Russia as well as the front-line states – those front-line states which as a result of knowing Russia are least concerned about the prospect of nuclear escalation, despite being the states that have the most to lose if they are wrong.¹⁶

That means that the message about irresponsible talk of nuclear escalation has to be clear. Like France, NATO must remind Russia that even without the United States, Ukraine's backers still include two nuclear powers. And if it should so happen in the worst case that the United States does withdraw nonstrategic nuclear weapons from Europe and revoke the principle of extended deterrence – with or without presenting Europe with an invoice for the past decades during which it has been in force – that means that there are rungs missing from the escalation ladder which will not be easily reconstituted in any relevant space of time.¹⁷ That will be a reality; so we adapt to the new reality. It has to be made plain to Russia that this means any use of nuclear weapons in Europe at any scale will lead to a full-scale devastating response because that is the

¹⁴ International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), "Europe's Air of Dependence," *IISS Military Balance*, March 2025, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/03/europes-air-of-dependence/>

¹⁵ Dan Sabbagh, "European-led Ukraine air protection plan could halt Russian missile attacks", *The Guardian*, 6 March 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/06/european-led-ukraine-air-protection-plan-could-halt-russian-missile-attacks>

¹⁶ Keir Giles, "Russian nuclear intimidation: How Russia uses nuclear threats to shape Western responses to aggression", Chatham House, March 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/03/russian-nuclear-intimidation>

¹⁷ Paul Carrel, "Germany's Merz Wants European Nuclear Weapons to Boost US Shield," *Reuters*, 9 March 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-merz-wants-european-nuclear-weapons-boost-us-shield-2025-03-09/>

only option remaining. And that should be not a threat, but a promise of escalation.

Russia has signed up to a pledge, among many other pledges, that nuclear war must never be fought. Some people find that reassuring, especially if they haven't read it in Russian. The Russian phrase is not "must not be fought", it is "*ne dolzhna razvyazatsya*", with a meaning closer to must not be unleashed, or develop, or spread, or get out of control. What that means is that if Russia is contemplating using nuclear weapons as anything more than an information weapon they have to be assured that the situation will definitely *razvyazatsya*. This is the deterrent to Russia's use of nuclear weapons both in real life and as the information weapon that has been so effective in the past.

Conclusions

If any of this is feasible, how exactly could it all be organised? The answer is probably not through NATO, or through whatever vestiges of command structures can be brought to bear on the problem given the likelihood of NATO being a coalition that includes several members who might be very *unwilling*. But in all the talk across Europe of the search for coalitions of the not unwilling to attempt to enforce and uphold peace in Ukraine, there has been a curious silence about one such coalition that appears ready-made. This is the Joint Expeditionary Force, the JEF. Today could have been the JEF's moment to shine, but somehow it doesn't feature in discussions at all. It is not capable of taking on tasks at the scale of NATO, or even at the scale required for Ukraine, but nonetheless, its total absence from the public debate – whether in its current form or expanded to meet the challenge – is hard to explain.

This is a symptom of the way plans for supporting Ukraine sometimes forget what is already in place and already available to be drawn on. That includes the contribution of Ukraine itself to a solution. Multinational NATO contingents

in the front-line states are routinely described as "NATO troops", as opposed to the national armed forces of the host nation – as though those local armed forces belonging to a NATO member state were not also in every respect "NATO troops". Similarly, the armed forces of Ukraine would be available to support a solution that enforces a lasting, durable, viable, even if not just peace. In fact, Ukraine's value to Europe is only going to increase if and when the United States' involvement in the future defence of the continent decreases. Ukraine will be a major security contributor, not a consumer.

Ukraine is currently faced with the choice of submitting to a ceasefire on unfavourable terms and potentially retaining US support, or fighting on with the likelihood of losing it. That calculation too can only be Ukraine's to make. If Ukraine is indeed permanently cut loose by the United States, this will also mean eliminating all of the constraints that had previously been placed by the US on Ukraine doing damage to Russia.¹⁸ Ukraine's hands would be untied, and it would be free to act. The challenge for European nations is to act before this situation arises, and to do so at the speed of relevance as the only way to have a say in their own future security.

¹⁸ Alexander J. Motyl, "Ukraine Without America," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2025,

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/ukraine-without-america>

Integrated Air Protection Zone (IAPZ)



This map showing a proposed Integrated Air Protection Zone for Ukraine is reproduced with permission from the report "Sky Shield: A Practical Security Guarantee for Ukraine", available at <https://is.gd/skyshieldukraine>



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