

UKRAINE'S SECURITY GUARANTEES: A PREREQUISITE FOR LASTING PEACE OR AN OBSTACLE TO ENDING THE WAR?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the key prerequisites for reaching an agreement on ending the Russia-Ukraine war is the provision of international security guarantees to Ukraine. This issue constitutes both a cornerstone of any prospective peace settlement and a major obstacle to reaching agreements with both the aggressor state and Ukraine's key partners – potential providers of such guarantees.

Current public discussions focus primarily on the formal aspects of security guarantees that Ukraine could obtain through membership in NATO or the European Union, or through a bilateral agreement with the United States. In reality, however, security guarantees are far more complex than securing formal commitments from a single powerful state or a group of countries to provide assistance in the event of armed aggression. Rather, they should be viewed as a comprehensive framework encompassing all potential national and international political, legal, military, technical, financial and economic components capable of preventing the renewal of aggression against Ukraine over the long term.

Particular attention should be paid to American security guarantees – their cost and value, as well as their practicality and reliability. The current US administration is demanding a tangible and exceptionally high price for such guarantees from Kyiv, in the form of access to natural resources and

territorial concessions, while offering Ukraine only uncertain benefits and largely declaratory commitments against the backdrop of its increasingly overt disregard for the interests of allies around the world.

Overall, there is currently little reason to expect Ukraine to obtain international security guarantees capable not only of paving the way for a ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities at this stage of the war, but also of preventing renewed Russian aggression. Nor are there realistic prospects for establishing a deterrence and enforcement mechanism strong enough to alter the aggressor's strategic calculus by making the costs of renewed aggression outweigh its perceived benefits. Above all, this stems from the unwillingness of any potential guarantor to engage in a direct military confrontation with Russia. However, certain conditions exist for the gradual development of a package of guarantees that could come as close as possible to achieving these objectives.

Against this backdrop, it is more important than ever to adopt a critical and realistic view of both the substance of formal security guarantees and the prospects for obtaining them. Such an approach would help Ukraine develop a well-grounded position in peace negotiations and minimise the risk of repeating mistakes similar to those associated with the Budapest Memorandum.

UKRAINE'S SECURITY GUARANTEES: A PREREQUISITE FOR LASTING PEACE OR AN OBSTACLE TO ENDING THE WAR?

INTRODUCTION

The issue of security guarantees for Ukraine is one of the key prerequisites for reaching a potential agreement to end the Russia-Ukraine war. It constitutes both a cornerstone of any prospective peace settlement and a major obstacle to achieving such an agreement. Long-term security guarantees remain one of the principal requirements for a future peace agreement for Kyiv, Ukrainian society and Ukraine's European partners. This concerns both international guarantees for maintaining a ceasefire and force separation during the final stage of active hostilities and ensuring credible safeguards against renewed aggression in the long term after a peace settlement is formalised.

The term «guarantees» should not be interpreted literally. History offers examples of both strong international security guarantees and empty promises, where «security guarantors» merely expressed sympathy for the victim of aggression, themselves became aggressors, or aligned with the aggressor. While even legally binding and carefully crafted guarantees cannot provide absolute certainty, their existence can boost national deterrence and defence capabilities by compelling a potential aggressor to take into account the military and political risks of facing a broader coalition of allies.

A realistic and critical assessment of both the prospects for obtaining formal security guarantees and their actual significance is essential for developing a well-grounded Ukrainian position in peace negotiations and minimising the risk of repeating mistakes

similar to those associated with the Budapest Memorandum.

EXTERNAL SECURITY GUARANTEES: FORMS, WEIGHT AND CAVEATS

The term «security guarantees» refers to unilateral or mutual commitments by one state or a group of states to provide another state with security assistance, including military protection against external aggression. In some cases, the term also encompasses mutual non-aggression commitments. Security guarantees are normally enshrined in legally binding treaties (formal guarantees). Their binding nature distinguishes them from security assurances, which are generally regarded as political declarations rather than legally enforceable commitments (informal guarantees).

In practice, even legally binding guarantees do not provide absolute certainty regarding their reliability. Nevertheless, legally established bilateral and multilateral defence arrangements (alliances, coalitions and blocs) enhance individual states' deterrence and defence capabilities. Any potential aggressor must take into account the possibility of confronting not only the target of aggression, but also a broader coalition, and assess the corresponding military and political risks.¹

Security guarantees should not be viewed as absolute commitments when they involve obligations by a state or a group of states to provide military protection to the victim of aggression. There is ample historical evidence² that international security guarantees intended to prevent or halt military invasions have

¹ For more detail, see M.Kapitonenko, «Theory and Practical Mechanisms of Security Guarantees.» *Actual Problems of International Relations*, No. 164, 2025, pp. 30–37. <https://apir.iir.edu.ua/index.php/apmv/article/view/3979>; The International Crisis Group, *High Stakes Promises: The Challenge of Security Guarantees for Ukraine*, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/qna/europe-central-asia/ukraine-russia-internal-united-states/high-stakes-promises-challenge-security-guarantees-ukraine>

² S.Morfinov, *Security Guarantees: When Have They Worked in History, and When Have They Failed?* BBC News Ukraine, 5 September 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c8rvxm116mxo> (in Ukrainian)

either remained effective for decades or proved to be little more than empty promises. Moreover, a security guarantor may itself become an aggressor or align itself with one. Even the most carefully drafted provisions and legally robust treaty obligations have their limitations and cannot provide complete certainty that a guarantor state will enter a war if doing so runs counter to its national interests or if the costs and risks of honouring its commitments substantially outweigh those associated with disregarding them.

For example, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty³ (see Annex 3), widely regarded as the most reliable collective security guarantee currently in existence, also leaves NATO members some discretion in determining how it should be implemented, namely through the taking of «such action as [each Ally] deems necessary...». Moreover, Article 11, which stipulates that the Treaty shall be carried out by all Parties «in accordance with their respective constitutional processes», may allow political actors in member states to delay decision-making or limit the nature and scope of measures taken to fulfil allied commitments. Despite providing more detailed and specific procedures, the Treaty on European Union (see Annex 3) contains similar ambiguities.⁴

Notably, Article 4 of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (Warsaw Treaty, 1955)⁵ and Article 4 of the Collective Security Treaty (the Tashkent Treaty)⁶ contain collective-defence provisions broadly similar to those found in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union. In other words, both NATO member states and members of the anti-NATO bloc declared their readiness to respond collectively to an armed attack, while leaving

a degree of ambiguity regarding the form of their obligations to provide immediate assistance, including military assistance, and support using the means at their disposal.

Understanding these and other limitations of international security guarantees is essential for maintaining realistic expectations regarding the potential benefits of full NATO membership (or participation in alternative security coalitions), as well as proposals for «NATO-light» arrangements or security guarantees modelled on Article 5.⁷

Nevertheless, despite the limitations of any collective security system and the imperfect nature of external security guarantees, mutual defence commitments enshrined in international treaties can significantly strengthen national deterrence capabilities. Even the possibility that allies may honour their security commitments can influence an aggressor's calculations and serve as an important deterrent.

THE NEED FOR SECURITY GUARANTEES FOR UKRAINE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Virtually the entire history of modern Russia-Ukraine relations has been shaped by an enduring interstate conflict,⁸ which for a combination of objective and subjective reasons, followed a largely escalating course. The current phase of the conflict (2014–present), culminating in a full-scale war, was preceded by a prolonged latent period (1991–2013), characterised by recurring cycles of tension and détente in bilateral political, diplomatic, economic and cultural relations, as well as a series of dangerous incidents involving either the threat or limited use of military force.⁹

³ North Atlantic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 4 April 1949, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/1949/04/04/the-north-atlantic-treaty>

⁴ Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12016M%2FTXT&utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵ Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (Warsaw Treaty), Warsaw, 14 May 1955, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20219/volume-219-I-2962-Other.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁶ Collective Security Treaty, 15 May 1992. Official website of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), https://odkb-csto.org/documents/documents/dogovor_o_kollektivnoy_bezopasnosti/#loaded (in Russian)

⁷ Meloni Offers Plan to Aid Ukraine in a Day If Russia Resumes War, Bloomberg, 20 August 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-08-20/meloni-offers-plan-to-aid-ukraine-in-a-day-if-russia-resumes-war>

⁸ Y.Yakymenko et al. Ukraine: 30 Years on the European Path. Kyiv: Razumkov Centre, Zapovit Publishers, 2021, p. 317, <https://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/2021-nezalezhnist-30.pdf>

⁹ Ibid.

February 2026 marked four years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and twelve years since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war. The war began in 2014 with Russia's hybrid aggression, including the largely bloodless invasion of Crimea by the so-called «little green men», and soon escalated into active hostilities in eastern Ukraine involving the direct but covert participation of regular Russian military units, accompanied by Moscow's familiar «*our troops are not there*» narrative. On 24 February 2022, the Putin regime launched the next stage of escalation in the form of an overt and full-scale armed invasion. The attack came after seven years of negotiations to resolve the conflict, during which Russia insisted on its role as a mediator, and after the conflict had effectively been frozen by the Minsk Agreements,¹⁰ under which it also acted as a self-styled guarantor.

Looking ahead to future agreements on ending the war and establishing a post-war legal framework for bilateral relations, it is worth recalling that, when Russian armed aggression began in 2014, mutual recognition of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity between Ukraine and the Russian Federation had already been formalised through bilateral agreements¹¹ (see Annex 3). This, however, did not prevent the Kremlin from repeatedly making hostile statements and taking actions directed against Ukraine.

In addition, Russia's commitment to «respect the independence and sovereignty

and the existing borders of Ukraine» had been enshrined in international instruments ranging from the Charter of the United Nations¹² and the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (1975)¹³ to the now infamous Budapest Memorandum of 1994¹⁴ (see Annex 3).

Russia's record of violating international commitments and bilateral agreements provides compelling grounds to question the reliability of any arrangement bearing the signature of the Russian state but lacking effective enforcement mechanisms. Against the backdrop of a profound crisis – or, effectively, a vacuum – of trust resulting from its unprovoked military aggression and numerous violations of international conventions governing the laws and customs of war,¹⁵ a broad consensus has emerged in Ukraine and across much of the Western political and expert community regarding Russia's inability to act as a reliable negotiating partner and the limited prospects of its compliance with future commitments.

As efforts to achieve a political and diplomatic settlement continue, well-founded doubts about Russia's willingness to honour future non-aggression commitments are also voiced by an overwhelming majority of Ukrainian citizens and the domestic expert community. Some 61.6% of surveyed citizens¹⁶ and 93.3% of experts¹⁷ agree with the statement that Russia «will violate the agreement and attack Ukraine as soon as it finds it convenient to do so».

¹⁰ Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements, 12 February 2015, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/ua150212minskagreementen.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹¹ Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, Kyiv, 31 May 1997, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52240.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹² Charter of the United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

¹³ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Final Act (Helsinki Final Act), 1975, https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/5/c/39501_1.pdf

¹⁴ Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1994), <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52241.pdf>

¹⁵ Ukraine's Ombudsman: UN Report Confirms Russia's Crimes, 16 March 2024, <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/news/details/ombudsman-ukrayini-zvit-oon-pidtvrdzhennya-zlochiviv-uf>; OSCE Experts Publish Report on Russia's Crimes against Ukrainian Prisoners of War; Ukrainian Foreign Ministry Responds. Ukrinform, 26 September 2025, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/4040748-eksperti-obse-opriludnili-zvit-pro-zlocini-uf-proti-ukrainskih-vijskovopolonienih-u-mzs-vidreaguvali.html>; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Report on Violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity Committed in Ukraine (1 December 2024 – 31 May 2025), <https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/a/0/598042.pdf>; Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1907), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp

¹⁶ For further details, see Annex 1: Public Opinion on Security Guarantees.

¹⁷ For further details, see Annex 2: Expert Assessments of Security Guarantees.

Therefore, perhaps the only effective safeguard against the kremlin violating future agreements – both during the initial stage of a ceasefire and over the longer term following the end of the armed phase of the conflict – would be the creation of a deterrence and enforcement mechanism capable of altering the aggressor's strategic cost-benefit calculations in favour of abandoning the use of force.

As for the formal dimension of future non-aggression agreements as the principal component of security guarantees for Ukraine from Russia, their provisions could, in practice, largely replicate the above-mentioned articles of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation (1997), with references to the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter and commitments under the Helsinki Final Act. **This time, however, such broad declarations of peaceful intent must be reinforced by legally binding external security guarantees accompanied by clearly defined implementation mechanisms and enforcement instruments.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES IN VIEW OF THE SPECIFIC COURSE AND PROSPECTS OF CONFLICT SETTLEMENT

After more than four years of high-intensity combat, the conflict displays all the characteristics of a war of attrition and a strategic stalemate, with neither side having achieved a decisive military victory or possessing the capacity to secure one in the foreseeable future.

The lack of significant progress on the political and diplomatic track is largely attributable to the kremlin's belief that it can ultimately prevail in a war of attrition and thereby achieve its objective of destroying Ukraine as a sovereign and independent state. At present, however, such a scenario appears unlikely given the challenges facing the Russian military and economy on the one hand, and Ukraine's capacity – with partner

support – to continue resisting Russian aggression on the other.

At the time of writing, the most likely path to ending the war appears to be a political and diplomatic settlement requiring mutual compromises from both sides.

Kyiv's position regarding the prerequisites for peace negotiations with the kremlin and, consequently, the acceptable compromises has undergone significant changes since Donald Trump's election to a second term and the corresponding shift in the United States' approach to the settlement of the conflict. Under pressure from the new US administration, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has gradually softened some of his earlier categorical conditions regarding the launch of negotiations and the content of a future peace agreement, accepted significant compromises, or expressed readiness to consider concessions that do not cross the «red lines» of the Ukrainian state and society. One of Ukraine's principal requirements remains the inclusion in any peace agreement of international commitments – above all by the United States – to provide reliable and long-term security guarantees.

Ukrainian society has consistently demonstrated an uncompromising position on the need for guarantees against renewed Russian aggression and is not prepared to sacrifice long-term prospects for peace in exchange for an immediate ceasefire. When assessing potential elements of a peace agreement with Russia, 73.1% of surveyed citizens considered concessions regarding effective security guarantees unacceptable, while the position of Ukrainian experts (90%) was even more uncompromising (see Annexes 1 and 2).

As of late May 2026, negotiations between Ukraine, the United States and Russia were centred on a **20-point peace plan**¹⁸ for ending the war, largely agreed by Ukraine, the United States and European partners. Most provisions of the proposed plan relate either directly or indirectly to security guarantees for Ukraine, including:

¹⁸ Zelenskyy Reveals 20-Point Peace Plan Draft and Details Its Provisions. Ukrinform, 24 December 2025, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/4072918-proekt-mirnoi-ugodi-zelenskij-nazvav-20-punktiv-i-rozkriv-detali.html> (in Ukrainian)

- Point 1 – reaffirmation of Ukraine’s sovereignty.
- Point 2 – a non-aggression agreement between Russia and Ukraine, accompanied by a monitoring mechanism to oversee the contact line.
- Point 3 – robust security guarantees for Ukraine.
- Point 4 – maintenance of the Ukrainian Armed Forces at a peacetime strength of 800,000 personnel.
- Point 5 – security guarantees from the United States, NATO and the European signatory states modelled on Article 5.
- Point 6 – legislative codification by Russia of a policy of non-aggression towards Ukraine and Europe.
- Point 7 – establishment of a specific timetable for Ukraine’s accession to the European Union and the granting of short-term preferential access to European markets.
- ...
- Point 11 – reaffirmation of Ukraine’s non-nuclear status.
- ...
- Point 14 – territorial issues (unresolved).
- Point 15 – mutual commitment not to use force to alter agreed territorial arrangements.
- ...
- Point 19 – oversight of implementation and guarantees provided by the Board of Peace, chaired by US President Donald Trump.
- Point 20 – an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire upon agreement by the parties.

As noted above, the proposed peace plan has been accepted by only one side of the conflict, and the kremlin will undoubtedly continue to seek further concessions from Kyiv, including on long-term security guarantees. Regardless of any additional concessions Ukraine may be forced to make as a result of objective circumstances or partner pressure, Russia (the putin regime, the state, and a significant portion of the population) is likely to remain dissatisfied with an outcome that falls short of its maximalist objectives.

Moreover, even after putin leaves power, for whatever reason, there is a strong possibility that, in the absence of the «decolonisation» of the Russian empire,¹⁹ any

process of «de-putinisation» (whether in the form of détente, a reset, perestroika, or otherwise) would prove short-lived – most likely lasting no longer than a single electoral cycle. It would likely be followed by another period of «rising from its knees», fuelled by the Russian empire’s deeply ingrained drive for revenge, expansion and the restoration of great-power status,²⁰ as well as by the West’s enduring belief in Russia’s immutability.

The timing of such a «revanchist» phase will, of course, depend on a number of factors, including the trajectory of Russia’s economy, the social, demographic and humanitarian situation across much of its territory, and relations among political and business elites. These factors, however, do not eliminate the risk of renewed aggression; they merely postpone it.

The cessation of active hostilities, therefore, is unlikely to produce a durable settlement of the conflict. The war has not only failed to resolve the political disagreements and underlying causes of the conflict; it has deepened them, destroyed the remaining trust between the parties, and further undermined confidence in both bilateral agreements and Russia’s international obligations.

Against this backdrop, the only effective safeguard against the kremlin violating future agreements – both during the initial period following a ceasefire and over the longer term after the end of active hostilities – may be the establishment of an international deterrence and enforcement mechanism (short of eliminating the source of the threat itself). Such a mechanism would need to alter the aggressor’s strategic cost-benefit calculations in favour of abandoning the use of force.

In fact, such a mechanism is envisaged under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter (see Annex 3), which sets out the conditions and procedures for the enforcement of peace. Its implementation, however, is constrained by the veto power of

¹⁹ «Support for Ukraine Is Not Charity»: Europe Must Work Towards Russia’s Capitulation. Opinion article by a Member of the Bundestag and a German Sociologist. NV, 2026, <https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/peremoga-ukrajini-chomu-bezumovna-kapitulyaciya-rosiji-ye-shlyahom-do-miru-v-yevropi-50608104.html> (in Ukrainian)

²⁰ Sergei Karaganov. «Some European Countries Must Perish.» Interview. <https://en.hvlyla.net/interview/2605-sergei-karaganov-some-european-countries-must-perish>

the nuclear-armed permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), the limited budgets available for peace operations, and the reluctance of UN member states to contribute military personnel to missions associated with a significant risk of casualties.

International experience from the mid-twentieth to the early twenty-first century suggests that ending a war, particularly with the involvement of external peacekeepers, rarely guarantees a durable peace. Recent decades have seen an average of around 50 active armed conflicts and some 60 peace operations worldwide. Most of these missions have focused on peacekeeping rather than peace enforcement and have often continued for years or even decades without achieving their ultimate objective of establishing a lasting peace. In most cases, therefore, international efforts have proved insufficient to compel belligerents to comply with obligations they have either voluntarily assumed or accepted under pressure.²¹

The challenge of resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict is, in many respects, both typical and unique among contemporary peace processes. Its defining feature is the special status of one of the parties – the Russian federation, which possesses both veto power in the UNSC and the world's largest nuclear arsenal.

Beyond long-term guarantees against renewed Russian aggression, a key unresolved issue is how to ensure compliance with a future ceasefire agreement, which would represent the first and most critical stage of ending the war.

The ability of the participants in the peace process to establish and maintain a ceasefire, and to ensure compliance with the agreed terms by the parties to the conflict, will be the first major test of any peace plan.

International experience in resolving armed conflicts suggests that the period immediately following a ceasefire carries the greatest risk of renewed hostilities. Even where the military and political leadership of the opposing sides is genuinely committed to maintaining a truce, or compelled to do so by circumstances, the peace process may be undermined by individual «spoilers of peace» or «beneficiaries of war» whose interests are not served by peace itself or by the terms of a settlement. This applies not only to veterans (particularly Russian ones) dissatisfied with their treatment by the state or struggling to reintegrate into civilian life, but also to a broader range of actors, including politicians, radical political parties and movements, war-oriented businesses, and criminal networks.

The experience of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine²² (21 March 2014 – 31 March 2022) gives a telling illustration of the «effectiveness» of international monitoring of ceasefire arrangements in the absence of mechanisms capable of compelling violators to comply with their obligations. A more recent example is the three-day ceasefire initiated by Donald Trump on 9–11 May 2026. Although no large-scale missile and drone attacks were launched against Ukraine's rear regions during that period, the ceasefire had no discernible impact on the intensity of fighting along the front line or on the shelling of frontline communities.²³

It is difficult to envisage an effective mechanism for international monitoring of a ceasefire, not so much because of the length of the contact line as because of the nature of the conflict itself, in which one of the parties – the initiator and the aggressor – is a nuclear power and a permanent member of the UNSC.

A «traditional» UN peacekeeping operation involving an international ground

²¹ See Part I of the *SIPRI Yearbooks 2000-2025*, <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook>

²² OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, <https://www.osce.org/uk/node/117786>

²³ See, for example, Operational Update as of 08:00, 11 May 2026, on the Russian Invasion. General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, <https://t.me/GeneralStaffZSU/38470>

contingent is currently regarded as an unrealistic option, given the enormous scale of the mission and the obvious challenges of staffing and financing it.²⁴ This would remain the case even if the Russian federation – as both a party to the conflict and a permanent member of the UNSC – were to consent to its deployment.

An alternative to a UN-led mission would be the deployment of a multinational force provided by a group of Western states (the Coalition of the Willing) to help enforce a ceasefire. The prospects for such an arrangement are also limited due to many of the same political and resource constraints. This assessment is reflected in a study by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).²⁵ Having examined three possible force structures for a ceasefire-monitoring coalition – small, medium and large-scale – together with the advantages and limitations of each, the IISS concludes that none can be regarded as capable of reliably guaranteeing compliance with a ceasefire agreement.

At the same time, the aggressor's «unique» status should not be regarded by the international community as an insurmountable obstacle to compelling it to make peace. Neither Russia's veto power in the UN nor its nuclear arsenal has prevented Ukraine – with the support of its international partners – from resisting aggression and inflicting military, geopolitical, socio-economic and other costs on the aggressor, thereby forcing it to seek an end to the conflict. This suggests that the pro-Ukrainian coalition already possesses a number of proven instruments of influence that could form part of a future system of international security guarantees for Ukraine.

KEY COMPONENTS, PRINCIPAL ACTORS AND POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS OF A SECURITY GUARANTEE FRAMEWORK FOR UKRAINE

The severe erosion of international law as a system of principles and norms designed to maintain peace and cooperation among states has become a defining feature of the current international environment. Equally evident is the inability of key international organisations, including the United Nations and the OSCE, to fulfil their core mandates of maintaining international peace and security, preventing and removing threats to peace, and suppressing acts of aggression and other breaches of the peace in accordance with the principles of justice and international law (UN Charter).²⁶

Against the backdrop of the deterioration of the existing international order, international law and the institutions responsible for upholding it currently play only a limited role as providers of security guarantees. Nevertheless, the principles they embody – including the non-use of force or the threat of force in interstate relations, and respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity – may form part of a broader system of security guarantees. These principles provide the normative foundation for such policies and, at the same time, require members of the international community to reject claims by the aggressor state to occupied territories and «new borders», and to refrain from economic activity in such territories, as was the case with Crimea and other temporarily occupied territories after 2014.

At its core, any system of security guarantees for Ukraine must rest on national defence capabilities, reinforced and supplemented

²⁴ Melnyk O., Umland A., Beyond the Minsk Agreements, https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_beyond_the_minsk_agreements/

²⁵ Ben Barry et al. «A European Reassurance Force for Ukraine: Options and Challenges, <https://www.iiss.org/research-paper/2025/03/a-european-reassurance-force-for-ukraine-options-and-challenges/>

²⁶

by bilateral and multilateral international commitments.

Membership in collective security arrangements does not absolve allies of the need, or the obligation, to develop their own defence capabilities. Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, for example, provides that «...the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of **continuous and effective self-help** and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their **individual** and collective capacity to resist armed attack» (*emphasis added*).

As Ukraine is not a member of either NATO or the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy framework, it has been compelled by the realities of war to strengthen its own defence capabilities while also concluding bilateral security cooperation agreements with members of both organisations. In both the short and long term, these efforts provide the foundation for broader collective capabilities.

The *Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine*, adopted by the G7 at the NATO Vilnius Summit on 12 July 2023, established a framework for long-term security commitments to Ukraine on its path towards Alliance membership.²⁷ The declaration envisages the conclusion of bilateral agreements covering defence, financial and intelligence assistance to Ukraine by the signatory states. Building on the G7 declaration, 29 such agreements have been concluded to date. Each sets out a framework for cooperation in areas including security and defence, the economy, the defence industry, energy, good governance, and countering disinformation and hybrid threats.

Taken individually, none of these agreements provides Ukraine with security guarantees against Russian aggression. Taken together, however, they constitute important elements of Ukraine's ability to

strengthen its defence capabilities, protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and secure access to military, financial, economic and humanitarian assistance in defending itself against aggression.

Nor are these bilateral agreements static. They continue to evolve and expand in ways that increase their mutual benefits for both Ukraine and the signatory states. Ukraine has now evolved from a net recipient into a contributor to security and is increasingly regarded by many European countries as a guarantor against the spread of Russian aggression beyond Ukraine's borders.

In 2025, the US-Ukraine agreement on the joint development of critical mineral resources²⁸ was presented as a real security guarantee, on the assumption that its conclusion would help protect Ukraine from future aggression. In reality, however, the agreement creates opportunities to attract funding for the reconstruction and modernisation of Ukraine in response to the extensive destruction caused by full-scale invasion, while offering little in terms of preventing such aggression from recurring. Moreover, the «spirit of the agreement» did not prevent the US negotiating team from subsequently accepting Russia's demand that Ukraine withdraw its Armed Forces from Donetsk Oblast.

During 2025 and early 2026, the focus of efforts to provide Ukraine with «security guarantees» shifted somewhat from the conclusion of bilateral agreements towards a collective European response to Russian aggression through the creation of a Coalition of the Willing», which also includes several non-EU countries, namely the United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, Türkiye and Australia. The coalition's principal objectives were outlined by UK Defence Secretary John Healey at the opening of its meeting at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on 10 April 2025.²⁹

²⁷ See G7 Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/07/12/g7-joint-declaration-of-support-for-ukraine/>

²⁸ Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the United States of America on the Establishment of the United States-Ukraine Reconstruction Investment Fund (Limited Partnership Agreement), <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/uploads/public/681/33c/e8f/68133ce8f2e82842702204.pdf>

²⁹ Coalition of the Willing in Brussels sets four goals for reassurance force in Ukraine. *Ukrainska Pravda*, 10 April 2025. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/04/10/7506972/>

«Our plans are well developed, and we have clear objectives for Ukraine: first, to secure safe skies; second, to secure safe seas; third, to support peace on land; and fourth, to help the Ukrainian Armed Forces become their own strongest possible deterrent.»

Several initiatives aimed at advancing these objectives emerged in the context of conflict settlement efforts. These included a joint initiative by the United Kingdom, France and Türkiye to establish a peacekeeping force to monitor compliance with a future peace agreement,³⁰ and a French initiative to create «three lines of defence»³¹ designed to provide long-term support for Ukraine's defence capabilities.

However, both these Coalition initiatives (which were intended exclusively for the post-settlement period) and the Coalition's activities more broadly encountered **two fundamental constraints from the outset. First, the unwillingness of the parties to the conflict to compromise in negotiations, combined with the reluctance of European states to enter into a direct confrontation with Russia. Second, the need for US backing of European initiatives and the refusal of the Trump administration to provide such support.**

As a result, the Coalition has so far functioned primarily as a coordinating and political forum, while assistance to Ukraine continues to be provided by its members through bilateral agreements.

Among the many factors that could constrain the effectiveness of a coalition, whatever form it may take, the role of the United States remains central. The key concern is the well-founded uncertainty over whether the current US administration is willing to provide active support for such an initiative. In this context, US support means not only compensating for Europe's military capability gaps, but above all providing the political and military umbrella without which

the risks of mission failure and direct confrontation with Russian forces would increase significantly.

The United States

For Ukraine and its partners, the United States remains the key external guarantor of security, whether through bilateral commitments or participation in a broader multilateral framework. Even a limited US role in future security arrangements – without, for example, the deployment of American ground forces – would carry significant political weight. More importantly, **the United States is the only country capable, both now and in the foreseeable future, of providing not only a nuclear deterrent but also the air and space, intelligence, and logistical capabilities that European allies currently lack.** The lessons of the Russia-Ukraine war are also likely to prompt a reassessment of existing doctrines of nuclear deterrence among theorists, policymakers and military strategists.

The Trump administration has shown little willingness either to pressure the kremlin into compromise or to participate in collective or bilateral mechanisms for providing security guarantees to Ukraine. At the same time, the US reluctance to assume additional commitments cannot be explained solely by the policies of the current administration or by the personal views of Donald Trump and his advisers. It reflects deeper structural constraints arising from the growing mismatch between America's global ambitions and the military and economic resources available to sustain them.³²

Accordingly, in light of both current and long-term trends in US foreign policy, as well as recent developments in the Middle East, **the perception of the United States as a security guarantor – whether through bilateral arrangements or as the cornerstone of a multilateral framework – requires critical reassessment.**

³⁰ The West Is Preparing Real Security Guarantees for Ukraine: What France, the United Kingdom and Türkiye Are Proposing, TSN, 16 April 2025, <https://tsn.ua/svit/zakhid-hotuye-realni-harantiyi-bezpeky-dlia-ukrayiny-shcho-proponuiut-frantsiia-brytaniia-taturechchyna-2993852.html> (in Ukrainian)

³¹ The West considering 3 lines of defense for Ukraine if war ends, <https://news.am/en/news/901321>

³² A Grand Strategy of Consolidation, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/trump-grand-strategy-consolidation-wes-mitchell>

One lesson that leaders across the Gulf region and beyond may need to draw is that an alliance with the United States no longer guarantees security.³³ According to Jim O'Neill – former UK Treasury Minister, Chair of Chatham House, and the author of the BRIC acronym – the war against Iran could accelerate an ongoing realignment of global trade and diplomatic relations that has been unfolding since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. This could include closer ties between the Gulf states and China and India, accompanied by a gradual distancing from the West. Although O'Neill's analysis focuses primarily on economic developments, the underlying premise of his forecast is the declining credibility of the United States as a security guarantor.³⁴

Therefore, notwithstanding the importance of obtaining security commitments from Washington, the efforts and concessions required to secure them may ultimately prove to be of limited practical value. This reflects not only precedents from the recent past and changes in US foreign policy since the beginning of Donald Trump's second term, but also the objective constraints on America's ability to sustain such commitments.

Russia

Russia's official position on security guarantees for Ukraine as part of a peace settlement amounts to verbal acceptance combined with the systematic removal of any substantive content from such guarantees. In particular, the kremlin categorically rejects the deployment of Western troops in post-war Ukraine, portraying any foreign military presence on Ukrainian territory as a threat to Russia's security and warning that such forces would be treated as legitimate military targets.³⁵

At the same time, the kremlin – paradoxically for a state claiming great-power status – demands security guarantees for itself as a «key element» of any peace agreement. While arguing that a settlement must include «security guarantees for Russia», not only for Ukraine,³⁶ Moscow also rejects any proposals that could obstruct the achievement of the objectives of the «special military operation» or the elimination of its alleged «root causes». In practice, this means accepting Russian ultimatums, including NATO's withdrawal to its 1997 borders, the demilitarisation of Ukraine, and the replacement of Ukraine's democratically elected government with a pro-Russian regime.³⁷ In other words, security guarantees for Russia would, in the kremlin's view, mean removing any obstacles to the pursuit of its imperial ambitions. In return, Russia is prepared to offer only «soft» commitments, presenting itself as a peace-loving state while avoiding meaningful mechanisms for verification or enforcement.

Thus, Russia's vision of security guarantees would effectively undermine Ukraine's capacity for self-defence while imposing significant constraints on NATO's defence capabilities. **Whereas Ukraine sees security guarantees as a means of deterring future Russian aggression, Russia seeks «guarantees» that would secure freedom of action for its expansionist foreign policy, recognition of its claimed spheres of influence, and the right to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring states.**

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For virtually the entire period of modern Russian-Ukrainian relations, interactions between the two states have been marked by persistent interstate conflict, culminating

³³ Jim O'Neill, «The End of the War in Iran: What China Will Do.» NV, 26 June 2025, <https://nv.ua/ukr/opinion/tramp-si-czinpin-zustrich-chomu-kitay-hoche-shvidkogo-zakinchennya-viyini-proti-iranu-50591321.html> (in Ukrainian)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Max Hunder and Susan Heavey, «Putin Says Foreign Troops in Ukraine Would Be Legitimate Targets», September 5, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-foreign-troops-ukraine-would-be-legitimate-targets-2025-09-05/>

³⁶ Senior Russian Diplomat Says Moscow Also Needs Security Guarantees, <https://www.reuters.com/world/senior-russian-diplomat-says-moscow-also-needs-security-guarantees-2026-02-09/>

³⁷ Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, February 4, 2026, <https://understandingwar.org/research/russia-ukraine/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-4-2026/>

in Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine. By mid-2026, the war had reached the point of a protracted war of attrition – a strategic stalemate in which neither side appears capable of achieving a decisive military victory.

Under these circumstances, a political and diplomatic settlement is widely regarded as the most likely path to ending the war. This would require the parties to abandon their maximalist objectives, accept mutual compromises, and rely on effective external guarantees to ensure compliance with any peace agreement.

However, a negotiated end to the war would not eliminate the deep-rooted civilisational, political, economic and social contradictions between the parties, nor their competing claims and grievances. Such an outcome would be viable only if:

- ✓ both sides demonstrated equal respect for international law and honoured their commitments – something that, as discussed above, appears unlikely in Russia's case beyond the immediate post-war period;

- ✓ international security organisations proved highly effective and possessed robust mechanisms for verification and enforcement – capabilities that, as also noted above, remain clearly inadequate.

This is precisely why Ukraine, significantly weakened by the war and facing a far larger and more resourceful aggressive neighbour, requires additional security guarantees.

First and foremost, the cessation of active hostilities is unlikely to resolve the conflict. The war has not only failed to address the political contradictions and underlying causes that gave rise to the conflict but has deepened them. It has also destroyed the remaining foundations of mutual trust and respect for bilateral agreements and Russia's international obligations.

Accordingly, preventing the kremlin from violating ceasefire arrangements and non-aggression commitments will require a comprehensive system of deterrence and punishment capable of altering the strategic calculations of Russia's political and military leadership in favour of restraint. Legally binding external guarantees must, in turn, be supported

by credible mechanisms and instruments for their implementation.

Potential guarantors of Ukraine's security should bear in mind that Russia's official position on such guarantees as part of a peace settlement amounts to verbal acceptance coupled with the systematic removal of their substantive content. When moscow speaks of security guarantees as a «key element» of a peace agreement, this should be understood first and foremost as a demand for «security guarantees for Russia» – that is, the removal of any meaningful obstacles to the pursuit of its imperial ambitions.

There can be little doubt that providing Ukraine with reliable security guarantees is one of the key preconditions for ending the Russia-Ukraine war and minimising the risk of renewed Russian aggression in the future. However, the absence of a common position between Kyiv and its key partners – the potential providers of such guarantees – regarding the form and substance of mechanisms for deterring and punishing a potential aggressor remains a factor that slows the peace process and hinders efforts to bring the kremlin to meaningful negotiations.

Ukrainian society's firm insistence on obtaining reliable guarantees against future Russian aggression as an integral part of any peace agreement, together with its unwillingness to sacrifice long-term prospects for peace in exchange for an immediate ceasefire, significantly strengthens Kyiv's negotiating position in defining the limits of acceptable compromise, including with regard to security guarantees.

History shows that even the most carefully crafted provisions and legally binding treaty commitments contain inherent limitations and strategic ambiguities. Nor do they invariably guarantee that an ally will enter a war if doing so runs counter to its national interests or if the risks of honouring its commitments are perceived to outweigh those of disregarding them.

Despite legitimate reservations about the reliability of political and legally binding security guarantees, their existence can significantly strengthen a state's capacity for deterrence and defence by forcing a potential aggressor to factor in the military and political

risks of confronting a broader coalition of allies. Even the possibility that allies might honour security commitments can become a decisive source of strategic uncertainty in an aggressor's calculations.

For the time being, however, such guarantees remain largely theoretical. The lack of any realistic prospect that Ukraine will receive binding commitments of immediate military assistance from individual states or coalitions of states – let alone see such commitments honoured in the event of a renewed Russian attack – stems primarily from the risks of direct military confrontation with Russia and possible nuclear escalation.

Minimising these risks will depend to a large extent on the degree of direct or indirect US involvement in guaranteeing Ukraine's security, whether through a bilateral agreement with Ukraine and/or a commitment to provide comprehensive support to the Coalition of the Willing. The coalition's credibility and resolve would, in turn, depend heavily on the protection afforded by the US security umbrella, including its nuclear component.

The United States continues to play a leading role in international efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war and to develop mechanisms for enforcing a ceasefire and providing long-term security guarantees for Ukraine. At the same time, the White House's foreign policy – and in particular its demonstrative disregard for its own commitments and the interests of allies around the world – has raised growing doubts about the reliability of US guarantees and, consequently, about the wisdom of paying for uncertain promises with

real resources and unacceptable territorial concessions. In light of both current and long-term trends in US foreign policy, as well as recent developments in the Middle East, the perception of the United States as a security guarantor – whether through bilateral arrangements or as a key component of a multilateral framework – requires critical reassessment.

Recognising these and other limitations of international security guarantees, as well as the realities of their implementation, is essential for maintaining realistic expectations when considering options such as «NATO-light» arrangements (security guarantees modelled on Article 5), eventual full membership in NATO (or alternative security coalitions), or a bilateral security agreement with the United States, however unlikely the latter may appear.

Even so, the foundations have already been laid for the gradual development of a broader framework – or «package» – of measures that could bring Ukraine closer to obtaining long-term and reliable security guarantees. These should be built on national defence capabilities, complemented and reinforced by bilateral and multilateral commitments.

Today, more than ever, it is important to take a critical view of both the prospects for obtaining formal security guarantees and their actual substance, while also focusing on realistic mechanisms for securing and implementing them. This would help Ukraine maintain the most well-grounded position possible in peace negotiations and minimise the risk of repeating mistakes such as the Budapest Memorandum.

Public Opinion on Security Guarantees for Ukraine¹

When considering different options for Ukraine's long-term security guarantees, including as part of a peace settlement and the compromises that Ukraine may be prepared to accept, public opinion is a key consideration. Ukrainian society has repeatedly demonstrated an active civic position and a willingness to assume responsibility for the country's future at critical moments in its modern history.

Ukrainian society harbours significant – and, given recent experience, well-founded – doubts about Russia's willingness to comply with any peace agreement. 75.2% of respondents believe that «Russia will violate the agreement and attack Ukraine again as soon as it is convenient for it.» (Diagram «Which of the following statements do you agree with most?»).

When asked about possible concessions by Ukraine for the sake of a peace agreement with the aggressor state, 73.1% of respondents categorically rejected any compromise on real security guarantees. A plurality of respondents also considered abandoning Ukraine's course towards EU membership (47.9%) and NATO membership (48.6%) unacceptable, viewing both as components of long-term security guarantees. (Diagram «Thinking about the different aspects of a possible peace agreement with Russia, in which of the following areas do you believe Ukraine can make concessions, and in which can it not?»).

When asked about possible concessions by Ukraine for the sake of a peace agreement with the aggressor state, 73.1% of respondents rejected any compromise on real security guarantees. Respondents were also unwilling to abandon Ukraine's course towards EU membership (47.9%) and NATO

membership (48.6%), both of which are widely viewed as components of long-term security guarantees. (Diagram «If you were to take part in a referendum on Ukraine's accession to the EU, how would you vote?», «If you were to take part in a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO, how would you vote?»).

An overwhelming majority of Ukrainian citizens would vote in favour of Ukraine's accession to the EU (83%) and NATO (71.3%). It is also noteworthy how sharply public support for membership in both organisations has increased during the years of full-scale aggression: support for EU membership rose from 55.6% in 2021 to 83% in 2026, while support for NATO membership increased from 47.8% to 71.3%. (Diagram «If you were to take part in a referendum on Ukraine's accession to the EU, how would you vote?», «If you were to take part in a referendum on Ukraine's accession to NATO, how would you vote?»).

As for perceptions of the reliability of different security guarantees, 88.2% of Ukrainians consider the most reliable option (combining the responses «completely reliable» and «rather reliable») to be «strengthening Ukraine's Armed Forces and broader defence capabilities without restrictions, while ensuring their stable funding». Other security guarantees included in the survey ranked lower but were nevertheless regarded as reliable by most respondents. (Diagram «Do you consider the following security guarantees reliable if they are provided to Ukraine?»).

When asked to choose between different forms of external security guarantees, «NATO membership» was seen as the best way to ensure Ukraine's security, receiving support roughly three times higher than either «neutral status» or various bilateral and

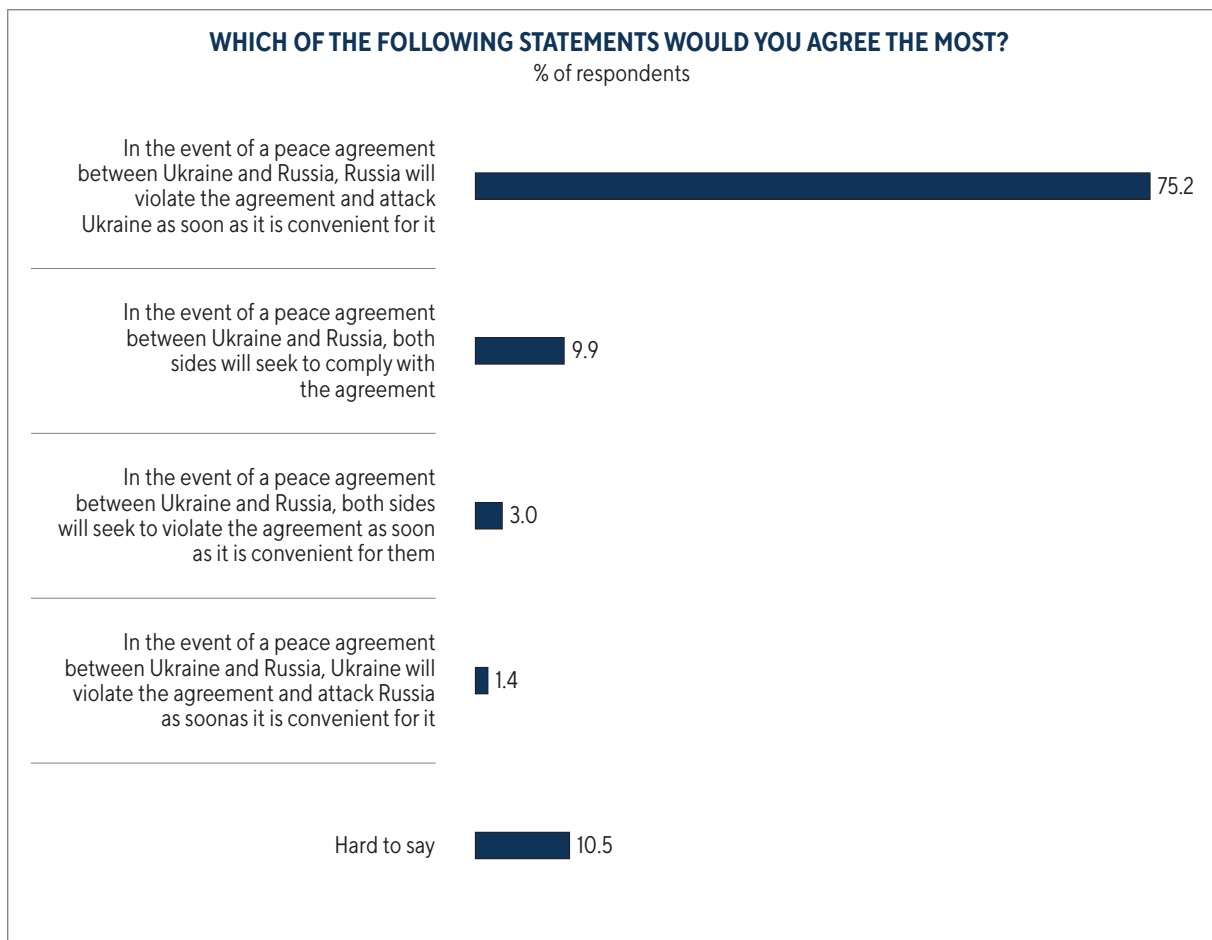
¹ Razumkov Centre sociological survey data. For further details, see: <https://razumkov.org.ua/sotsiologija/pres-relizy>.

multilateral security arrangements. (Diagram «What do you consider the best way to ensure Ukraine's security?»).

A majority of Ukrainians (57.8%) believe that NATO is capable of defending itself effectively in the event of a Russian attack, although nearly one-third (28.6%) disagree. (Diagram «Do you think NATO is capable of defending itself effectively in the event of a Russian attack?»).

At the same time, despite confidence in NATO's ability – presumably its military capability – to defend itself against a Russian attack, and despite the perception of NATO membership as the best way to ensure Ukraine's

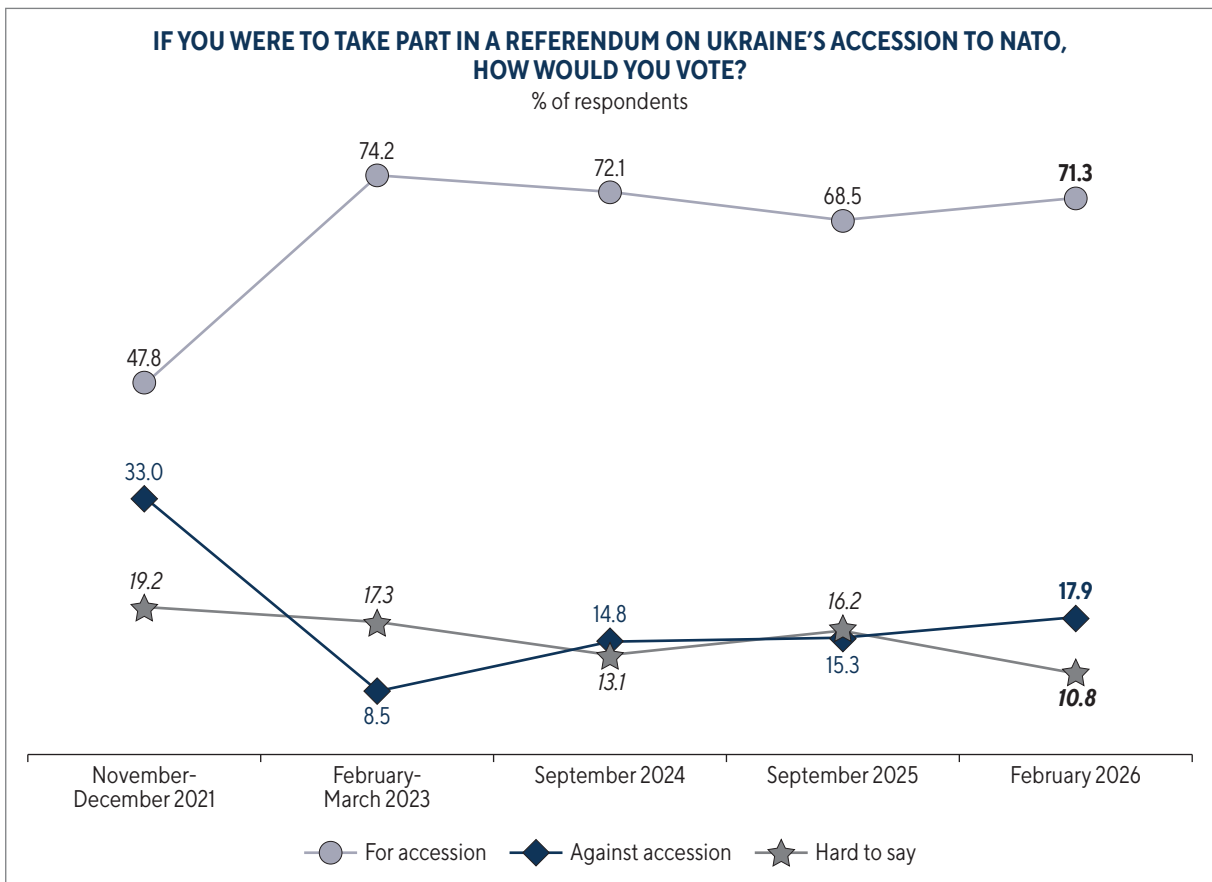
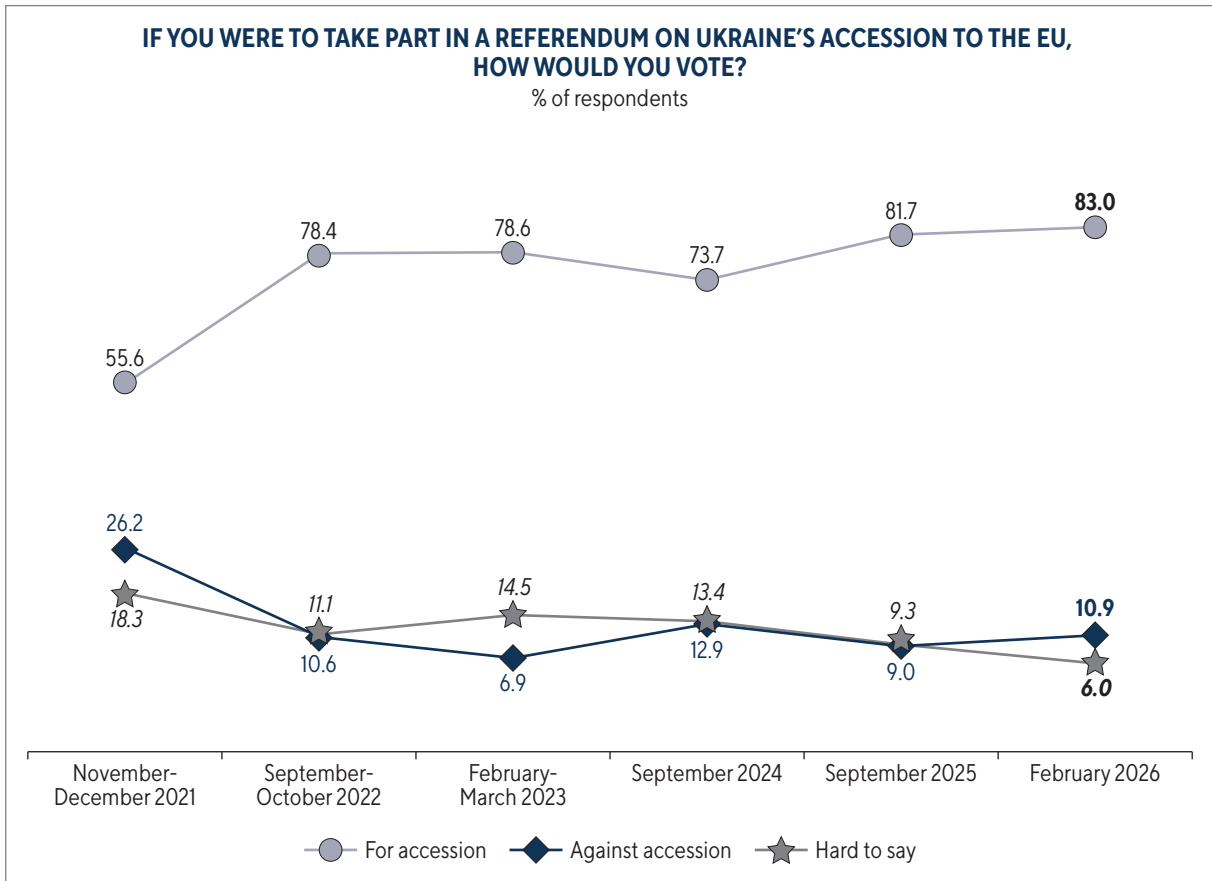
security, only 24.5% of respondents believe that «if one member state is attacked, all NATO members will immediately come to its assistance», while 25.3% agree that «NATO member states will not risk the lives of their citizens for the security of their allies». Notably, 39.2% of respondents chose the answer «rather yes, but primary responsibility for security and defence should rest with national governments». This view closely mirrors the findings cited above regarding the most reliable security guarantee: «strengthening Ukraine's Armed Forces and broader defence capabilities without restrictions, while ensuring their stable funding». (Diagram «Do you believe in the reliability of collective security guarantees for NATO member stat



**THINKING ABOUT THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF
A POSSIBLE PEACE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA, IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING
AREAS DO YOU BELIEVE UKRAINE CAN MAKE CONCESSIONS, AND IN WHICH CAN IT NOT?**

% of respondents





DO YOU CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SECURITY GUARANTEES RELIABLE IF THEY ARE PROVIDED TO UKRAINE?

% of respondents

Strengthening Ukraine's Armed Forces and broader defence capabilities without restrictions, while ensuring their stable funding



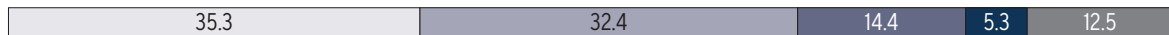
Establishing a no-fly zone as part of security guarantees for Ukraine, with Western countries providing air patrols, fighter-aircraft cover, and air-defence protection for Ukraine's airports



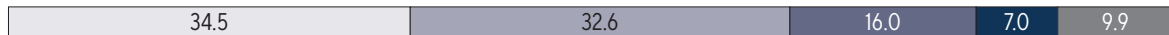
Maintaining an effective sanctions policy



Ukraine joining NATO



Creating conditions for Ukraine's membership in the European Union, including the opening of accession negotiations



Establishing, as part of a future peace agreement, a 40-kilometre buffer zone between Ukrainian and Russian forces, together with the deployment of a large European military contingent in Ukraine's rear areas



Deploying personnel from US private military companies in Ukraine



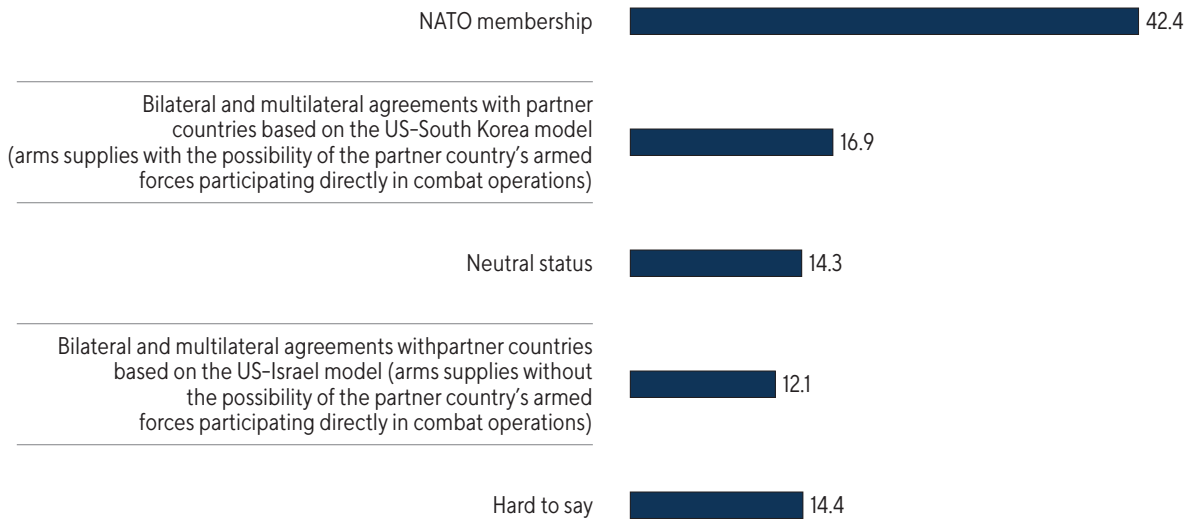
Establishing a system of legally binding multilateral security guarantees at the level of heads of state, providing for defence support to Ukraine



Completely reliable
 Rather reliable
 Rather unreliable
 Completely unreliable
 Hard to say

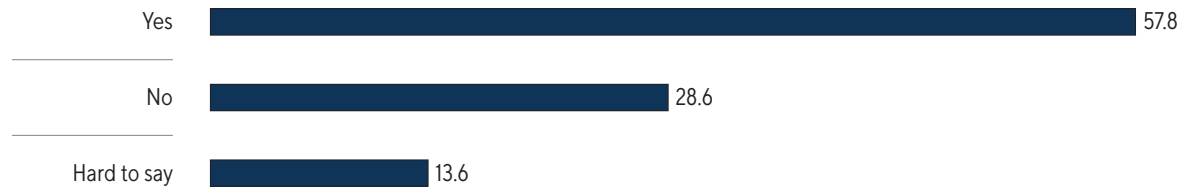
WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE BEST WAY TO ENSURE UKRAINE'S SECURITY?

% of respondents



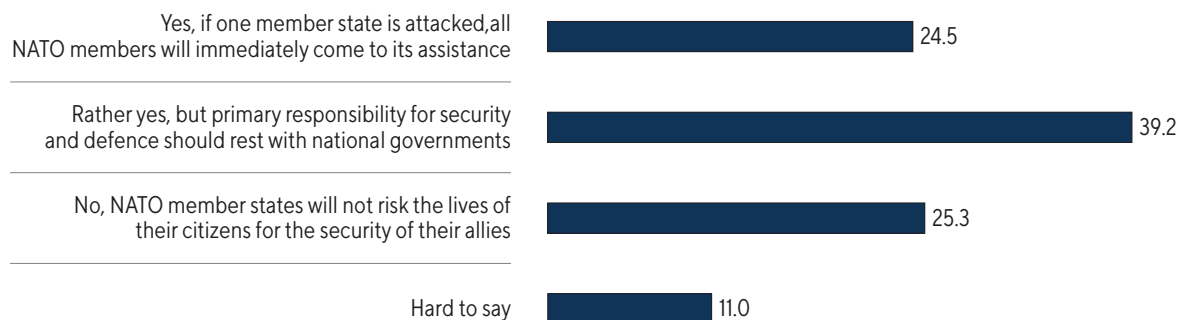
DO YOU THINK NATO IS CAPABLE OF DEFENDING ITSELF EFFECTIVELY IN THE EVENT OF A RUSSIAN ATTACK?

% of respondents



DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE RELIABILITY OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY GUARANTEES FOR NATO MEMBER STATES?

% of respondents



WHICH COUNTRIES DO YOU CONSIDER RELIABLE PROVIDERS OF SECURITY GUARANTEES, AND WHICH DO YOU CONSIDER UNRELIABLE?				
% опитаних				
	Would honour the guarantees and would be able to protect Ukraine	Would honour the guarantees, but would be unable to protect Ukraine	Would not honour the guarantees if it provided them	Hard to say
The European Union as a whole	61.9	23.9	5.9	8.3
NATO as a whole	54.8	21.3	11.2	12.7
The United Kingdom	49.4	33.6	6.5	10.5
The United States	44.0	26.0	13.2	16.9
Germany	35.7	48.3	6.4	9.5
The Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden)	24.0	54.7	7.3	13.9
France	23.7	58.1	6.0	12.3
Canada	22.3	54.6	7.6	15.5
The Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia)	20.1	63.8	4.4	11.7
Turkey	17.6	46.1	18.7	17.6
Poland	17.1	57.6	12.9	12.4
Czechia	12.3	61.1	7.3	19.4
Italy	11.6	56.6	13.2	18.6
Romania	4.2	50.6	25.0	20.1
China	4.1	9.4	74.3	12.1
Russia	1.2	1.5	90.0	7.3

Expert Assessments of Security Guarantees for Ukraine¹

The importance of securing long-term security guarantees for Ukraine as a critical prerequisite for ensuring Russia's compliance with a ceasefire and creating the conditions for a lasting and sustainable peace is self-evident. Accordingly, 90% of surveyed experts believe that «credible security guarantees for Ukraine» cannot be subject to compromise for the sake of reaching a peace agreement with Russia. Only a small minority take the opposite view (6.7%) or have no opinion on the matter (3.3%). The issues on which Ukrainian experts are most willing to contemplate concessions also affect the effectiveness of security guarantees, but are generally viewed as less critical components of the broader framework of domestic and international guarantees. (Diagram «*Thinking about the different aspects of a possible peace agreement with Russia, in which of the following areas do you believe Ukraine can make concessions, and in which can it not?*»).

An overwhelming majority of Ukrainian experts (93.3%) agree with the statement that «in the event of a peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia, Russia will violate the agreement and attack Ukraine as soon as it is convenient for it». (Diagram «*Which of the following statements do you agree with most?*»).

When assessing potential security guarantees – or, more precisely, individual components of a broader security guarantee framework – Ukrainian experts consider the following to be the most reliable (combining the responses «completely reliable» and «rather reliable»):

- ✓ partner support in developing a strong Ukrainian defence-industrial sector capable of meeting the core needs of the Defence Forces, including through joint ventures (93.3%);

- ✓ partner support for strengthening the Armed Forces of Ukraine and broader defence capabilities without restrictions, while ensuring their stable funding (86.7%);

- ✓ Ukraine's accession to the European Union (83.3%);

- ✓ Ukraine's accession to NATO (70%);

- ✓ effective sanctions policy against Russia (63.3%).

The highest-rated guarantees are those linked to Ukraine's own defence capabilities. Notably, Ukraine's membership in the European Union is regarded as a more reliable component of the broader security guarantee framework than NATO membership. At the same time, NATO accession received the highest share of responses in the category «completely reliable» (36.7%). (Diagram «*Do you consider the following security guarantees reliable if they are provided to Ukraine?*»).

NATO membership was also viewed by Ukrainian experts as the best way to ensure Ukraine's security (56.7%) among the available models of security cooperation with partners. Given the opportunity to select only one option, none of the experts surveyed preferred agreements that provide for arms supplies without the possibility of the partner country's armed forces participating directly in combat operations, let alone neutral status. (Diagram «*Which model of security cooperation with partner countries do you consider the best way to ensure Ukraine's security?*»).

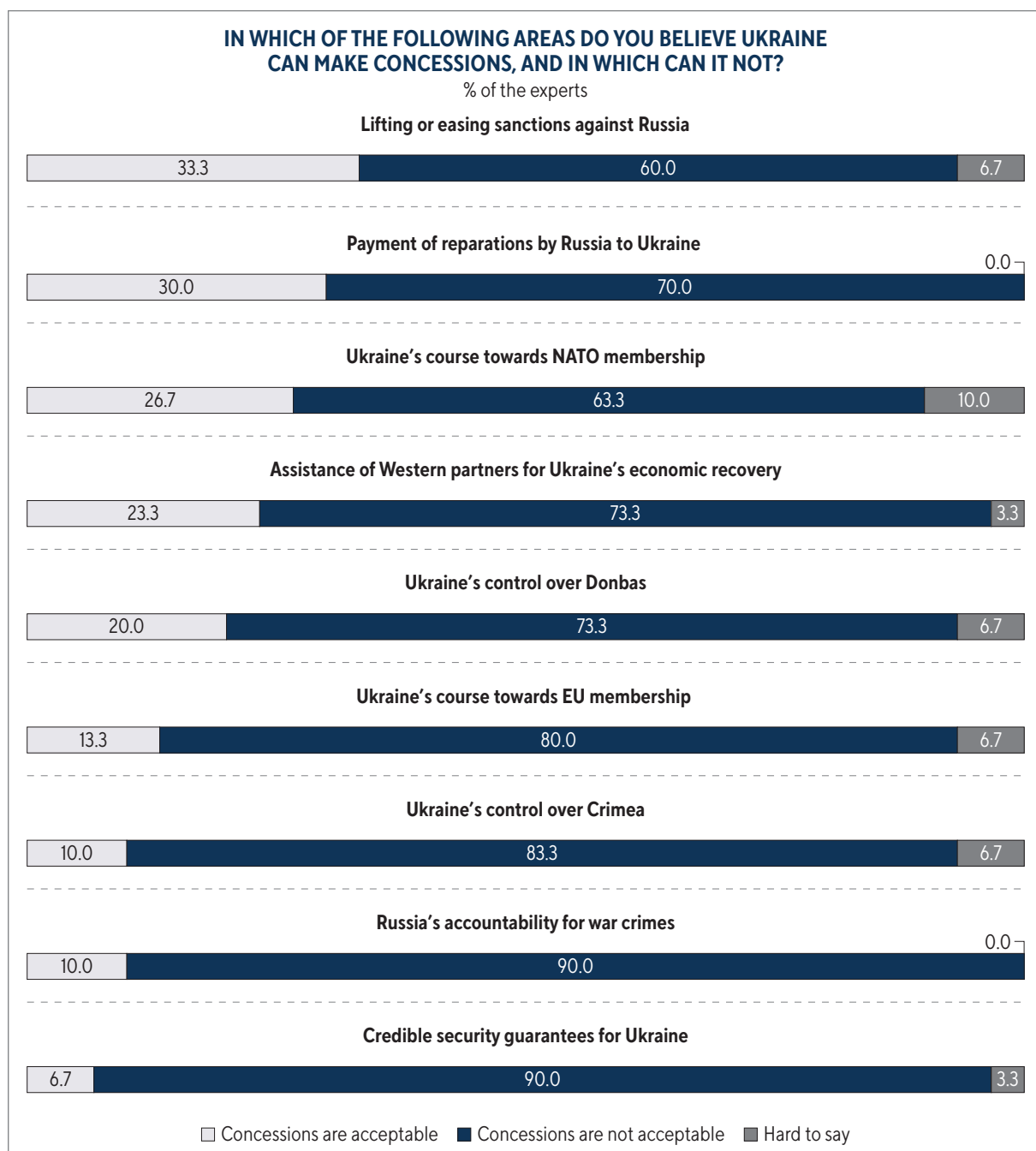
Only 3.3% of experts believe that all NATO members would immediately come to the assistance of a member state under attack. By contrast, an overwhelming majority of Ukrainian experts (83.3%) chose the response: «Rather yes, but primary responsibility for security and defence should rest with national governments». At the same time, 13.3% expressed confidence that «NATO member states will not risk the lives of their citizens for the security of their allies». (Diagram «*Do you believe in the reliability of collective security guarantees for NATO member states?*»).

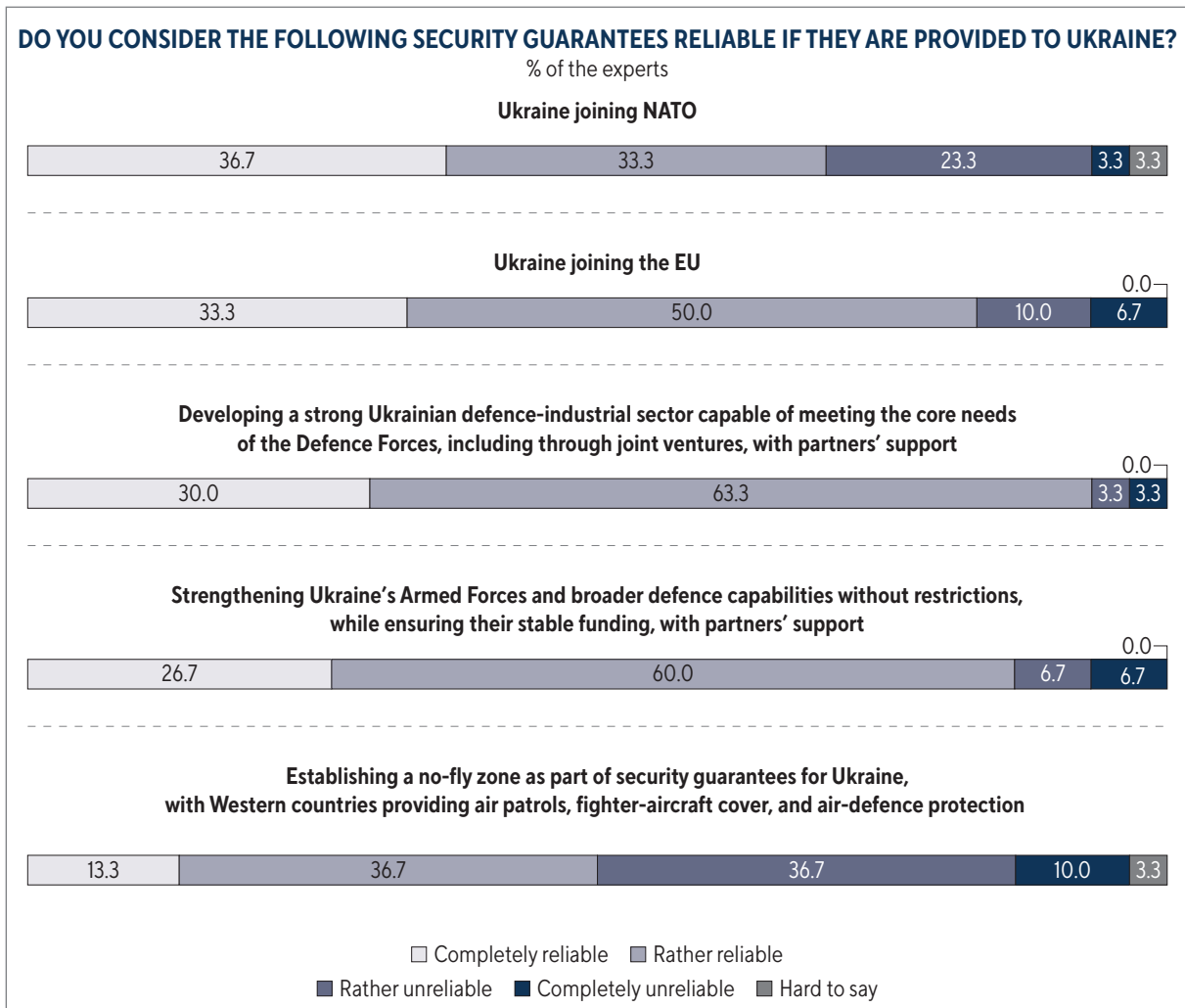
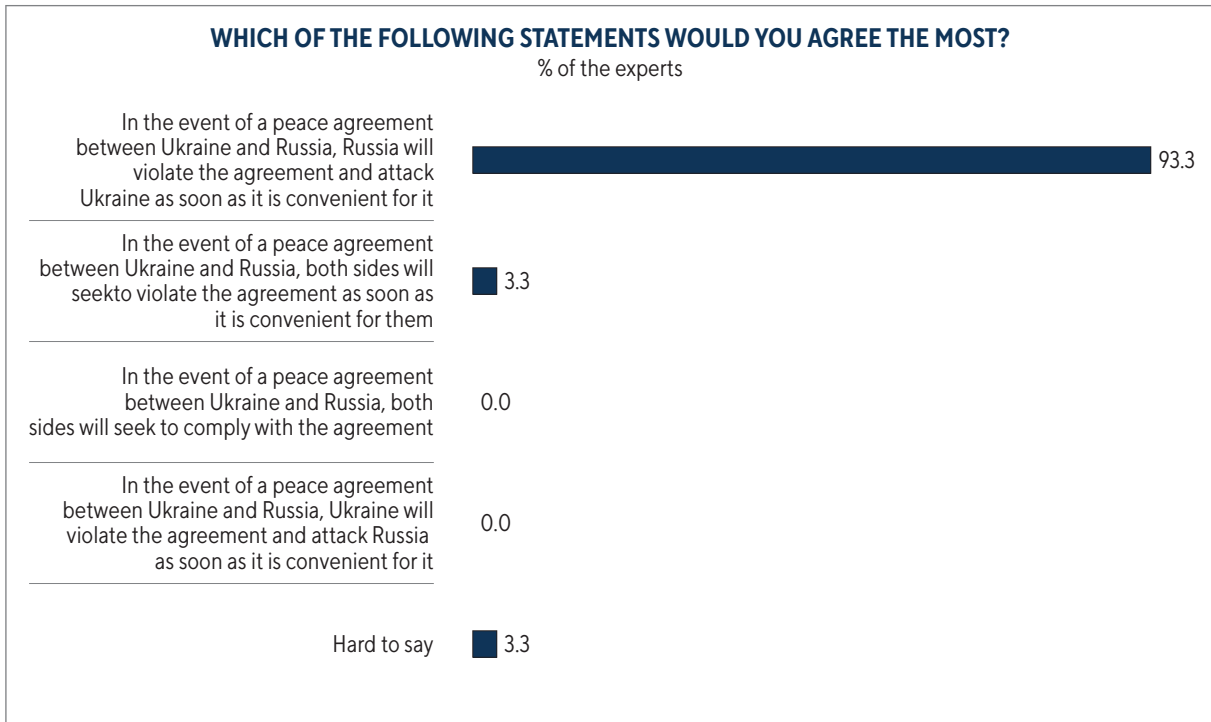
¹ The expert survey was conducted by the Razumkov Centre's Sociological Service between 17 and 27 April 2026. A total of 30 government and non-government experts in the fields of international relations and national security were surveyed.

Ukrainian experts expressed a high degree of confidence in the reliability of most Western partners. None of the respondents questioned the willingness of the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), the United Kingdom, Poland or Romania to honour their commitments. Only a small proportion expressed doubts about other partners or about the willingness of the European Union (10%) and NATO (13.3%) to uphold their guarantees. By contrast, one-third of experts (33.3%) believe that the United States would not honour such guarantees, while a further 20% were unable to give a definite answer. Particular attention should be paid to expert

assessments of the willingness and ability of the United States – the key potential guarantor of Ukraine’s security. Only one-quarter of Ukrainian experts (26.7%) believe that the United States would honour its guarantees and be able to protect Ukraine.

Security guarantees offered by Russia and China received almost uniformly negative assessments. None of the Ukrainian experts surveyed considered guarantees from either Moscow or Beijing to be reliable or effective. (Diagram «Do you consider security guarantees from the following countries to be reliable and effective?»).





DO YOU CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SECURITY GUARANTEES RELIABLE IF THEY ARE PROVIDED TO UKRAINE?

% of the experts

(continued)

Maintaining an effective sanctions policy against Russia



Establishing a system of legally binding multilateral security guarantees at the level of heads of state, providing for defence support to Ukraine



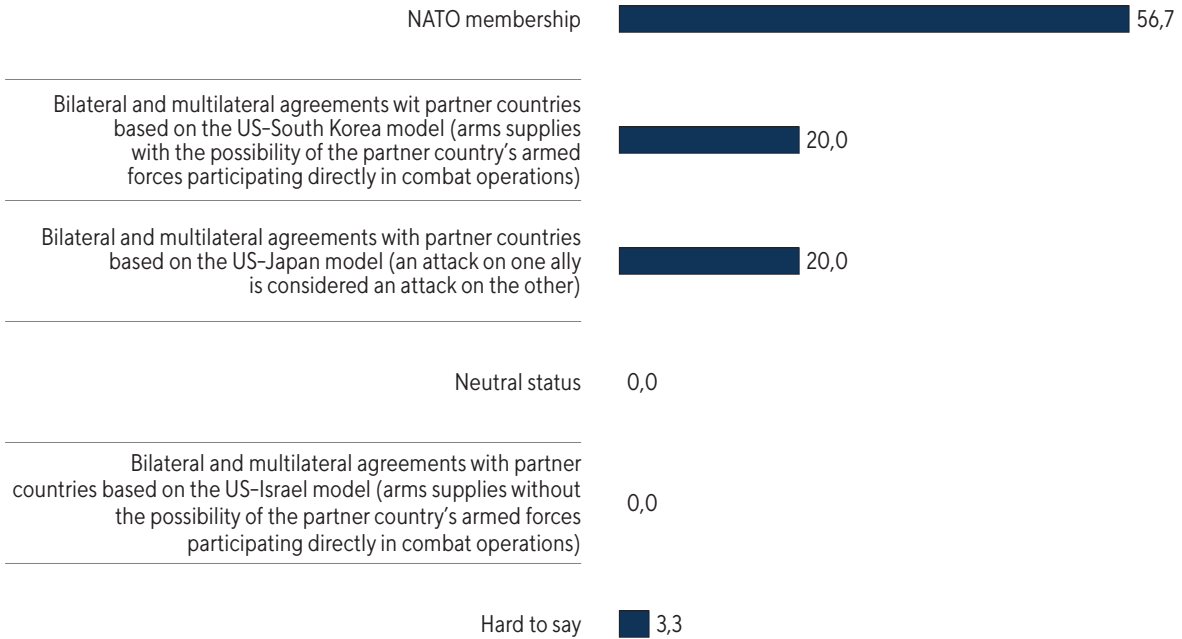
Establishing, as part of a future peace agreement, a 40-kilometre buffer zone between Ukrainian and Russian forces, together with the deployment of a large European military contingent in Ukraine's rear areas



Completely reliable
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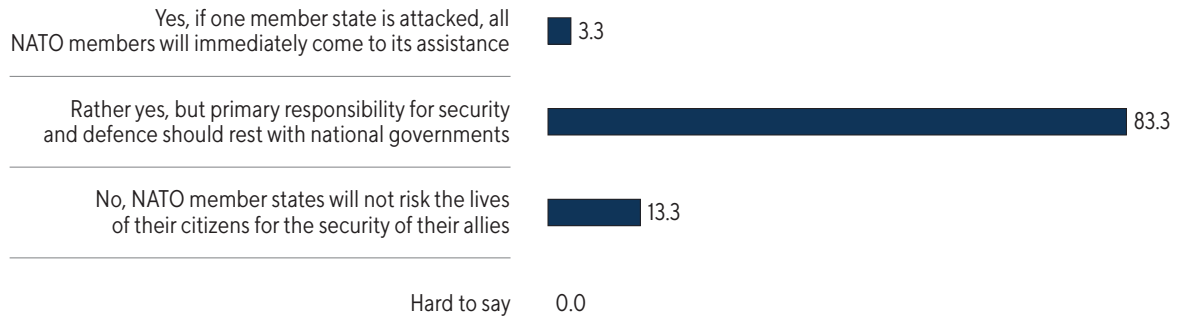
WHICH MODEL OF SECURITY COOPERATION WITH PARTNER COUNTRIES DO YOU CONSIDER THE BEST WAY TO ENSURE UKRAINE'S SECURITY?

% of the experts



DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE RELIABILITY OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY GUARANTEES FOR NATO MEMBER STATES?

% of the experts



DO YOU CONSIDER SECURITY GUARANTEES FROM THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES TO BE RELIABLE AND EFFECTIVE

% of the experts

	Would honour the guarantees and would be able to protect Ukraine	Would honour the guarantees, but would be unable to protect Ukraine	Would not honour the guarantees if it provided them	Hard to say
The United Kingdom	43.3	50.0	0.0	6.7
The Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden)	33.3	60.0	3.3	3.3
NATO as a whole	33.3	40.0	13.3	13.3
The United States	26.7	20.0	33.3	20.0
Poland	20.0	70.0	0.0	10.0
Germany	13.3	66.7	10.0	10.0
The Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia)	10.0	86.7	0.0	3.3
The European Union as a whole	10.0	66.7	10.0	13.3
France	10.0	76.7	3.3	10.0
Canada	10.0	80.0	3.3	6.7
Turkey	6.7	56.7	16.7	20.0
Czechia	6.7	70.0	6.7	16.7
Romania	3.3	86.7	0.0	10.0
Italy	0.0	73.3	13.3	13.3
China	0.0	0.0	83.3	16.7
Russia	0.0	0.0	90.0	10.0

International Legal Acts and Documents of International Organisations Concerning Security Guarantees¹

TREATY ON FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (1997)¹

(excerpt)

Article 1

The High Contracting Parties, as friendly, equal and sovereign States, shall base their relations on mutual respect and confidence, strategic partnership and cooperation.

Article 2

The High Contracting Parties, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and their obligations under the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, shall respect each other's territorial integrity and confirm the inviolability of their common borders.

Article 3

The High Contracting Parties shall base their relations with each other on the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the non-use of force or threat of force, including economic and other means of pressure, the right of peoples to control their own destiny, non-interference in internal affairs, observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, cooperation among States, and conscientious fulfilment of international obligations and other universally recognized norms of international law.

MEMORANDUM ON SECURITY ASSURANCES IN CONNECTION WITH UKRAINE'S ACCESSION TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. BUDAPEST²

(excerpt)

1. The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and The United States of America reaffirm their commitment to Ukraine, in accordance with the principles of the CSCE Final Act, to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine.

2. The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and The United States of America reaffirm their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defense or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

¹ Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, Kyiv, 31 May 1997, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52240.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

² Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Budapest, 5 December 1994, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52241.pdf>

3. The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and The United States of America reaffirm their commitment to Ukraine, in accordance with the Principles of the CSCE Final Act, to refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by Ukraine of the rights inherent in its sovereignty and thus to secure advantages of any kind.

4. The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and The United States of America reaffirm their commitment to seek immediate United Nations Security Council action to provide assistance to Ukraine, as a non-nuclear-weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, if Ukraine should become a victim of an act of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used.

UNITED NATIONS CHARTER³

Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression

Article 39

The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Article 40

In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation, the Security Council may, before making the recommendations or deciding upon the measures provided for in Article 39, call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable. Such provisional measures shall be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties concerned. The Security Council shall duly take account of failure to comply with such provisional measures.

Article 41

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 42

Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.

Article 43

1. All Members of the United Nations, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.

³ United Nations Charter, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

2. Such agreement or agreements shall govern the numbers and types of forces, their degree of readiness and general location, and the nature of the facilities and assistance to be provided.

3. The agreement or agreements shall be negotiated as soon as possible on the initiative of the Security Council. They shall be concluded between the Security Council and Members or between the Security Council and groups of Members and shall be subject to ratification by the signatory states in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.

Article 44

When the Security Council has decided to use force it shall, before calling upon a Member not represented on it to provide armed forces in fulfilment of the obligations assumed under Article 43, invite that Member, if the Member so desires, to participate in the decisions of the Security Council concerning the employment of contingents of that Member's armed forces.

Article 45

In order to enable the United Nations to take urgent military measures, Members shall hold immediately available national air-force contingents for combined international enforcement action. The strength and degree of readiness of these contingents and plans for their combined action shall be determined within the limits laid down in the special agreement or agreements referred to in Article 43, by the Security Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee.

Article 46

Plans for the application of armed force shall be made by the Security Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee.

Article 47

1. There shall be established a Military Staff Committee to advise and assist the Security Council on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security, the employment and command of forces placed at its disposal, the regulation of armaments, and possible disarmament.

2. The Military Staff Committee shall consist of the Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members of the Security Council or their representatives. Any Member of the United Nations not permanently represented on the Committee shall be invited by the Committee to be associated with it when the efficient discharge of the Committee's responsibilities requires the participation of that Member in its work.

3. The Military Staff Committee shall be responsible under the Security Council for the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at the disposal of the Security Council. Questions relating to the command of such forces shall be worked out subsequently.

4. The Military Staff Committee, with the authorization of the Security Council and after consultation with appropriate regional agencies, may establish regional sub-committees.

Article 48

1. The action required to carry out the decisions of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security shall be taken by all the Members of the United Nations or by some of them, as the Security Council may determine.

2. Such decisions shall be carried out by the Members of the United Nations directly and through their action in the appropriate international agencies of which they are members.

Article 49

The Members of the United Nations shall join in affording mutual assistance in carrying out the measures decided upon by the Security Council.

Article 50

If preventive or enforcement measures against any state are taken by the Security Council, any other state, whether a Member of the United Nations or not, which finds itself confronted with special economic problems arising from the carrying out of those measures shall have the right to consult the Security Council with regard to a solution of those problems.

Article 51

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY (1949)⁴

(excerpt)

Article 3

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

Article 4

The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.

Article 5

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

⁴ North Atlantic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 4 April 1949, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/1949/04/04/the-north-atlantic-treaty>

Article 6

For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack:

✓ on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of Turkey or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer;

✓ on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION (2009)⁵

(excerpt)

Article 42

The common security and defence policy shall be an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. It shall provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The Union may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The performance of these tasks shall be undertaken using capabilities provided by the Member States.

The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides. It shall in that case recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

The policy of the Union in accordance with this Section shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and shall respect the obligations of certain Member States, which see their common defence realised in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework.

Member States shall make civilian and military capabilities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy, to contribute to the objectives defined by the Council. Those Member States which together establish multinational forces may also make them available to the common security and defence policy...

Decisions relating to the common security and defence policy, including those initiating a mission as referred to in this Article, shall be adopted by the Council acting unanimously on a proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy or an initiative from a Member State. The High Representative may propose the use of both national resources and Union instruments, together with the Commission where appropriate.

The Council may entrust the execution of a task, within the Union framework, to a group of Member States in order to protect the Union's values and serve its interests. The execution of such a task shall be governed by Article 44.

⁵ Treaty on European Union, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12016M/TXT>

Those Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions shall establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework. Such cooperation shall be governed by Article 46. It shall not affect the provisions of Article 43.

If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States.

Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation.

Article 43

The tasks referred to in Article 42(1), in the course of which the Union may use civilian and military means, shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories.

Article 44

Within the framework of the decisions adopted in accordance with Article 43, the Council may entrust the implementation of a task to a group of Member States which are willing and have the necessary capability for such a task. Those Member States, in association with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall agree among themselves on the management of the task

Member States participating in the task shall keep the Council regularly informed of its progress on their own initiative or at the request of another Member State. Those States shall inform the Council immediately should the completion of the task entail major consequences or require amendment of the objective, scope and conditions determined for the task in the decisions referred to in paragraph 1. In such cases, the Council shall adopt the necessary decisions.

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