

So, we need to put in whatever we have to and whatever we can in order to keep Russia from prevailing militarily, in its Phase One around Kyiv. We have to make sure it is denied Phase Two, which to start with is to create a landlocked Ukraine. We need to enable Ukraine to prevent Russia from having that land bridge. Third, we have to help Ukraine to make sure that, if the Russians are determined to try consolidating their position in the Donbas, they will pay a heavy, conventional military price.

So, we have to be in this with full-out support for Ukraine as NATO, but with the United States in the lead, because as we all know going all the way back to its founding, NATO has been nothing without the United States. And one little sidebar to make the point: People remember that on September 12, 2001, the day after 9/11, NATO declared Article 5. We did not ask for it. The Canadians proposed it. The allies asked, "Can we do it?" and they came to the United States and asked: "Do you mind if we declare Article 5?" We said "OK, if you want to do it, it is fine with us." Why did they do it? Not because they thought that there were going to be major terrorist attacks in Europe, even though there were some terrorist attacks but nothing of the quality and drama and lasting threat as we saw on 9/11. They got NATO to declare Article 5 on our behalf for one simple reason: They were worried we would become so distracted that we would not focus on the number-one European requirement, which was the defense of Europe against any possible Russian threat and preserving the credibility of the commitment to deal with Russia. Nobody but the US can deal effectively with Russia. The same with 2003, going into Iraq to support the US invasion (where Germany and France turned out to be right), and then getting involved in Iraq afterwards, and then later, of course, the allies sending troops to Afghanistan. They did it again in both circumstances for one reason: because only the United States can deal with Russia.

That is my bottom line right now. For the credibility of the alliance and the credibility of the United States, Russia has to "not succeed" in Ukraine, which means it is going to have to fail in Ukraine. That means getting the Donbas free of Russian forces. I think at the end of the day, frankly, nobody is really going to care if Russia ends up with Crimea. Nobody is really going to care as long as the principle of sanctity of international borders is clear, and Ukraine is in charge of the rest of its country, and it is Russia-free in terms of troops and fighting. So that, in my judgment, is the fundamental strategic posture problem for NATO, without succeeding at which NATO is going to be in deep trouble.

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I would like to express my gratitude to be invited to this important reunion, with such distinguished and knowledgeable speakers, to discuss a topic crucial for future decisions in the field of war and peace, in the transatlantic community, and practically in the world. To respond appropriately to this difficult topic, let me define from the very beginning the following points of my attempt.

Firstly, I will concentrate on the political-strategic part of the matter and not on the military strategic (operational) level. In Madrid, in June 2022, a few weeks from now, the NATO Summit will give necessary guidance for at least another decade regarding the essential principles of evolution of this community of 30 nations. It will formulate the common vision regarding the changing global political-military environment and establish strategic-military posture in order to respond to the massive challenges of today and in the future. Secondly, on this conceptual basis, we must address the idea of consolidating NATO in the next decade, on the horizon of the 2030s, taking into account the unambiguous background:

- a common global vision
- ways to strengthen the transatlantic link
- construction of an adequate military strategy and forces
- distribution of the transatlantic burden
- the democratic resilience of our societies

On a personal note, our topic today will be researched and debated by academics, the military, and politicians for years and decades to come, using declassified documents on both sides of the hill, and there will certainly be much controversy, many diametrically opposed interpretations, and varied views. We are now, without any hint about the 'rule of the epilogue,' at the beginning of this process of gradually knowing the truth about these events, and trying to identify, even during their unfolding, what is essential or peripheral.

I also add that I am solely responsible for what I say.

I. QUESTIONS [OF THE TOPIC] TO BE ANSWERED

In this context, both of the crisis leading up to the Russian invasion of February 24 and the evolution of this military confrontation in Ukraine, Allied experts and analysts have been called upon to extract preliminary conclusions, to answer a broad package of questions, and build the vision of a *grand strategy* capable of delivering NATO relevance in the medium and long term.

Just a few such questions that I consider very important within this framework:

1. Did the Russian invasion of Ukraine aim to change only the strategic situation in Europe or, more than that, to change the entire global order?
2. Is this the first "proxy" geopolitical war in Europe, and does it set a model for the medium-term of future geopolitical clashes between the major nuclear powers in the global system?
3. What is the useful and economically and militarily favorable relationship between strategic deterrence and strategic defense in this future geopolitical environment?
4. What 'exits'/solutions observed historically from similar strategic difficulties and geopolitical clashes of the great powers are to be considered now and in the future: Helsinki -1975, Yalta -1945, Finlandization, or Ukraine - 2022?
5. Is there any resemblance of the current crisis in Eastern Europe to other historically registered crises after the Second World War ('Cuban missile crisis of 1962'; 'missile crisis of 1983')?
6. Is it conceivable that a development of events, imposed today on the United States, would eventually lead it to wage a war on two continental fronts, concomitantly, against Russia and China?
7. What is the solution for a US victory in such a confrontation on two fronts: unilateral preparation or readying NATO's robust European component capable, with American support, to maintain its own continental security?
8. Is the Russian-Ukrainian war a kind of prolonged "frozen war" produced by Moscow's strategy to keep for the years to come, or is Europe unstable and insecure, dividing allies and destroying transatlantic links?
9. What changes need to be made to NATO's war-fighting concept and included in the New Strategic Concept as a result of the lessons learned from this Russian-Ukrainian war ?
10. Is a Third World War, undoubtedly a nuclear one, unavoidable, or can diplomatic ways to prevent it be identified? If so, what are they and what suggestions does the current war in Ukraine offer?

And so on.

II. ABOUT THE RUSSIAN GOAL: EUROPE OR THE WORLD?

What have the five weeks of political-military developments of the Ukrainian war shown us, and what lessons can we draw for the future according to the guidelines outlined above?

Before anything else: does the Russian invasion in Ukraine only aim to change the balance of power in Europe or to transform the entire global system? The answer is extremely important because it engages the entire planning of NATO's grand strategy, but also the military and operational strategy and the entire future activity of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Here, in this perimeter, we identify today – namely, to be precise, before the end of the war, two opinions of the experts clearly expressed. The first, because it is the most widespread, is that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the first phase of a conscious military effort by Russia to position itself against NATO and the European Union, the main continental institutions of Euro-Atlantic security. As one expert recently noted: “Russia’s explicit goal is the disintegration of NATO, the EU and any other structure in the international architecture that gets in its way. Thus, it makes no sense to say that ‘NATO is not at enmity with anyone.’”¹ Such a completely new situation in Europe since the invasion began on February 24 has made the old position of the Euro-Atlantic alliance no longer possible.

This old position was, in the formulation of a group of experts² in charge of elaborating a draft of a new strategic concept, dating from February 3, 2022: “The Alliance will continue to seek dialogue with Russia and honor the NATO-Russia Founding Act, even though Russia continues to breach the values, principles, trust, and commitments outlined in that and other agreed documents that underpin the NATO-Russia relationship.”³ But the same document has an paramount conclusion which has to be strengthened in the New Strategic Concept: “The upholding of the rules-based order will be further assured by reinforcing the transatlantic pact between North America and Europe in which Europeans become ever more central to European defense.”⁴

So, if the biggest war in Europe after the second global conflagration of 1939-1945 signifies that Russia’s position is the recovery of its former sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, then NATO must decide in Madrid, in the New Strategic Concept, that a completely new strategic orientation is needed. And this is to define Russia not as a competitor or possible partner, but as a self-declared enemy.

The second opinion, more recently expressed publicly, including by high-ranking allied politicians and experts, is that Russia’s so-called special military operation in Ukraine is the beginning of a violent challenge to the current global order. Thus, a professor from the University of Turku (Finland) recently wrote on her twitter account: “I’ve been asked in many discussions if I think the European and even global rules-based security order is dead due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. My short answer: it depends on the outcome of the war/ Ukraine’s defeat would encourage authoritarian great powers Russia and China to keep pushing for a revised security order based on spheres of influence and rejecting the values of democracy and human rights. One might argue that Russia and China would establish a different, but still rules-based order, with different rules, but fundamentally it would mean force prevailing over norms.”⁵ She concludes her analysis by showing that in Ukraine with the help of the West: “we can save the rules-based order and give a decisive blow to Russian imperialist ambitions and the spread of authoritarianism.”⁶ The Bulletin for the Atomic Scientists recently published an editorial on the war in Ukraine, in which it stated that: “The war in Ukraine is not only about the future of Ukraine. Both Russian and US leaders are making it increasingly clear that the brutal fight for territorial control inside the former Soviet republic is but part of a larger superpower struggle that will determine a new balance of power around the world.”⁷

¹ Mason, “Ukraine, NATO and a Zeitenwende.” Social Europe, April 11, 2022

²The Alphen Group (TAG) is an informal network of leading strategic thinkers who to considers the future of the transatlantic relationship and European security and defence .The members are:

Ambassador Alexander Vershbow;Lieutenant General (Ret.) ; Arne Bard Dalhaug;Dr. Alexandra Schwarzkopf; Professor Andrew Michta; Anna Wieslander; Professor Beatrice Heuser; Lt. Gen. (ret.) Ben Hodges; Dr. Claudia Major ; Colin Robertson; Edward Lucas; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Franco Algieri ; Professor Emeritus Georges-Henri Soutou ;Admiral (ret.) Giampaolo Di Paola; Dr Hans Binnendijk; Lt. Gen. (ret.) Heiner Brauss; Professor Holger Mey; Professor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer; General (ret.) Sir James Everard;Jim Townsend; Judy Dempsey ;Professor Julian Lindley-French (Chair);Kate Hansen Bundt; Marta Dassu; Professor Neil MacFarlane; Professor Paul Cornish; Professor Paul Schulte; Lord Richards of Herstmonceux; Dr. Colonel (ret.) Richard D. Hooker, Jr.; General (Retd.) Richard Shirreff; Professor Rob de Wijk; General (Ret.) Sir Rupert Smith; Dr. Sarah Kirchberger; Stan Sloan; Ambassador Stefano Stefanini; Professor Sten Rynning; Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff; Trygve Refvem; Professor Yves Boyer Professor Žaneta Ozoliņa-<https://thealphengroup.home.blog/>

³ Lindley-French, The Alphen Group, “The TAG NATO Shadow Strategic Concept 2022: Preserving Peace, Protecting People.” GMF, February 3, 2022

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Raik, "Thread: I've been asked in many discussions if I think the European and even global rules-based security order is dead due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine..." Twitter, April 22, 2022

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Hooper, “In search of a new world order, Russia and China team up to push Ukraine propaganda” Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, April 20, 2022

III. BUT IS RUSSIA ALONE IN THIS EFFORT TO CHANGE THE BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE AND DEMOLISH THE GLOBAL ORDER?

More and more space in the comments of experts, as well as in those of allied politicians or their positions, is devoted to the thesis of an alliance, formal or informal, between China and Russia. It should not be ignored that Russia, during this Ukrainian war, will be not only declaratively but directly supported by China in its effort to demolish the global order. This is clear from the joint statement signed on February 4, 2022, by the presidents of the two major nuclear powers [China and Russia] that expressly states: *“The sides believe that certain States, military and political alliances and coalitions seek to obtain, directly or indirectly, unilateral military advantages to the detriment of the security of others/.../intensify geopolitical rivalry/.../. The sides oppose further enlargement of NATO and call on the North Atlantic Alliance to abandon its ideologized cold war approaches/.../. The sides stand against the formation of closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the Asia-Pacific region and remain highly vigilant about the negative impact of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy on peace and stability in the region.”*⁸

The opposition of the signatories, Presidents V. Putin (Russia) and Xi Jinping (China), to NATO enlargement considered as a way to obtain *“military advantages to the detriment of the security of others”* and to US strategy in the Indo-Pacific region, is clear proof of a joint Russian-Chinese program of destruction of today's international order. Here is possible strategic coordination between the two powers shown by a recent statement on the content of the conversation of April 18, 2022 between the Deputy Foreign Minister of China Le Yucheng and Russian Ambassador to China Andrey Ivanovich Denisov: *“Le Yucheng said that under the guidance of President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin, China and Russia maintain high-level development of the comprehensive strategic partnership /.../No matter how the international landscape may change, China will continue to strengthen strategic coordination with Russia for win-win cooperation, jointly safeguard the common interests of the two countries and promote the building of a new type of international relations./.../The two sides also exchanged views on deepening China-Russia cooperation within the framework of the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as the situation in Ukraine and other international and regional issues of common concern.”*⁹ Along this line of finding, an analyst wrote on April 24 in an overview dedicated to the close relations between Russia and China: *“There is a growing trend in the West of treating Russia and China as an increasingly close political tandem, dubbed ‘Dragonbear’, referring to the two countries’ national animals.”*¹⁰ To complete the picture, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said after talks with senior EU officials about China, NATO and the Indo-Pacific in Brussels (April 22) that *“Chinese state media has parroted the Kremlin’s lies and conspiracy theories, including absurd claims that Ukraine and NATO and the EU pose a security threat to Russia.”*¹¹

For NATO, the above mentioned positions are not just points of academic debate, but rather elements of a huge challenge to the very future of the alliance. In the previous two months of the conflict, in the face of Russian aggression, members of the North Atlantic alliance have shown extraordinary and even unexpected unity in supporting the Ukrainian military effort. At the same time, millions of refugees in Ukraine have received necessary support from the NATO states on the eastern flank, all members of the EU showing an unprecedented opening of cooperation between the two organizations.

At the Madrid Summit, NATO must responsibly take the necessary steps to secure its own medium and long-term future in the face of an existential threat. Below is an incomplete summary, not in any order of priority, of some of the challenges highlighted by the Ukraine conflict which the Summit must confront in accordance with the ‘lessons learned’ up to now: strengthening the transatlantic link; consolidating the defense of some regions on NATO's eastern flank of exceptional strategic significance in order to block the spread of Russian aggression; expanding the NATO alliance; building a compelling deterrent to Russia's aggression against Europe; and responding to the Russian-Chinese comprehensive partnership/alliance in the future.

⁸ Russian Federation and People's Republic of China, “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development.” Russian Federation, February 4, 2022

⁹ MFA of the PRC, “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development.” MFA of the PRC, April 19, 2022

¹⁰ Brzozowski, “What to make of ‘Dragon-Bear.’” Euractiv Global Europe Brief, April 24, 2022

¹¹ Ibid.

IV. ABOUT A 'PROTRACTED WAR' IN UKRAINE

Could the Ukrainian war be considered a 'frozen war' within Moscow and Beijing's strategy? The concept of the 'frozen war' has been mentioned, in today's circumstances, as a possible alternative for Russia to the military invasion of Ukraine. According to this concept, Russia would have rotated its troops on the border of Ukraine, so as to permanently maintain the pressure on this country and the West. As well-known strategist Lindley-French has written prior to the Russian invasion: *"The cleverest strategy Putin might adopt is to not quite invade Ukraine allowing coercion and the threat of invasion to keep Europe politically off-balance and the wider transatlantic alliance divided."*¹²

The invasion occurred, and in Lindley French's analysis we are in the third phase of the war between Russia and Ukraine (the first in 1914, the second, the invasion of February 24, and the third, launched with the focus of the Russian army on the Donbas and offensive actions already triggered). On the basis of the 'cleverest strategy' already mentioned, Putin could now consider encircling the bulk of the Ukrainian army in the Donbas, prolonging this operation; or, launching another operation also in Ukraine, so as to force the West to multiply aid to Kyiv significantly. This would keep the West busy asking itself 'what's next?' in Eastern Europe and caring all the time about deterring Russia. The West would be dispersing and consuming its own military forces and neglecting the other important global region, India-Pacific, where China could act. Here is the danger of the Ukrainian war for the possible big confrontation on two fronts which the US and its Allies could be pushed to wage: focusing on eastern Europe and losing the global overview of the Russian-Chinese challenge. In such a way, the Russian strategy of keeping Europe off-balance and dividing the transatlantic link could be unfolded up to the desired goal. A recent fascinating report on the war has *"the foremost conclusion"* that "Russia is now preparing, diplomatically, militarily and economically, for a protracted conflict."¹³

I note that in Western Europe, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the attitude of some allies (the case of Germany, which continues to import energy from Russia and thus financially subsidizes the Kremlin's war effort, while refusing to support Ukraine with heavy weapons, which has divided the domestic political scene; it is also worth mentioning France, whose military support does not rise to the expected level, and Bulgaria or Hungary). We must not forget in this narrative the common Russian-Chinese propaganda offensive in support of the actions launched by Russia to challenge the current global order, which is developing in Africa, India, Europe or elsewhere.

At the same time, along with the above, we must take into account the 'war fatigue' that could occur on this trend of incongruity in action across the EU, and even the possible negative impact of the waves of refugees from the war zone intentionally weaponized by Russia. Here is Lindley French's description of this scenario: *"Frozen war would also force risk-averse European leaders with their outmoded Bonsai armed forces, COVID economies and fin de siècle populations to choose between expensive and dangerous confrontation and appeasement. It would reignite the German Question as Germans were once again forced to face possible trauma in the future and the deep, dark traumas of the past. There is no guarantee that German angst would automatically lead to greater resolve to strengthen NATO. Frozen war would also create a new information war designed to stoke a new culture war similar to the public fear which greeted the 1983 deployment of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles and the mass demonstrations in Western Europe it provoked. Putin is no Gorbachev and the former would like nothing more than to weaken the already frayed political bonds between the US and its Allies, humiliate NATO, and if possible 'decouple' the Americans from the defense of Europe."*

It is important to consider how much is needed, especially concerning the prolongation of the Ukrainian war. There is a careful correlation between forces, means, and political or military risks. If for Russia, a prolongation of the war without a swift victory will appear to be a strategy to reach the final goal, then a protracted war in Ukraine will put the West in a limited situation. Therefore, a quick successful end of the Ukraine war (or even a suitable settlement) is needed, and the increase of Western support in this regard (while avoiding the nuclear threshold), is decisive.

¹² Lindley-French, "Frozen War: The Whiff of Munich?" The Lindley-French Analysis, February 15, 2022

¹³ Watling and Reynolds, "Operation Z: The Death Throes of an Imperial Delusion." Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies, April 22, 2022

V. STRENGTHENING THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK

The Washington Treaty states that the alliance between the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean is "*founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law*," fundamental values that unite the 30 members. The current global order is an expression of their common political will. In the run-up to the Alliance's New Strategic Concept Summit, an indisputable truth has been stated: "*NATO will remain the unique, essential, and indispensable transatlantic forum for consultations and joint action on all matters related to the individual and collective security of the allies, as set out in Article 4 of the Washington Treaty.*"¹⁴

The war in Ukraine hastened what was already assumed in principle, namely the establishment of a framework for debating the issue of transatlantic security in a NATO-EU context, which was already in the process of implementation. In this context, the EU adopted the '*strategic compass*' last month, practically a security strategy for the organization. Overall, the document is seen as being "*a quantum leap forward*" in the direction of building a "*stronger and more capable EU in security and defense*" and towards increasing its contribution to global and transatlantic security. This dimension of the EU will be definitively complementary to NATO. Among other things, the document provides: training of a strong EU Rapid Deployment Capacity of up to 5000 troops, for crisis interventions; the carrying out of regular training exercises on land and sea; optimizing military mobility, etc.¹⁵ The executive summary of the EU document contains a crucial paragraph for its entire orientation: "*The transatlantic relationship and EU-NATO cooperation, in full respect of the principles set out in the Treaties and those agreed by the European Council, including the principles of inclusiveness, reciprocity and decision-making autonomy of the EU, are key to our overall security. The EU reaffirms its intention to intensify support for the global rules-based order, with the United Nations at its core. It will also reinforce its strategic partnership with NATO and increase its cooperation with regional partners, including the OSCE, AU and ASEAN.*"¹⁶ I mention that in the late 1990s, when the UK was part of the EU, a decision was made to form a 60,000-military Rapid Reaction Force for military intervention as needed. Unfortunately, it was unfulfilled for various reasons. We realize that this level of ambition can be much higher in the perspective of transatlantic cooperation for the defense of the current global order. At the same time, NATO's announcement that the New Strategic Concept will have to debate the world role for NATO shows that this transatlantic cooperation has to become a fundamental pillar to global stability. The NATO Secretary General's participation in the G-7 meeting in Brussels on March 24, 2024 is a proof of that orientation, taking place in a period of effervescent mobilization of NATO, EU and G-7 to assess the global security situation and take action accordingly.

VI. A COMPELLING DETERRENT IN EASTERN EUROPE

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine and in close connection with its evolution, various escalation scenarios were circulated. Among them, on the basis of the imposition of a nuclear alert by the Kremlin (February 27), the dangerous scenario of a nuclear confrontation began to be considered, especially since the Russian leader's medium and long-term intentions were unknown. Then, when Russian troops carried out military operations in both the Chernobyl (closed) and the Zaporozhe (operational) plants, these fears of escalating beyond the nuclear threshold multiplied (use of tactical nuclear strikes by Russia). In addition, the massive Western support sent to Ukrainian defenders in convoys arriving at Ukraine's borders could finally lead the Kremlin to invoke this as NATO participation in the war. This, coupled with the plight of Russian forces on the ground in Ukraine operations, has once again raised fears that tactical nuclear strikes could be used by Russia to force the West to suspend or reduce aid.

The hypothetical escalation and the possibility of a nuclear accident in Ukraine were also arguments - in addition to the possibility of Russia attacking the territory of an alliance member - often imagined when considering the probability of the outbreak of a Third World War. The hybrid war between the two camps has increased the perception of this probability, with some Russian commentators insisting that such a war, while not immediate, is an inevitable one. In the West, this scenario, which encourages growing fears of a global war, has been used by some political leaders to prevent the deployment of high-performance weapons for defense in Ukraine. Germany, after announcing the abandonment of the Ostpolitik assumed in the 1960s and at the

¹⁴ Lindley-French, The Alphen Group, "The TAG NATO Shadow Strategic Concept 2022: Preserving Peace, Protecting People." GMF, February 3, 2022

¹⁵ European Union, "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense." European Union External Action, March 24, 2022

¹⁶ Ibid.

same time the allocation of important financial funds for the country's military preparation, hitherto neglected for several weeks, despite international and domestic pressure, to deliver heavy weapons (howitzers, tanks) to Ukraine as aid.¹⁷ After the concentration of Russia's offensive military actions in the Donbas, where World War II-type confrontations are specific to the vast steppes here, and the countering of Russian military means requires such heavy weapons, on April 25, Berlin announced that it will deliver heavy howitzers and tanks. The same thing happened in France, where for electoral reasons it was only after the second round of voting that heavy armor was sent to Ukraine (the Caesar howitzer).

As experts noted, in the first eight weeks of fighting weapons were delivered to Ukraine as a symbol of support by the West; especially small arms and Javelin anti-tank armor, which were useful, for example, to stave off the enemy in the Kyiv region. In the last two weeks, the US-Biden administration has sent heavy howitzers and artillery rounds, armored vehicles, counter-battery radars and deadly experimental drones, the type of armaments desperately asked for by Ukrainian field commanders.¹⁸ On the other hand, in order to avoid escalation towards WW3, the request by Kyiv to install a no-fly zone in Ukraine was rejected. But, what was noticed from the beginning of the war in Ukraine was that the NATO forces on the eastern flank were insufficient to be a credible deterrent to the aggressive Russian actions. A more robust NATO military deterrent had begun to be set up after March 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, but its consolidation had been delayed in recent years. Today, the situation is considered to be dangerous, and during last March the first measures to consolidate it were taken, especially in the southern part. Basically, in March it was decided to double the number of multinational battle groups deployed on the Eastern flank (from 4 to 8), but it is not enough. As mentioned some weeks ago by the US military chief, General Mark Milley, in congressional hearings, after 2005 the number of American soldiers deployed in Europe decreased rapidly, reaching about 30,000, and only recently through new deployments did this number rise to 100,000. According to the Pentagon, a credible deterrent would be the deployment of permanent military bases on the eastern flank in Poland, Lithuania, and Romania, and these changes might be under study at both the Pentagon and NATO headquarters.

As I underlined above, an EU-USA forum for debating security and defense issues has existed since 2021, as an expression of the will to fight together [against] security threats according to mutual ties, values and common interests. The focus of discussions in this forum include cooperation in various fields: cyber defense, climate change, disruptive technologies, etc.¹⁹ The issue of "strategic autonomy" by the EU is expected to be one of the hot topics in this forum, especially since the war in Ukraine has demonstrated the imminent danger of Russian aggression. Furthermore, a common European military force to oppose it is not available, and its construction will take time. The importance of this issue is also mentioned by J. Lindley French, who argues the most comprehensive and efficient deterrent against Russia is related to having an operational and robust European military force, which would be available, in cooperation with American forces, to defend NATO territory on the Eastern flank. Here is Lindley French's opinion on such a force: *"reinforcing the Eastern Flank of the Alliance. That means the strengthening of the Enhanced Forward Presence; the acceleration and expansion of the NATO Readiness Initiative; and by moving HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (HQ ARRC), NATO's most capable non-American deployable corps headquarters from England to near Warsaw reinforced by American, British, German and Polish forces and in support of the EFP forces, HQ Multinational Corps (Northeast) and supported by the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC). HQ ARRC must now be designated as the command and development driver for a new European-led first responder, high end multi-domain Allied Mobile Heavy Force (AMHF) heavy enough to fill the 1500 km gap between MNC (NE) the Black Sea and the Baltic States, maneuverable enough to both deter a high-end aggressor such as Russia, heavy enough to also support front-line states facing terrorism, as well as capable enough of holding the European theatre across the hybrid, cyber, hyper war spectrum in an emergency if US forces are simultaneously engaged in Europe, the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere."*²⁰

In such an era of uncertainty and a lack of international communication between the conflicting camps, such strategies must be adopted quickly and implemented urgently.

¹⁷ Kutschaty, "Video: Wir wollen Deutschland nicht in den dritten Weltkrieg hineinziehen." Welt, April 25, 2022

¹⁸ Miller and McLeary, "Heavy weaponry pours into Ukraine as commanders become more desperate." Politico, April 25, 2022

¹⁹ Brzozowski, "EU-US to start new defence and security dialogue in early 2022." Euractiv, December 6, 2021

²⁰ Lindley-French, "Ukraine and a NATO Theory of Victory." The Lindley-French Analysis, February 24, 2022

VII. NATO ENLARGEMENT

Russia's aggression in Ukraine has condensed decades of historical developments into weeks. Ironically, given the arguments invoked within the proposed Russian draft treaty with NATO in December 2021 (which calls for the abandonment of NATO's enlargement), after the launch of the Ukraine invasion on February 24, Finland and Sweden, neutral countries, have expressed their intent to join the North Atlantic Alliance.

NATO enlargement by including these two Nordic countries expands NATO's eastern flank, but at the same time adds value to both the building of a compelling deterrent and the successful defense of the territory between the Arctic and Black Seas in the event of Russian aggression. The strategic space of defense becomes much wider and more compact, hindering the strategic maneuvers of the enemy, and the military and political impact of the alliance with these two countries cannot be underestimated. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, the former Prime Minister of Sweden, Carl Bildt, argues that the accession of these two countries to NATO at the Madrid Summit changes the security architecture in Northern Europe: *"Integrated control of the entire area will make defense of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania easier [... it] will strengthen deterrence and make a conflict there less likely [...] increase the alliance's political strength as the pillar of the defense of Europe and the transatlantic area [...] underlining that "neither Finland nor Sweden is likely to seek any permanent basing of major NATO units in their territory, and both are likely to have the same reservations about housing nuclear weapons."*²¹

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

As the Ukrainian war intensifies, both long expected and totally unexpected events are happening. In the first category: the Bundestag motion today to send heavy weapons to Ukraine; for so long this has been refused by the government in spite of domestic and international pressure. In the second: yesterday, statements of some officials in the UK and the US concerning the West's goal in Ukraine have been summarized as the "weakening of Russia." Accordingly, the current analysis has to be refined, and even revised in some details. That is the risk I had in mind when I referred to 'the rule of the epilogue'.

The Ukrainian war, as an unfolding 'proxy geopolitical war,' might be usefully studied according to the theory of the systemic hegemonic war. NATO's NSC in Madrid should be tailored accordingly, preparing the alliance for the future.

Installing a compelling deterrent against Russian aggression against the NATO countries in Eastern Europe should be implemented fast alongside the unfolding Ukrainian war.

²¹ Bildt, "NATO's Nordic Expansion." *Foreign Affairs*, April 26, 2022