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BEYOND EUROPEAN REARMAMENT: WHY
REARMAMENT SHOULD BE A GLOBAL,
DEMOCRATIC PROJECT

Shane M. Ball¹

ABSTRACT

The second Trump Administration has quickly abandoned long-standing American commitments to European security and to Ukraine’s defense against Russia’s invasion. Between this and an increasingly belligerent Russia, European leaders are rightly planning how to best remilitarize to defend the continent. But European rearmament faces significant exogenous and endogenous obstacles. Meanwhile, other democratic nations around the globe are similarly confronting the loss of American leadership and increasing autocratic aggression. This Comment discusses how global collective action among democracies is a more effective and durable approach than regional solutions. It first traces the promise and challenges of European rearmament, then turns to situations facing democracies in other parts of the world. The Comment concludes by offering four policy considerations to guide global democratic rearmament.

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INTRODUCTION

*Behold! in this manner act the European nations—they envy each other the commerce in books, and the trade in wine and cotton, not knowing that learning and wealth belong to one house—that is, to free nations.*²

When Adam Mickiewicz—Poland's national poet—wrote these lines in 1832, Poland was under imperial subjugation by Russia.³ The Romantic poet urged other European nations to recognize that the fate of Poland was intertwined with theirs. While his calls went unheeded, Mickiewicz's analysis holds true today: learning and wealth belong to free nations. But free nations must defend themselves and their freedom.

Yet, free nation-states are under attack. In 2022, long-standing warnings about Russian aggression were realized. Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, beginning the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II.⁴ Western intelligence suggests that China's military may be preparing to take Taiwan within the next couple of years.⁵

² ADAM MICKIEWICZ, *THE BOOKS AND PILGRIMAGE OF THE POLISH NATION* 77 (Krystyn Lach-Szyrma trans., London, James Ridgway 1833).

³ Richard Nelsson, *Russia Annexes Poland – Archive, 1832*, GUARDIAN (Feb. 23, 2022, at 07:56 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/23/russia-annexes-poland-archive-1832> (last visited May 24, 2026).

⁴ *The Armed Conflict Survey 2022: Europe and Eurasia Regional Analysis*, INT'L INST. FOR STRATEGIC STUD. (IISS) (Nov. 18, 2022), <https://www.iiss.org/ar-BH/online-analysis/online-analysis/2022/11/acs-2022-europe-and-eurasia/> [https://perma.cc/XRV3-X9DH].

⁵ Greg Norman-Diamond, *China's Xi Has Ordered Military to Be Ready for Taiwan Invasion by 2027*, CIA Director Burns Says, FOX NEWS (Feb. 3, 2023, at 12:54 ET), <https://www.foxnews.com>

Democratic backsliding in countries like Poland, Hungary, and the United States has not only made Poles, Hungarians, and Americans less free,⁶ but has also emboldened autocrats and eroded the unity of liberal democracies.⁷

/world/china-xi-ordered-military-ready-taiwan-invasion-2027-cia-director-burns-says [https://perma.cc/2Y7B-LWNC]. But see James Siebens, MacKenna Rawlins & Dan Grazier, *Rethinking the Threat: Why China Is Unlikely to Invade Taiwan*, STIMSON CTR. (Sep. 3, 2025), <https://www.stimson.org/2025/rethinking-the-threat-why-china-is-unlikely-to-invade-taiwan/> [https://perma.cc/S3PB-RNCG]. Additionally, a round of purges of Chinese military leaders by Xi Jinping indicates deep-rooted issues within the military. See *On Parade in China: Putin, the PLA and Purges*, ECONOMIST (Aug. 28, 2025), <https://www.economist.com/china/2025/08/28/on-parade-in-china-putin-the-pla-and-purges> [https://perma.cc/5N3X-HVNL]; William Matthews, *As China's Purge of Top Military Officials Continues, Will Xi's High-Stakes Gamble Pay Off?*, CHATHAM HOUSE (Dec. 3, 2024), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/12/chinas-purge-top-military-officials-continues-will-xis-high-stakes-gamble-pay> [https://perma.cc/A5G3-ESFV]; M. Taylor Fravel, *Is China's Military Ready for War?: What Xi's Purges Do—and Don't—Mean for Beijing's Ambitions*, FOREIGN AFFS. (July 18, 2025), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-military-ready-war-xi-jinping-taylor-fravel> [https://perma.cc/C8QZ-FF98].

⁶ For backsliding in Eastern and Central Europe, see, for example, Anna Grzymala-Busse, *How Populists Rule: The Consequences for Democratic Governance*, 51 POLITY 707, 712–13 (2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/705570> [https://perma.cc/UX6N-ECET]; Michael Bernhard, *Democratic Backsliding in Poland and Hungary*, 80 SLAVIC REV. 585, 585–88 (2021), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27289815?seq=1> [https://perma.cc/5NXR-YZEN]; Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski, *Towards a Political Theory of Democratic Backsliding? Generalising the East Central European Experience*, in ILLIBERAL TRENDS AND ANTI-EU POLITICS IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE 301, 303–07 (Astrid Lorenz & Lisa H. Andres eds., 2021), https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-54674-8_13 [https://perma.cc/LS86-KQQL]. For backsliding in the United States, see, for example, Jacob M. Grumbach, *Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding*, 117 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 967, 978–81 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000934> [https://perma.cc/E5E6-B7Z9]; MCKENZIE CARRIER & THOMAS CAROTHERS, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INT'L PEACE (CEIP), U.S. DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE 1–2 (2025), <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/08/us-democratic-backsliding-in-comparative-perspective?lang=en> [https://perma.cc/4R3R-ZXSM]; Vanessa Williamson, *Understanding Democratic Decline in the United States*, BROOKINGS INST. (Oct. 17, 2023), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/understanding-democratic-decline-in-the-united-states/> [https://perma.cc/2DWT-BGKZ].

⁷ For example, one of Putin's goals is to disrupt Western unity and cause infighting within and among democracies. See, e.g., Seth G. Jones, *Russia's Shadow War Against the West*, CTR. FOR STRATEGIC & INT'L STUD. (CSIS) (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-shadow-war-against-west#h2-russian-strategy> [https://perma.cc/KDZ3-YZHQ]; Oleksandr V Danylyuk, *The Components of Russia's Undeclared War Against the West*, RUSI (Jan. 28, 2025), <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/components-russias-undeclared-war-against-west> [https://perma.cc/U8QZ-GCC9]; Vladimir Putin Is Testing the West—and Its Unity,

Since World War II, free nations were led—economically, politically, and militarily—by the United States.⁸ Donald Trump's second administration has gleefully relinquished this role, threatening American security commitments to democracies around the world—seemingly aligning with autocrats—and implementing autarkic, mercantilist tariffs on friends and foes alike.⁹

I argue that, rather than viewing European rearmament as a regional security issue, policymakers should recognize that democracies from Europe to North America to East Asia are facing the same pressures of American equivocation on collective security and increasing autocratic aggression. I first discuss European rearmament. While European rearmament is a daunting task politically, fiscally, and logistically, I focus on issues exogenous to the task of rearmament itself: European political unity and the scope of the security threats to Europe. Then, I show how democracies elsewhere have similar security situations as Europe. I focus on Canada and on East Asian democracies like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. I conclude by offering four policy considerations to guide democracies aspiring to take collective action on security issues.

First, democracies should approach rearmament as a global collective action problem. Second, institutional design should be carefully selected. I use insights from economic literature to show how institutional design can enable durable collective action through incentives. Without strong incentives, collective action is more difficult. Third, given high debt levels among most developed countries and shocks to the global trading system caused by American protectionism, democracies should recognize the centrality of fiscal and trade policy to security policy. Finally, democracies

ECONOMIST (Oct. 2, 2025), <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2025/10/02/vladimir-putin-is-testing-the-west-and-its-unity> [<https://perma.cc/5ABV-V66Z>].

⁸ See generally ALEXANDER COOLEY & DANIEL NEXON, EXIT FROM HEGEMONY: THE UNRAVELING OF THE AMERICAN GLOBAL ORDER (2020) (describing the United States' global dominance post-World War II and the modern decline of that dominance); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Rise and Fall of American Hegemony from Wilson to Trump*, 96 INT'L AFFS. 63, 63–80 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy212> [<https://perma.cc/DJF8-CUYF>] (describing the weakening of the United States' hegemonic influence on the global stage).

⁹ See WHITE HOUSE, NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 12–15 (2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/LRD9-UEJK>]; Jamieson Greer, *Trump's Trade Representative: Why We Remade the Global Order*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 7, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/07/opinion/trump-trade-tariffs.html> [<https://perma.cc/3KAF-XLA3>] (explaining the Trump Administration's trade policy).

should remember that collective action in defense of democracy has intangible, symbolic power beyond its immediate effects.

I. EUROPE'S "ERA OF REARMAMENT"

This Part surveys the history of European defense since the end of the Cold War, also discussing challenges facing Europe in what European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has declared an "era of rearmament."¹⁰

In the aftermath of two consequential meetings, one between the United States and Russia in Riyadh re-establishing diplomatic contact¹¹ and the other resulting in the public castigation of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office by Trump and J. D. Vance,¹² European leaders quickly began to fill the void left by the lack of American commitment to Ukraine.¹³ This reflects a sea change in European views of Russia; the most prominent post-Cold War divide in Europe—the East–West divide—has now diminished in the face of Russian aggression.¹⁴ I first discuss how this rift

¹⁰ Haley Ott, *As Trump Halts Aid to Ukraine, EU Unveils \$840 Billion Defense Investment "ReArm Europe" Plan*, CBS NEWS (Mar. 4, 2025, at 08:27 ET), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-russia-war-trump-eu-defense-investment-rearm-europe-plan/> [<https://perma.cc/GN6B-DRSL>].

¹¹ Matthew Lee & Dasha Litvinova, *Russia and US Agree to Work Toward Ending Ukraine War in a Remarkable Diplomatic Shift*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Feb. 18, 2025, at 17:49 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-riyadh-talks-trump-putin-rubio-0c3beebfe5839e9d509ff58239a6bc5> [<https://perma.cc/78NN-AXNN>].

¹² Andrew E. Kramer, Constant Méheut & Anton Troianovski, *Zelensky and Trump Trade Blows as Feud Escalates over Peace Talks*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 19, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/19/world/europe/ukraine-zelensky-trump-russia-war.html> [<https://perma.cc/4R2T-UD9R>]; Peter Baker, *In Showdown with Zelensky, Trump Takes Offense on Putin's Behalf*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/28/us/politics/trump-zelensky-putin.html> [<https://perma.cc/QT9K-BW5P>].

¹³ Yaroslav Trofimov, *Squeezed Between Putin and Trump, Europe Sees a Moment of Truth*, WALL ST. J. (Feb. 16, 2025, at 12:21 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/squeezed-between-putin-and-trump-europe-sees-a-moment-of-truth-b265a5e5> [<https://perma.cc/CWF2-VFD6>].

¹⁴ See Ivan Krastev & Mark Leonard, *Fragile unity: Why Europeans Are Coming Together on Ukraine (and What Might Drive Them Apart)*, EUR. COUNCIL ON FOR. RELS. (Mar. 16, 2023), <https://ecfr.eu/publication/fragile-unity-why-europeans-are-coming-together-on-ukraine/>; Steven Erlanger, *Ukraine War Accelerates Shift of Power in Europe to the East*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 26, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/26/world/europe/eu-nato-power-ukraine-war.html>.

has been shrinking since the end of the Cold War before turning to new challenges that complicate a European effort to rearm.

A. Old Divisions Healing

The most significant fault line in post–Cold War European defense, the East–West divide, is healing because of Russian revanchism and American isolationism.¹⁵ Since Western European countries like Britain, France, and Germany are now aware of Europe's geopolitical vulnerabilities and committed to rearming,¹⁶ their interests have converged with those of historically hawkish Eastern European countries, namely Poland and the Baltic states.

These East–West tensions began in the 1990s, as Eastern European countries sought to join NATO immediately, but were rebuffed.¹⁷ Yet, by 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were admitted, and, five years later, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Slovenia were also admitted.¹⁸ These countries' hawkish stance toward Russia ran counter to more dovish attitudes further west; for instance, in 2009, the Obama Administration canceled a Bush-era plan to build a missile defense system in Eastern Europe in order to obtain a United States–Russia agreement to reduce the size of their nuclear arsenals.¹⁹ In the

¹⁵ For examples, see Patrick Wintour, “No Turning Back”: How the Ukraine War Has Profoundly Changed the EU, *GUARDIAN* (Sep. 30, 2023, at 01:00 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/30/ukraine-russia-war-changed-eu> (last visited June 2, 2026); *Britain and Poland Are Set to Sign a Big New Security Treaty*, *ECONOMIST* (May 24, 2026), <https://www.economist.com/britain/2026/05/24/britain-and-poland-are-set-to-sign-a-big-new-security-treaty> (describing increasing defense cooperation between Poland and Britain).

¹⁶ See *Acting on Defence to Protect Europeans*, EUR. COMM'N (Nov. 19, 2025), https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/future-european-defence_en [<https://perma.cc/WR3T-WXXT>]; Liana Fix, *Europe Rearms*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELS. (May 15, 2026), <https://www.cfr.org/articles/europe-rearms> [<https://perma.cc/3QP4-LPER>].

¹⁷ M.E. Sarotte, *How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate Inside the Clinton Administration, 1993–95*, 44 INT'L SEC. 7, 13–14 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00353 [<https://perma.cc/Z3NB-F9AG>].

¹⁸ *NATO Member Countries*, N. ATL. TREATY ORG. (NATO) (Mar. 11, 2024), <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/organization/nato-member-countries> [<https://perma.cc/L3LC-FNAQ>].

¹⁹ STEVEN A. HILDRETH & CARL EK, CONG. RSCH. SERV., RL34051, LONG-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE IN EUROPE 3–4, 22–23 (2010), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/RL34051> [<https://perma.cc/PY86-TENW>]. In November 2024, the long-awaited U.S. Navy missile defense base in northern Poland was opened. Rafal Wojciech Nowak & Hedy Beloucif, *Poland Hails Opening of US Missile Base as Sign of Its Security*, *REUTERS*

aftermath, the Polish Prime Minister refused to take the White House's call about the program cancellation, and Lithuania's President refused to meet with Obama in protest.²⁰

In 2014, Russian aggression escalated further when they seized control of Crimea, which was soon annexed formally by the Kremlin.²¹ The initial ambiguity of the events—soldiers did not wear Russian uniforms, seemingly to make the coup seem like it was instigated from within Ukraine—helped to delay and scramble a Western response.²² While the United States and EU placed significant sanctions on Russia and Russian individuals, these sanctions largely failed to change Russian behavior, with the Russian population, rather than Russian elites and oligarchs, bearing most of the economic costs.²³ Obama resisted pressure from key institutions and figures within the American foreign policy establishment to send weapons to Ukraine.²⁴ German Chancellor Angela Merkel still proceeded with the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, increasing German dependence on Russian gas and helping Russia financially.²⁵ This

(Nov. 13, 2024, at 08:45 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-opens-missile-base-poland-trump-presidency-looms-over-nato-2024-11-13/> [<https://perma.cc/CPU7-99JD>].

²⁰ Anne Applebaum, *Obama and Europe: Missed Signals, Renewed Commitments*, 94 FOREIGN AFFS. 37, 38 (2015); Eglė Samoškaitė, *Why Has D. Grybauskaitė Changed So Much?*, DELFI (Lith.) (Jan. 6, 2015), <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/kodel-taip-pasikeite-d-grybauskaitė-66777372> [<https://perma.cc/EJJ9-CQVD>].

²¹ *Putin Reveals Secrets of Russia's Crimea Takeover Plot*, BBC NEWS (Mar. 9, 2015), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31796226> [<https://perma.cc/8ZKC-AR2B>]; Jonathan Guyer, *What Biden Learned the Last Time Putin Invaded Ukraine*, VOX (Feb. 7, 2022, at 07:00 ET), <https://www.vox.com/2022/2/7/22916942/biden-lessons-russia-2014-invasion-ukraine-crimea> [<https://perma.cc/299J-VTU4>].

²² *Putin Reveals Secrets of Russia's Crimea Takeover Plot*, *supra* note 21; Guyer, *supra* note 21.

²³ Emma Ashford, *Not-So-Smart Sanctions: The Failure of Western Restrictions Against Russia*, 95 FOREIGN AFFS. 114, 116–17, 120–21 (2016); Ewen MacAskill, Shaun Walker & Dan Roberts, *US Rejects Criticism of "Toothless" Sanctions Following Crimea Referendum*, GUARDIAN (Mar. 18, 2014, at 02:30 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/17/us-eu-sanctions-russia-ukraine-crimea-referendum> [<https://perma.cc/3KXC-5Z32>].

²⁴ Peter Baker, *Wary Stance from Obama on Ukraine*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 24, 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/25/world/europe/wary-stance-from-obama.html> [<https://perma.cc/88XX-RJGN>]; Peter Baker, *Obama Said to Resist Growing Pressure from All Sides to Arm Ukraine*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 10, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/us/politics/obama-said-to-resist-growing-pressure-from-all-sides-to-arm-ukraine.html> [<https://perma.cc/H4ET-DEUP>].

²⁵ *Angela Who? Merkel's Legacy Looks Increasingly Terrible*, ECONOMIST (Oct. 24, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/europe/2024/10/24/angela-who-merkels-legacy-looks-increasingly-terrible> [<https://perma.cc/6QSK-3DPH>].

pipeline would have allowed Russian gas to flow directly to Germany without having to pass through Ukraine or Eastern European countries like Poland, which were more hawkish toward Russia than Merkel's Germany.²⁶

After 2014, NATO considerably increased its Eastern European presence, deploying more fighter jets and troops to the region.²⁷ Still, Eastern European countries felt that other NATO allies were not sufficiently clear-eyed about the Russian threat. In 2014, the Polish Foreign Minister, Radosław Sikorski, was caught on tape saying that the Polish–US alliance “creates a false sense of security We'll get in conflict with the Germans, Russians and we'll think that everything is super, because we gave the Americans a blow job.”²⁸ Seeking to convince Germany to become more hawkish, the President of Estonia coined the term “Suwalki Gap” in a meeting with Ursula von der Leyen, then the German Defense Minister.²⁹ The gap is the forty-mile Polish–Lithuanian border between Belarus and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. Were Russia to attack here, the Baltics would be completely severed from the rest of Europe.³⁰ It intentionally echoes Cold War fears of a Soviet invasion through the “Fulda Gap,” a lowland area of Germany where the Soviets could quickly strike Frankfurt and cross the Rhine with ease.³¹

The 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia validated Eastern European countries' long-standing fears and jeopardized their security further.³² NATO activated its high-readiness elements for the first time and

²⁶ Paul Belkin, Michael Ratner & Cory Welt, Cong. Rsch. Serv., IF11138, Russia's Nord Stream 2 Natural Gas Pipeline to Germany Halted 1 (2022), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11138> [<https://perma.cc/ZS9L-ZYVX>].

²⁷ *Readiness Action Plan*, NATO (Apr. 3, 2025), <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/readiness-action-plan> [<https://perma.cc/2MGM-ZHN5>]; *Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank*, NATO (Oct. 23, 2025), <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/strengthening-natos-eastern-flank> [<https://perma.cc/2SK5-VKBR>].

²⁸ *Polish Foreign Minister Says Country's Alliance with US Worthless*, GUARDIAN (June 22, 2014, at 12:00 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/22/poland-foreign-minister-alliance-us-worthless> [<https://perma.cc/2UEH-26HA>].

²⁹ Andrew Higgins, *At Risk of Invasion or Lovely to Visit: Two Views of a Polish Border Area*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 22, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/22/world/europe/poland-suwalki-russia-belarus.html> [<https://perma.cc/N9GA-HP54>].

³⁰ Id.

³¹ Id.

³² Ingrida Simonyte, *Lithuania's Prime Minister, Ingrida Simonyte, Says Russia's Invasion Was Predictable*, ECONOMIST (Mar. 2, 2022), <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2022/03/02/lithuanias-prime-minister-ingrida-simonyte-says-russias-invasion-was>

committed more troops to Eastern Europe.³³ There was still tension, however, between the Baltics, calling for more NATO troops to be stationed on their soil, and NATO leaders, aiming to minimize the alliance's presence on Russia's borders to avoid alarming Russia.³⁴ It is clear why these countries are so nervous: American assessments suggest that the Baltics could be occupied in a matter of hours,³⁵ and Estonian analysts say that "Russia considers the Baltic states to be the most vulnerable part of NATO."³⁶

Nervousness has begotten action in Eastern Europe. For instance, Eastern European countries have upgraded military infrastructure and developed detailed defense plans that involve military resistance to aggression and whole-of-society responses, like guerrilla warfare, passive resistance, and the use of civil society and religious organizations to maintain morale and social cohesion.³⁷ Eastern European NATO allies have been some of the most generous donors of aid to Ukraine when measured as percentage of GDP: Estonia has given 3.05 percent of its GDP in bilateral aid, trailing only Denmark (3.27 percent).³⁸ Lithuania has given 2.52 percent of its GDP, and Latvia has given 1.94 percent, which, along

predictable [https://perma.cc/7JAD-MLGJ]; Kaja Kallas, *Kaja Kallas on the Atrocities in Ukraine*, *ECONOMIST* (Apr. 9, 2022), <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/kaja-kallas-on-the-atrocities-in-ukraine/21808581> [https://perma.cc/LV4Q-JEED].

³³ *NATO Response Force (2002–2024)*, NATO (Apr. 3, 2025), <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/nato-response-force-2002-2024> [https://perma.cc/H65Z-UDWR]; *Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank*, *supra* note 27.

³⁴ Sabine Siebold, *NATO Reaches Back to Cold War Past with First Major Defense Plans*, *REUTERS* (May 18, 2023, at 02:29 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/world/nato-reaches-back-cold-war-past-with-first-major-defence-plans-decades-2023-05-18/> [https://perma.cc/2KTT-V6MM].

³⁵ Dalia Bankauskaitė & Deividas Šlekys, *Lithuania's Total Defense Review*, 10 *PRISM* 54, 57 (2023).

³⁶ ESTONIAN FOREIGN INTEL. SERV., *INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND ESTONIA 2023* § 1.2 (2023) [hereinafter *INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND ESTONIA 2023*], <https://raport.valisluureamet.ee/2023/en/russian-armed-forces/russian-armed-forces-near-the-estonian-border/> [https://perma.cc/Q2H9-A6TD].

³⁷ Bankauskaitė & Šlekys, *supra* note 35, at 68–69; Janis Bērziņš, *Latvia: From Total Defense to Comprehensive Defense*, 10 *PRISM* 39, 43–45 (2023); Tony Lawrence, *Estonia: Size Matters*, 10 *PRISM* 19, 19–20 (2023).

³⁸ This data is current through April 16, 2026. Christoph Trebesch et al., *Ukraine Support Tracker*, KIEL INST. FOR THE WORLD ECON. (Apr. 16, 2026), <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/> [https://perma.cc/9DX6-S8CQ] (on file with *UCLA Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs*).

with Norway (2.45 percent of GDP), round out the five most generous donors.³⁹

Since 2014, Lithuania and Latvia have both increased their defense spending by over 350 percent, Poland by over 250 percent, and Estonia by almost 120 percent.⁴⁰ For comparison, over the same period, the United States' defense spending has only increased 13.1 percent, Britain's 29.6 percent, and France's 27.6 percent.⁴¹ Notably, German spending has almost doubled, with most of the increase coming after 2022.⁴² While these figures reflect, to some extent, the size of each nation's economy, the massive increases in spending by Eastern European countries reflect a concerted effort to rearm.

Another positive development is that following the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Finland and Sweden—long neutral—joined NATO.⁴³ Both nations bring strategically significant territory into NATO. Finland has an 832-mile land border with Russia, and Sweden has Gotland, a large island in the Baltic Sea. While Gotland is better known to Swedes as a vacation destination rather than a strategic outpost, its central location in the Baltic Sea makes it a valuable asset for NATO and, likewise, a vulnerable target should Russia choose to wage war in the Baltic region.⁴⁴ With

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2025)*, NATO 10 tbl. 4 (June 3, 2025), <https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/finance/def-exp-2025-en.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/PM2E-EZFN>].

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.* at 8 tbl. 2.

⁴³ Simon Shuster, "Sweden Is a Potential Target": An Interview with NATO's Newest Member, TIME (July 13, 2024, at 07:00 ET), <https://time.com/6998040/sweden-a-target-an-interview-with-natos-newest-member-sweden-ulf-kristersson/> [<https://perma.cc/YZ4L-TPF3>]; MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFS. OF FINLAND, *Finland's Membership in NATO*, <https://um.fi/finlands-membership-in-nato> [<https://perma.cc/8USC-YD97>] (explaining that NATO membership will increase Finnish security "in the changed security environment"); *Finland Joins NATO as 31st Ally*, NATO (Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2023/04/04/finland-joins-nato-as-31st-ally> [<https://perma.cc/4LZ8-D3KQ>]; *Sweden Officially Joins NATO*, NATO (Mar. 7, 2024), <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2024/03/07/sweden-officially-joins-nato> [<https://perma.cc/2258-GZDY>].

⁴⁴ Paul Kirby & Jonathan Beale, *NATO's Border with Russia Doubles as Finland Joins*, BBC NEWS (Apr. 4, 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65173043> [<https://perma.cc/W3X7-CGR9>]; VILTAUTĖ ZAREMBAITĖ, CHRISTOPHER SKALUBA & ANN MARIE DAILEY, ATL. COUNCIL, NAVIGATING SWEDEN'S NATO MEMBERSHIP: INSIGHTS FOR POLITICAL AND OPERATIONAL ADAPTATION 5–6 (2023), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/navigating-swedens->

Finland and Sweden now in NATO, the entire Baltic is surrounded by NATO countries, except for Kaliningrad.

Finland and Sweden also have significant military and economic capabilities. Finland's wartime troops number almost 300,000, and almost one-fifth of all Finns have had military training.⁴⁵ In response to the trauma of the 1940 Soviet invasion, Finland developed a comprehensive civilian defense infrastructure, including supply stockpiles.⁴⁶ Sweden has recently increased its defense budget so that it is now—and will continue to be—in compliance with NATO's two percent of GDP defense spending target.⁴⁷ Sweden's navy and air force are large and advanced.⁴⁸ Its submarine fleet is especially crucial, as the Baltic is too shallow for all American submarines and most Russian submarines, but Sweden's are small enough to operate in the Baltic.⁴⁹ Both Finland and Sweden have advanced telecommunications sectors (Nokia and Ericsson, respectively), and Sweden has a robust domestic defense industrial base that meets its own needs and can export equipment to other allies.⁵⁰ Nordic interests are now tightly aligned with Baltic interests.

The interests of Northern European countries further west—Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands—have also converged, no doubt driven by these countries' direct experiences with Russian aggression in recent years. Indeed, Russia has run a long campaign of physical and

nato-membership-insights-for-political-and-operational-adaptation/ [https://perma.cc/Y9F6-SJN9].

⁴⁵ Jason C. Moyer, *Finland's Remarkable First Year in NATO*, WILSON CTR. (Apr. 3, 2024), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/finlands-remarkable-first-year-nato> [https://perma.cc/97LY-HD4D].

⁴⁶ Robin Forsberg, Aku-M. Kähkönen & Jason C. Moyer, *Finland's Contributions to NATO: Strengthening the Alliance's Nordic and Arctic Fronts*, WILSON CTR. (Nov. 8, 2022), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/finlands-contributions-nato-strengthening-alliances-nordic-and-arctic-fronts> [https://perma.cc/PY2C-63KJ].

⁴⁷ GOV'T OFFS. OF SWED., DEFENCE RESOLUTION 2025–2030, <https://www.government.se/government-policy/total-defence/defence-resolution-2025-20302/> [https://perma.cc/A4BU-TW8N].

⁴⁸ Jason C. Moyer & Henri Winberg, *Sweden's Contributions to NATO: Bolstering the Alliance's Defense Industry and Air Capabilities*, WILSON CTR. (Jan. 23, 2024), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/swedens-contributions-nato-bolstering-alliances-defense-industry-and-air-capabilities> [https://perma.cc/JH45-9H5K].

⁴⁹ Johan Ahlander, *What Sweden's Submarines Bring to NATO*, REUTERS (July 3, 2023, at 03:56 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/world/what-swedens-submarines-bring-nato-2023-07-03/> [https://perma.cc/3VLF-AYQS].

⁵⁰ ZAREMBAITE, SKALUBA & DAILEY, *supra* note 44, at 7; Moyer & Winberg, *supra* note 48.

cyber sabotage against Europe, and this campaign has escalated in scope and severity in recent years. An early, high-profile example of this escalation was the 2018 assassination attempt against a former Russian spy and his daughter in Britain, in which a Soviet-era chemical nerve agent was used, killing one woman.⁵¹ Particularly since 2022, Russian aggression toward Europe has become more brazen.⁵² In 2024 alone, sabotage plots ranged from attacks against infrastructure and military installations to an assassination attempt on the CEO of Germany's largest arms company.⁵³

Russia has also been jamming GPS in the Baltic region, causing commercial flights to be canceled and affecting maritime navigation.⁵⁴ Since 2023, multiple undersea communications and energy cables have been cut beneath the Baltic Sea in what European defense ministers have called "hybrid warfare."⁵⁵ These incidents have led the Swedish opposition party to call for Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty to be invoked, which

⁵¹ Vikram Dodd, Luke Harding & Ewen MacAskill, *Sergei Skripal: Former Russian Spy Poisoned with Nerve Agent, Say Police*, GUARDIAN (Mar. 8, 2018, at 02:21 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/07/russian-spy-police-appeal-for-witnesses-as-cobra-meeting-takes-place> [https://perma.cc/B9U6-M72V]; Theresa May, *PM Commons Statement on Salisbury Incident: 12 March 2018*, GOV.UK (Mar. 12, 2018), <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-commons-statement-on-salisbury-incident-12-march-2018> [https://perma.cc/FS5U-N5KK].

⁵² *Russia Is Ramping Up Sabotage Across Europe*, ECONOMIST (May 12, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/europe/2024/05/12/russia-is-ramping-up-sabotage-across-europe> [https://perma.cc/84E7-9CLS].

⁵³ *Vladimir Putin's Spies Are Plotting Global Chaos*, ECONOMIST (Oct. 13, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/international/2024/10/13/vladimir-putins-spies-are-plotting-global-chaos> [https://perma.cc/3KPL-G5C8].

⁵⁴ Vitaly Shevchenko, *Russia Blamed for GPS Interference Affecting Flights in Europe*, BBC NEWS (May 2, 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cne900k4wvjo> [https://perma.cc/88RP-C946]; Dana Goward, *As Baltics See Spike in GPS Jamming, NATO Must Respond*, BREAKING DEF. EUR. (Jan. 31, 2024, at 10:51 ET), <https://breakingdefense.com/2024/01/as-baltics-see-spike-in-gps-jamming-nato-must-respond/> [https://perma.cc/73KK-PT8D].

⁵⁵ Bojan Pancevski, *Russia Suspected as Baltic Undersea Cables Cut in Apparent Sabotage*, WALL ST. J. (Nov. 20, 2024, at 06:02 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/russia-suspected-as-baltic-undersea-cables-cut-in-apparent-sabotage-801cb392> [https://perma.cc/Y4KQ-S3UN]; *The Damage to a Baltic Undersea Cable Was "Purposeful," Swedish Leader Says but Gives No Details*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Oct. 24, 2023, at 09:57 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/sweden-estonia-damage-cable-finland-telecoms-pipeline-19c7f951b833b709cdf5f74b9a2dd221> [https://perma.cc/CSM2-2PV3]; *Sweden Opens Inquiry into Damaged Undersea Cable as NATO Deploys Ships*, GUARDIAN (Jan. 26, 2025, at 17:00 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/26/latvia-investigating-significant-damage-to-undersea-fibre-optic-cable> [https://perma.cc/WV5X-PYDC].

would require consultation between NATO allies on threats to security.⁵⁶ While Article 4 has not yet been invoked for this issue, in January 2025, NATO increased its Baltic Sea presence to monitor undersea infrastructure using ships and aircraft.⁵⁷

Similarly, in the North Sea, Russian ships have sailed near wind farms and undersea cables, seemingly to reconnoiter them.⁵⁸ Following repeated sightings of Russian reconnaissance vessels and damage to undersea infrastructure in Norwegian waters,⁵⁹ Britain, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands agreed to protect their infrastructure in the North Sea.⁶⁰

In November 2024, Polish and Lithuanian prosecutors revealed that they suspected Russia of shipping incendiary devices through DHL as a test to see if such devices could be sent on planes to North America.⁶¹ The head of Polish foreign intelligence bluntly said that “Russia has started employing terrorist tactics in Europe.”⁶² While these tactics are designed to cause fear and caution toward Russia, they also may serve a more sinister purpose:

⁵⁶ Daniel Bellamy, *Sweden’s Opposition Wants NATO Article Invoked After Cable Break*, EURONEWS (Dec. 29, 2024), <https://www.euronews.com/2024/12/29/swedens-opposition-wants-nato-article-invoked-after-cable-break> [<https://perma.cc/FFY4-UM5U>]; Hultqvist on the Baltic Sea: Activate NATO’s Article 4, SWED. HERALD (Dec. 28, 2024, at 17:10 CET), <https://swedenherald.com/article/hultqvist-on-the-baltic-sea-activate-natos-article-4> [<https://perma.cc/J52K-PJ98>].

⁵⁷ NATO Launches “Baltic Sentry” to Increase Critical Infrastructure Security, NATO (Jan. 14, 2025), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_232122.htm [<https://perma.cc/9X9C-8EBH>].

⁵⁸ Gordon Corera, *Ukraine War: The Russian Ships Accused of North Sea Sabotage*, BBC NEWS (Apr. 19, 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65309687> [<https://perma.cc/DXW5-KWUV>].

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ Aleksander Cwalina, *Concerns Grow over Possible Russian Sabotage of Undersea Cables*, ATL. COUNCIL (Sep. 12, 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/concerns-grow-over-possible-russian-sabotage-of-undersea-cables/> [<https://perma.cc/HZY7-MXHG>].

⁶¹ Bojan Pancevski et al., *Russia Suspected of Plotting to Send Incendiary Devices on U.S.-Bound Planes*, WALL ST. J. (Nov. 4, 2024, at 16:59 ET), https://www.wsj.com/world/russia-plot-us-planes-incendiary-devices-de3b8c0a?mod=article_inline [<https://perma.cc/W453-4FK6>]; Max Colchester, *Russia Is Accused of Terrorism in Alleged Incendiary-Device Plot*, WALL ST. J. (Nov. 5, 2024, at 17:23 ET), https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/russia-is-accused-of-terrorism-in-alleged-incendiary-device-plot-e90ab67b?mod=hp_lead_pos4 [<https://perma.cc/4V7M-BB5S>].

⁶² Colchester, *supra* note 61.

experts note that these “patterns of behaviour match predictions of what Russia would attempt to do in advance of an open conflict with NATO.”⁶³

Through direct exposure to Russian aggression, Northern European countries’ views on Russia have converged, allowing for a robust and coordinated approach to rearmament. But they face headwinds, both from within and outside Europe.

B. Challenges in Rearmament

There are both endogenous and exogenous challenges to rearming Europe. I will only discuss endogenous obstacles briefly before focusing on two exogenous challenges that present vexing and incisive questions for European leaders.

European rearmament will be extremely challenging because it will have to be both speedy and significant to be effective. Rearmament must be speedy because estimates suggest that Russia will rebound from its significant personnel and materiel losses in Ukraine quickly; in fact, Estonian intelligence expects Russia will regain its full operational capacity near Estonia by 2027,⁶⁴ and German assessments predict Russia will be ready to wage war against Europe by 2029.⁶⁵

Rearmament also must be significant because of how much NATO’s European forces rely on American support. To replace the United States’ military presence in Europe, experts estimate that Europe will need to replace the 300,000 American troops that would be expected to be mobilized in the event of an attack on NATO.⁶⁶ But American troops are commanded centrally, so if European national militaries are to remain discrete, then more than 300,000 additional troops will need to be at the ready.⁶⁷ In order to resist a Russian land invasion of the Baltics, Europe needs to acquire more tanks and artillery “than currently exist[] in the French, German, Italian and British land forces *combined*.”⁶⁸ Such buildup would require Europe to increase its defense spending by over €250 billion

⁶³ *Russia is Ramping Up Sabotage Across Europe*, *supra* note 52.

⁶⁴ INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND ESTONIA 2023, *supra* note 36.

⁶⁵ Trofimov, *supra* note 13.

⁶⁶ Alexandr Burilkov & Guntram B. Wolff, *Defending Europe Without the US: First Estimates of What Is Needed*, BRUEGEL (Feb. 21, 2025), <https://www.bruegel.org/analysis/defending-europe-without-us-first-estimates-what-needed> [<https://perma.cc/5DGQ-GM6F>].

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ *Id.* (emphasis added).

per annum, which translates to nearly doubling defense spending from roughly two percent of European GDP to three and a half percent.⁶⁹

There is some movement toward greater spending: the EU announced a plan in March 2025 to issue €150 billion in debt to fund rearmament, along with a plan to loosen some bloc rules on debt limits, allowing up to €840 billion in additional defense spending.⁷⁰ These funds cannot be accessed by American, British, or Turkish contractors unless those countries agree to security partnerships with the EU, and any purchases with these funds must majorly be spent in EU members or Norway or Ukraine.⁷¹ The EU also has a European Defense Fund to support research and development in the defense industry, but the fund's budget for 2021–2027 is only €7.9 billion—a paltry sum.⁷² As of April 2025, EU finance ministers are considering creating a single, intergovernmental defense fund to make a single market for defense purchases, making large purchases easier.⁷³ This fund reportedly could also include non-EU countries like Britain, Norway, and Ukraine.⁷⁴ Increased defense spending will require fiscal tradeoffs, which could be politically unpopular or economically damaging.⁷⁵

The EU's most significant plan to achieve readiness for defending against Russia by 2030 was unveiled in spring 2025.⁷⁶ It is quite broad,

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ Ott, *supra* note 10; Council Regulation 2025/1106 of May 27, 2025, Establishing the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) Through the Reinforcement of the European Defence Industry Instrument, 2025 O.J. (L 2025/1106); Jennifer Rankin, “*As Real as it Can Get*”: EU to Loan €150bn for European Defence from Invasion, *GUARDIAN* (Mar. 19, 2025, at 13:19 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/19/eu-loans-scheme-europe-defence-invasion-russia-ukraine> [https://perma.cc/8XME-AEHF].

⁷¹ Rankin, *supra* note 70.

⁷² *European Defence Fund (EDF)*, EUR. DEF. AGENCY, [https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/european-defence-fund-\(edf\)](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/european-defence-fund-(edf)) [https://perma.cc/A78Z-94PB].

⁷³ Jan Strupczewski, *EU Finance Ministers to Discuss Joint Fund to Buy and Own Defence Gear*, *REUTERS* (Apr. 6, 2025, at 23:02 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/eu-finance-ministers-discuss-joint-fund-buy-own-defence-gear-2025-04-07/> [https://perma.cc/V52E-QPMT]; Guntram B. Wolff, Armin Steinbach & Jeromin Zettelmeyer, *The Governance and Funding of European Rearmament*, *BRUEGEL* (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/governance-and-funding-european-rearmament> [https://perma.cc/N2KC-UY5Y].

⁷⁴ Strupczewski, *supra* note 73.

⁷⁵ *Europeans Are Hoping They Can Buy More Guns but Keep Their Butter*, *ECONOMIST* (Dec. 12, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/europe/2024/12/12/europeans-are-hoping-they-can-buy-more-guns-but-keep-their-butter> [https://perma.cc/54KH-48B2].

⁷⁶ EUR. COMM'N, *WHITE PAPER FOR EUROPEAN DEFENCE – READINESS 2030 20–21* (2025) [hereinafter *WHITE PAPER FOR EUROPEAN DEFENCE*], <https://defence-industry->

setting out benchmarks and requirements for creating a European-wide defense market, filling critical gaps in supply lines and stores, and building military infrastructure continent-wide.⁷⁷ However, an analysis of the EU's plan by Bruegel, a European think tank with a focus on economics, shows that the current and planned EU defense appropriations will be insufficient to fully achieve the EU's readiness goals.⁷⁸ Moreover, the massive political and economic effort that will be required to meet these goals could be vulnerable to internal political tensions within the EU.⁷⁹

5. *Internal Tensions*

As Europe assembles its “coalition of the willing”—a term with a fraught history, no doubt⁸⁰—to prepare to rearm, a pattern among coalition members emerges. Britain and France have spearheaded much of the action since Trump returned to office.⁸¹ Germany is also in a position to lead, with the spring 2025 election of Chancellor Friedrich Merz.⁸² Poland and the Baltics have consistently shown their leadership since 2022, and the Nordics are also taking an active role in responding to undersea sabotage in the Baltic, or, in the case of Denmark, responding to what

space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/white-paper-european-defence-readiness-2030_en [https://perma.cc/ZY7Q-5H8U].

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 6–10, 12–15.

⁷⁸ ALEXANDR BURILKOV ET AL., FIT FOR WAR BY 2030? EUROPEAN REARMAMENT VIS-À-VIS RUSSIA 77–81 (2025), https://www.bruegel.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/e880656a-f9f2-47d4-845c-136cea3e4b11-Kiel_Report_no3.pdf [https://perma.cc/2A34-PFZS].

⁷⁹ See *infra* Part I.B.1.

⁸⁰ The “coalition of the willing” was also used to describe the countries that supported the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. See Peter Walker, *Where Does the Phrase “Coalition of the Willing” Come From?*, GUARDIAN (Mar. 2, 2025, at 13:56 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/02/starmer-coalition-of-the-willing-ukraine-us-iraq> [https://perma.cc/KH66-XQTG].

⁸¹ Alberto Nardelli et al., *Who Speaks for Europe? It's a UK-French Axis with Dash of Meloni*, BLOOMBERG (Mar. 2, 2025, at 17:22 ET), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-03-02/who-speaks-for-europe-it-s-a-uk-french-axis-with-dash-of-meloni> [https://perma.cc/3MB9-WF28]; *Macron, Merz and Starmer Are Forming a New Trilateral Leadership*, ECONOMIST (Nov. 27, 2025), <https://www.economist.com/europe/2025/11/27/macron-merz-and-starmer-are-forming-a-new-trilateral-leadership> [https://perma.cc/89DS-AF3J].

⁸² Paul Kirby, *Germany's Merz Promises to Do “Whatever It Takes” on Defence*, BBC NEWS (Mar. 5, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c981w25y5wp0> [https://perma.cc/3A3U-TY2C]; *Macron, Merz and Starmer Are Forming a New Trilateral Leadership*, *supra* note 81.

Danish leaders view as a threat of American imperialism.⁸³ And, at the EU level, the two key officials leading the bloc's efforts are two Northern European women: Germany's von der Leyen and Estonia's Chief of Foreign Affairs Kaja Kallas. Notice how all these countries and individuals are Northern European. If the East–West divide has shrunk considerably, the North–South gap has widened.

The North–South internal tension will pose challenges as Europe rearms, as the South, a region that has typically had less influence in continent-wide discussions, will, in all likelihood, continue to be sidelined. Another internal dynamic is the role of troublemakers in Europe—Hungary and Turkey in particular. These countries' leaders have shown a willingness to antagonize EU and NATO consensuses, respectively.⁸⁴

6. North–South Division

The tension between Southern and Northern Europe has simmered for centuries, fueled by religious and cultural differences, but has taken on new significance in the age of the EU. These new tensions manifest in new ways, such as in fiscal policy. The condescension with which the North approaches the South can be traced in large part to the eurozone debt crisis in 2009–2012.⁸⁵ Southern European nations also typically spend much less on defense than their Northern counterparts,⁸⁶ adding to the image of Southern Europe as unserious, in turn fueling resentment toward the North.

The European debt crisis arose from criteria promulgated after the creation of the EU that required countries to have their books in order before adopting the euro as their currency.⁸⁷ Some countries entered the eurozone without meeting these budget requirements or failed to continue

⁸³ Laura Gozzi, *Danish PM in Whirlwind EU Trip as Greenland Unease Grows*, BBC NEWS (Jan. 28, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm218mle9pzo> [<https://perma.cc/7UQU-MVFH>] (reporting that the Trump Administration has "refused to rule out using military or economic force" to acquire Greenland).

⁸⁴ For Hungary, see *infra* notes 109–116. For Turkey, see *infra* notes 101–108 (starting with "For examples of Turkish. . .").

⁸⁵ Christopher Alessi & James McBride, *The Eurozone in Crisis*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELS. (Feb. 11, 2015, at 07:00 ET), <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/eurozone-crisis> [<https://perma.cc/FZ7M-JR2J>].

⁸⁶ *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2025)*, *supra* note 40, at 4 fig. 4.

⁸⁷ TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION art. 109j, Feb. 7, 1992, 1992 O.J. (C 191) 1; CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION PROTOCOL No. 12, May 9, 2008, 2008 O.J. (C 115) 279–80.

to meet the criteria, indulging in credit provided by other eurozone members, and, once the global financial crisis occurred, sovereign debt crises emerged.⁸⁸ Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain all required bailouts, and Italy undertook significant austerity measures,⁸⁹ resurrecting the nickname “PIIGS” (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain) that first arose during the 1970s European economic integration.⁹⁰ This crude acronym illustrates the internal tensions well. Northern European countries felt a sense of responsibility to save the EU from total collapse, and their voters expressed much anger at the insolvent countries for their fiscal irresponsibility.⁹¹ This established—both perceived and in practice—a divide between so-called responsible and irresponsible countries within the EU.

Since the COVID pandemic, Southern European economies have experienced stronger growth than Germany, France, and other Northern European countries, exacerbating regional tensions.⁹² In 2024, International Monetary Fund figures show that Germany’s economy shrank by half a percentage point while Spain experienced growth of three and a half percent, Portugal nearly two percent, and Greece over two percent.⁹³

⁸⁸ Alessi & McBride, *supra* note 85.

⁸⁹ *Id.*

⁹⁰ Mark Koba, *PIIGS: CNBC Explains*, CNBC (Aug. 11, 2011), <https://www.cnbc.com/2011/08/11/piigs-cnbc-explains.html>.

⁹¹ This anger was a crucial driver of the success of populist “eurosceptic” political parties in the mid-2010s in many Northern European countries. See TIMOTHY GARTON ASH, *HOMELANDS: A PERSONAL HISTORY OF EUROPE* 248–56 (2023).

⁹² *Le Monde* amusingly calls this “southern Europe’s economic revenge.” See Sandrine Morel et al., *Southern Europe’s Economic Revenge*, LE MONDE (Oct. 8, 2024, at 17:55 CEST), https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2024/10/08/southern-europe-s-economic-revenge_6728642_19.html [<https://perma.cc/3KC8-EFNL>]; see also Sophia Busch & Phillip Meng, *Southern Europe Is the Continent’s New Economic Growth Engine*, ATL. COUNCIL (Aug. 3, 2023),

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/southern-europe-is-the-continents-new-economic-growth-engine/> [<https://perma.cc/89YC-K5U5>] (describing Southern Europe’s recent economic strength relative to Northern Europe); *How Spain Became Europe’s Fastest Growing Major Economy*, GOLDMAN SACHS (July 31, 2025),

<https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/articles/how-spain-became-europes-fastest-growing-major-economy> [<https://perma.cc/L26R-E46D>] (analyzing reasons why Spain’s economy has had a relatively high growth rate).

⁹³ INT’L MONETARY FUND, *REGIONAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: EUROPE* 31 Annex Tbl. 1.1 (2025), <https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/reo/eur/2025/october/english/text.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/5TT9-9UBN>]. An exception to this trend is Italy, which is not projected to experience growth at or above 1 percent for 2025–2027. *Id.*

The gulf between the North and the South on budgetary matters also holds in the context of defense spending. NATO's 2025 defense spending numbers estimate that all thirty-two members met the two percent of GDP defense spending target in 2025.⁹⁴ But seventeen countries are within ten basis points of the two-percent target, including Italy, Portugal, and Spain.⁹⁵ A similar pattern emerges in bilateral aid to Ukraine. The most generous donors, determined by percentage of GDP donated, are the Baltic countries, Nordic countries, and Poland.⁹⁶ The middle of the pack includes Germany, France, Britain, and the United States, though the size of these countries' economies means that, when measured in currency, they are some of the most generous donors.⁹⁷ The stingiest Western countries include Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.⁹⁸ Most of Europe's defense industrial base is located in the North,⁹⁹ though Turkey has a significant arms industry (and has taken flak for selling weapons to Russia).¹⁰⁰ In short, Southern Europe is not pulling its weight and has less to contribute toward a significant rearmament effort.

7. Troublemakers

Countries free-riding on others' contributions is one problem, but active subterfuge that undermines collective action is far more damaging and much harder to solve. Europe's most pernicious troublemakers have been Turkey and Hungary.

Though a NATO member since 1952, Turkey has been a perennial troublemaker in the alliance.¹⁰¹ Consider invocations of the North Atlantic

⁹⁴ *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2025)*, *supra* note 40, at 4 fig. 4.

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ Trebesch et al., *supra* note 38.

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ *Id.*

⁹⁹ In a ranking of the largest defense contractors worldwide by market capitalization, Northern European firms had a total market capitalization of \$357.05 billion, compared to only \$43.88 billion in Southern Europe. *Largest Defense Contractors by Market Cap*, COMPANIESMARKETCAP, <https://companiesmarketcap.com/defense-contractors/largest-companies-by-market-cap/> [<https://perma.cc/NE2H-F3BT>] (last visited May 24, 2026).

¹⁰⁰ Elçin Poyrazlar, *Turkey Carves Its Own Course in NATO*, POLITICO (July 8, 2024, at 19:16 CET), <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-nato-russia-ukraine-turkish-defense-minister-yasar-guler/> [<https://perma.cc/7PB7-XX5T>].

¹⁰¹ For examples of Turkish subterfuge, see, for example, *NATO Puts Defence Plan for Poland, Baltics into Action, Officials Say*, REUTERS (July 2, 2020, at 09:36 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-baltics-turkey-idUSKBN24320B/> [<https://perma.cc/K7GB-27EV>] (reporting that Turkey blocked the implementation of a

Treaty's Article 4, which requires consultation of all NATO members when a country feels its "territorial integrity, political independence, or security" is threatened.¹⁰² Of the nine times Article 4 has been invoked, Turkey led five of them.¹⁰³ Turkey has long had a difficult relationship with the EU.¹⁰⁴ It is much less democratic than any EU country or any other NATO ally.¹⁰⁵ Turkey's economic issues¹⁰⁶ make it an unreliable partner, and, more

defense plan for Poland and the Baltics for six years); Elena Becatoros & Suzan Fraser, *Greek Foreign Minister Slams Turkish Leader's Missile Threat*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Dec. 12, 2022, at 09:07 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/greece-turkey-athens-recep-tayyip-erdogan-government-5bee76c2e7b2e1feaea3e2ddd54144c> [<https://perma.cc/5FYB-R5GB>] (noting President Erdogan's threat to attack Athens with ballistic missiles). See also *Erdogan Says Turkey Might Enter Israel to Help Palestinians*, REUTERS (July 28, 2024, at 16:11 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/erdogan-says-turkey-might-enter-israel-help-palestinians-2024-07-28/> [<https://perma.cc/9HMB-K2XG>] (reporting on Erdogan's threat to invade Israel). Notably, Turkey was initially granted NATO membership after a concerted campaign to win over U.S. officials, who acceded because of Turkey's strategic geography. See Melvyn P. Leffler, *Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945–1952*, 71 J. AM. HIST. 807, 817–21 (1985), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1888505> [<https://perma.cc/VP7W-BFW9>]. There have been calls to reconsider Turkey's membership. Sinan Ciddi, *It's Time to Reconsider Turkey's NATO Membership*, FOREIGN POL'Y (Dec. 6, 2023, at 12:03 ET), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/06/turkey-nato-membership-alliance-russia-erdogan-sweden-syria/> [<https://perma.cc/2L3X-55GS>]; Itamar Eichner, *Wilders: Turkey Should Be Kicked out of NATO After Threatening Israel with War*, YNET NEWS (July 29, 2024, at 01:14 IST), <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/typ7ivkc> [<https://perma.cc/UKD2-T436>].

¹⁰² *The Consultation Process and Article 4*, NATO (Sep. 23, 2025), <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/introduction-to-nato/the-consultation-process-and-article-4> [<https://perma.cc/LK7Y-JUNS>].

¹⁰³ *Id.*

¹⁰⁴ See generally NATHALIE TOCCI, BROOKINGS INST., *TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: A JOURNEY IN THE UNKNOWN* (2014), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Turkey-and-the-European-Union.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/4N3B-S3AU>] (focusing on Turkey's geopolitical and economic situation to determine its relation to and involvement in the EU).

¹⁰⁵ Turkey is the only NATO member to be ranked as "Not Free" by Freedom House. No countries other than Russia and Belarus on the European continent share this status. YANA GOROKHOVSKAIA & CATHRYN GROTHE, FREEDOM HOUSE, *FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025: THE UPHILL BATTLE TO SAFEGUARD RIGHTS* (2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2025/uphill-battle-to-safeguard-rights> [<https://perma.cc/YFM8-JAEP>].

¹⁰⁶ *Ahead of a Critical Election Turkey's Economy Is Running on Borrowed Time*, ECONOMIST (Mar. 26, 2023), <https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/03/26/ahead-of-a-critical-election-turkeys-economy-is-running-on-borrowed-time> [<https://perma.cc/HQ48-XHGG>]; *Turkey's Long Hard Struggle with Inflation*, ECONOMIST (Oct. 10, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/europe/2024/10/10/turkeys-long-hard-struggle-with-inflation> [<https://perma.cc/LR4C-JN3L>].

significantly, its somewhat close relations with Russia are deeply concerning.¹⁰⁷ Turkey can exploit NATO's insistence on consensus and unanimity, like how it held up Sweden's accession to the alliance.¹⁰⁸

Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, publicly describes his country as an "illiberal democracy."¹⁰⁹ The EU believes him: in 2022, the European Parliament voted to designate Hungary as "a hybrid regime of electoral autocracy" acting against core EU and democratic values.¹¹⁰ Orbán's party has exerted financial and political pressure to fully capture media,¹¹¹ facilitated corruption,¹¹² rigged electoral rules to their advantage,¹¹³ and forced one of the premier universities in central Europe to move from Budapest to Vienna because it was a "bastion of liberalism" and funded by George Soros.¹¹⁴ Orbán has also accused the EU of prolonging the war in Ukraine and is ideologically sympathetic toward Russia, from whom Hungary buys much of its energy.¹¹⁵ Consistent with this stance, Hungary has blocked a significant amount of EU aid and support for Ukraine since 2022.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ JIM ZANOTTI & CLAYTON THOMAS, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R44000, TURKEY (TÜRKIYE): MAJOR ISSUES AND U.S. RELATIONS 20–22 (2025), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44000> [<https://perma.cc/D5CB-D5SD>].

¹⁰⁸ *Why Is Turkey Blocking Sweden from Joining NATO?*, ECONOMIST (July 10, 2023), <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2023/07/10/why-is-turkey-blocking-sweden-from-joining-nato> [<https://perma.cc/N8DD-PWD3>].

¹⁰⁹ Lorne Cook, *EU Lawmakers Declare That Hungary Is No Longer a Democracy*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Sep. 15, 2022, at 13:43 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/hungary-gay-rights-european-union-6a87b83de47bb90b12e4927735d8092f> [<https://perma.cc/6BTF-JQZQ>].

¹¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹¹ ANNE APPLEBAUM, TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY: THE SEDUCTIVE LURE OF AUTHORITARIANISM 141 (2020).

¹¹² *Freedom in the World 2025: Hungary*, FREEDOM HOUSE (2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2025> [<https://perma.cc/KM2V-SNQY>].

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ Marc Santora, *George Soros-Founded University Is Forced out of Hungary*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 3, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/03/world/europe/soros-hungary-central-european-university.html> [<https://perma.cc/D2R8-TXB7>].

¹¹⁵ *Hungary: Viktor Orban Pledges to Keep Relations with Russia*, DEUTSCHE WELLE (DW) (Feb. 19, 2023), <https://www.dw.com/en/hungary-viktor-orban-pledges-to-keep-relations-with-russia/a-64754014> [<https://perma.cc/8TFF-DHHY>].

¹¹⁶ Boldizsar Györi, *Hungary to Block EU Military Aid Fund for Ukraine Unless Kyiv Takes OTP Bank off Blacklist*, REUTERS (May 17, 2023, at 13:35 ET), <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungary-block-eu-military-aid-fund-ukraine-unless-kyiv-takes-otp-bank-off-2023-05-17/> [<https://perma.cc/FM8R-CADZ>]; Jaroslav Lukiv & Jessica Parker, *Hungary Blocks €50bn of EU Funding for Ukraine*, BBC NEWS (Dec. 15,

Other countries have the potential to become troublemakers too. Far-right parties have seen a swell of recent success in Europe, challenging ruling parties¹¹⁷ or taking power.¹¹⁸ A far-right party governed Poland for eight years, which led to frequent clashes with the EU¹¹⁹ and severe democratic backsliding.¹²⁰ Far-right politicians across Europe, like Orbán in Hungary, echo Russian talking points and are unreliable partners in agreeing to greater defense spending, let alone greater cooperation on security and intelligence issues. Why would Finnish or French intelligence wish to share intelligence through an EU-wide intelligence agency—which has been recommended by an EU white paper¹²¹—when they know their product

2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67724357> [<https://perma.cc/3893-573J>]; Jacopo Barigazzi, *EU Ministers Fume as “Outrageous” Hungary yet Again Blocks Military Aid for Ukraine*, POLITICO (May 27, 2024, at 17:20 CET), <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-ministers-outrageous-hungary-blocks-military-aid-arms-ukraine/> [<https://perma.cc/7YYS-Y7ZV>].

¹¹⁷ For example, in Germany and France. See, e.g., Geir Moulson, *Conservative Opposition Wins German Election and the Far Right Is 2nd with Strongest Postwar Result*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Feb. 23, 2025, at 12:07 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/germany-election-merz-scholz-far-right-afd-ebf16ed38e0beaff7fed9a6d29b32a24> [<https://perma.cc/V9RT-4P5S>]; *France Steps into Deep Trouble*, ECONOMIST (Dec. 4, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2024/12/04/france-steps-into-deep-trouble> [<https://perma.cc/B68W-HJC8>].

¹¹⁸ For example, in Italy. See Nicholas Lokker & Jason C. Moyer, *Italy’s New Far-Right Government Threatens EU Unity*, WILSON CTR. (Sep. 26, 2022), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/italys-new-far-right-government-threatens-eu-unity> [<https://perma.cc/4GDA-XZNE>].

¹¹⁹ For Polish–EU tensions on rule of law and funding, see Raf Casert, *EU Top Court Says That Poland’s Justice Reform Infringes EU Law*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (June 5, 2023, at 11:10 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/eu-poland-rule-of-law-conflict-c439762983d197484af65ccc356a323c> [<https://perma.cc/2W9B-L4VW>]; *EU Releases Blocked Funds of \$6.7 Billion to Poland as Part of Its Post-Pandemic Recovery Package*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Apr. 15, 2024, at 07:57 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/poland-european-union-funding-post-covid-funding-d4490d9cac002be93fb78b75758da98a> [<https://perma.cc/FSP7-P6S5>]; James Frater & Lianne Kolirin, *EU Blocks Funding for Six Towns That Declared Themselves “LGBT-Free Zones,”* CNN (July 31, 2020, at 07:49 ET), <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/31/europe/poland-lgbt-eu-funding-intl> [<https://perma.cc/53WK-MMFW>].

¹²⁰ See generally Grzymala-Busse, *supra* note 6 (describing democratic backsliding in Poland and Hungary); Bernhard, *supra* note 6 (same); Karolewski, *supra* note 6 (same). Also notable are significant drops in Poland’s Freedom in the World and Nations in Transit index scores from 2015 to present day. *Poland*, FREEDOM HOUSE, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland> [<https://perma.cc/4Z79-DXKE>].

¹²¹ Joshua Posaner, *Create a CIA-Style European Spy Service, von der Leyen Is Told*, POLITICO (Oct. 30, 2024, at 13:39 CET), <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-spy-service-cia-ursula-von-der-leyen/> [<https://perma.cc/4MAS-R5ZA>].

will be shared with governments that disavow Western values and downplay the war in Ukraine? The EU, like NATO, is prone to having collective action blocked by just one or two obstinate members, which, in recent years, has often been Hungary.¹²²

Europe, then, does not turn to the task of rearmament with a unified front. Disagreements in good faith are to be expected in such a process, and are occurring;¹²³ however, those issues are distinct from and milder than disunity caused by actors that completely reject the need for collective action and align themselves with adversaries.

8. *The China Challenge*

Rearming Europe to defend against an increasingly belligerent Russia is a daunting challenge, the scale and complexity of which are compounded by China's role. Sino-Russian cooperation on military and intelligence matters is tightening, making it myopic for European rearmament to focus solely on risks posed by Russia.¹²⁴ Europe must prepare to face Russian revanchism and Chinese imperialism simultaneously.

Europe is already experiencing Sino-Russian joint aggression. Some of the damage to undersea infrastructure in the Baltic has been conducted by Chinese-flagged vessels, at least one of which had Russians aboard.¹²⁵ China and Russia have become more closely aligned since the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, with Xi Jinping all but pledging support for Putin's

¹²² See *supra* note 116.

¹²³ Oleg Sukhov, *Ukraine Summit in Paris Exposes Divisions, Lack of Coherent Plan, Experts Say*, KYIV INDEP. (Feb. 18, 2025, at 21:49 EET), <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-summit-in-paris-exposes-divisions-lack-of-coherent-plan-experts-say/> [https://perma.cc/3VZM-M2JA].

¹²⁴ See Michael McFaul & Evan S. Medeiros, *China and Russia Will Not Be Split*, FOREIGN AFFS. (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/china-and-russia-will-not-be-split> [https://perma.cc/PZH6-BM2H]; ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR & NICHOLAS LOKKER, CTR. FOR A NEW AM. SEC., *RUSSIA-CHINA DEFENSE COOPERATION* 5–6 (2023), <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/russia-china-relations> [https://perma.cc/3N75-42WW]; Natalia Chabarovskaya, *Going Steady: China and Russia's Economic Ties Are Deeper than Washington Thinks*, CTR. FOR EUR. POL'Y ANALYSIS (CEPA) (June 16, 2025), <https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/going-steady-china-and-russias-economic-ties-are-deeper-than-washington-thinks/> [https://perma.cc/4KT2-5V7K].

¹²⁵ Pancevski, *supra* note 55.

war,¹²⁶ and the two leaders have proclaimed that their countries will “stand guard over the world order.”¹²⁷

Xi, like Putin, has long shown an interest in the Arctic—a region home to multiple European countries and no Chinese territory. In 2014, Xi proclaimed China’s desire to become a “polar great power,”¹²⁸ and in 2018, China conferred on itself the dubiously meaningful title of “Near-Arctic State.”¹²⁹ China has matched its rhetoric with investment by attempting to establish more Arctic scientific research stations,¹³⁰ expanding its icebreaker fleet,¹³¹ and deploying its icebreakers and other ships to the Arctic more frequently, often in concert with Russia.¹³²

Sino-Russian cooperation requires an even more aggressive rearmament effort by Europe but also poses important conceptual challenges for European leaders. Securing Europe no longer just requires a

¹²⁶ Marc Julienne, *The China-Russia Partnership and the Ukraine War: Aligned but Not Allied*, FRENCH INST. OF INT’L RELS. (Feb. 20, 2025), <https://www.ifri.org/en/external-articles/external-publications/china-russia-partnership-and-ukraine-war-aligned-not-allied> [https://perma.cc/2F5S-CXEG].

¹²⁷ Kevin Shalvey & Karson Yiu, *Putin Hosts China’s President Xi in Moscow Amid Ukraine War*, ABC NEWS (Mar. 20, 2023, at 19:36 ET), <https://abcnews.go.com/International/chinas-president-xi-arrives-moscow-meeting-putin-amid/story?id=97980986> [https://perma.cc/M4J2-4WKS].

¹²⁸ *China Wants to Be a Polar Power*, ECONOMIST (Apr. 14, 2018), <https://www.economist.com/china/2018/04/14/china-wants-to-be-a-polar-power> [https://perma.cc/CM4Z-UWVC].

¹²⁹ STATE COUNCIL INFO. OFF. OF CHINA, CHINA’S ARCTIC POLICY (Jan. 26, 2018, at 13:50 CST), https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm [https://perma.cc/BKL4-K44L].

¹³⁰ Matthew P. Funaiolo et al., *Frozen Frontiers: China’s Great Power Ambitions in the Polar Regions*, CSIS (Apr. 18, 2023), <https://features.csis.org/hiddenreach/china-polar-research-facility/> [https://perma.cc/EYM6-9N8J].

¹³¹ John Grady, *Chinese Icebreaker Mission to Arctic “Clear Signal” of Beijing’s Polar Ambitions, Says Expert*, U.S. NAVAL INST. (USNI) NEWS (Sep. 3, 2024, at 15:11 ET), <https://news.usni.org/2024/09/03/chinese-icebreaker-mission-to-arctic-clear-signal-of-beijings-polar-ambitions-says-expert> [https://perma.cc/8TZ6-VZEM].

¹³² *Id.*; John Grady, *China Coast Guard Now Operating in the Bering Sea*, USNI NEWS (Oct. 3, 2024, at 18:03 ET), <https://news.usni.org/2024/10/03/china-coast-guard-now-operating-in-the-bering-sea> [https://perma.cc/8JZE-QE3Z]; Meia Nouwens & Veerle Nouwens, *China-Russia Coast Guard Cooperation: A New Dimension of China-Russia Relations?*, CSIS (Oct. 16, 2024), <https://chinapower.csis.org/analysis/china-russia-coast-guard-cooperation/> [https://perma.cc/9PDR-KXXQ]; Andrei Dagaev, *The Arctic Is Testing the Limits of the Sino-Russian Partnership*, CARNEGIE POLITIKA (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/02/russia-china-arctic-views?lang=en> [https://perma.cc/BYZ3-DJVE].

safe neighborhood; it requires a safe globe. European political and security institutions are not designed for a challenge of this scope. A potential avenue for success in overcoming this challenge is that other liberal democracies around the globe find themselves in a similar predicament: abandoned by American withdrawal, they are exposed to Chinese or Sino-Russian aggression.

II. BEYOND EUROPE

A. Canada

Over many decades, Canada and the United States built an extremely close relationship, collaborating on everything including air defense (NORAD), trade, professional sports, and culture. Trump has shattered that long-standing partnership in a matter of weeks: Trump placed large tariffs on Canadian imports, and he has repeatedly insulted Canada and questioned Canadian sovereignty.¹³³ If Trump's abandonment of Europe and alignment with Russia feels strategically misguided, Trump's Canada policy has an added emotional resonance, as America is seemingly arbitrarily and cruelly punishing its neighbor.

Trump placed significant tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods, withdrew them, and then enacted them again.¹³⁴ Canada's robust response at the federal and provincial level has led to a trade war across the forty-ninth parallel.¹³⁵ While the United States later dropped tariffs on Canadian goods covered under the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement,¹³⁶ tensions rose again in fall 2025. Ontario's government ran a television advertisement of a Ronald Reagan speech castigating tariffs, which caused

¹³³ Allan Smith & Peter Nicholas, *Trump's Quest to Conquer Canada Is Confusing Everyone*, NBC NEWS (Mar. 14, 2025, at 14:04 ET), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-quest-conquer-canada-confusing-everyone-rcna195657> [https://perma.cc/ZD4C-6ULS].

¹³⁴ Chad P. Bown, *Trump's Trade War Timeline 2.0: An Up-to-Date Guide*, PETERSON INST. FOR INT'L ECONS. (PIIE) (May 17, 2026, at 10:00 ET), <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/trumps-trade-war-timeline-20-date-guide> [https://perma.cc/3MNE-UTTP].

¹³⁵ *Id.*

¹³⁶ WHITE HOUSE, *Amendment to Duties to Address the Flow of Illicit Drugs Across Our Northern Border* (Mar. 6, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/amendment-to-duties-to-address-the-flow-of-illicit-drugs-across-our-northern-border-0c3c/> [https://perma.cc/T6DP-HZ29].

Trump to call off United States–Canada trade negotiations.¹³⁷ More menacingly, Trump has seemingly been fixated on annexing Canada into the United States: he called the Canadian Prime Minister “governor,” suggesting that Canada was a state in the Union,¹³⁸ and Trump has said that Canada should not be a sovereign nation and should, instead, become the fifty-first state.¹³⁹ While Trump’s rhetoric seems to have cooled since spring 2025, his backlash to Ontario’s anti-tariff ad reveals his continuing ire toward Canada. His motivations are murky, but they may be driven by his desire for Canada’s natural resources—though Trump has justified tariffs on Canadian goods by saying that the United States gains nothing from trade with Canada.¹⁴⁰

Trump’s fixation with undermining Canadian sovereignty is substantiated by his discussions with Canadian and American officials. He suggested to Justin Trudeau that the border treaty between the United States and Canada is invalid and the border itself is ugly and arbitrary.¹⁴¹ Some Trump administration officials have discussed removing Canada from the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing group (consisting of Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States).¹⁴² Further, Trump is apparently eyeing NORAD and seeking to renege on agreements on how the United States and Canada share the Great Lakes.¹⁴³ It is an understatement to say that trust between Canada and the United States has been shattered.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ Mike Crawley, *Trump Calls Off Trade Talks with Canada over Ontario’s Anti-Tariff Ad*, CBC NEWS (Oct. 25, 2025), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/trump-trade-negotiations-tariffs-ontario-ad-9.6951469> [https://perma.cc/L6N2-TYCX].

¹³⁸ John Paul Tasker, *Trump Taunts Trudeau by Calling Him “Governor” of “a Great State,”* CBC NEWS (Dec. 11, 2024), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trump-trudeau-governor-great-state-canada-1.7406226> [https://perma.cc/K2KM-5KRF].

¹³⁹ Smith & Nicholas, *supra* note 133.

¹⁴⁰ *Id.*

¹⁴¹ Matina Stevis-Gridneff, *How Trump’s “51st State” Canada Talk Came to Be Seen as Deadly Serious*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 24, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/07/world/canada/trump-trudeau-canada-51st-state.html> [https://perma.cc/7LCJ-2MPW].

¹⁴² *Id.*

¹⁴³ *Id.*

¹⁴⁴ See Sofia Hernandez Ramones, Jonathan Schulman & Andrew Prozorovsky, *Canadians’ Opinions of the U.S. and Its President Are at or near Historic Lows*, PEW RESEARCH CTR. (July 24, 2025), <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/07/24/canadians-opinions-of-the-us-and-its-president-are-at-or-near-historic-lows/> [https://perma.cc/MG6W-BNUU]; Anja Karadeglija, CANADIAN PRESS, *New Poll Says 27% of Canadians View the United States as an “Enemy” Country*, CTV NEWS (Feb. 20, 2025, at 06:13 ET),

Like Europe, Canada is now threatened by both changes in American policy and escalations in Sino-Russian aggression. For Canada, their exposure comes in the Arctic, where, as discussed above, China and Russia have been particularly belligerent.¹⁴⁵ A 2023 report by the Canadian Senate identified that Russian military expansion in the Arctic requires a greater sense of urgency to defend Canada's north.¹⁴⁶ The report also quoted Canadian military leaders as characterizing Russia as a "vassal for China" in the Arctic.¹⁴⁷ In 2024, the government published its Arctic Foreign Policy, outlining an assertive stance to protect Canadian sovereignty in the high north.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, Canada and Australia partnered in 2025 to expand Canada's radar system covering the Arctic.¹⁴⁹ Thus, currently, Canada is losing support from the United States on mutual defense issues while China and Russia increase their military activity in the Arctic.

Yet, one justified claim that Trump has against Canada is that they do not spend much on defense. In 2024, Canada spent only 1.47 percent of GDP on defense, per NATO estimates.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Prime Minister Mark Carney has pledged to reach the two percent of GDP spending target by 2030,¹⁵¹ and NATO estimates that Canada spent 2.01 percent of GDP on defense in 2025.¹⁵² Canada has been a steady, if not particularly generous, donor to Ukraine. By GDP, it is about as generous as Italy and Spain.¹⁵³ And Canada has been a consistent donor amidst American

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/article/new-poll-says-27-of-canadians-view-the-united-states-as-an-enemy-country/> [<https://perma.cc/ZXF3-9UW7>] (displaying that over a quarter of Canadians surveyed view the United States as an "enemy country").

¹⁴⁵ See *supra* Part I(B)(4), notes 124–132.

¹⁴⁶ STANDING SENATE COMM. ON NAT'L SEC., DEF. & VETERANS AFFS., CANADA, ARCTIC SECURITY UNDER THREAT: URGENT NEEDS IN A CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LANDSCAPE 28 (2023), https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/441/SECD/reports/2023-06-28_SECD_ArcticReport_e.pdf [<https://perma.cc/6N2H-XG2Z>].

¹⁴⁷ *Id.* at 26–28.

¹⁴⁸ GOV'T OF CAN., CANADA'S ARCTIC FOREIGN POLICY 17 (2024), <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/transparence-transparence/arctic-arctique/arctic-policy-politique-arctique.aspx?lang=eng> [<https://perma.cc/J777-P5KZ>].

¹⁴⁹ *Reinforcing Canada's Security and Sovereignty in the Arctic*, PRIME MINISTER OF CAN. (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2025/03/18/reinforcing-canadas-security-and-sovereignty-arctic> [<https://perma.cc/N4Q4-VYSC>].

¹⁵⁰ *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2025)*, *supra* note 40, at 9 tbl. 3.

¹⁵¹ Ashley Burke, *Mark Carney Commits to 2% NATO Defence Spending Benchmark by 2030*, CBC NEWS (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/liberal-leadership-contender-mark-carney-defence-spending-1.7450718> [<https://perma.cc/W39F-LJNC>].

¹⁵² *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2025)*, *supra* note 40, at 9 tbl. 3.

¹⁵³ Trebesch et al., *supra* note 38.

equivocation on supporting Ukraine. Since Trump returned to office, Canada's steadfast support of Ukraine has stood in stark contrast with Trump's actions.¹⁵⁴

Canada has said that it would be willing to send troops to Ukraine as part of a peacekeeping force that Britain and France are beginning to conceptualize.¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, Canada has been one of the few non-European countries to join the "coalition of the willing" summits hosted by France and Britain.¹⁵⁶ This shows that European democracy hawks are already beginning to expand their scope beyond Europe to democracies across the globe. This expansion is also evident in, among other actions, the increase in the Polish–Korean defense trade¹⁵⁷ and the establishment of a free trade agreement between the EU and four Latin American countries of Mercosur.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ See Mickey Djuric, *As Trump Turns on Ukraine, Trudeau Tells Zelenskyy: "Your Fight Is Our Fight"*, POLITICO (Feb. 23, 2025, at 12:00 ET), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/23/trump-ukraine-trudeau-zelenskyy-canada-00205614> [https://perma.cc/Q5YU-Q587]; for Canadian actions in support of Ukraine announced in 2025, see NAT'L DEF., GOV'T OF CAN., *Defence Minister Bill Blair Commits \$440 Million in Military Assistance to Ukraine* (Jan. 9, 2025), <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2025/01/defence-minister-bill-blair-commits-440-million-in-military-assistance-to-ukraine.html> [https://perma.cc/ADH3-4ZJ5]; *A Just and Lasting Peace for Ukraine*, PRIME MINISTER OF CAN. (Feb. 24, 2025), <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2025/02/24/just-and-lasting-peace-ukraine> [https://perma.cc/DZM2-9GCG]; *Canada Reinforces Its Support for a Just and Lasting Peace in Ukraine*, PRIME MINISTER OF CAN. (Aug. 24, 2025), <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2025/08/24/canada-reinforces-its-support-just-and-lasting-peace> [https://perma.cc/Y2SA-FXMA].

¹⁵⁵ Murray Brewster, *Canada "Ready and Able" to Join Ukraine Peacekeeping Force*, *Defence Minister Says*, CBC NEWS (Mar. 5, 2025), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-ukraine-blair-troops-1.7475333> [https://perma.cc/RHA8-RX8C].

¹⁵⁶ Vicky Wong, *Starmer Announces "Coalition of the Willing" to Guarantee Ukraine Peace*, BBC NEWS (Mar. 3, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9vygkzkkrrvo> [https://perma.cc/4WEA-GXD2]; Harry Taylor, *Ukraine Ceasefire Plans Moving to Operational Phase, Starmer Says*, GUARDIAN (Mar. 15, 2025, at 10:14 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/15/ukraine-ceasefire-plans-moving-to-operational-phase-starmer-says> [https://perma.cc/TLR3-ALUC].

¹⁵⁷ Stuart Dee & Kiran Suman-Chauhan, *Missiles, Markets, and Mutual Interests: Poland and South Korea's Evolving Defence-Industrial Cooperation*, RAND (Sep. 4, 2025), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/09/missiles-markets-and-mutual-interests-poland-and-south.html> [https://perma.cc/6VLV-7T3U].

¹⁵⁸ Cecilia Malmström, *The European Union Is Forging a New Strategic Alliance with Latin America*, PIIE (Nov. 6, 2025, at 12:52 ET), <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/european-union-forging-new-strategic-alliance-latin-america> [https://perma.cc/ZNA3-85AS].

While Canada's financial commitments to its defense and Ukraine could be increased, Canada's willingness to lead discussions of Ukraine's future demonstrates its commitment to Ukraine. It also shows that these discussions are not solely European discussions, but conversations among democratic nations around the globe.

B. Asia-Pacific Democracies

In Asia and the Pacific, China is becoming more belligerent across a growing swath of territory. This belligerence is enabled by China's blue-water navy¹⁵⁹ and its militarized coast guard—both the world's largest.¹⁶⁰ China's coast guard is often called its "second navy" by experts,¹⁶¹ and it has taken the leading role in asserting Chinese power in contested waters in the South China Sea.¹⁶² China has built up shoals or reefs in the South China Sea into military bases near the Philippines, using its coast guard to assert dominance while avoiding the implications of a gray-hulled naval vessel in an American ally's territorial waters.¹⁶³

Taiwan is the most coveted target for China, and zero hour is approaching: the CIA has assessed that Chinese leadership may expect their military to be ready to invade the island by 2027.¹⁶⁴ The extent to which this goal is achievable is highly uncertain.¹⁶⁵ Any attempted invasion of Taiwan would be logistically and militarily difficult, and recent purges of

¹⁵⁹ *How Is China Modernizing Its Navy?*, CSIS (Nov. 9, 2023), <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-naval-modernization/> [https://perma.cc/CQ34-JXNJ].

¹⁶⁰ Damien Cave, *China Creates a Coast Guard Like No Other, Seeking Supremacy in Asian Seas*, N.Y. TIMES (Sep. 24, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/12/world/asia/china-coast-guard.html> [https://perma.cc/86FS-EPKT].

¹⁶¹ Matthew Loh, *China's Coast Guard Is Looking Even More Like Its "2nd Navy," with "Monster" Ships, a Destroyer-Level Vessel, and a Rumored Drone Carrier*, BUS. INSIDER (Aug. 26, 2024, at 23:37 ET), <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-coast-guard-second-navy-monster-ship-destroyer-drone-carrier-2024-8?op=1> [https://perma.cc/D4UB-8TRB].

¹⁶² Niharika Mandhana & Camille Bressange, *China Is Waging a "Gray Zone" Campaign to Cement Power. Here's How It Looks.*, WALL ST. J. (Mar. 9, 2025, at 21:00 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/world/china/china-expansion-taiwan-himalayas-146aff72?mod=mhp> (last visited May 25, 2026).

¹⁶³ *Id.*

¹⁶⁴ Michael R. Gordon & Nancy A. Youssef, *How Oct. 7 Upended America's Global Military Strategy*, WALL ST. J. (Oct. 9, 2024, at 21:00 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/how-oct-7-upended-americas-global-military-strategy-9e288f96?mod=mhp> [https://perma.cc/LUU8-L46U].

¹⁶⁵ See *supra* note 5.

Chinese military leadership by Xi suggest that serious, deep-rooted issues plague the military.¹⁶⁶

Yet, Chinese aircraft incursions into Taiwan's air-defense identification zone have increased in recent years, with an incursion occurring almost every day in 2024.¹⁶⁷ Its air sorties around Taiwan have expanded geographically to encircle the entire island rather than just Taiwan's western shore.¹⁶⁸ China's naval exercises around Taiwan include live-fire drills and feature China's relatively new aircraft carriers.¹⁶⁹ Even so, the likelihood of a Chinese victory in an invasion of Taiwan is unclear. A simulation conducted by the Center for Strategic & International Studies found that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan failed in most scenarios where Taiwanese, American, and Japanese forces were involved, but at a massive cost to all sides.¹⁷⁰

Chinese aggression has extended farther afield, too. In February 2025, a flotilla of Chinese naval vessels circumnavigated Australia, breaching Australia's exclusive economic zone repeatedly.¹⁷¹ The ships conducted live-fire drills in international waters between Australia and New Zealand with little notice.¹⁷² China has also strengthened its ties with Pacific Island nations, posing challenges for American interests in the region.¹⁷³

Then, there is the issue of North Korea, whose belligerence most acutely threatens South Korea and Japan. North Korea has nuclear

¹⁶⁶ See *supra* note 5.

¹⁶⁷ Mandhana & Bressange, *supra* note 162.

¹⁶⁸ *Id.*

¹⁶⁹ Joyu Wang, *China Launches Sea and Air Drills Around Taiwan*, WALL ST. J. (Oct. 14, 2024, at 12:58 ET), https://www.wsj.com/world/china/china-launches-sea-and-air-drills-around-taiwan-505c47f3?mod=article_inline (last visited May 25, 2026).

¹⁷⁰ Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian & Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan*, CSIS (Jan. 9, 2023), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/first-battle-next-war-wargaming-chinese-invasion-taiwan> [<https://perma.cc/8Q8F-URR2>].

¹⁷¹ Victoria Kim, *Chinese Warships Circle Australia and Leave It Feeling "Near-Naked,"* N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 12, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/12/world/australia/china-warships-australia-aucus.html> [<https://perma.cc/93AM-XGB7>].

¹⁷² *Id.*; *New Zealand Says China Navy Held 2nd Live-Fire Drill in International Waters*, REUTERS (Feb. 22, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australia-says-china-failed-explain-inadequate-navy-live-fire-notice-2025-02-22/> [<https://perma.cc/URM5-HGAJ>].

¹⁷³ ETHAN MEICK, MICHELLE KER & HAN MAY CHAN, U.S.—CHINA ECON. & SEC. REV. COMM'N, CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES 7–17 (2018), <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-Pacific%20Islands%20Staff%20Report.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/FJ3D-7XKF>].

capabilities,¹⁷⁴ and its missile tests are both frequent and intentionally provocative.¹⁷⁵ Twice, North Korean missiles have flown over Japan,¹⁷⁶ and it often launches missiles in response to U.S.–South Korea or U.S.–Japan dialogue or defense cooperation.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, North Korea's stonewalling of information on its campaign to abduct Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s continues to cause tension.¹⁷⁸ North Korea's tightening defense ties with Russia are also concerning for Japanese and South Korean security, as are China's efforts to ensure it remains closer to North Korea than Russia.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ See DANIEL M. GETTINGER & MARY BETH D. NIKITIN, CONG. RSCH. SERV., IF10472, NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE PROGRAMS (Apr. 29, 2026), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10472> [<https://perma.cc/7H89-XJ2P>].

¹⁷⁵ *The CNS North Korea Missile Test Database*, NUCLEAR THREAT INITIATIVE (Nov. 12, 2024), <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cns-north-korea-missile-test-database/> [<https://perma.cc/9YKQ-4BRH>].

¹⁷⁶ Motoko Rich & Choe Sang-Hun, *North Korea Fires Powerful Missile, Using Old Playbook in a New World*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 8, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/03/world/asia/japan-north-korea-missile.html> [<https://perma.cc/G57L-8Z87>].

¹⁷⁷ *North Korean Missile Launches & Nuclear Tests: 1984–Present*, MISSILE THREAT (CSIS Missile Def. Project) (Apr. 25, 2023), <https://missilethreat.csis.org/north-korea-missile-launches-1984-present/> [<https://perma.cc/N4J5-KC8R>]; *Fact Sheet: North Korea Missile Launch Activity*, CTR. FOR ARMS CONTROL & NON-PROLIFERATION (Jan. 2026), <https://armscontrolcenter.org/fact-sheet-north-korea-missile-test-activity/> [<https://perma.cc/PMN2-HPY6>]; see, e.g., Hyunsu Yim & Ju-min Park, *North Korea Fires Missiles After Slamming US-South Korea Drills*, REUTERS (Mar. 10, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/north-korea-calls-us-south-korea-drills-dangerous-provocative-act-2025-03-09/> [<https://perma.cc/64ZG-J6MP>]; Kim Tong-Hyung & Hyung-Jin Kim, *North Korea Touts Missile Tests as Trump Visits South Korea*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Oct. 29, 2025, at 10:29 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/north-korea-missiles-611a288d8f6cb02f5d43bb5db70204f8> [<https://perma.cc/2GBZ-B5A7>].

¹⁷⁸ Rebecca Seales & Hideharu Tamura, *Snatched from a Beach to Train North Korea's Spies*, BBC NEWS (Feb. 6, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55651578> [<https://perma.cc/K745-5MU5>]; *Japan Government Vows All-Out Push to Resolve North Korea's Abductions*, JAPAN TIMES (Dec. 14, 2025), <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/12/14/japan/politics/government-push-resolve-north-korea-abductions/> [<https://perma.cc/S6A8-B9WM>].

¹⁷⁹ See *infra* note 183; Victor Cha, Andy Lim & Truly Tinsley, *Renewed China-DPRK Diplomacy: Symbolism or Substance?*, CSIS (Oct. 14, 2025), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/renewed-china-dprk-diplomacy-symbolism-substance> [<https://perma.cc/KA4C-YSH6>].

These democracies are also threatened by Russia. Russia occupies the Kuril Islands, which are claimed by Japan.¹⁸⁰ Recently, Russia has been militarizing its presence on the Kurils, some of which lay within one hundred miles of Japanese territory.¹⁸¹ Russian anti-ship missiles deployed there have a range that would allow them to strike ships sailing into most ports on Hokkaido.¹⁸² Russia has also threatened South Korea if they were to supply arms to Ukraine, and Russia significantly increased its defense and economic ties with North Korea since 2022.¹⁸³

The challenge of Chinese aggression in East Asia and the Pacific is compounded by a lack of adequate collective security infrastructure. There is no Asian NATO. The closest analog for NATO in the region is the Quad, an informal group that includes Japan, Australia, India, and the United States.¹⁸⁴ Complications lie in India's somewhat close relations with Russia.¹⁸⁵ Most significantly, Trump placed steep tariffs on imports from India in the summer of 2025, souring relations and upending decades of work to bring India closer to America's orbit.¹⁸⁶ Future cooperation with the Quad will be more difficult given this spike in tensions.

¹⁸⁰ Ike Barrash, *Russia's Militarization of the Kuril Islands*, CSIS (Sep. 27, 2022), <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/russias-militarization-kuril-islands> [<https://perma.cc/B8NC-574V>].

¹⁸¹ *Id.*

¹⁸² *Id.*

¹⁸³ ANDREW S. BOWEN, MARK E. MANYIN & MARY BETH D. NIKITIN, CONG. RSCH. SERV., IF12760, *RUSSIA-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS* (June 13, 2025), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12760> [<https://perma.cc/AF98-D23Q>]; Kelly Ng, *Putin Warns South Korea Against Arming Ukraine*, BBC NEWS (June 21, 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1ee8x221lno> [<https://perma.cc/8T3W-7K7E>].

¹⁸⁴ Sheila A. Smith, *The Quad in the Indo-Pacific: What to Know*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELS. (May 27, 2021, at 14:30 ET), <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/quad-indo-pacific-what-know> [<https://perma.cc/DYL5-GPLP>]; *The Quad*, AUSTRALIAN GOV'T DEP'T OF FOREIGN AFFS. & TRADE, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/quad> [<https://perma.cc/3J5N-QX47>].

¹⁸⁵ Chietigj Bajpae & Lisa Toremark, *India–Russia Relations*, CHATHAM HOUSE (Oct. 17, 2024), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/10/india-russia-relations> [<https://perma.cc/PT75-SY4M>]; *Freedom in the World 2025: India*, FREEDOM HOUSE (2025), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2025> [<https://perma.cc/WY99-FFE9>].

¹⁸⁶ Ishaan Thakker, *Trump's Tariffs on India Could Unravel Decades of Strategic Partnership*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELS. (Sep. 25, 2025, at 14:21 ET), <https://www.cfr.org/article/trumps-tariffs-india-could-unravel-decades-strategic-partnership> [<https://perma.cc/5WJ2-6NFL>]; Evan A. Feigenbaum, *Donald Trump Risks Tanking Twenty-Five Years of U.S.-India Relations*, CEIP: EMISSARY (Aug. 4, 2025), <https://carnegieendowment.org/missary/2025/08/trump-tariffs-risk-us-india-relations?lang=en> [<https://perma.cc/LBK7-RG2H>].

Even more so than Europe, East Asia-Pacific democracies are dependent on the United States for defense. Japan's military was dismantled after World War II, and its constitution prohibits it from possessing the ability to militarily strike other nations.¹⁸⁷ American troops have been stationed in Japan since after World War II, but Trump has questioned this defense treaty, understandably worrying Japanese officials.¹⁸⁸ Given worries about the strength of U.S. support for Japan and the increasing amount of Russian, North Korean, and Chinese threats to Japan, Japan's 2022 national security strategy approved the acquisition of offensive military capacity.¹⁸⁹ Japan's first female Prime Minister, Takaichi Sanae, who took power in fall 2025, has pledged to continue expanding the military.¹⁹⁰

South Korea is similarly vulnerable. The United States military assumes operational control over Korean forces in wartime, and has since the Korean War.¹⁹¹ While South Korea has a more robust military than Japan, Trump has still complained that South Korea should pay the United States more for its military presence there.¹⁹² And, Trump has a historically strange relationship with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, which is understandably unnerving to South Korea.¹⁹³ Trump has suggested that it

¹⁸⁷ *Nihonkoku Kenpō* [KENPŌ] [CONSTITUTION], art. 9, ¶ 2 (Japan).

¹⁸⁸ Shane Croucher & Sophie Clark, *Donald Trump Questions Why US Protects Japan*, NEWSWEEK (Mar. 7, 2025, at 04:21 ET), <https://www.newsweek.com/trump-questions-why-us-protects-japan-2041027> [<https://perma.cc/V3TB-FNWM>].

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Kuhn, *Eyeing China, Japan Lifts Longtime Restrictions to Allow Major Defense Buildup*, NPR (Dec. 16, 2022, at 06:36 ET), <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/16/1143017026/japan-defense-spending-weapons-buildup-rearming> [<https://perma.cc/FM8X-Y445>].

¹⁹⁰ Mari Yamaguchi, *Japan's New Leader Vows to Further Boost Defense Spending as Regional Tensions Rise*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Oct. 24, 2025, at 13:52 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/japan-takaichi-politics-policy-defense-4b885276a0052297ab633bac31715254> [<https://perma.cc/3UDF-YQR2>].

¹⁹¹ Julian Ryall, *Is the US Rethinking Its Command Role in South Korea?*, DW (Mar. 12, 2025), <https://www.dw.com/en/is-the-us-rethinking-its-command-role-in-south-korea/a-71897857> [<https://perma.cc/N2MW-2EZB>].

¹⁹² Julian Ryall, *South Korea Shocked by Trump's "Money Machine" Plan*, DW (Oct. 22, 2024), <https://www.dw.com/en/south-korea-shocked-by-trumps-money-machine-plan/a-70564833> [<https://perma.cc/JH29-RUNN>].

¹⁹³ For Trump–Kim rapport during Trump's first term, see Laura Bicker, *Friends Reunited? Trump Faces a Very Different Kim Jong Un This Time*, BBC NEWS (Jan. 28, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd7d2g19q00o> [<https://perma.cc/FKS5-2B38>]. In his second term, as of November 2025, Trump has yet to meet with Kim again, though Trump has said he would "love" to meet. See, e.g., Trevor Hunnicutt & Josh Smith, *Trump Would "Love" to Meet Kim Jong Un Again, but No Word from North Korea*, REUTERS (Oct. 28, 2025),

may be a good idea for both Japan and South Korea to obtain nuclear weapons.¹⁹⁴ As of November 2025, it appears Japan and South Korea are on good footing with Trump. In a fall visit to Asia, leaders of both countries used personal diplomacy and flattery to their advantage: Korea gave Trump a replica of an ancient gold crown, which Trump said was “very special,”¹⁹⁵ while Japan’s Prime Minister gave Trump a golf club used by the late Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.¹⁹⁶ The hospitality that greeted Trump demonstrates how allies are attempting to secure American commitments despite Trump’s fickleness. It is unclear how long these warm ties will hold. More broadly, it is highly problematic that American allies feel compelled to prostrate themselves before and lavish American leaders with gifts in order to maintain their alliance.

Further south, Australia faces similar challenges. Australia’s navy is ill-equipped to deal with Chinese naval power, which was the chief motivation for the AUKUS submarine pact between Australia, Britain, and the United States.¹⁹⁷ The United States military has been expanding its presence in Australia recently to disperse its troops more throughout the western Pacific.¹⁹⁸ This is because, currently, American troops are concentrated in

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/trump-would-love-meet-kim-jong-un-again-no-word-north-korea-2025-10-28/> [https://perma.cc/2RVF-4WCW].

¹⁹⁴ Stephanie Condon, *Donald Trump: Japan, South Korea Might Need Nuclear Weapons*, CBS NEWS (Mar. 29, 2016, at 23:05 ET), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-japan-south-korea-might-need-nuclear-weapons/> [https://perma.cc/TK46-DS6Q].

¹⁹⁵ Yan Zhuang, *Trump Has Likened Himself to a King. South Korea Gave Him a Crown.*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/29/world/asia/trump-south-korea-crown-gyeongju.html> [https://perma.cc/KJ8G-YVUR].

¹⁹⁶ Kiyoshi Takenaka & John Geddie, *With Golfing Gifts, Japan PM Invokes Abe’s Legacy to Forge Trump Bond*, REUTERS (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/with-golfing-gifts-japan-pm-invokes-abes-legacy-forge-trump-bond-2025-10-28/> [https://perma.cc/X5X9-V9PV].

¹⁹⁷ Lauren Kahn, *AUKUS Explained: How Will the Trilateral Pact Shape Indo-Pacific Security?*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELS. (June 12, 2023, at 09:00 ET), <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/aukus-explained-how-will-trilateral-pact-shape-indo-pacific-security> [https://perma.cc/FC2W-YZVJ] (“[AUKUS] will significantly enhance Australia’s undersea capabilities, (which mostly operates diesel-electric submarines at present) as nuclear-powered submarines offer many advantages . . . that have become necessities, given changing geopolitics and shifting defense dynamics in the Indo-Pacific.”).

¹⁹⁸ Kirsty Needham, *US to Increase Force Projection from Australia in Face of “Coercive” China*, REUTERS (Aug. 7, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/australia-us-discuss-greater-defence-cooperation-2024-08-06/> [https://perma.cc/ZV26-LWV5]; *United States Force Posture Initiatives*, AUSTRALIAN GOV’T DEF., <https://www.defence.gov.au/defence-activities/programs-initiatives/united-states-force-posture-initiatives> [https://perma.cc/422A-XKTU].

a small number of locations—like Okinawa, Guam, and Hawaii—and Chinese air strikes on these bases could decimate American troops and equipment, thus deploying troops and materiel across more locations in the region would reduce this risk.¹⁹⁹ Early in his second term, Trump seemed unfamiliar with AUKUS,²⁰⁰ and, in the summer of 2025, the Administration initiated a formal review of the pact,²⁰¹ with Trump eventually declaring his support of the pact.²⁰² Still, the uncertainty surrounding decisions made by the Trump Administration and the review of AUKUS have caused some concern in Australia about the strength of American commitments.²⁰³

Japan and South Korea most directly face the confluence of Chinese, Russian, and North Korean cooperation, which has tightened since the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine: Russia and North Korea signed a defense pact requiring mutual assistance, and North Korean soldiers have subsequently been deployed to Ukraine to assist the Russian war effort.²⁰⁴ Like how Putin and Xi pledged to “stand guard” over a new world order in 2022,²⁰⁵ this treaty promises cooperation to build a “just and multipolar

¹⁹⁹ Mike Cherney, *U.S. Tackles a Military Vulnerability in the Pacific: Supply Lines*, WALL ST. J. (Sep. 25, 2024, at 00:02 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/world/u-s-tackles-a-military-vulnerability-in-the-pacific-supply-lines-26a1efd5> (last visited May 25, 2026); Gerry Doyle, *US Military Airfields in Indo-Pacific Too Easily Taken out of Action, Report Says*, REUTERS (Dec. 11, 2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-military-airfields-indo-pacific-too-easily-taken-out-of-action-report-says-2024-12-12/> [<https://perma.cc/Y3FX-77LX>]; Rupert Schulenburg, *Reinforcement and Redistribution: Evolving US Posture in the Indo-Pacific*, IISS (Mar. 27, 2025), <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/03/reinforcement-and-redistribution-evolving-us-posture-in-the-indo-pacific/> [<https://perma.cc/N22J-ADT4>].

²⁰⁰ Heloise Vyas, *Donald Trump’s “What Does that Mean?” AUKUS Remark Played Down as Verbal Slip-Up*, AUSTRALIAN BROAD. CORP. NEWS (Feb. 28, 2025, at 01:26 ET), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-02-28/donald-trump-asks-what-aucus-means-after-keir-starmer-meeting/104993110> [<https://perma.cc/425K-2WK9>].

²⁰¹ REUTERS, *Trump Administration Reviewing Biden-Era Submarine Pact with Australia*, UK, CNN (June 12, 2025, at 00:45 ET), <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/11/australia/trump-reviewing-aucus-submarine-pact-latam-intl> [<https://perma.cc/C8VW-22XW>].

²⁰² Emilie Gramenz & Riley Stuart, *Australia Is All In on AUKUS. In Donald Trump’s America, It’s More Complicated*, AUSTRALIAN BROAD. CORP. NEWS (Nov. 6, 2025, at 17:43 ET), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-10-24/us-aucus-commitment-welcomed-but-questions-remain/105928396> [<https://perma.cc/B62F-BNBP>].

²⁰³ *Id.*

²⁰⁴ Hyung-Jin Kim, *North Korea Ratifies Major Defense Treaty with Russia*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Nov. 11, 2024, at 22:20 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/north-korea-russia-ukraine-059d73e4c3492c19b555476b2fb45ca9> [<https://perma.cc/5D5J-Z2B6>].

²⁰⁵ Shalvey & Yiu, *supra* note 127.

new world order.”²⁰⁶ North Korea and China are linked due to North Korea’s economic reliance on China.²⁰⁷ To complete the triad, China and Russia have flown nuclear-capable bombers together near Japan and South Korea, causing both to scramble fighters in response.²⁰⁸

There is much debate about the extent of collaboration and alignment among this new axis of China, Russia, and North Korea, with some suggesting that their interests are disjointed.²⁰⁹ However, the tightening economic ties between these autocratic countries—and others like Iran and Venezuela, along with Iran’s proxies throughout the Middle East—at minimum enable aggression by each other and likely suggest an emerging, tacit network of autocracies.²¹⁰ This cooperation is now extending to military and intelligence matters, from the Arctic to Ukraine to the Korean Peninsula. To underestimate it would be folly, and it is clear that democratic nations that are most vulnerable are not doing so.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ *Id.*

²⁰⁷ ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR & NICHOLAS LOKKER, CTR. FOR A NEW AM. SEC., *THE AXIS OF UPHEAVAL: GAUGING THE GROWING MILITARY COOPERATION AMONG RUSSIA, CHINA, IRAN, AND NORTH KOREA* 4–5 (2025), <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/the-axis-of-upheaval> [<https://perma.cc/S9F3-6RPC>]. For a more skeptical view, see CHRISTOPHER S. CHIVVIS & JACK KEATING, CEIP, *COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA, IRAN, NORTH KOREA, AND RUSSIA: CURRENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE THREATS TO AMERICA* 6–7 (2024), <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/cooperation-between-china-iran-north-korea-and-russia-current-and-potential-future-threats-to-america?lang=en> [<https://perma.cc/A5XD-UTUG>]. For an analysis that falls between those two views, see Bonny Lin et al., *CRINK Security Ties: Growing Cooperation, Anchored by China and Russia*, CSIS (Sep. 30, 2025), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/crink-security-ties-growing-cooperation-anchored-china-and-russia> [<https://perma.cc/QD95-CDPF>].

²⁰⁸ Dzirhan Mahadzir, *UPDATED: Joint Russian, Chinese Pacific Bomber Flight Prompts Japan and South Korea to Scramble Fighters*, USNI NEWS (Dec. 1, 2024, at 19:57 ET), <https://news.usni.org/2024/11/29/joint-russian-chinese-pacific-bomber-flight-prompts-japan-and-south-korea-to-scramble-fighters> [<https://perma.cc/57AR-C5PG>].

²⁰⁹ CHIVVIS & KEATING, *supra* note 207.

²¹⁰ For tightening financial and economic cooperation, including sanctions avoidance, see ANNE APPLEBAUM, *AUTOCRACY, INC.: THE DICTATORS WHO WANT TO RUN THE WORLD* 30–42, 50–64 (2024). See generally Yaroslav Trofimov, *Has World War III Already Begun?*, WALL ST. J. (Dec. 13, 2024, at 21:00 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/world/has-world-war-iii-already-begun-16fb94c9> (last visited May 25, 2026) (discussing the “axis of autocracies” and how it challenges democracies around the globe).

²¹¹ For instance, Japan. Dzirhan Mahadzir, *Japan Facing Most Complex Security Environment Since World War II, Warn Military Leaders*, USNI NEWS (Jan. 6, 2025, at 16:34 ET), <https://news.usni.org/2025/01/06/japan-facing-most-complex-security-environment-since-world-war-ii-warn-military-leaders> [<https://perma.cc/8GRC-DSUL>].

To that end, East Asia-Pacific democracies are joining with Europe and Canada in the emerging “coalition of the willing” supporting Ukraine. Australia, New Zealand, and Japan have all attended coalition summits.²¹² Australia’s Prime Minister has said that he would send a small contingent of Australian troops to serve as peacekeepers in Ukraine.²¹³ These Asian nations clearly recognize that they and Ukraine are similarly vulnerable to autocratic aggression. Former Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru said in 2024 that “today’s Ukraine could be tomorrow’s East Asia.”²¹⁴ Asia-Pacific democracies’ collaboration with European countries to support Ukraine and their tightening defense-industrial ties with other democracies all suggest that the free world—not just a free region—is moving toward greater cooperation, even without the United States.

III. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEMOCRACIES

Considering American equivocation on commitments to collective security, liberal democracies around the world must tactfully maneuver to both secure themselves from autocratic threats and avoid the worst consequences of American isolationism and protectionism. Rearmament, then, transcends regional boundaries. Democracies are beginning to recognize this and band together to solve these issues through coalitions and bilateral agreements.

In undertaking collective commitments and building new security infrastructure, democracies should consider how regional thinking is underinclusive and, instead, adopt a global perspective. Democracies should

²¹² Taylor, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**; Wong, *supra* note **Error! Bookmark not defined.**; *Macron Calls on Allies to Plan “Credible Security Guarantees” for Ukraine at Paris Talks*, FRANCE 24 (Mar. 11, 2025, at 13:44 CET), <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20250311-european-nato-paris-ukraine> [<https://perma.cc/C8AW-DXJB>].

²¹³ Ben Westcott, *Australia Will Consider Ukraine Peacekeeping Force, PM Says*, BLOOMBERG (Mar. 4, 2025), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-03-04/australia-will-consider-ukraine-peacekeeping-force-pm-says> (last visited May 25, 2026); Henry Belot, *Russia Warns Australia Deploying Peacekeeping Troops to Ukraine Would Lead to “Grave Consequences,”* GUARDIAN (Mar. 10, 2025, at 05:11 ET), <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/mar/10/russia-warns-australia-deploying-peacekeeping-troops-to-ukraine-would-lead-to-grave-consequences> [<https://perma.cc/8M9K-CKSU>].

²¹⁴ *Japan PM Warns “Today’s Ukraine Could Be Tomorrow’s East Asia,”* FRANCE 24 (Apr. 10, 2024, at 09:49 CET), <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20241004-japan-pm-warns-today-s-ukraine-could-be-tomorrow-s-east-asia> [<https://perma.cc/65P4-TNMX>].

also take care to design institutions that are durable and resilient in an uncertain policy environment.

Democracies must also recognize that security policy is now also economic and trade policy, since the United States has ended its eight decades of commitment to free trade and globalization.²¹⁵ Trade policy and fiscal policy now play a central role in rearmament and in relationships with other democracies. Finally, the symbolism of security policy has a heightened importance in a world where the so-called leader of the free world has abdicated its position and autocracies are emboldened. This Part addresses these considerations in turn.

A. Think Globally, Act Collectively

No matter their geographic location, democracies around the world share the predicament of being caught between an American retreat from global leadership and increasing aggression from autocratic countries. Thinking about defense as an issue siloed by region fails to consider the global nature of security threats posed to democracies. Collective security infrastructure as it exists currently is inherently regional, from NATO to the Quad. A regional alliance will be stretched to its limit when threats to its members could originate from next door or across the world—or when the threat next door is receiving material assistance from a country far away.

A natural response to Trump's threats to diminish American military support to NATO, including giving up American control over NATO's European military operations,²¹⁶ is to revitalize the alliance by boosting

²¹⁵ See Daniel H. Joyner, *Economic Nationalism as the Fourth Era of International Trade Law*, 22 MANCHESTER J. INT'L ECON. L. 3, 21–27 (2025). A watershed event was the first Trump Administration ending WTO dispute settlement. See Chad P. Bown & Soumaya Keynes, *Why Trump Shot the Sheriffs: The End of WTO Dispute Settlement 1.0*, at 13–15 (PIIE Working Paper No. 20-4, 2020), <https://www.piie.com/publications/working-papers/why-trump-shot-sheriffs-end-wto-dispute-settlement-10> [<https://perma.cc/YHA9-YSKB>].

²¹⁶ Courtney Kube & Gordon Lubold, *Trump Admin Considers Giving Up NATO Command that Has Been Exclusively American Since Eisenhower*, NBC NEWS (Mar. 18, 2025, at 17:18 ET), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/trump-admin-considers-giving-nato-command-exclusively-american-eisenho-rcna196503> [<https://perma.cc/G8UX-6C6V>].

spending or transition it to an entirely European endeavor.²¹⁷ Another is to increase defense spending throughout the EU.²¹⁸

This is necessary and important but should not be the end goal in and of itself. Limiting European rearmament to only the goal of replacing American presence in Europe will only leave Europe well defended against yesterday's threats, unprepared to address the next threat. Instead, taking a global approach and considering partnerships with democracies in North America and Asia can more comprehensively address threats to its security.

While the EU plan for rearmament, unveiled in March 2025, is largely parochial, it has kernels of global cooperation.²¹⁹ It mainly looks to other European countries like Britain, Norway, and Ukraine, not across the globe.²²⁰ It does, promisingly, state that the EU should "explore opportunities for defence industrial cooperation" with Asian democracies like Japan, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.²²¹ EU–Korea trade in defense materiel is already increasing and should continue to be encouraged.²²²

Asian democracies' actions are a good template. Countries from Japan²²³ to Australia²²⁴ to New Zealand²²⁵ are investing more in their own

²¹⁷ Henry Foy & Ben Hall, *European Military Powers Work on 5-10 Year Plan to Replace US in NATO -UK, France, Germany and Nordics Among Countries Engaged in Informal Discussions over a Managed Transfer*, FIN. TIMES (Mar. 20, 2025), <https://www.ft.com/content/939b695c-7df8-412d-a430-df988c98f2ca> [https://perma.cc/6W82-YTCN].

²¹⁸ Ott, *supra* note 10; Strupczewski, *supra* note 73.

²¹⁹ EUR. COMM'N, *supra* note 76, at 18–19.

²²⁰ *Id.*; Strupczewski, *supra* note 73.

²²¹ EUR. COMM'N, *supra* note 76, at 19.

²²² Dee & Suman-Chauhan, *supra* note 157; Nicolas Jouan, *Towards a New Axis of Security?*, RAND (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/10/towards-a-new-axis-of-security.html> [https://perma.cc/BF85-Y4K7].

²²³ Mari Yamaguchi, *Japan Cabinet OKs Record Defense Budget as It Pushes Strike-Back Capability to Deter Regional Threat*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Dec. 26, 2024, at 22:36 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/japan-military-budget-us-australia-china-f82c70bd6f5cbfc184f15cf17f2fde21> [https://perma.cc/TR7L-YDTK].

²²⁴ Andrew Greene & Tom Crowley, *Richard Marles Unveils \$50 Billion Defence Spending Increase over Next Decade*, AUSTRALIAN BROAD. CORP. NEWS (Apr. 17, 2024, at 02:28 AET), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-17/richard-marles-unveils-50b-defence-spending-increase/103734300> [https://perma.cc/C5X8-GRUT].

²²⁵ Colin Clark, *New Zealand Pledges to Double Defense Spending to Modernize Ships, Surveillance, Networks*, BREAKING DEF.: INDO-PACIFIC (Apr. 9, 2025, at 12:23 AET), <https://breakingdefense.com/2025/04/new-zealand-pledges-to-double-defense-spending-to-modernize-ships-surveillance-networks/> [https://perma.cc/6TBG-59XX].

defense capabilities. Plus, they have joined the “coalition of the willing” to support Ukraine,²²⁶ showing that they view European security and Ukrainian sovereignty as fundamental to their own. Another bright spot is strengthening trade between Korea and Europe in military equipment.²²⁷ Nearly half of defense products exported from Korea were sent to Poland.²²⁸ These efforts should be continued and expanded. Commitments and mutual support matter, but the mechanism through which they take place is also extremely important in determining the efficacy of collective action.

B. Institutional Design

While responses to Trump’s undercutting of Ukraine and other threats to American security commitments are still in their infancy, they are taking the forms of coalitions and bilateral agreements. Nations supporting Ukraine have joined a “coalition of the willing,” headed by Britain and France.²²⁹ Countries have also made bilateral security pacts, like Canada and France,²³⁰ or Australia and Canada.²³¹ The issue with these two institutional designs is that they are unstable. Stronger, more resilient infrastructure is needed, particularly when the strategic environment is as fluid as it is now.

Coalitions are unstable because there is no penalty for undercutting the coalition or free-riding on other members’ contributions.²³² A coalition

²²⁶ Taylor, *supra* note Error! Bookmark not defined.; Wong, *supra* note Error! Bookmark not defined.; *Macron Calls on Allies to Plan “Credible Security Guarantees” for Ukraine at Paris Talks*, *supra* note 212. Japan has gone even farther, expressing interest in joining NATO’s unit that provides support for Ukraine. Mayuko Ono & Mari Yamaguchi, *Japan Says It Wants to Join a NATO Command for the Support of Ukraine*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Apr. 8, 2025, at 11:17 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/japan-defense-nato-rutte-china-15de39e226c57a893fb9755f600dcd8> [<https://perma.cc/VAE2-JE3X>].

²²⁷ Jouan, *supra* note 222.

²²⁸ Dee & Suman-Chauhan, *supra* note 157.

²²⁹ Wong, *supra* note Error! Bookmark not defined..

²³⁰ PRIME MINISTER OF CAN., *Prime Minister Carney Meets with President of France Emmanuel Macron* (Mar. 17, 2025), <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/readouts/2025/03/17/prime-minister-carney-meets-president-france-emmanuel-macron> [<https://perma.cc/SR7G-WBED>].

²³¹ *Canada to Partner with Australia on Early Warning Detection System in the Arctic*, CBC NEWS (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-early-warning-detection-arctic-1.7486640> [<https://perma.cc/VW4H-2J6M>].

²³² John F. Nash, Jr., *Equilibrium Points in n-Person Games*, 36 PROCS. NAT’L ACAD. SCI. 48, 49 (1950), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.36.1.48> [<https://perma.cc/VK9K-DFPG>]; James M. Buchanan, *An Economic Theory of Clubs*, 32 ECONOMICA 1, 13–14 (1965),

member can still receive most or all of the benefits of membership without contributing on their own.²³³ This institutional design leads to an equilibrium of noncooperation, and the coalition will fail.²³⁴ Bilateral agreements are more stable than coalitions because there are only two parties, but there still are incentives to free ride.²³⁵

Coalition structures are even more fragile when accounting for political instability and policy uncertainty, as uncertainty decreases other coalition members' perception of a country's commitment to long-term cooperation.²³⁶ This makes it riskier for a country to offer to cooperate, reducing the likelihood of a coalition forming or continuing.²³⁷

A stronger institutional design is that of a club. A club is like a coalition, but it has penalties for noncompliance. Club members join to receive the benefits exclusive to the club and are discouraged from free-riding by the penalty system.²³⁸ Economists have proposed club structures to solve other collective action problems, like climate change and international tax competition.²³⁹ NATO lacks a penalty mechanism to

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2552442>. For a good survey of the literature, see generally Todd Sandler & John T. Tschirhart, *The Economic Theory of Clubs: An Evaluative Survey*, 18 J. ECON. LITERATURE 1481 (1980) (surveying economic articles developing club theory).

²³³ Buchanan, *supra* note 232, at 13–14.

²³⁴ *Id.*

²³⁵ *Id.*

²³⁶ Charles Lipson, *International Cooperation in Economic and Security Affairs*, 37 WORLD POL. 1, 17 (1984).

²³⁷ *Id.*; see also Todd Sandler, Frederic P. Sterbenz & John Tschirhart, *Uncertainty and Clubs*, 52 ECONOMICA 467, 467–72 (1985) (establishing economic model and evaluating certainty in club models with different benefits).

²³⁸ William Nordhaus, *Climate Clubs: Overcoming Free-Riding in International Climate Policy*, 105 AM. ECON. REV. 1339, 1340–41 (2015).

²³⁹ For climate policy proposals and analysis, see generally *id.* (arguing that club theory can inform climate policy efforts to prevent free-riding problems); Kimberly Clausing et al., *Global Climate Cooperation after 2024: A Proposal for a Heavy Industry Climate Coalition*, in PARIS REPORT 3: GLOBAL ACTION WITHOUT GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: BUILDING COALITIONS FOR CLIMATE TRANSITION AND NATURE RESTORATION 97, 97–121 (Jean Pisani-Ferry, Beatrice Weder di Mauro & Jeromin Zettelmeyer eds., 2025) (proposing a club model for a small scope of industrial greenhouse gas emissions); Kimberly A. Clausing & Catherine Wolfram, *Carbon Border Adjustments, Climate Clubs, and Subsidy Races When Climate Policies Vary*, 37 J. ECON. PERSPS. 137, 137–62 (2023) (explaining how policy design incentives can hamper or strengthen climate policy efforts). While the climate club proposals have not been adopted, countries have begun to implement the OECD international tax agreement. See generally ORG. FOR ECON. CO-OPERATION & DEV. (OECD), TAX CHALLENGES ARISING FROM THE DIGITALISATION OF THE ECONOMY – GLOBAL ANTI-BASE EROSION MODEL RULES (PILLAR TWO): INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK ON BEPS (2021), <https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/tax-challenges-arising-from->

discourage free-riding, and, thus, it is not a club.²⁴⁰ In the collective security context, a club's benefits would be security guarantees or cooperation—perhaps defense-related economic goodies.

One multilateral effort led by the Biden Administration and the EU was to create the Minerals Security Partnership.²⁴¹ In addition to the United States and EU, Australia, Canada, India, Japan, Norway, and South Korea have joined.²⁴² This partnership is a friendshoring initiative, seeking to shift reliance on critical minerals away from China in particular.²⁴³ The pledges here are to finance mineral extraction projects in member countries and their allies.²⁴⁴

However, the Minerals Security Partnership is not a club; it is merely a coalition. Without a club's incentive structure, the members' financing promises are just that: promises. Moving toward a club structure would require specifying what benefits members would receive and what penalties

digitalisation-of-the-economy-global-anti-base-erosion-model-rules-pillar-two_782bac33-en.html [https://perma.cc/7EV5-5MDN] (setting forth the framework of the agreement). See also Kimberly Clausing, *The International Tax Agreement of 2021: Why It's Needed, What It Does, and What Comes Next?*, PIIE, Pol'y Brief No. 23-4 (Apr. 2023), <https://www.piiie.com/publications/policy-briefs/2023/international-tax-agreement-2021-why-its-needed-what-it-does-and> [https://perma.cc/DFN9-FW2C] (explaining the negotiations, design, and implementation of the OECD tax agreement); Rebecca M. Kysar, *The Global Tax Deal and the New International Economic Governance*, 77 TAX L. REV. 171, 233–37 (2024) (describing factors informing the design and implementation of Pillar 2 as well as its similarities to multilateral efforts to fight climate change). For the status of implementing the agreement, see OECD, *Central Record for Purposes of the Global Minimum Tax*, <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/global-minimum-tax/central-record-of-legislation-with-transitional-qualified-status.html> [https://perma.cc/6L9B-M78R].

²⁴⁰ Trump's threats to deny NATO security guarantees to countries that do not meet NATO defense spending guidelines act as an informal mechanism to discourage free-riding. Actually following through on those threats would raise serious concerns, and Trump frequently equivocates on decisions. Thus, these threats would not transform NATO from a coalition into a club.

²⁴¹ EUR. COMM'N: TRADE & ECON. SEC., *Minerals Security Partnership Forum*, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/help-exporters-and-importers/accessing-markets/raw-materials/minerals-security-partnership-forum_en [https://perma.cc/D9XY-2F2M]; U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, *Minerals Security Partnership*, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/minerals-security-partnership/> [https://perma.cc/U266-AWQZ].

²⁴² U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, *supra* note 241.

²⁴³ Vlado Vivoda, Ron Matthews & Neil McGregor, *A Critical Minerals Perspective on the Emergence of Geopolitical Trade Blocs*, 89 RES. POL'Y 1, 4 (2024); Vlado Vivoda, Ron Matthews & Jensine Andresen, *Securing Defense Critical Minerals: Challenges and U.S. Strategic Responses in an Evolving Geopolitical Landscape*, 44 COMPAR. STRATEGY 281, 294–96 (2025).

²⁴⁴ Vivoda, Matthews & McGregor, *supra* note 243, at 4.

are imposed for failing to meet commitments. For example, club members could offer most favored nation clauses for trade in minerals. Members could also agree to technical collaboration on minerals extraction or defense cooperation in other areas. Since the Minerals Security Partnership lacks this incentive structure, its efficacy and sustainability are fragile. Even so, it is a rare moment of increasing cooperation among global democracies and could provide the groundwork for greater cooperation over time in areas related to defense industrial production.

Without durable institutions, collective action is less likely to be effective or stable. Such institutions will be made more effective and stable if their scope is not just limited to defense policy, but also addressing economic shocks disrupting, namely, the world trading system.

C. The Centrality of Trade and Fiscal Policy to Defense

On April 2, 2025, Trump announced tariffs on goods from nearly all jurisdictions on the planet in what he called “Liberation Day.”²⁴⁵ This marked the opening salvo in a revived trade war with China²⁴⁶ but also was an about-face from a policy of free trade and economic liberalization with longtime allies.²⁴⁷ In February 2026, the Supreme Court invalidated all tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).²⁴⁸ Trump has subsequently imposed tariffs under a different statutory authority and vowed to continue his protectionist policies.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Erica York & Emily Kraschel, *Liberation Day Was One Year Ago: Did the President's Tariff Promises Happen?*, TAX FOUND. (Mar. 30, 2026), <https://taxfoundation.org/blog/liberation-day-trump-tariffs/> [https://perma.cc/GMT9-Z679].

²⁴⁶ Chad P. Bown, *US-China Trade War Tariffs: An Up-to-Date Chart*, PIIE (Nov. 14, 2025), <https://www.piie.com/research/piie-charts/2019/us-china-trade-war-tariffs-date-chart> [https://perma.cc/937J-JWYH].

²⁴⁷ Jeanna Smialek, Martin Fackler & Natalie Kitroeff, *With Trump's Tariffs, the Chasm Between Allies and the U.S. Widens*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/world/europe/trump-tariffs-reciprocal-reaction-trade-war.html> [https://perma.cc/Z7VG-EREA].

²⁴⁸ *Learning Res., Inc. v. Trump*, 146 S. Ct. 628, 646 (2026).

²⁴⁹ Kimberly Clausen & Maurice Obstfeld, *What the Supreme Court's Tariff Ruling Changes, and What It Doesn't*, PIIE (Feb. 23, 2026, at 14:50 ET), <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2026/what-supreme-courts-tariff-ruling-changes-and-what-it-doesnt> [https://perma.cc/9HD7-KM37].

The goal of Liberation Day was seemingly to liberate the United States from free trade,²⁵⁰ a lack of a risk premium on its debt,²⁵¹ and the remarkable post-COVID economic recovery.²⁵² Trump's tariffs will continue to harm the United States' own economy, even after the IEEPA tariffs were struck down.²⁵³ There is a strong nexus between trade and security policy; in addition to being a global economic shock,²⁵⁴ Trump's trade policy has alienated American allies and ceded more room on the

²⁵⁰ Mary Beth Sheridan, Amanda Coletta & Mariana Martínez Barba, *Trump's Tariffs Mark the End of an Era for Free Trade in North America*, WASH. POST (Apr. 3, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/04/03/trump-mexico-canada-tariffs-nafta/> [<https://perma.cc/W36M-YECQ>].

²⁵¹ *A Flight from the Dollar Could Wreck America's Finances*, ECONOMIST (Apr. 13, 2025),

<https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2025/04/13/a-flight-from-the-dollar-could-wreck-americas-finances> [<https://perma.cc/UP97-A5YG>]; Nick Timiraos, Jack Pitcher & Chelsey Dulaney, *Trump's Trade Offensive Threatens America's Financial Primacy*, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 20, 2025, at 21:00 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/economy/global/trump-tariffs-us-markets-treasuries-dollar-7d9777d7?mod=mhp> [<https://perma.cc/K8P7-TFZQ>].

²⁵² *The American Economy Has Left Other Rich Countries in the Dust*, ECONOMIST (Oct. 14, 2024), <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2024/10/14/the-american-economy-has-left-other-rich-countries-in-the-dust> [<https://perma.cc/E46D-N7TR>].

²⁵³ Kimberly A. Clausing & Maurice Obstfeld, *Tariffs as Fiscal Policy*, 79 NAT'L TAX J. 163, 178–81 (2026); Lysle Boller et al., *The Economic Effects of President Trump's Tariffs*, PENN WHARTON BUDGET MODEL (Apr. 10, 2025), <https://budgetmodel.wharton.upenn.edu/issues/2025/4/10/economic-effects-of-president-trumps-tariffs> [<https://perma.cc/F926-C83L>]; Kimberly A. Clausing, Opinion, *The Real Reason President Trump Pushes Tariffs*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 21, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/21/opinion/trump-tariffs-tax-cuts.html> [<https://perma.cc/D9QX-A4WA>]; Maurice Obstfeld, *Trump's Tariffs Are Designed for Maximum Damage—to America*, PIIE (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/trumps-tariffs-are-designed-maximum-damage-america> [<https://perma.cc/VG5R-CBE9>]. A lingering source of economic harm lies in the tariffs' effects on the political economy, encouraging rent-seeking behavior and corruption. Shane Ball & Kimberly Clausing, Opinion, *The Big Problem with Tariffs Isn't the Rates. It's the Corruption.*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 2, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/02/opinion/tariffs-trump-corruption.html> (last visited May 25, 2026).

²⁵⁴ *The Probability of a Recession Has Fallen to 40%*, J.P. MORGAN (May 27, 2025), <https://www.jpmorgan.com/insights/global-research/economy/recession-probability> [<https://perma.cc/C36R-NF58>]; *Despite the Pause, America's Tariffs Are the Worst Ever Trade Shock*, ECONOMIST (Apr. 9, 2025), <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2025/04/09/despite-the-pause-americas-tariffs-are-the-worst-ever-trade-shock> [<https://perma.cc/BEY3-JYYZ>].

world stage to China.²⁵⁵ NATO allies' recent equivocation on F-35 orders underscores the tight connection between defense and trade policy.²⁵⁶

Democracies face two challenges related to trade and security. First, many democracies are heavily reliant on American defense equipment.²⁵⁷ Second, protectionism makes countries poorer, making rearmament and defense spending less feasible.²⁵⁸ These challenges can be addressed through collective action if democracies incorporate trade and defense procurement topics into any sort of collective security infrastructure.²⁵⁹

By committing to trade freely with each other, democracies can shore up their economies, relieving some economic and fiscal pressure, which, in turn, makes defense spending easier to maintain or expand. There are already calls for countries committed to free trade to band together.²⁶⁰ Also, it is more powerful to link trade and defense. Democracies can pair trade

²⁵⁵ *How America Could End Up Making China Great Again*, ECONOMIST (Apr. 3, 2025), <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2025/04/03/how-america-could-end-up-making-china-great-again> [<https://perma.cc/KS7R-UEVW>]; Yaroslav Trofimov, *As the U.S. Alienates Old Friends, China Is Ready to Reap the Benefits*, WALL ST. J. (Apr. 11, 2025, at 11:00 ET), <https://www.wsj.com/world/as-the-u-s-alienates-old-friends-china-is-ready-to-reap-the-benefits-7beda327> (last visited May 25, 2026); Didi Tang & Zeke Miller, *As Trump Alienates Allies with US Tariffs, China Is Poised to Exploit the Gaps*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Apr. 10, 2025, at 18:29 ET), <https://apnews.com/article/china-united-states-tariffs-influence-d0bd2de680a04f0e1cbbc42a8bba1c8f> [<https://perma.cc/E6JP-JGBJ>]; *Xi Jinping May Try to Woo the Victims of Donald Trump's Tariffs*, ECONOMIST (Apr. 10, 2025), <https://www.economist.com/asia/2025/04/10/xi-jinping-may-try-to-woo-the-victims-of-donald-trumps-tariffs> [<https://perma.cc/2TGC-LNKU>].

²⁵⁶ Murray Brewster, *Canada Reconsidering F-35 Purchase Amid Tensions with Washington, Says Minister*, CBC NEWS (Mar. 14, 2025, at 19:11 ET), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/f35-blair-trump-1.7484477> [<https://perma.cc/KW2Z-VLMN>]; Laura Kayali, *Portugal Wobbles on Buying F-35s Because of Trump*, POLITICO (Mar. 14, 2025, at 00:17 CET), <https://www.politico.eu/article/portugal-rules-out-buying-f-35s-because-of-trump/> [<https://perma.cc/2ZJN-KHHH>].

²⁵⁷ Juan Mejino-López & Guntram B. Wolff, *Europe's Dependence on US Foreign Military Sales and What to Do About It*, BRUEGEL (Oct. 13, 2025), <https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/europes-dependence-us-foreign-military-sales-and-what-do-about-it> [<https://perma.cc/ZWV9-3GXT>].

²⁵⁸ For a cutting-edge analysis of the fiscal effects of US tariffs, see Clausing & Obstfeld, *supra* note 253.

²⁵⁹ Samir Puri, *President Trump's Tariffs Increase Pressure on Allies to Reduce Security Dependence on the US*, CHATHAM HOUSE (May 22, 2025), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/04/president-trumps-tariffs-increase-pressure-allies-reduce-security-dependence-us> [<https://perma.cc/PT5M-CP2D>].

²⁶⁰ André Sapir, *The European Union Should Form an International Open Trade Coalition in Response to Trump's Tariffs*, BRUEGEL (Apr. 15, 2025), <https://www.bruegel.org/first-glance/european-union-should-form-international-open-trade-coalition-response-trumps-tariffs> [<https://perma.cc/2JSD-DRW4>].

agreements and cooperation with a commitment to source as much of their military equipment from other democracies as possible. Plus, with the Trump Administration's volatile trade policy, policy uncertainty and likely price increases of American exports make sourcing more materiel from fellow free-trading democracies even more intuitive.²⁶¹

Even with collective action, fiscal pressures on many democracies will continue to ratchet up—some experts have described a “coming fiscal cliff.”²⁶² Populations are aging, requiring more spending on health care and social insurance,²⁶³ and productivity has been stagnant in many countries.²⁶⁴ That equates to more spending and less revenue even before considering the significant spending increases that will be needed if countries are serious about rearmament.

Responsible fiscal policy will become even more important, on both the revenue and spending side. Countries may have to make difficult choices. Germany is a good example of this, having recently jettisoned its long-standing debt brake to allow for more military spending.²⁶⁵ The issue

²⁶¹ The increased price of U.S. exports is driven by increased input costs, as many big exporters import many inputs. Plus, foreign retaliation against U.S. tariffs will increase the price of U.S. exports on the world market. Finally, currency appreciation would cause U.S. exports' price to increase. Despite currency appreciation being a typical effect of increased tariffs, the U.S. dollar has been depreciating, likely due to decreasing investor confidence in the dollar and U.S. Treasuries. See Clausung & Obstfeld, *supra* note 253, at 7, 28; Dario Caldara et al., *The Economic Effects of Trade Policy Uncertainty*, INT'L FIN. DISCUSSION PAPERS, Sep. 2019, no. 1256, at 27–28, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/ifdp/files/ifdp1256.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/M6UW-WTXB>].

²⁶² Kimberly Clausung & Natasha Sarin, *The Coming Fiscal Cliff: A Blueprint for Tax Reform in 2025*, HAMILTON PROJECT (Sep. 27, 2023), <https://www.hamiltonproject.org/publication/policy-proposal/the-coming-fiscal-cliff-a-blueprint-for-tax-reform-in-2025/> [<https://perma.cc/MH4W-3YVY>].

²⁶³ These data hold true across much of the developed world, including the United States. See generally CONG. BUDGET OFF., CBO'S 2024 LONG-TERM PROJECTIONS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY (2024), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/60679> [<https://perma.cc/LST9-NKB9>] (displaying long-term projections for Social Security spending in the United States). CBO's latest estimate is that federal debt will reach 120 percent of GDP by 2036. CONG. BUDGET OFF., THE LONG-TERM BUDGET OUTLOOK DATA, 2026 TO 2056 tbs. 1, 2, 3 (Feb. 25, 2026), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62044> (on file with *UCLA Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs*).

²⁶⁴ GLOBAL PRODUCTIVITY: TRENDS, DRIVERS, AND POLICIES 57–70 (Alistair Dieppe ed. 2021); OECD, OECD COMPENDIUM OF PRODUCTIVITY INDICATORS 2025 8–10 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1787/b024d9e1-en> [<https://perma.cc/K5QN-8KMJ>].

²⁶⁵ Frank Gardner & Toby Luckhurst, *Germany Votes for Historic Boost to Defense Spending*, BBC NEWS (Mar. 18, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62z6gljv2yo> [<https://perma.cc/K8MX-76GB>].

with this move is that it may put Germany in violation of EU debt rules.²⁶⁶ Nonetheless, this conflict may be productive if it spurs thoughtful reforms to fiscal rules in order to tackle stagnant growth and rearmament. Countries should similarly take their fiscal policy, including their trade policy, into consideration when approaching the challenge of rearmament.

D. Collective Action's Symbolic Power

Finally, the world's democracies need to consider the symbolism of collective action. Tackling defense challenges together is much more powerful than going at it alone. Collective action with other democracies shows resolve and demonstrates that democracies believe their values are worth defending. This is an important message to send to citizens in democratic countries, the United States, and autocratic countries.

The United States is now seemingly in the nonaligned camp of countries between liberal democracies and autocracies. By moving on without the United States and taking collective action, democracies will force American policymakers and citizens to reckon with their new place in the world order. Marginalizing the influence of the United States may force the United States back to the democratic camp. It would also have an effect on the American electorate, forcing Americans to confront the loss of primacy on the world stage.

Collective action would be a show of strength against autocracies, whose aggression is enabled by democratic acquiescence to revanchism. It would strategically be a deterrent against future aggression and counter propaganda that the West is weak and divided amongst itself.²⁶⁷ Cooperation on defense also diffuses the argument that democracies either do not believe in democratic ideals or are simply too lazy to defend them.

The Russo-Ukrainian War has been a good opportunity for democracies to overcome unease about the rhetoric of democracy and freedom. Amid domestic social movements that critique democracies for

²⁶⁶ Armin Steinbach & Jeromin Zettelmeyer, *Germany's Fiscal Rules Dilemma*, BRUEGEL (Apr. 24, 2025), <https://www.bruegel.org/analysis/germanys-fiscal-rules-dilemma> [<https://perma.cc/2C3V-LBVU>]; Jeromin Zettelmeyer, Zsolt Darvas & Lennard Welslau, *What Germany's Medium-Term Fiscal Plan Means for Europe*, BRUEGEL (Oct. 22, 2025), <https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/what-germanys-medium-term-fiscal-plan-means-europe> [<https://perma.cc/9HZL-E2EZ>].

²⁶⁷ Experts have explained that one of Putin's goals is to disrupt Western unity and cause infighting within and among democracies. See Jones, *supra* note 7; Danylyuk, *supra* note 7; Vladimir Putin Is Testing the West—and Its Unity, *supra* note 7.

their history, values, or policy outcomes, vociferous defense of liberal democracy has become rarer on the left.²⁶⁸ Meanwhile, some on the far right are ready to dump—or are dumping—core tenets of liberalism, like secularism, restraints on state power, and economic liberalism.²⁶⁹ These debates play right into the hands of foreign adversaries, who can then claim that Westerners do not even believe in the values they purport to uphold. Collective action in defense of liberal democracy can cut off these rhetorical attacks from autocracies. Liberalism and democracy are fragile and worth defending.²⁷⁰ Democracies should act like it.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that thinking of European rearmament as a regional project is myopic. First, I discussed how European rearmament is a colossal task fiscally and logistically, complicated by internal divisions within Europe and by illiberal European countries. But rearmament is not a challenge unique to Europe, as democracies around the world are also struggling with the same challenges: an equivocal United States and increasing revanchism from China and Russia. Democracies should recognize that collective action can make their efforts more efficient and more durable, benefiting all democracies. I end by offering policy considerations for collective action on security issues. Democracies should act collectively and be smart about institutional design while doing so. Democracies should also resist protectionist forces, as liberalized trade and

²⁶⁸ *Enlightenment Liberalism Is Losing Ground in the Debate About Race*, ECONOMIST (July 9, 2020), <https://www.economist.com/international/2020/07/09/enlightenment-liberalism-is-losing-ground-in-the-debate-about-race> [<https://perma.cc/LUU2-QNMP>]; Jonathan Chait, *How Liberal America Came to Its Senses*, ATLANTIC (Dec. 19, 2024), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/12/cancel-culture-illiberalism-dead/681031/> (last visited May 25, 2026); Jonathan Chait, *Hamas, the Jews, and the Illiberal Left: The Schism on the Left Is Not Just About the Middle East*, N.Y. MAG. (Oct. 16, 2023), <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/10/hamas-jews-illiberal-left-progressive-israel-terrorism.html> [<https://perma.cc/73Y4-2STB>]; *The Threat from the Illiberal Left*, ECONOMIST (Sep. 4, 2021), <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/09/04/the-threat-from-the-illiberal-left> [<https://perma.cc/V448-SGDB>].

²⁶⁹ See generally APPLEBAUM, *supra* note 111, at chs. II, IV.

²⁷⁰ See generally DARON ACEMOGLU & JAMES A. ROBINSON, *THE NARROW CORRIDOR: STATES, SOCIETIES, AND THE FATE OF LIBERTY* (2019). For democracy's effects on development, health, and economic indicators, see generally V-DEM INST., UNIV. OF GOTHENBURG, *CASE FOR DEMOCRACY* (2023), https://v-dem.net/documents/34/C4DReport_230421.pdf [<https://perma.cc/RX8X-VPLL>].

smart fiscal policy are crucial for rearmament. Finally, democracies should recognize the symbolic power that lies in collective action.

Fundamentally, though, these policy challenges are about key questions: is freedom worth defending? Are the benefits of freedom and liberalism worth sharing? These are questions of values, willpower, and imagination. Autocrats are calculating that democracies' values are hollow and their willpower and imagination lacking. It is easy for democratic countries' leaders and citizens to assume that the autocrats will prevail, but individuals have the power to change this mindset. As Anne Applebaum wrote, "[t]o put it bluntly, we need to be able to imagine a different kind of future, one in which our nation and its ideas are not in retreat, but in ascendance."²⁷¹

I'll add one element to Applebaum's assessment. We need to imagine a future in which *free nations* and their ideas are not in retreat, but in ascendance. Liberalism and freedom cross borders. Acknowledging this is symbolically powerful and is sound policy. This brings us back to Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, who was writing the lines above while Polish revolutionaries were rebelling against imperial Russian rule.²⁷² Those revolutionaries knew how freedom crosses borders, carrying banners that read, "in the name of God, for our freedom and yours."²⁷³

²⁷¹ Anne Applebaum, *America Needs a Better Plan to Fight Autocracy*, ATLANTIC (Mar. 15, 2022), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/03/russia-ukraine-senate-testimony-autocracy-kleptocrats/627061/> (last visited May 25, 2026).

²⁷² See MICKIEWICZ, *supra* note 2, at 52.

²⁷³ *God, Honor, Homeland. A Motto for Poland — Artur Górski — 2014*, REPUBLIKA POLONIA (Dec. 14, 2021), <https://republikapolonia.pl/2021/11/25/god-honor-homeland-a-motto-for-poland-artur-gorski-2014/> [https://perma.cc/SWM6-HW9X].