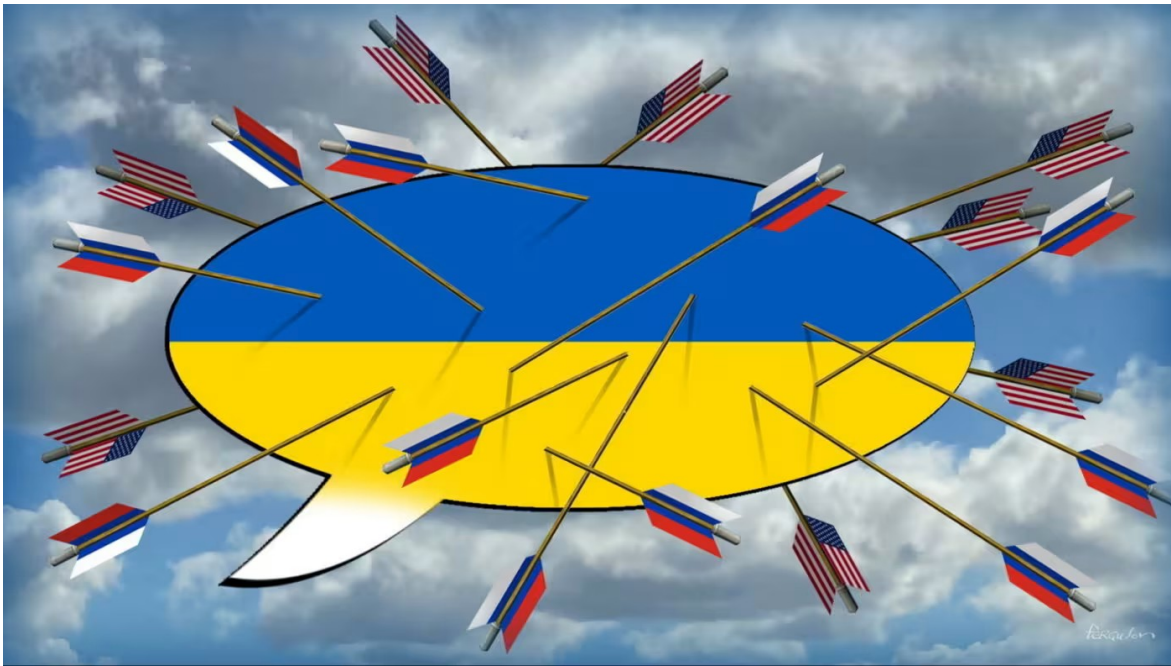


Opinion **Geopolitics**

The US is now the enemy of the west

Washington has decided to abandon both Ukraine and its postwar role in the world

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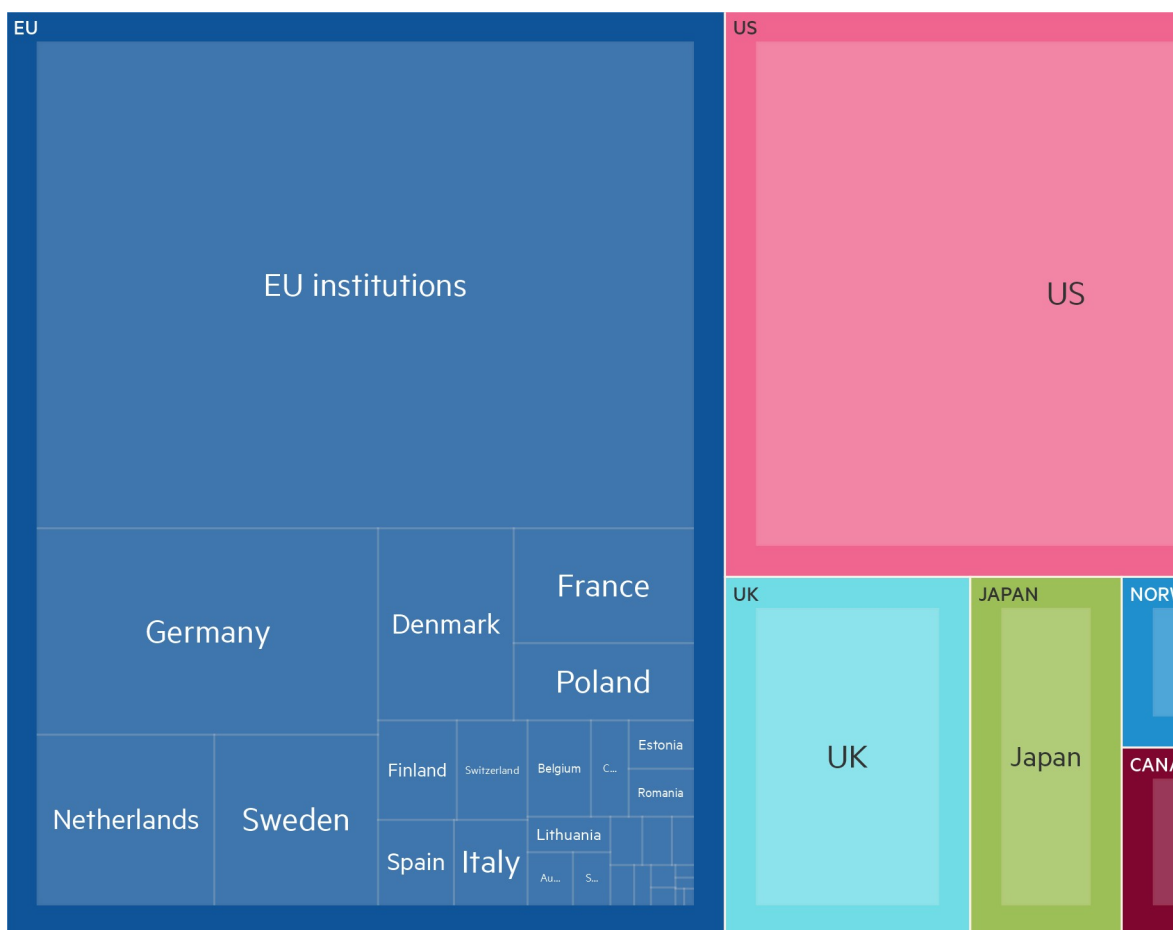
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“Freedom and independence are today in jeopardy the world over. If the forces of conquest are not successfully resisted and defeated there will be no freedom, no independence and no opportunity for freedom for any nation.” Thus did [Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#) commemorate the first anniversary of the Atlantic Charter, which had been agreed between him and Winston Churchill on August 14 1941. Half a century later, with the fall of the Soviet Union, it was at least reasonable to hope that these ideals might be realised across much of the globe. That was not to be. Today, not only are autocracies increasingly confident. The US is moving to their side. That is the lesson of the last two weeks. Freedom is not in as much danger as it was in 1942. Yet the dangers are very real.

Three events stand out. The first was a [speech on February 12](#) by Donald Trump’s secretary of defence, Pete Hegseth, to the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Nato in which he told the Europeans that they were now on their own. America was now principally concerned with its own borders and China. In sum: “Safeguarding European security must be an imperative for European members of Nato. As part of this Europe must provide the overwhelming share of future lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine.”

The US is not providing disproportionately large amounts to Ukraine

Total value of cumulative commitments (€bn)



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Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy: Ukraine Support Tracker • Data up to Dec 2024

The second was a [speech by JD Vance](#), vice-president of the US, at the Munich Security Conference on February 14 in which he declared that “what I worry about is the threat from within, the retreat of Europe from some of its most fundamental values – values shared with the United States of America”. An example he gave of such a threat was that “the Romanian government had just annulled an entire election”. To this one might respond that Europeans know better than Americans what happens when the enemies of freedom come to power through elections. But they also know that his boss, Trump himself, sought to annul the outcome of the presidential election four years ago. “Pots”, “kettles” and “black” come to mind.

Total European assistance to Ukraine is far bigger than that of the US

Commitments of support to Ukraine up to Dec 2024 (€bn)

Military Non-military

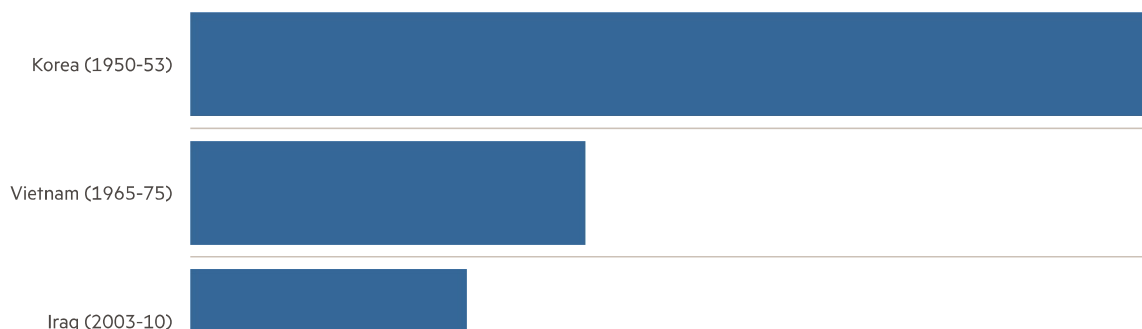
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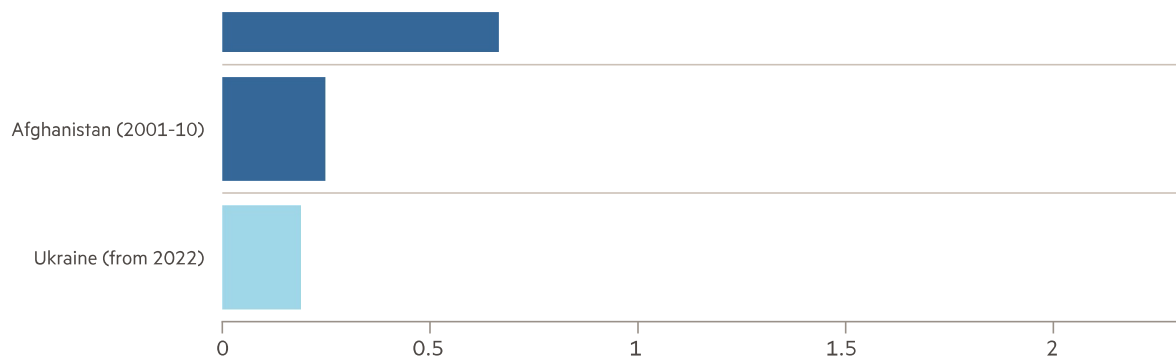
Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy: Ukraine Support Tracker

The third and most revealing event is the negotiation over the future of Ukraine. Hegseth had of course already accepted Putin's most important conditions by declaring that Ukraine's borders would not be re-established and it could not join Nato. But this was just the beginning. The negotiations have been conducted between the US and Russia over the heads of the Europeans, even though the latter have been ordered to make any deal secure, and, outrageously, of Ukraine itself, whose people have borne the brunt of Vladimir Putin's three years of aggression. Yet now, [insists the US](#), Russia was not the aggressor. On the contrary, [Ukraine started the war](#). To underline the split from Europe, the [US voted for a resolution in the UN Security Council](#) alongside Russia and China, while France, the UK and other Europeans abstained. The "west" is dead.

US spending on past wars dwarfs support for Ukraine

Military expenditure in wars vs aid to Ukraine, average annual cost as % of GDP at the time*





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Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy: Ukraine Support Tracker • *Dates as used in the calculation

Trump also declared that Volodymyr Zelenskyy was a “[dictator](#)”, a term he does not use for Putin, who is one. His justification for this abuse is that Ukraine’s president had not held elections. How, one wonders, were elections to be held in the middle of a war, with substantial parts of the country under a brutal occupation?

All too characteristically, Trump has also proposed a property deal. [According to Zelenskyy](#), US Treasury secretary Scott Bessent’s original proposal demanded 50 per cent of the rights to the country’s rare earth and critical minerals in exchange for past military assistance, and did not contain any offers of future assistance.

European energy subsidies dwarf support for Ukraine

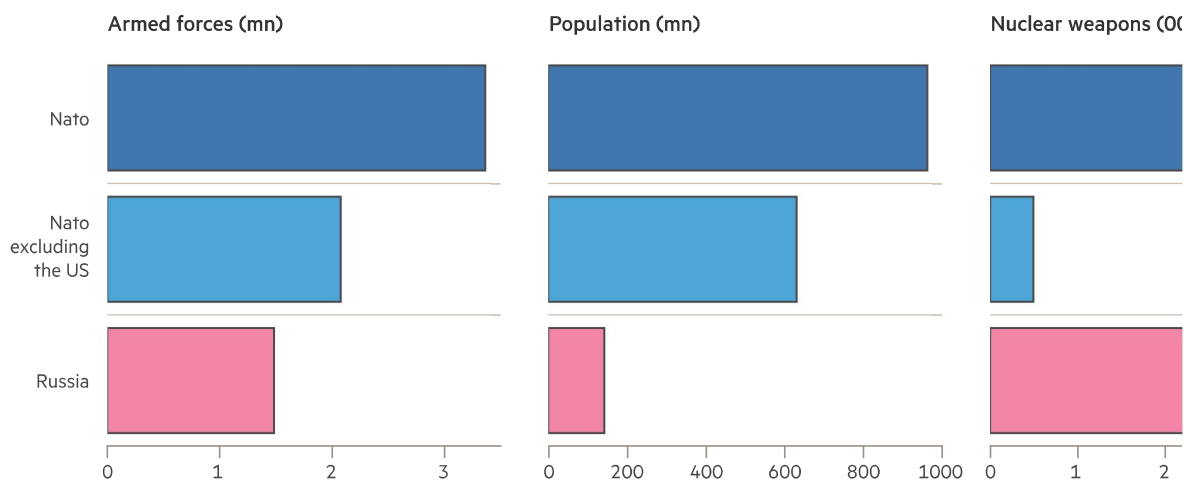
Fiscal commitments (% of GDP)

Energy subsidies Aid for Ukraine*

Arguably, for Trump, “dictator” may be a term of commendation, not condemnation. Again, for him, owning a valuable asset in another country might be the only reason to protect it. Even so, demanding a vast sum from a poor country that has been the victim of an unprovoked aggression is outrageous, particularly when Ukraine must rebuild. It is worse that the value of US demands was some four times its assistance. Moreover, according to the Kiel Institute’s Ukraine Support Tracker, Europeans provided more assistance than the US, which made just 31 per cent of total bilateral commitments and 41 per cent of military commitments to Ukraine between January 2022 and December 2024. Yet where are they in these negotiations? Nowhere. Trump is deciding for Ukraine and Europe, on his own. (See charts.)

In all, the US has spent just 0.19 per cent of GDP on military assistance for Ukraine. This is trivial, particularly in comparison with the cost of its previous wars. In return, it has gained the humiliation of what was once thought to be a powerful enemy and the vindication of the ideals of liberal democracy, for which Ukrainians are fighting and the US once fought.

Non-US Nato should be able to match Russia in most military domains



These past two weeks then have made two things clear. The first is that the US has decided to abandon the role in the world it assumed during the second world war. With Trump back in the White House, it has decided instead to become just another great power, indifferent to anything but its short-term interests, especially

its material interests. This leaves the causes it upheld in limbo, including the rights of small countries and democracy itself. This also fits with what is happening inside the US, where the state created by the New Deal and the law-governed society created by the constitution are both in danger of destruction.

Non-US Nato can surely raise its defence spending substantially

Defence spending as a share of GDP in 2023 (%)

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Source: Sipri, NATO

In response, Europe will either rise to the occasion or disintegrate. Europeans will need to create far stronger co-operation embedded in a robust framework of liberal and democratic norms. If they do not, they will be picked to pieces by the world's great powers. They must start by saving Ukraine from Putin's malevolence.

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