



European Organisation for Strategic Policy

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Beyond Ceasefire: Designing Credible Security Guarantees for Ukraine

Deterrence, monitoring and long-term defence capacity in a European security settlement.

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INSTITUTIONAL NOTE

About this publication

A ceasefire can interrupt violence; only a layered system combining Ukrainian defence capacity, persistent monitoring, pre-agreed support and long-term European commitment can reduce the risk of renewed aggression.

Deterrence, monitoring and long-term defence capacity in a European security settlement.

Publication responsibility

Prepared by the Research Directorate. This public edition is intended for policy discussion. It does not represent a governmental position and does not disclose confidential dialogue or attribute views to participants.

Method and evidentiary standard

The paper separates verified institutional evidence from analytical judgement, identifies important uncertainties and frames recommendations as options whose implementation depends on mandate, capacity and timing.

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Executive judgement

A ceasefire can interrupt violence; only a layered system combining Ukrainian defence capacity, persistent monitoring, pre-agreed support and long-term European commitment can reduce the risk of renewed aggression.

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Key findings

- Ambiguous assurances invite incremental testing; credible guarantees define consultation and support mechanisms before a violation occurs.
- Monitoring must establish facts quickly enough to preserve political unity and deny advantages from engineered ambiguity.
- Ukraine's own resilient defence remains the first layer of deterrence and cannot be replaced by external promises.
- Guarantees require durable finance, industrial capacity and institutional ownership beyond the moment of negotiation.

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The credibility problem

Security language is credible only when it changes an adversary's calculation before force is used. Political declarations that leave the trigger, timing and scale of support undefined may reassure temporarily while creating uncertainty during the first hours of a renewed crisis. A settlement therefore needs an architecture that links violations to consultation, emergency assistance and a prepared European response without pretending that every contingency can be automated.

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Four mutually reinforcing layers

The first layer is Ukrainian national defence: trained forces, air defence, ammunition, logistics and a viable defence-industrial base. The second is monitoring and attribution through persistent technical observation and an agreed incident mechanism. The third is pre-arranged external support, including supply corridors and rapid consultation. The fourth is long-term cooperation that embeds training, industrial production and planning in European institutions.

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Managing escalation and political cohesion

A guarantee must deter without creating incentives for miscalculation. Consultation arrangements should distinguish local incidents, sustained violations and major renewed attack. Governments should rehearse decision procedures and communicate enough about the architecture to strengthen deterrence while retaining operational discretion. Political cohesion is itself a capability: adversaries will test whether different capitals interpret the same event differently.

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From agreement to endurance

The most difficult period begins after a document is signed. Monitoring missions need access and protection; industrial commitments need contracts; Ukrainian institutions need predictable finance; and European publics need evidence that arrangements reduce rather than defer risk. A formal annual review should assess military balance, compliance, readiness and the adequacy of response options.

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A guarantee as a decision system

The architecture must function during the hours of uncertainty that follow an alleged violation, not only in the clarity of a major attack.

A permanent secretariat should maintain the incident picture, convene guarantors and protect a common evidentiary record. Its mandate should distinguish technical monitoring from political attribution: sensors and observers can establish events, while governments retain responsibility for judging intent and choosing a response. This distinction reduces the risk that disagreements over interpretation paralyse immediate protective action.

Pre-agreed consultation does not require an automatic military response. It requires named contact points, protected communications, decision deadlines and a menu of assistance that can be scaled. Options may include intelligence support, air-defence replenishment, cyber assistance, financial measures and rapid contracting. Exercises should test political coordination as rigorously as military logistics.

- Maintain a single protected chronology of incidents, evidence and decisions.
- Set consultation deadlines for local incidents, sustained violations and major attack.
- Exercise supply, attribution and public communication under deliberately ambiguous scenarios.

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Finance and democratic endurance

Long-term credibility depends on institutions and budgets that can survive electoral change.

Multi-year support should be organised around capability outcomes rather than annual political announcements. National parliaments and European institutions need a regular account of expenditure, Ukrainian reform, industrial delivery and risk. Such reporting should be candid about limits: a guarantee reduces the probability and cost of renewed aggression, but it cannot eliminate uncertainty or substitute for Ukraine's own defence choices.

- Use rolling multi-year finance with annual strategic review rather than annual renegotiation.
- Report readiness and delivery in aggregate form suitable for democratic scrutiny.

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Policy recommendations

- Define violation categories, consultation triggers and emergency support channels in advance.
- Establish an independent monitoring and attribution mechanism with protected technical access.
- Fund multi-year Ukrainian air defence, ammunition, logistics and defence-industrial capacity.
- Pre-position contracting and transport arrangements for rapid assistance.
- Conduct annual political-military exercises of the guarantee architecture.

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Indicators to watch

- Changes in force posture near agreed lines
- Restrictions on monitoring access
- Divergence among guarantor states
- Interruptions to long-term defence finance

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Scope and analytical method

Deterrence, monitoring and long-term defence capacity in a European security settlement. The paper tests the issue against institutional authority, delivery capacity, political sustainability and the interests of affected partners. It separates confirmed developments from interpretation and identifies the conditions under which recommendations would need to change.

The analysis is based on a structured review of official institutional material and current primary sources. It distinguishes formal decisions and verified facts from institutional assessment and forward-looking judgement. Recommendations are tested against authority, delivery capacity, timing, political sustainability and the interests of external partners.

Public sources cannot capture classified readiness data, commercially sensitive contracting information or confidential diplomatic exchanges. Time-sensitive figures and legal developments should therefore be refreshed by responsible authorities before an operational decision is taken.

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Sources and method

The sources below establish the public evidentiary basis for this paper. Interpretation and recommendations remain the responsibility of the Research Directorate. Principal public sources:

- European Council conclusions, 18 June 2026 | <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/18/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-and-on-european-defence-and-security/>
- Coalition of the Willing, Paris Declaration | <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/01/06/robust-security-guarantees-for-a-solid-and-lasting-peace-in-ukraine-statement-of-the-coalition-of-the-willing-issued-by-france/>