

Ukraine Expert Talks

“The longer we wait to supply Leopards, the more painful the consequences of not supplying will be.”

Interview with **Gustav Gressel**
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When the war began, Germany became not only an important partner in terms of energy, financial support, and European integration – as had been traditionally perceived in Ukraine – but also an important partner to the country in terms of military support. Now Germany is in the top five suppliers of heavy weapons to Ukraine. Anyone following Ukrainian discourse – and for many in Germany this perhaps comes as a surprise – might even have gained the impression that Germany’s input is crucial for Ukraine’s victory in the war. So, what is the real added value of German military support? How would you assess this input?

As you say, Germany is now in the top five [of arms suppliers to Ukraine]. In fact, Germany’s proportion of the contribution is increasing, because the UK has its own economic and financial problems, which are much more severe than Germany’s. Thus, for the sake of financial reliability it is important for Germany to maintain this position. It has been a long road so far.

If you look at it purely from a German perspective, it is a miracle what has happened since the war began. In Germany, I often criticize Olaf Scholz because he needs to do more. But, of course, to a foreign audience I always explain that compared to how naive the discussion about the Russian military had been, how detached people were from the logic of military deterrence, defense, and offense, and how blinkered the arguments about the potential effects on Germany of arming Ukraine were, it is somewhat of a miracle the extent to which this country has changed.

At the outset of the war, Germany agreed to send a number of shoulder-launched weapons, not because it saw a particular benefit to this, but because it did not want to act alone and it was conscious of its long-standing influence in the EU. Many people, especially surrounding the Chancellor, assumed that Ukraine

would fall in two or three weeks, that there was no chance [of it standing]. And then the situation emerged in March and April where Russia failed in Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, etc. Then people started to realize that Ukraine might well survive.

What then needed to be decided was in what form it would survive, and an entirely new discussion began. There were still a lot of people who thought that the war would last for a few more months and then it would be over. And there was a debate about training efforts, and what kind of balance was needed between providing Ukraine with weapons versus keeping the weapons in the Bundeswehr for NATO defense, etc.

The situation and attitudes to it have been continuously evolving. This is a process; even now we are in the process of finding a way to cope with reality, and it’s very difficult for the Germans. Because, as I said, *just one year ago, they were of a completely different state of mind. This makes me an optimist in Germany.* However, there are of course some critical shortcomings in this debate, especially regarding the issuing of what in Germany are called “offensive weapons,” which are largely battle tanks and infantry fighting vehicles.

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There is a general fear, and in Germany this fear is stronger than in any other EU member state, that any perceived defeat of Russia would lead to nuclear war, and that nuclear release would be an automatic Russian response. I am more skeptical; I think Russia is bluffing. I do not say it is completely unrealistic,

but the chances that this will come to pass are much lower than people tend to think. Yet there is still much discussion about this, and while it's good that we have acknowledged the possible consequences, we also have to overcome our hesitation.

What role do you think is played by the fact that some Germans simply do not believe in Ukraine's victory in the war in the way Ukraine believes in it? Is this lack of belief based on military analysis or is this just the approach that "Putin always wins" and "no matter what we do, he would win anyway"?

I have to disagree on some points. Yes, there are certain people who still maintain that Russia cannot lose, because this impression lingers from the Second World War, that the Soviet Union, which they basically equate with contemporary Russia, is so big and powerful. But it is the minority who think like this.

realize. And that is why, for example, they say: "Look guys, Ukraine needs air defense, because it has these air attacks, but they do not need tanks, because they have enough Soviet tanks and they also have captured so many in Kharkiv, etc. In a couple of months, they're bound to be hoisting Ukraine's flag in Donetsk."

On the other hand, I'd say that we have a certain amount of overcomplacency: a lot of people expect a Ukrainian victory and they expect it over the winter, which I think is too optimistic. Not that I think the Russian army is well trained and well equipped. The morale of the country's forces is low, which is detrimental to its aims, and the equipment being used is older than ever. But Russian soldiers still number more than 300,000 and they need to be overcome as well. Personally, I do not think that we're seeing the last wave of mobilization. When the Russian barracks are empty, there could be another call-up of people for the army.

Of course, I'd be happy if this were the case, but I would not be so sure that in a couple months Ukraine will be in such a position. I think, in fact, a harsh time lies ahead for the Ukrainian armed forces, in trying to defend the country against Russia's spring offensive – and after defeating this offensive the inevitable counteroffensive. This is the pattern we have seen: an extremely bloody Russian offensive, followed by – once the Russians have exhausted their resources – a Ukrainian counterattack. This is how it's looking in Bakhmut at the moment: first, you have to inflict sufficient damage and then you can counterattack. But this is a very long, resource-intensive process, especially in terms of ammunition.

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This leads to my claim that there are very few 125 mm rounds available now, because we have had nine months of highly intensive war between the two largest armies in Europe. This is not a training exercise – we cannot sustain this level of ammunition consumption with only one type of tank ammunition throughout the whole of the coming year. And when people in Germany hear “the whole of the coming year,” they are astonished.

But we have to plan to provide the armed forces of Ukraine with the sustained capability to fight the Russians for months, maybe even for years ahead. That’s why it is so important to ensure well-planned support is in place, with all categories of weapons systems, including tanks, and full control over the logistical chain in terms of ammunition, spare parts, etc. The same applies right now to air defense. Olaf Scholz does understand the logic of this. “S-300” will run out, “Buk” will run out, so the “IRIS-T” missile system will need to be delivered, together with whatever else is available, or can be produced.

In Germany, we do recognize this logic, but the thinking seems to be that because the war will not last long, the logic does not apply to the supply of tanks. But the war continues still, and the better the advance planning, the more training the Ukrainians will have on these tanks. And when the tanks are needed, they can be introduced gradually. *If, on the other hand, one waits too long – like in March – and the current tank ammunition begins to run out, everything will have to be done in a hurry, as happened with the artillery.* Suddenly, everybody had to scramble things together and it was only later that we found the Polish “Krab,” which could be produced more quickly. When you’re in a rush, things are often not done properly, which could result in a lack of spare parts for the equipment provided – because it was supplied on short notice, because there was an urgent need for whatever was available. This is not the way it should be done, especially after we have already experienced success in this war.

Why is Germany able to provide Panzerhaubitze, which is classed as heavy offensive weapons, but is not able to provide tanks to Ukraine? What is the logic behind this?

I don’t think there is a logic; the problem is that the Chancellor doesn’t communicate the reasoning behind decisions that are being made. His adviser does, but I can demolish these arguments immediately. These people are not stupid, so there must be a reason behind everything they do, but they are refusing to explain what these are.

There are some rumors that point to an unofficial agreement between the US and Russia, or the US and China, not to supply certain things. There’s a rumor that Putin has threatened Scholz that if the tanks roll, he will use nuclear weapons.

These are different theories and there is no clear response from the Chancellery. At some point he really needs to explain his decision-making; I do not know what the logic is.

What do you think is the main reason for his hesitation?

I think the hesitation arises largely from the fear of nuclear war, which is very entrenched in Germany. Unfortunately, the problem is that the fear is also entrenched in the Chancellery; the Ministry of Defense is of the same party as the Chancellor and has to follow the party leader's line. The Foreign Office has little say in military affairs and arms supply. However, defense experts and key diplomats think Russia issued the nuclear threat because it would have the desired effect on the West, not because it is in the process of planning such action. So, opinions are divided.

The problem is that the same discussion is taking place in Washington. There's the State Department, which is much more like: "Guys, this is a bluff." There's the Department of Defense, which shows a greater willingness to do more and is pushing for more weapons deliveries. There's the White House,

which is hesitating and suffers from the same anxiety with regard to nuclear weapons, and where you'll find the same arguments in favor of restraint. And, of course, the President has the final say over the other Ministries. Jake Sullivan [National Security Advisor] is now the dominant figure in organizing all the international efforts and he is talking to Scholz. But these guys share a similar mindset on Ukraine.

Without a change in the American mindset, I don't think the Germans will change theirs, because America provides the strategic umbrella - the overall security and nuclear deterrence - against Russian aggression. So, the German Chancellor will not do anything that he thinks could unsettle relations with Washington. Therefore, *if you want to lobby for German tanks, half of that lobbying needs to take place in Washington.*

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That is what we are doing - requesting that at least one American tank be sent to Ukraine from the US to pause this gentlemen's agreement they made. And it must be remembered that there is more in common between Washington and Berlin than people often realize. Even though Washington is usually praised and Berlin criticized.

I'd like to ask you about this discourse, that Ukraine cannot use offensive weapons provided by Western allies, because the war is a defensive one. Ukraine was attacked, the aggressor is on Ukraine's land, 20% of Ukrainian territory is occupied. Ukraine, as far as we know from different sources, has already assured partners that it will not use HIMARS, for example, on targets not approved by partners, i.e. on Russian territory. Is this logic workable?

As far as I know from Washington, at the outset America was extremely wary of providing HIMARS. Only four such systems were delivered in the initial batch, and it was the UK that initiated that. There was

a huge concern that the situation might escalate and the US wanted information on Ukrainian targeting. Now after months of war, they know that Ukraine uses HIMARS responsible. The US partners have

always been kept informed by Ukraine, even in terms of attacks, albeit not HIMARS, but rather other systems, and the US is happy with this level of consultation, on strikes, etc. I think there was much more hesitation on delivering HIMARS in the spring, whereas now Ukraine has many more months of experience in conducting attacks, counterattacks, etc. That gives a solid basis on which to say: "Look guys, it is not so precarious and we are not heading closer toward World War III by the minute."

Also, I think this is a particularly German discussion – regarding offensive and defensive weapons. It has a history. As you know, up to February 24 Germany did not want to send any weapons to Ukraine at all. There was also a lot of discussion about EU support for Ukraine, and that it should focus on field hospitals medical mind-clearing. Anything that was armed, and anything that could kill, was bad.

Robert Habeck, the leader of the Green Party, wanted to break the deadlock. He went to Mariupol in 2021 and subsequently coined the term "defensive weapons," because he understood the status quo and wanted to acknowledge its importance. These weapons would

not be intended to reconquer, to escalate the Donbas war, to retake Donetsk – they would be purely defensive, he emphasized. And the IRIS-T was being discussed back then too, as a measure to protect civilians

This is what lies behind the term "defensive weapon" in Germany; that is how this whole discourse started. Of course, militarily there are no defensive weapons – it is complete nonsense. A battle tank is used for both defense and offense. In the battle for Kyiv, artillery, tanks, and infantry fighting vehicles were all used in defense. And counterattacks are essential parts of defensive operations. Even if you do not retake territories, you need to have an armed reserve, so that when the enemy invades your lines, your defense is robust and you can remove them again.

Without offensive weapons, a country cannot defend itself, but given the origins of this discussion, these debates about defensive weapons persist. If people are used to hearing such logic, it is hard to divert them from it, even by saying, "No guys, this is not how things work, especially now with full-scale war." This argument might have held for only a limited war and in relation to the Minsk agreement, but this logic no longer applies.

What are your observations regarding the policymakers in Germany: Are they ready to accept the long-term war in Ukraine in both theory and practice?

I think this is an evolving process and we are getting there. When I was on a train to Kyiv, recently, I read an interview with Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the German media. Of course, the journalist asked about the aims of the war and about Ukrainian victory.

In the past, Scholz avoided the term "victory," avoided specifying territorial lines, etc. But in this interview, he twice mentioned the impossibility of peace negotiations now, as Russia is unwilling to withdraw its troops – and if you say

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something twice in an approved interview that you have put on the Chancellery's homepage, it is not just a passing remark.

This reference to Russia withdrawing troops had never been made before and it represents a realization on the part of the Chancellor that the minimum outcome must be that Russia loses everything it has conquered in this war, to make the war itself a failed concept for Russian foreign policy. Hence, for the Chancellor, this argument is beginning to take root; he had never used language which pointed in that direction before.

This is why Scholz has specifically said that we have to support Ukraine for as long as it takes. He knows that this will be a long endeavor and that no "Minsk 3 agreement" is going to provide a situation of sustained peace or allow the necessary reconstruction of Ukraine. Everybody expects Russia to persist with its aim and restart the invasion in a few years, if there is, say, a 50 km push-back instead of a 200 km one. This logic is now forming part of the Chancellor's reasoning, which is a good sign.

What about deeds as well as declarations? One sentence stands out in particular from your last analysis: "The Bundeswehr has an ammunition stockpile for only two days of war." This indicates this is not a long-term strategy.

Yesterday [November 28], there was a meeting in the Chancellery with all those in the defense industry and the ammunition manufacturers to address the ramping-up of production. The problem is that the Bundeswehr is in really bad shape. This is not just the fault of this government: Consecutive governments and defense ministers from different parties have consistently failed to put serious measures in place. Consecutive finance ministers have failed to approve the funds necessary to purchase in particular ammunition spare parts to ensure the Bundeswehr is operational, as it was declared in 2014 and 2016 in the Wales and Warsaw NATO summits. As Germany had obligations to NATO and its Allied partners, this is now an issue in many senses.

There is a growing realization that ammunition needs to be produced

on a large scale. We have the first big initiative "European Sky Shield," which will provide the manufacturers of the IRIS-T with the prospect of long-term procurement. Up to 15 states showed an interest in investing in the new production facilities, to manufacture more missiles, and more quickly, because Ukraine needs them in much greater numbers for its air defense strategy against Russian cruise missile attacks.

These are private companies, so they need to have the money to expand, and if there are long-term contracts in place, new factories can be built. However, to build a new factory, a financial commitment to procure these missiles not only for next year, but for the next decade, is essential. Otherwise, these companies will have to charge an astronomical price per round or per missile, which serves no one.

So, this is where we are: It is again a process, and again, we are getting there. The good thing about the ammunition is that it's not only us who are involved: There are also large air ammunition manufacturers in the United States, France, Italy, Spain, and South Korea. Ammunition for the "Gepard" in Norway will soon be available – Rheinmetall bought a factory in Spain to produce more of this. Turkey is not resistant either to supplying Ukraine with ammunition and this is as yet an underexplored opportunity.

The collective West is making progress, and this is a long-term commitment. Let's take a look at how the Asia-Pacific region is developing now. If China launches an attack on Taiwan, beginning a Pacific War, the Americans will not ask Germany

to send a symbolic frigate to the Pacific, or six symbolic Eurofighters somewhere in Australia. If this war breaks out, they will ask, how many IRIS-T, Metheor, or anti-ship missiles do you have; how many torpedoes or sea mines can you manufacture; how much artillery ammunition can you manufacture and how much can we have?

If this war breaks out, sustained military production will also be a huge issue. Therefore, this is not something we need to do for Ukraine alone, or because it is the topic of the day. How we deal with these difficult, 21st-century times, and these large industrialized revisionist powers, also impacts our own security and our ability to influence world politics in the right direction.

HIMARS are considered to some extent to be a game-changer in a war. Could you name any German weapons that have become or could become a game-changer on the battlefield in Ukraine?

To be honest, I do not like calling certain weapons "game-changers," because success does not rely on a single kind of armed weapon, but on a combination of equipment. If you use HIMARS, you need good reconnaissance, which is provided by satellites, imagery, intelligence, etc. What is always important is a combination of forces and

capabilities. It's the same with tanks; some criticize Germany's position that the "Leopard" is not a game-changer, implying that if we delivered enough Leopards, the war would be over in a month. That is nonsense, although the Leopard is important for Ukrainian armed forces to continue the fight, despite issues of ammunition shortage.

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So, you do not think that the Leopard would be a gamechanger?

They will be a necessity for Ukraine in a long war. *The longer we wait to supply Leopards, the more painful the consequences will be.* But I don't say they will be a game-changer and Moscow will be liberated in two days. That is a fantasy.

Another system, which has been somewhat of a surprise, is the air defense system Gepard. It played a crucial role in a Kharkiv counteroffensive, and it has proved to be surprisingly effective in what it does. The radar sensors are hard for the Russians to jam, the gun is very precise, and the ammunition consumption per destroyed target is very low. Thus, in very few rounds they can destroy drones and even aircraft and keep Russian aerial

assets away from Ukrainian attack forces. It is an enormously versatile piece of equipment, with many uses, including protecting VIPs. Overall, it is really a very effective weapon.

Unfortunately, there are only limited numbers of Gepards available, as it has been out of production for a long time. We cannot deliver more, because the rest have been sold across the world. There are twenty in bad shape, which could be renovated and sent to Ukraine, but sadly after this there are none left. Unless there are any in a Second World War museum somewhere. We need a successor, but it is as yet only a prototype.

If you could advise the Ukrainian armed forces or political leadership on what type of German weapon they should focus on, and ask for right now, what would that be?

I still think tanks are important. Except for the UK, France, and Italy, the tanks in Europe are German. It is the only tank that is still in production – new engines, new tracks, new spare parts, etc. However, to get hold of German tanks, this issue also needs to be lobbied in Washington. If the mindset changes in Washington, it will change in Berlin.

Aside from this, there is something else that is underexplored: Things that need to be supplied beyond entire weapon systems, that is, subcomponents, or equipment to enable combat. For example, the German company Hensoldt produces optics, electro-optical systems, electronic warfare systems, and radio direction finders, etc. These systems do not do the actual shooting, thus, there is less political

sensitivity surrounding them, than for a weapon system that actively kills people.

At the same time, it is vital that any defense is properly planned, and that there's a clear picture of what one's enemies are doing and where they are. For instance, every Soviet anti-aircraft gun is good enough to shoot down Iranian drones. The problem is that at night you can't see anything, so you need optics, a night vision modification to an existing weapon system. Here, we're not talking about the supply of a complete weapon system, but rather a subcomponent provision. This is something we need to do more work on; we need to explore what is feasible, and how we modernize the existing Ukrainian defense equipment via new subcomponents, etc.

How should Ukraine communicate that? Ukraine's communication in terms of demanding weapons from Germany was quite aggressive. However, there is a view in Ukraine that without such a pushy approach, it would not have received the equipment and help that it did.

I think the verdict is still out in that regard. Ukraine's new ambassador to Germany is much more calm and polite. We will see; the results will determine whether the old ambassador's approach or that of the new one is more effective.

At the same time, certain issues are arising within the German political establishment. Every other week, delegations of Ukrainians – either members of parliament or experts – are coming to Berlin to brief German politicians and enter into talks with them. Of course, usually, it is easier to approach people in the Green Party or the Free Democratic Party. Yet the Social Democratic Party constitutes a real problem. I'm not saying that

there are no people willing to supply Ukraine with what it wants. There are such people, good MPs, they are not stupid people. The problem is that there is a very aggressive pacifist wing within the SPD and MPs have come under extreme pressure within the party.

The polarization within the Social Democratic Party is connected to the generational gap and people's personal experience. However, it is tricky. It's becoming increasingly difficult to penetrate into the party and advocate for anything that contradicts what the Chancellor says. And that's problematic because it's not good for discourse.

When we are talking about the obstacles to Germany supplying military equipment to Ukraine, people often point to the Chancellor, who is already demonized. At the same time, I have heard some opinions in Berlin that the Greens could put more pressure on the Chancellor and Social Democrats, rather than just shifting responsibility and playing the blame game. Do you think the Greens could do more?

No, there have been some heated arguments. There are people that no longer talk to each other. There are accusations within the Coalition that certain people are more opposed to the government than in support of it; they have almost reached internal breaking points several times on this issue. This fighting has, however, made Scholz move on certain issues.

Germany faces two kinds of pressure: international, from allies such as the UK or the Netherlands, which basically pushed us into taking action to supply equipment such as Panzerfaust, Panzerhaubitze 2000, and rocket launchers; and internal pressure in the form of supplying the IRIS-T, a demand that came from the Greens, from Habeck.

Do you support this current approach by the German government, to focus on air defense and prioritize this issue?

Air defense is crucial. The strikes that are being targeted at infrastructure mean this issue is important for millions of citizens.

I think *air defense is crucial*. The strikes that are being targeted at infrastructure mean this issue is important for millions of citizens. If there is no hot water for 30 hours in Kyiv in January, when it is minus 15 at night, the water pipes in the buildings will freeze and burst. If all these buildings, built in the 1990s, become uninhabitable because of water damage, how many tens of thousands, if not millions, of people will have nowhere to live? The consequences of having or not having air defense are tremendous, and therefore it is a priority. The Chancellor has my full support here and I have applauded his TV appearances on this issue.

work with other countries, and they could be the first to break the ice, deliver what is required – and prove that we will not stumble into World War III. Then Germany would be able to deliver them as well, as happened with the HIMARS. But for tanks, *it is basically impossible to avoid using Leopard 2*.

The only potential alternative to the Leopard 2 is the Abrams, but given the speed of the US depot system, delivery to Poland will only be possible sometime around the middle of next year. The Poles have the infrastructure to maintain the German Leopards, which are already there at the border. For the Abrams, they are of course in the process of creating this [infrastructure] in Poland, but let's see how long that takes. The decision was taken in March to provide Poland with the Abrams, but we don't know how long it will take to implement this decision.

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However, I think regarding the main types of battle tanks specifically, he needs to change course, because the Leopard 2 is the only practical solution. With regard to other infantry fighting vehicles, Ukraine could easily substitute German ones for those made and operated by other countries. Thus, Ukraine could

Do you advocate the idea of a European Leopard Tank Consortium?

Yes, of course. It is a painful discussion, but there is no other way.

May I ask about a more ambitious idea, which was expressed by Ukrainian generals Zaluzhnyi and Zabrodskyi in their September article? The piece was devoted to next year's war campaign, and their view was that the war could be won if Ukraine were to have missiles with a range up to 2,000 km. So if Kyiv, for example, were attacked by Russian missiles, Ukraine could attack Moscow in the same way. This logic implies that a real strategic balance can be reached only through this kind of deterrence. Otherwise Russia will always be tempted to attack Ukraine.

As for long-term deterrence, I'd prefer to say that the best solution would be to include Ukraine in NATO and bring it under the Alliance's nuclear umbrella.

As for long-term deterrence, I'd prefer to say that the best solution would be to include Ukraine in NATO and bring it under the Alliance's nuclear umbrella. This is because the Russian missiles are all dual-use – there is always the chance that they could be nuclear-armed, and Ukraine is not a nuclear state. You cannot match the deterrence potential of nuclear-armed missiles. Moreover, Russia is so big that one would need to go intercontinental to reach Vladivostok. I don't think that this perspective is worth exploring too much. Yet the Alliance does seem to take this perspective, especially if you look at hypersonic weapons and vehicle delivery from the US side.

I think in the long run, the paradigm of strategic stability with Russia is dead. Strategic stability in terms of mutually assured destruction and arms control within certain limits requires both sides to demonstrate the same responsibility and adhere to certain models of accountability, which the Soviet Union did and Russia does not. Russia should not therefore

enjoy this privilege. Essentially, what I'm saying is if the Americans start to deploy, for example, Prompt Global Strike (PGS) systems, which are hypersonic long-range weapons that can preemptively kill the Russian nuclear deterrent, they should do so – to make Russia nervous, fearful, because only that will keep them away.

This is beyond the reach of any individual European state, including Ukraine, because of the research and development effort required. This can be done by the collective West in terms of US leadership in the nuclear field, and maybe there are some other French or British missiles with similar capabilities.

We have to recognize also that the post-war focus for Ukraine will be on reconstruction. There will be a lot of other tasks as well. And of course, Ukraine will have to maintain a strong army, like all Russia's neighbors. Finland, for instance, during the Cold War had no nuclear weapons, but it still had a credible defense.

But Ukraine cannot simply say to Russia that it will join NATO; other NATO members must support this. We need to know first that Ukraine has the Alliance's backing.

I hope, of course, that the war ends in an undeniable defeat of Russia.

Yes, absolutely. *I hope, of course, that the war ends in an undeniable defeat of Russia.* Then we have a Ukrainian victory and can move toward the difficult phase of rebuilding – and

this phase will also need to be accompanied by some security guarantees until you join the Alliance (not a substitute for NATO membership, but something interim

that would offer protection during the time until membership).

Nobody can say right now what such security guarantees would look like, because the war is still ongoing. But even Scholz has said that something like that needs to be done. Germany has explicitly promised the same to Sweden and Finland – we guaranteed that we would defend them if Russia decided to attack during the negotiation period. This process takes time. In Sweden and Finland there is no issue with the capability of their armed forces, but their accession process is still taking

a long time because of issues with Hungary and Turkey.

In Ukraine's case, we do not know how Turkish or Hungarian domestic policies will develop in the years to come. There are still a lot of uncertainties, but you also have to bear in mind that even if, after the war, the majority of NATO countries are strongly in favor of Ukraine's accession into NATO, a strong majority is not enough. This is likely to take time. Therefore, something will need to be in place during the transition period, and before.

Unfortunately, we do not believe in a NATO-like security guarantee for Ukraine without NATO membership.

Of course, in practice NATO Article 5 is rock solid, because every country depends on that. Nobody except Trump wants to leave NATO; Germany, for example, is absolutely committed to Article 5, because its own security depends on it. If one country turns a blind eye toward other states, other states would turn a blind eye toward them, and that would be a doomsday scenario. I think there is much more public insecurity about NATO Article 5 than there should be.

Concerning the Rasmussen-Yermack paper, what I think will certainly not happen is the production of any detail on the kind of guarantees concerning measures to be taken following a Russian attack. For the very reason that each situation is unique. If you promise that in situation A, we will instigate measures B or C, then the Russians will take action five

millimeters below the threshold of those clearly defined circumstances. Therefore, very tailored responses will always be needed to whatever Russia plans and does, and because as a country it is creative. This is the only thing we can assume – that Russia will continue to be a threat, and a creative one.

Moreover, freedom of action must always be a priority in terms of reply, in order to keep the other side guessing. We have an unfortunate habit of always trying to be the good pupil, nice, and only defensive, of never being ambiguous and outwardly threatening Russia. That is actually the wrong thing to be. You need to be a bit ambiguous and you need to be somewhat of a threat, because only then will the other side think twice.

About the Author



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Gustav Gressel is a Senior Policy Fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations` Wider Europe Programme. His expertise includes Russia, Eastern Europe, and defence policy. Prior to joining ECFR, Gressel worked as a Desk Officer in the Bureau for Security Policy of the Austrian Ministry of Defence and as a Research Fellow of the Commissioner for Strategic Studies with the Austrian MoD as well as with the International Institute for

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