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The proposed 'Kyiv Security Compact' and the Western network of advisers and consultancy firms helping to steer Ukraine's foreign policy choices

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On the 13 September President Volodymyr Zelensky's office published a draft set of security guarantees that, if agreed, would commit Ukraine's allies to legally binding large-scale weapons transfers and multi-decade investment in the country's defences. The nine-page [Kyiv Security Compact](#) was prepared by a Working Group On International Security Guarantees for Ukraine co-chaired by former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Andriy Yermak, the head of Zelensky's presidential administration. Zelensky [said](#) the package - which called for Western countries to provide "political, financial, military and diplomatic resources" to boost Kyiv's ability to defend itself - should form the basis of a new security settlement for Ukraine.

The Compact claims that, "these will be the first such guarantees of the 21st century and can lay the foundations for a new security order in Europe". This model involves formalising guarantees that the international community would in future follow similar steps to those taken in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war to supply a state with all the resources necessary to prevail, should it experience an incursion. But crucially it goes further than this, committing those states giving the guarantees to do all in their power to

expand Ukraine's military capability over decades. It is a recipe for massive increases in military spending across Europe.

As discussed below, the process was initiated by President Zelensky who tasked Rasmussen and Yermak to draft a package of security guarantees short of NATO membership (at least in the short- to medium term). What is less clear is the timeline and process for adopting the Compact and its recommendations. It seems as if bilateral consultations between Ukraine and potential partners are due to begin immediately, and certainly before the war is over. In that sense the document is a roadmap. For example, Rasmussen is quoted in Newsweek as [saying](#), "These security guarantees should enter into force as soon as possible. We should not wait for an end to the conflict". And while the Compact could form part of a future peace treaty and involve discussions with Russia, the sense is that this would only be likely in the event of a regime change in Moscow.

Key feature of the proposal

The Compact does not propose that NATO countries collectively offer their troops in defence of Ukraine's sovereignty (as they do for each other

under the so-called Article 5 collective defence commitment), but says there should be no restriction on the military, diplomatic and economic help provided by NATO member countries (and potentially other states) through bilateral agreements. It is unclear exactly what 'no restriction' might mean. The level of support should be both "permanent" and "scalable to adapt and reflect the level of the threat", and should apply "throughout Ukraine's internationally recognised borders". It goes on to argue that the "strongest security guarantee for Ukraine lies in its capacity to defend itself against an aggressor ... To do so, Ukraine needs the resources to maintain a significant defensive force capable of withstanding the Russian Federation's armed forces and paramilitaries.... This requires a multi-decade effort of sustained investment in Ukraine's defence industrial base, scalable weapons transfers and intelligence support from allies, intensive training missions and joint exercises under the European Union and NATO flags".

Under the proposal, Ukrainian forces would be trained to NATO standards and "at the scale needed to build a robust territorial defence force and reserve force", including a form of conscription for those civilians aged over 18. The guarantees, the Compact suggests, should not require Ukraine to limit the size or strength of its armed forces, and "nor should they be drawn in exchange for a specific status, such as neutrality". However, it would require Ukraine to remain committed to democratic reforms. The military guarantees might also provide commitments to Ukraine that amount to "a closed sky" through the provision of anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence equipment (something Ukraine is still demanding of its NATO backers seven months into the war).

It is unclear which countries may be willing to contribute to the Compact. Among those touted as signatories are a core group of NATO countries and allies that "could include the US, UK, Canada, Poland, Italy, Germany, France, Australia, Turkey, and Nordic, Baltic, central and eastern European countries". However, key Ukrainian allies like the United States and UK have already been hesitant to sign up to new security guarantees for Ukraine, even while providing vast amounts of military equipment.

The Compact also suggests that a broader group, including non-NATO countries such as Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Switzerland, might provide non-military guarantees such as a commitment to a list of sanctions that would be automatically applied in the event of a further Russian attack. This would also include measures enabling authorities to "seize the property of the aggressor, its sovereign funds and reserves, and the assets of its citizens and entities on the sanctions list".

The reaction in Moscow

Unsurprisingly, the proposals [reportedly](#) triggered indignation in Moscow, which saw them as reinforcing Kyiv's determination to join NATO and a strategy that could pave the way for the deployment of more Western weaponry near its borders. Russian spokesman Dmitry Peskov [said](#) Russia viewed the document negatively, saying the idea of Ukraine joining NATO was "the main threat to Russia: It once again emphasises the relevance and urgent need for us to ensure our own security and our own national interests". This hints at a likely escalation in any future arms race as a Western bloc of states collaborate to build up their military capabilities against those of Russia and its allies.

The origins of the Compact

Yermak [announced](#) in May the establishment of the Working Group that was tasked with developing proposals on security guarantees for Ukraine. Yermak co-led the group with Rasmussen, who is now the head of the [Rasmussen Global](#) consultancy firm. The group [met three times](#) in the previous two months before submitting the document for consideration by President Zelensky. Of the two Americans on the group, Michele Flournoy was a senior civil servant specialising in defence for the Clinton and Obama administrations, before co-founding [WestExec Advisors](#) with current US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, while Stephen Hadley was George W Bush's national security adviser, before he too went into consulting with [Rice, Hadley, Gates & Manuel](#). The day-to-day activities of the group are carried out by four project managers: two Ukrainian nationals and two senior executives at Rasmussen Global. Both of the latter had former planning positions at NATO. See below for the full list of members of the working group.

Before publication of the Compact there had been little or no discussion of the process itself within the international media. A notable exception was a recent [article](#) (paywalled) in *Intelligence Online (IO)*, which described in some detail this group, as well as another group of military experts working behind the scenes to advise Ukraine on its future security requirements. This second, smaller group of four prominent and retired generals is gathered in a [Strategic Advisory Council](#) (SAC) within the [Ukrainian World Congress](#). According to the SAC webpage, the group provides strategic military advice, advocacy and ambassadorship, and fundraising support. The global fundraising campaign is focused on “providing vital protective and medical equipment to Ukraine”. Former

Canadian Chief of Staff Rick Hillier, now a public speaker, chairs the group, which includes Dutch general Dick Berlijn, as well as Americans Wesley Clark and David Petraeus (US Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual theorist and former CIA director).

The disclosure of these two consultancy groups by *IO* is in keeping with an independent journal that, in its own words, seeks to “understand who the world's intelligence actors are, trace their careers and choices and decode the web of networks they weave across the globe” and to “keep track of the men and women who keep a low profile but are just as influential as official agents in diplomatic developments and international dealmaking”.

This is a laudable endeavour in transparency and accountability, since many of the most important decisions in foreign policy and that shape international institutions are made in small groups. Moreover, many popular accounts of foreign policy decision-making suggest that critical foreign policy choices often hinge on whether a leader's inner circle is filled with hawks or doves. A recent [study](#) on the influence of advisers on US foreign policy concluded, for example, that when hawks dominate the advisory group, “they introduce arguments congruent with a more antagonistic worldview and thereby nudge states toward more conflictual policies”.

Given their largely hawkish backgrounds it seems likely that both of these groups of consultants' continue to favour NATO membership for Ukraine, and it is no surprise therefore that the Compact can be seen as a device for steering Kyiv on such a path, rather than looking for alternatives that might de-escalate tensions and build a more inclusive European security architecture. In

addition to questions concerning the enforceability of the proposed legal guarantees and the scale of financial support required, the Compact also raises issues about the central importance of informal but well-networked advisers in foreign policy decision-making and the need for transparency and greater accountability.

The (current and former) composition of the Working Group on International Security Guarantees for Ukraine is:

Andriy Yermak, Ukraine, Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine (Co-Chair);

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Denmark, Former Prime Minister and NATO Secretary General (Co-Chair);

Kevin Rudd, Australia, Prime Minister (2007-2010; 2013), Foreign Minister (2010-2012), and President of the Asia Society;

Carl Bildt, Sweden, Prime Minister (1991-1994) and Foreign Minister (2006-2014). Lord William J. Hague of Richmond, UK, Foreign Secretary (2010-2014);

Michèle A. Flournoy, USA, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (2009-2012);

Norbert Röttgen, Germany, Chair of Bundestag Foreign Affairs Committee (2014-2021) and Environment Minister (2009-2012);

Giampiero Massolo, Italy, President of the Italian Institute for International Political Studies;

Anna Fotyga, Poland, MEP (2014-present) and Foreign Affairs Minister of Poland (2006-2007);

Adam Eberhardt, Poland, Director of the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW);

Marie Dumoulin, France, Director Wider Europe programme, European Council on Foreign Relations;

Andrii Kostin, Ukraine, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine, Moderator of the Group;

Roxana Cristescu, Ukraine, Senior Advisor at the European Institute of Peace (EIP);

Mikuláš Dzurinda, Slovakia, Prime Minister (1998-2006) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (2010-2012);

Stephen Hadley, National Security Adviser to the US President (2005-2009);

Omid Nouripour, Member of the German Parliament (2006-present) and co-chairman of the Alliance '90/The Greens party (since 2022); and

Volkan Bozkır, Turkey, former Minister for European Union Affairs of Turkey.

(Members are taking part in a personal capacity, not as representatives of their organisations).

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