



Coalition of the Willing for Ukraine: A Multinational Force in the Making

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Recommendations

Based on the country profiles in this collection, members of the Coalition of the Willing can be grouped in three categories by political will and military capability to contribute to a Multinational Force Ukraine:

- The willing and able: France, UK.
- The willing but constrained: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden.
- The hesitant and doubtful: Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland.

From these country profiles emerge the following short-term recommendations for coalition members:

1. Proactively engage in discussions on Rules of Engagement, desired end state, exit strategies and NATO Article 5 contingencies—especially at the political level to ensure alignment and preparedness.
2. Even if not legally required, consult national parliaments to ensure broad political support, given the high-risk nature of a Multinational Force Ukraine.
3. Design mandates that realistically reflect available

military capabilities, particularly with limited US involvement. Prioritize expectation management with Ukrainian leadership, civil society, and European audiences.

4. Develop and implement a clear, multi-domain rotation scheme for the Multinational Force Ukraine, ideally pre-arranged for multi-year sustainability.
5. Accelerate formal integration of Ukrainian forces into European cooperation frameworks, building on the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) partnership and prioritizing interoperability (e.g. aligning European air assets with Ukrainian ground-to-air defence).
6. Strive for strategic communication that demonstrates coalition resolve, tailored to diverse political contexts. Sustained public support hinges on transparency, realism, and acknowledging operational risks.

A Multinational Force Ukraine is still hypothetical, but if it materializes, coalition members will be in for the long run. European leaders should act, plan, and prepare based on that assumption.

Introduction

In March 2025, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron [announced](#) the launch of a *Coalition of the Willing* in support of Ukraine. Bringing together partner countries that had already supported Ukraine for several years, the initiative allowed for deeper political coordination, irrespective of NATO or EU membership. The coalition of 34 European states and governments—alongside the NATO Secretary-General, the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council, Canada, and later also Australia and Japan—represents a coordinated political effort to strengthen Europe's role in ensuring Ukraine's future sovereignty and security.

On the military track, momentum grew on 4 September 2025, when President Macron [announced](#) that 26 countries had committed to securing Ukraine by deploying troops on the ground, at sea or in the air, “the day after the ceasefire or peace”, as part of a reassurance force—labeled ‘Multinational Force Ukraine’. Building on this pledge, a [European counter-proposal](#) on 23 November 2025 to the United States’ draft [28-point Ukraine ‘peace plan’](#) included the provision that Ukraine should be “free to decide on the presence, weapons and operations of friendly forces invited by the government of Ukraine on its territory”. Yet despite months of discussion and continuous military planning, there is still little public information available about what such Multinational Force Ukraine would look like, what contributions coalition members are prepared to make, and what a realistic deployment might entail. In this policy brief collection, we bring together [experts from 18 countries](#) to fill this gap and inform public debate about a Multinational Force Ukraine. Contributors were asked to reflect on two main questions:

1. What is your country willing to contribute to a Multinational Force for Ukraine?
2. What is your country able to contribute to a Multinational Force for Ukraine?

The contributions sketch a picture of the political will including drivers and constraints, alongside the military capabilities and impact on existing deployments of coalition members. Together, these country profiles offer much-needed input for public and political debate about what Europe is willing *and* able to do to militarily ensure Ukraine's security. To establish the parameters of this discussion clearly: the best security guarantee is

still a strengthened and enduring support to Ukraine's Armed Forces.

Although the precondition of a ceasefire—let alone a peace agreement—between Ukraine and Russia remains unlikely, any public or political debate about a Multinational Force Ukraine must be grounded in pragmatic realism. European democracies, by nature, depend on domestic political debate and public support. Meanwhile, most European countries—particularly those in Western and Southern Europe, as well as [Canada](#)—have only recently begun to again take their defense capabilities seriously. With many of their armed forces undergoing transformation, European leaders should be cautious not to raise expectations they cannot fulfill. This collection of policy briefs seeks to contribute to a more grounded and constructive discussion on these matters.

Multinational Force Ukraine

By creating a Coalition of the Willing, allied leaders acted upon the growing recognition that Europe must take the lead in securing Ukraine's future, and NATO has de facto been ruled out as an option. The initiative followed a series of wake-up calls, including the contentious Trump-Zelensky Oval Office meeting of 28 February 2025, which underscored how indecision could leave Ukraine, and Europe, dangerously exposed to continued and escalating Russian aggression. A coalition format allows for [overcoming gridlock](#) in NATO, and react swiftly and flexibly to a rapidly changing security context. Yet, [we also know](#) that coalitions require leadership, active coordination and political strategy.

In October 2025, [UK Defence Secretary John Healey stated that](#) “200 military planners from more than 30 nations” were developing detailed plans to prepare a Multinational Force Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire, but the public is still short on data and detail. Meanwhile, scenarios with varying levels of ambition and pragmatism have been circulating. One proposal involves an over-the-horizon force, with coalition countries providing a rapid reaction capacity, including air protection from airbases in Eastern Europe, potentially supplemented by land and maritime elements. A [European SkyShield](#) over (parts of) Ukraine to counter Russian cruise missile and drone attacks on cities and infrastructure has also been brought up in that regard. The proposal to move (some of the) military training of Ukrainian troops and units back to Ukraine,

which would involve deploying European advisors, has equally been raised. Another idea that sparked considerable debate is the deployment of a deterrence and reassurance force, with scenarios ranging from a small-footprint brigade-size force of 5,000 troops, to a medium-sized force of 30,000 troops, or a large-scale corps-sized land component of 60,000-100,000 troops—each supported by appropriate air and maritime assets.

Following a virtual meeting on 10 July 2025—attended by US government officials—it was [announced](#) that the force’s command structure would include a three-star multinational operational headquarters based in Paris, jointly led by the UK and France, with plans to rotate to London after 12 months. Additionally, a UK two-star general would head a coordination cell located in Kyiv.

Statements furthermore revealed that the force would most likely focus on three main tasks:

- Securing Ukrainian skies by conducting air policing alongside Ukraine’s Air Force;
- Enhancing Black Sea maritime security by providing mine countermeasures and protection of sea lines of communication and port access; and
- Supporting regeneration of Ukraine’s land forces by providing logistics, armaments, and training outside and on the ground in western Ukraine.

Yet, this is only a rough scaffolding of a still-hypothetical Multinational Force Ukraine. Critical details regarding the mandate and strategy of the MFU are largely undefined, or have not been made public. This includes the political and military conditions for deployment, the precise mandate and rules of engagement, and the available military capacity. Even though this collection of country profiles does not include all coalition members, it gives a more concrete idea about where the potential lines of convergence and disagreement are between the various coalition members.

Political will

There remains relatively broad political and public support among coalition members for continuing military assistance to Ukraine, with the Nordic and Baltic European countries unsurprisingly [standing out](#). For many, a core motivation is to demonstrate Europe’s resolve and signal to the US administration that Europe is prepared to take responsibility for its own security. Equally important is the growing recognition that

Europe’s security depends on a strong and resilient Ukraine.

However, the picture becomes more complex when considering political and public support for deploying military troops. All members of the coalition of the willing have made clear that they will not deploy a Multinational Force Ukraine until a ceasefire or peace agreement is in place. Additionally, the insistence by some countries—most notably [Italy](#)—on credible US backing for such a force adds another layer of complexity.

Further complicating matters are the variations in domestic rules governing the deployment of military forces, and particularly the requirements regarding prior parliamentary consultation or approval. This inherently creates uncertainty, as several countries’ contributions depend on securing broad political agreement on deployment decisions, especially in nations with multi-party coalition governments.

Others, such as [France](#), operate under a more permissive system—with considerable presidential authority—but face a difficult budgetary situation. Moreover, several governments within the coalition of the willing are grappling with unstable domestic political environments, looming elections, and rising support for populist parties that favor scaling back or even ending assistance to Ukraine. The recent elections in the [Czech Republic](#) serve as a stark reminder to many European leaders of how a leading supporter of Ukraine can easily become a spoiler of Europe’s collective resolve.

Although not yet covered with a separate brief in this collection, [Turkey’s willingness](#) to be part of the coalition should also be highlighted, considering its crucial role in the maritime domain guarding the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits according to the Montreux Convention.

Russia’s resistance to allied support in Ukraine forces European leaders to weigh the level of risk they are willing to accept. Will coalition members maintain resolve if struck by an “accidental” missile or drone attack? And how far will they be willing to climb the escalation ladder? While several states are open to deploying to western Ukraine, a frontline Multinational Force Ukraine is unlikely to gain broad support, as most—if not all—coalition governments are wary of direct confrontation with Russian forces. Country profiles also reflect slightly different expectations of US

involvement, yet only a few would consider deploying troops without credible US military backing.

Military capabilities

Although Coalition of the Willing members declared readiness to contribute militarily to a Multinational Force Ukraine after a ceasefire, limited military capacity constrains what is realistically achievable. Years of neglect and budget cuts have hollowed out coalition partners' military capabilities. Most coalition members have begun reversing this trend by increasing defence spending and investment, yet many national armed forces remain in transition. Meanwhile, intensifying hybrid attacks across Europe seem designed to divert resources from Ukraine and erode public support.

With the US refusing to deploy troops on the ground, a Multinational Force Ukraine would evidently be led by the [UK](#) and [France](#). Their expeditionary capacity, operational experience, and established [Combined Joint Expeditionary Force](#) (CJEF) partnership position them to take the lead. However, both countries face significant limitations in military capacity, making it unrealistic for them to commit forces to an open-ended operation that cannot be sustained over time. Moreover, each coalition member must navigate a difficult tradeoff among four competing priorities: maintaining national defence readiness, preserving NATO's strategic reserve, sustaining troops deployments on NATO's Eastern Flank, and contributing to a Multinational Force Ukraine.

In a most likely scenario, the Multinational Force Ukraine would be able to deploy available capabilities in the air, on land and at sea, although to varying

degrees. The UK and France would take a leadership role, with [Poland](#) acting as a logistical hub. In the air, a Multinational Force Ukraine would relabel NATO air policing from air bases in Eastern Europe and extend this into western Ukraine as part of a SkyShield covering parts of Ukraine. Yet the question arises: would the MFU enforce only a no-fly zone, or would it also seek to protect western Ukraine from missile and drone strikes? On land, training of Ukrainian troops would continue in eastern Poland, but existing training could also be moved eastwards into western Ukraine. At sea, minesweeping vessels, together with support from ashore, could be deployed in coordination with Turkey and its reading of the Montreux Convention.

A Multinational Force Ukraine could support the monitoring of a ceasefire or a peace agreement, act as a deterrence against the resumption of hostilities, protect critical infrastructure, enable Ukraine to focus its military efforts on deterrence along a demarcation line and develop robust and resilient air defence that can withstand large-scale missile and drone attacks. Maritime exports through the ports on the Black Sea account for a large part of Ukrainian exports, making safe corridors for maritime traffic a critical objective.

The deployment of the Multinational Force Ukraine will be difficult and rejected by Russia. Such a force is also unlikely without clear objectives and credible US support through strategic enablers, including intelligence assets, air defense support, and battlefield oversight. Given the high risks, a Multinational Force Ukraine would also only be effective if it operates with flexible rules of engagement—a politically difficult sell for many coalition members domestically.

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In the *Multinational Force Ukraine* series of policy briefs leading experts from allied countries assess key factors for participation in the Multinational Force Ukraine. This includes the political willingness of allies to deploy troops—on the ground, in the air, or at sea—to establish a military presence in or around Ukraine. They also examine the conditions for such deployments to occur (before, during, or after peace negotiations), the roles these forces would be expected to perform (defensive or offensive), the red lines imposed by national governments, and the specific capabilities each country could realistically contribute.