

The European Union Between Drift and a Course Towards a New Transatlanticism

As the Pentagon reviews the US military presence in Europe and allied capitals assess its possible consequences, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen used her September State of the Union address to present two initiatives that go notably beyond the existing repertoire of EU external policy: an offer of associate member status to Canada and a proposal for a European Security Council [1]. Both fit into a broader trend of the Union seeking forms of cooperation with partners with whom it shares a community of values and complementary resources, at a time of declining predictability in US policy. It is telling that in a speech devoted to a significant extent to the continent's security, Washington was not mentioned directly. Yet it is precisely US policy that forms the essential backdrop to the initiatives announced.

The initiatives announced by Ursula von der Leyen reveal a defining feature of the new transatlanticism, which shifts part of the weight of the relationship from Washington to Ottawa. The choice of partner and the recourse to existing instruments - Canada's participation in SAFE, the 2025 Security and Defence Partnership, sanctions regimes - point to a deliberate recalibration. Both initiatives announced in the address nonetheless remain goals with a defined direction but no indicated path towards their operationalisation: the legal basis, the decision-making procedure and the time horizon all remain open. Under these conditions, the pace and trajectory of this movement remain largely a function of external factors - the unpredictability of Washington's actions and Russia's hybrid campaign.

Forced Convergence: The Common Course of Brussels and Ottawa

The rapprochement between the two capitals stems from the same experience: the transformation of economic interdependence into an instrument of political pressure. Canada, which sends nearly 70 per cent of its exports to the US market, is now in an open trade conflict with Washington, following the collapse of negotiations and the imposition of 50 per cent tariffs on successive categories of goods, to which Ottawa has responded with retaliatory measures [2]. Because the accompanying rhetoric called Canada's agency into question, the dispute shifted from the economic plane to that of sovereignty, as polling data attest: a considerable share of Canadians now regard their southern neighbour as a hostile state, while nearly half declare support for their country's membership of the European Union - a remarkable result for a state lying on the other side of the ocean [2][3].

The Union finds itself in a milder phase of an analogous process, yet it knows the mechanism first-hand. The 2025 US National Security Strategy assigned Europe primary responsibility for conventional defence. The declarations were accompanied by material decisions, including the spring withdrawal of 5,000 troops from Germany and announced cuts in areas critical for Europe, such as air-to-air refuelling and maritime patrol aviation [4][5]. The character of the relationship itself was altered by a posture review linked to an assessment of allies according to their public support for American priorities, which gives the alliance commitment the character of a conditional undertaking [5]. In January 2026, the pressure also acquired a territorial dimension when, in the dispute over Greenland, Washington threatened eight European states with tariffs [6].

Brussels and Ottawa, then, did not so much choose each other as they were steered onto a common course by Washington's consistent pattern of behaviour, which explains both the pace of the rapprochement and its fragility. The durability of relationships born of the experience of pressure,

however, depends on whether they can be transformed into institutional commitments before the pressure eases or shifts to a different target.

Canada as a Partner of Choice and the Limits of This Formula

The choice of Ottawa as the addressee of the offer rests on both ideational and material grounds. As early as January, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney described the present moment as a rupture, not a transition, in the international order, calling for variable geometry, that is, assembling coalitions around specific problems [7]. In the European Parliament, this concept took the form of a thesis on the divergence of institutions and capabilities: the Prime Minister argued that institutions are organised by geography, whereas strategic capabilities are organised by function, which opens the way to functional alliances [8].

Canada meets this criterion better than any other non-European partner of the EU, as its resources complement precisely those deficits that the Union has identified as strategic: critical raw materials, energy, investment capital and access to the Arctic. Cooperation already has an institutional foundation that extends beyond trade - the 2025 Security and Defence Partnership and participation in the SAFE instrument as the first non-European state allow it to be expanded within the framework of the existing treaties [9]. The application to join the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, submitted on the day of the address, further suggests that Ottawa views European formats in terms of operational cooperation [10].

The relationship with the Union forms part of Ottawa's broader diversification strategy. Mark Carney distanced himself from the idea of a third bloc competing with the great powers, and in the same Davos speech in which he invoked a community of values, he announced strategic partnerships with China and Qatar [7][8]. For Canada, the Union thus remains a privileged direction, but not the only one. Deepening cooperation with it goes hand in hand with anchoring Canada's territorial security in the North American system and with Carney's consistently reaffirmed commitment to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty [7]. The new transatlanticism therefore covers the economic, technological and defence-industrial domains, leaving security guarantees within the existing alliance framework.

Associate Membership: A Label in Search of a Basis

The proposal made to Ottawa concerns a category alien to EU law. Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union opens membership to European states, while relations with other states rest on association agreements concluded under Article 217 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, used, for instance, in constructing the European Economic Area. In this light, associate membership remains a political label placed on an existing instrument, and giving it the substance its name suggests would require treaty revision, for which a majority is hard to find today [11]. The scope of cooperation discussed in Brussels corresponds to a conservative variant: it covers deeper trade and cooperation in defence, advanced technologies and artificial intelligence, while leaving political rights and the free movement of persons outside its framework [11][12].

Situating the proposal requires comparing it with the spectrum of formulas already available and in use. Full membership remains reserved for European states; the European Economic Area model entails participation in the internal market along with the adoption of the *acquis*; the Swiss variant rests on a network of sectoral agreements; and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area has so far been offered to states with an accession perspective [11][13][14]. The offer to Ottawa lies outside

this typology, as it combines real substance with the absence of both the obligation to adopt the *acquis* and political conditionality.

Member states have long supported closer relations with Canada. A deepened sectoral partnership, however, is something other than the establishment of a new category of belonging, of which governments learned from the text of the speech and which requires a decision by the Council [11][13]. The credibility of the offer is also affected by the state of existing commitments - the free trade agreement with Canada, signed a decade ago, still awaits ratification in ten member states [11]. Ottawa responded to the Commission's new proposal with caution, welcoming the ambition while leaving the question of nomenclature to the European side, since its priorities are market access and industrial cooperation [12]. Donald Trump, by contrast, promptly put a price on it, announcing that he would consider tariffs in response to an EU-Canada association, the introduction of which would undermine last year's trade agreement with the Union [15].

The European Security Council: Institutional Ambition and the Decision-Making Rule

The second proposal carries this movement to the institutional level of the security architecture. The announced leaders' format, with the participation of Canada, Norway, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, would operate alongside an Emergency Security Protocol - a counterpart to Article 4 of the Washington Treaty - allowing a single state to convene the others to coordinate responses to incidents below the threshold of armed aggression [1]. Little is known at this stage, however, about the architecture and remit of the European Security Council; these remain the subject of forthcoming work by the European Commission.

Russia's hybrid campaign has shifted the weight of threats below the threshold that triggers NATO's collective defence mechanisms. The Alliance responds with operational measures: the protection of undersea infrastructure under Baltic Sentry, the multi-domain activity of Eastern Sentry along the eastern flank, and reinforced air policing that intercepts successive drones [16]. What remains open, however, is the political qualification of these actions as a campaign requiring a common response. The threshold for applying Article 5 to hybrid activities remains blurred, and consultations under Article 4 were last convened in September 2025, at the request of Poland and Estonia; subsequent incidents in 2026 were not followed by such a step [17][18].

The Union has a broader toolkit than the Alliance, encompassing sanctions, the regulation of critical infrastructure and cybersecurity, foreign investment screening and the oversight of digital platforms. The question remains, however, whether another leaders' format is the missing link, given that these instruments lie within the remit of existing institutions. Indeed, the idea of a European Security Council has circulated in the debate since the 1980s and has usually foundered on the capitals' reluctance to delegate defence decisions; it was revived in January 2026, during the Greenland crisis [6]. That crisis exposed a gap that the Alliance fills only with difficulty: with consensus-based decision-making and an unpredictable relationship with Washington, NATO remains an institution ill-suited to a situation in which pressure comes from the hegemon itself. The fundamental obstacle, however, lies in the capacity to decide, as evidenced by an admission contained in the address itself. The Commission President acknowledged that member states had remained divided over the war in Gaza and that the measures proposed a year earlier had failed to secure the required majorities:

"When Europe is divided, it cannot change the course of events" [1].

This admission concerns political will rather than procedure: when the capitals' preferences diverge, yet another deliberative format leaves the outcome of the vote unchanged. The war with Iran reveals a second limitation of the planned structure. European security - energy supplies, freedom of navigation, the risk of escalation - was shaped in 2026 outside the area to which the mandate of "continental security" refers, and European responses took the form of sectoral instruments and decisions by individual capitals [19]. The omission of this conflict from the address indicates that an architecture designed for the continent will cover only part of the threats to which the Union is actually exposed.

The Common Foreign and Security Policy rests on unanimity, and Article 31(4) TEU keeps decisions with military or defence implications under that rule, even where the passerelle clause is applied, so that any change would require treaty revision. The durability of this barrier was confirmed by a dispute in the very days the address was delivered: France and Slovakia held up the six-month renewal of the sanctions regime against Russia covering nearly 3,000 individuals and entities [20]. A veto from a founding member state indicates that the problem is structural and that the declared community of values gives way to particular interests. Concepts that circumvent this barrier do appear in the European debate, led by a proposal to establish a council through a separate intergovernmental agreement among a narrow group of states, taking decisions unanimously within its own circle and open to partners from outside the Union. The price of such a solution is nonetheless clear: decisions of a defence nature would be taken outside the treaty order and without the participation of those member states not invited to cooperate, which over time would differentiate the positions of individual capitals within the Union itself [21]. Such a solution would make it possible to bypass decision-making paralysis and to include partners whose presence in the European security architecture is indispensable, while moving defence decisions outside the treaty order. Speed and flexibility would thus come at the cost of differentiating the positions of individual capitals within the Union and the risk of entrenching a division between a decision-making circle and the remaining members, and the assessment of such a trade-off depends on the place a given state would occupy in the new structure.

The scale of resistance to initiatives taken over the heads of the capitals is illustrated by an episode that preceded the address. On 1 September, the High Representative announced the establishment of a high-level group on defence - an advisory body tasked with identifying ways to close capability gaps faster; objections from member states, among them France, Germany and Italy, led to the cancellation of its inauguration on 7 September, before its composition had been announced [22]. The reservations concerned the manner in which the body was set up, having been announced without prior discussion at ministerial level [23]. In the background lies the rivalry between the Commission and the European External Action Service, reflected in Franco-German proposals, put forward in the summer of 2026, to place the service under Commission structures [23]. Member states thus retain control over the pace and form of the institutionalisation of defence policy, which any new leaders' format will have to take into account.

The decision-making rule is, moreover, only one of several constraints on the project. In parallel, a competence dispute with NATO and the risk of duplicating structures are emerging, as are reservations among non-EU allies about an architecture built without their participation [18]. Within the Union itself, the Commission's initiative extends into an area reserved for the European Council and the High Representative, which portends a dispute over who leads the work, while in the European Parliament questions have been raised about the democratic mandate for creating new security formats [13]. Practical constraints add to this: the participation of third states requires

arrangements on the exchange of classified information and on decision-making discipline in a group of variable composition, and the effectiveness of each of these solutions ultimately depends on capabilities that the Union still lacks [24].

Decision-making constraints are compounded by a shortage of procedures and capabilities. The EU's mutual assistance clause under Article 42(7) TEU, worded more strongly than the NATO commitment, has so far been invoked only once, and a manual for its application is only now being drafted, on the basis of the first ambassador-level tabletop exercise since 2022, which tested activation thresholds, available tools and bottlenecks in a hybrid scenario [25]. The material gap is recognised by the Commission itself, which has announced an instrument to finance so-called strategic enablers: air-to-air refuelling, air and missile defence, and military satellites - capabilities that Washington has so far provided to Europe and is now moving to withdraw from the continent [4][24].

Partnership and Enlargement: A Signal to Candidate Countries

The two proposals in the address share a common denominator, however, that deserves attention: they extend the Union's influence to states outside it through partnership rather than membership. Yet the Union's historical strength, including in the security dimension, has been integration. The Union admitted new members and transformed them through accession conditionality, rebuilding candidates' institutions, economies and administrations and binding them durably to the Western political order. The distribution of emphasis in the address itself reflects this shift. Enlargement received a few sentences in the closing section, with references to Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans, an announcement of roadmaps for the most advanced candidates and a reminder of the merit principle, while Ukraine's accession appeared mainly as an element of security policy [1]. Although awareness of the war on the Union's borders permeated the entire speech and justified successive defence initiatives, the accession process itself was described in peacetime terms - as a sequence of technical stages spread over years, measured by progress in legislative work rather than by geopolitical urgency. The rhythm of the negotiations with Ukraine confirms this: the opening of the "Fundamentals" cluster in June and of the external relations cluster in July 2026 shows that the process is moving forward, but at a pace set by procedure, not by the security situation [26][27]. In this framing, enlargement retains the status of an administrative procedure at a time when other areas of the Union's external policy are shifting into crisis-response mode.

The offer made to Canada outlines a path that is in many respects more attractive than the accession route, since access to the most coveted areas of cooperation - trade, defence, technology - proves attainable without the reforms required of candidates. For states that have been in the process for more than a decade, this sends a negative signal, and the Union thereby undermines the achievements of its own enlargement project, founded on the premise that the full benefits flow from full obligations. An important caveat remains: Canada cannot become an EU member under Article 49 TEU and does not seek to, while negotiations with Kyiv and Chişinău are being pursued consistently; the issue is therefore the asymmetry of the offer, not the efforts of the candidates.

The signal this sends to candidates remains ambiguous, even though the Commission stresses that the associate status is addressed to states without a membership perspective [11]. The same label means different things depending on the recipient: for Canada it would mark a new ceiling for the relationship, whereas for Ukraine - which in the spring was offered participation in the work of the institutions without voting rights, together with coverage by the mutual assistance clause - it would mean an intermediate form, rejected by Kyiv and received with reservations by EU member states

[12][28]. The risk of a precedent is recognised in the capitals themselves, as some candidates are signalling readiness to join the Union on less favourable terms in exchange for a faster process, which turns incomplete membership into a real point of reference and weakens the conditionality on which enlargement policy rests [12][14].

Between Drift and Course

The coming months will show whether the chosen direction acquires the tools needed to sustain it. The summit with Canada at the end of October will reveal whether the associate membership label survives its encounter with the positions of the capitals and whether it will be filled with substance going beyond existing formats of cooperation [12]. The Commission must also begin conceptualising the announced European Security Council, its role and its architecture.

The backdrop to both decisions remains the outcome of the US military posture review, which will determine the time horizon available to Europe to fill its capability gaps. The ultimate shape of the new transatlanticism will depend on the Union's own ability to decide whether its partnerships are to serve as a hedge against a further deterioration in relations with the United States, or as the nucleus of an order in which Washington remains one of many points of reference for Europe.

Implications for Poland

For Poland, both initiatives in the address raise a set of questions that Polish European policy will have to answer in the coming months. The starting point remains the position of a frontline state that spends the most on defence in NATO relative to GDP, with a planned level of 4.8 per cent [29], is the largest beneficiary of the EU's SAFE instrument [30], and at the same time bases its territorial security on the American presence. From this position, Warsaw has both the reasons and the arguments to help shape both initiatives from the outset, rather than responding to solutions agreed without its participation.

The Commission directs its offer of associate membership to states without a prospect of conventional membership [11], yet some European states are already signalling readiness to accept similar forms of intermediate membership on less favourable terms in exchange for a faster process [14], which could turn this formula into the end point of their path to the Union. Poland, which has long helped shape the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policy, has rejected the prospect of fast-track membership for Ukraine [31], advocating an enlargement based on full conditionality, which is the source of its strength. It is therefore in Poland's interest to support deeper EU-Canada relations while ensuring that no new category of belonging emerges that could subsequently be offered to Ukraine in place of membership. The safest solution would be to base the offer to Ottawa on an association agreement concluded under Article 217 TFEU and to link it explicitly to the addressee's lack of an accession perspective, so that associate membership cannot be perceived as an alternative to accession. The security situation also demands this, as leaving candidates in the east of the continent suspended between partnership and membership would help entrench a grey zone exploited by Russia. Support for rapprochement with Ottawa should also be translated into concrete undertakings. Canada already participates in SAFE, leads a NATO multinational brigade in Latvia and possesses raw materials and capital that the European defence industry lacks, which opens space for joint industrial and military projects on the eastern flank in which Polish companies could take part as partners rather than merely as recipients.

The same logic applies to the planned Security Council, which from a Polish perspective should complement the Alliance. As one of the states with the greatest military potential in Europe, Poland would likely be among its members [21]. This does not mean, however, that it will be granted a seat automatically. Poland should therefore take part in the Commission's conceptual work from the outset, before the Council's composition and *modus operandi* are agreed by the largest capitals, since it is at this stage that it will be decided whether the eastern flank states become co-authors of the new structure or merely its participants. Warsaw is also consistently seeking to consolidate the American presence, and the day after the address Donald Trump announced progress in talks on establishing a permanent US Army base in Poland [32]. The mechanism that the European Emergency Security Protocol would mirror already works within NATO, as demonstrated by the Article 4 consultations convened in September 2025 at Poland's request [17]. Hybrid activities, moreover, fall within collective defence, since allies acknowledged as early as the 2016 Warsaw Summit that they may provide grounds for invoking Article 5 [33]. A Council conceived as a parallel structure could compete with allied consultations for the capitals' political attention and be read in Washington as a signal of substitution [18]. During the US review of its military presence in Europe, this would run counter to Polish interests. For the same reasons, Warsaw should seek to ensure that the protocol complements rather than replaces allied consultations and covers, above all, areas in which the Union has broader tools than NATO, namely responses to hybrid activities and the protection of critical infrastructure, from undersea connections to energy and transport networks.

All these issues are intertwined with the competence dispute between the Commission and the European External Action Service, which the September episode with the high-level group brought into view [22][23]. Strengthening the Commission accelerates action in the industrial and financial domains from which Poland benefits, while in foreign policy it may shift the centre of gravity towards the largest member states. The resolution of this dispute will determine how decisions on the security of the eastern flank are made, which obliges Warsaw to take a position on it.

Sources

- [1] European Commission. "State of the Union Address 2026 by President Ursula von der Leyen." Strasbourg, 16 September 2026. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0e4622b7-6970-49c5-a4d8-0f803e1717f5_en?file_name=State%20of%20the%20Union%202026%20-%20Multilingual%20address.pdf.
- [2] Lindsay, James M. "The U.S.–Canada Trade War Could Mark a Breaking Point." Council on Foreign Relations, September 2026. <https://www.cfr.org/articles/the-u-s-canada-trade-war-could-mark-a-breaking-point>.
- [3] "Canada to Become First Associate Member of the EU." Euronews, 16 September 2026. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/09/16/canada-to-become-first-associate-member-of-the-eu>.
- [4] Edelman, Eric, Franklin C. Miller, Walter B. Slocombe. "The Crumbling Defense of Europe." Foreign Affairs, 15 September 2026. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/crumbling-defense-europe>.
- [5] Marshall, Andrew R. C., John Shiffman, Phil Stewart, Humeyra Pamuk, Luiza Ilie, Victoria Waldersee. "Trump's Pressure on NATO Is Reshaping Europe's Defenses. Will It Break the Alliance?" Reuters Special Report, 17 September 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/trumps-pressure-nato-is-reshaping-europes-defenses-will-it-break-alliance-2026-09-17/>.
- [6] Jack, Victor, Jacopo Barigazzi. "Greenland Crisis Revives Calls for European 'Security Council'." Politico Europe, 19 January 2026. <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-greenland-crisis-revives-calls-for-european-security-council/>.
- [7] Prime Minister of Canada. "'Principled and Pragmatic: Canada's Path' – Prime Minister Carney Addresses the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting." Davos, 20 January 2026. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2026/01/20/principled-and-pragmatic-canadas-path-prime-minister-carney-addresses>.
- [8] Prime Minister of Canada. "Prime Minister Carney Delivers an Address to the European Parliament." Strasbourg, 17 September 2026. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2026/09/17/prime-minister-carney-delivers-address-european-parliament>.
- [9] Council of the European Union. "SAFE: Council Concludes Agreement with Canada." 15 June 2026. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/15/safe-council-concludes-agreement-with-canada/>.
- [10] Neubert, Kjeld. "Canada Applies to Join Europe-Led Military Partnership for Northern Seas." Euractiv, 17 September 2026.

<https://www.euractiv.com/news/canada-applies-to-join-europe-led-military-partnership-for-northern-seas/>.

[11] Starcevic, Sebastian, Max Grier. "EU Blindsided by von der Leyen's Canada 'Associate Member' Pitch." Politico Europe, 16 September 2026.
<https://www.politico.eu/article/ursula-von-der-leyen-blindsided-eu-canada-associate-member-pitch/>.

[12] Foy, Henry, Andy Bounds. "Why Mark Carney's Romance with Europe Can Only Go So Far." Financial Times, 17 September 2026.
<https://www.ft.com/content/7b1a00f1-6842-4f5e-ace4-d6a57e98b21e>.

[13] Gavin, Gabriel. "EU Capitals Caught Off Guard as von der Leyen Announces 'Associate Membership' for Canada." Politico Europe, 16 September 2026.
<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-capitals-mark-carney-ursula-von-der-leyen-associate-membership-canada/>.

[14] Ionta, Nicoletta, Magnus Lund Nielsen, Eddy Wax. "Offer to Ottawa Opens EU Enlargement Can of Worms." Euractiv, 17 September 2026.
<https://www.euractiv.com/news/offer-to-ottawa-opens-enlargement-can-of-worms/>.

[15] Mackinnon, Amy, Aime Williams. "Donald Trump Suggests EU–Canada Associate Member Deal Would Be 'Hostile Act'." Financial Times, 17 September 2026.
<https://www.ft.com/content/7b0f8f90-b3ad-4640-916a-f8b5495920a3>.

[16] NATO. "Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank." 2026.
<https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/deterrence-and-defence/strengthening-natos-eastern-flank>.

[17] NATO. "The Consultation Process and Article 4." 2026.
<https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/introduction-to-nato/the-consultation-process-and-article-4>.

[18] Jack, Victor, Max Grier. "New EU Security Proposals Risk Fresh Turf War with NATO." Politico Europe, 16 September 2026.
<https://www.politico.eu/article/ursula-von-der-leyen-eu-nato-turf-war/>.

[19] "European Leaders Reject Military Involvement in Strait of Hormuz." Al Jazeera, 16 March 2026.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/3/16/eu-leaders-reject-military-involvement-in-strait-of-hormuz-amid-war-on-iran>.

[20] "French-Slovak Veto Deepens EU Deadlock on Russia Sanctions Renewal." Euronews, 14 September 2026.
<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/09/14/french-slovak-veto-deepens-eu-deadlock-on-russia-sanctions-renewal>.

[21] "Becoming Sovereign: A Proposal for the Establishment of a European Security Council. Blueprint, Legal Basis, and Considerations." May 2026.
<https://lagodinsky.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/European-Security-Council.pdf>.

[22] "EU Diplomatic Service Scraps New High-Level Defence Group amid Pressure from Member States." Euronews, 7 September 2026.
<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/09/07/eu-diplomatic-service-scraps-new-high-level-defence-group-amid-pressure-from-member-states>.

[23] "Kaja Kallas under Fire from EU Capitals When She Needs Them Most." Euronews, 9 September 2026.
<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/09/09/kaja-kallas-under-fire-from-eu-capitals-when-she-needs-them-most>.

[24] Foy, Henry. "Von der Leyen Advances EU Defence Pitch with Army of New Ideas." Financial Times, Europe Express, 17 September 2026.
<https://www.ft.com/content/5d1dba1a-db81-464d-b2d0-9e0741010560>.

[25] Cohen, Charles. "EU Tests Its Mutual Assistance Clause in First Administrative Drill since 2022." Euractiv, 5 May 2026.
<https://www.euractiv.com/news/eu-test-its-mutual-defence-clause-in-first-administrative-drill-since-2022/>.

[26] Council of the European Union. "EU and Ukraine Open First Accession Negotiations Cluster." 15 June 2026.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/15/eu-and-ukraine-open-first-accession-negotiations-cluster/>.

[27] Council of the European Union. "Enlargement: EU Opens Accession Negotiations with Ukraine on External Relations Policies." 14 July 2026.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/07/14/enlargement-eu-opens-accession-negotiations-with-ukraine-on-external-relations-policies/>.

[28] "Merz's Plan of Associate EU Membership for Ukraine Gets Mixed Reception." Euronews, 21 May 2026.
<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/05/21/merzs-plan-of-associate-eu-membership-for-ukraine-gets-mixed-reception>.

[29] "Poland Plans Record Defence Spending of 4.8% GDP in 2026 Budget." Notes from Poland, 29 August 2025.
<https://notesfrompoland.com/2025/08/29/poland-plans-record-defence-spending-of-4-8-gdp-in-2026-budget-along-with-lower-deficit/>.

[30] European Commission, DG Defence Industry and Space. "Poland Receives First €6.6 Billion Payment under SAFE." 29 May 2026.
https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/poland-receives-first-eu66-billion-payment-under-safe-2026-05-29_en.

[31] Sonko, Alona. "Poland Rejects Fast-Track EU Membership for Ukraine." NV (The New Voice of Ukraine), 16 April 2026.
<https://english.nv.ua/nation/sikorski-opposes-fast-track-eu-entry-for-ukraine-50600602.html>.

[32] Vandiver, John. "Trump Touts Plan for New Poland Base as Pentagon Weighs Europe Troop Cuts." Stars and Stripes, 18 September 2026. <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2026-09-18/trump-poland-base-europe-troop-cuts-22887147.html>.

[33] NATO. "Warsaw Summit Communiqué." Warsaw, 9 July 2016, para. 72. <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2016/07/09/warsaw-summit-communicue>.