

London summit: Show of unity or growing transatlantic rifts?

ANALYSIS The London summit, which was held on March 2 with the participation of leaders from Europe, NATO, and Ukraine, once again brought out the growing disagreements between Europe and the United States over supporting Ukraine. The meeting, which focused on continuing military and financial aid to Kyiv, also set the stage for new tensions in transatlantic relations. The London summit, hosted by the UK, included 18 European countries as well as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. During the meeting, the emphasis was put on continuing support for Ukraine, with European countries pledging new packages of military and economic aid. However, the meeting took place without a representative from the United States, which itself highlights the deep divide between Europe's approach and the new policies of the White House under the leadership of Donald Trump. The summit had some key points, including Europe's emphasis on strong support for Ukraine and the formulation of long-term security guarantees, an increase in Europe's defense budget and a reduction in dependence on the United States, differing views on how to deal with Russia, and the absence of an American representative and concerns over Washington's reduced support for NATO and Ukraine.

Key statements by European officials

Donald Tusk, the prime minister of Poland, at the London summit, stressed that "the West has no intention of capitulating" before Russia and warned that any retreat in the face of Moscow could lead to the weakening of Europe's overall security. He added, "Everything must be done to ensure that Europe and the United States speak with one voice." Tusk also clarified that Ukraine needs ongoing support and a strong position before negotiating with Russia, and any peace must be based on conditions that guarantee Ukraine's long-term security.

Viktor Orbán, the prime minister of Hungary, contrary to many European leaders, expressed concern over the continuation of the war in Ukraine and described the London summit as "dangerous". He stated that "European leaders decided in London today that they want to go on with the war instead of opting for peace," and he considered this move a mistake. The Hungarian PM emphasized that his country is in favor of peace negotiations and seeks a solution to quickly end the war without continuing military conflicts.

Mark Rutte, NATO secretary-general, announced at the London summit that some European countries have drawn up plans to increase defense spending and described this as "very good news". He said, "Europe must take more responsibility for its own security."

In response to concerns about reduced American support for Ukraine, the NATO secretary-general clarified that "Washington remains committed to NATO," but European countries must act more independently in developing their defense capabilities.

Due to necessity or American pressure?
One of the key outcomes of the



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (from 3rd R) and other leaders participating in the London Summit on Ukraine leave the stage after taking a group photo on March 2, 2025.
● EPA

London summit was the emphasis by European countries on increasing defense budgets and beefing up the military. NATO secretary-general announced plans to increase military spending, and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, called for rapid European rearmament.

Why has Europe turned to increasing defense spending? The reasons for the shift towards higher defense spending can be found in three main issues.

1. Trump's pressure: The US president has repeatedly asked NATO members to contribute more to military spending.

2. Concerns over NATO's future: With escalating disagreements, Europe is worried that America might back out of its commitments to NATO.

3. The Russian threat: Europe does not want to remain defense-

less against Moscow without American support, hence it is moving towards strengthening its own forces. However, the increase in military spending will put significant economic pressure on European countries, and some, like Hungary, strongly oppose it.

Divide deeper than ever
After the tense meeting between Trump and Zelenskyy at the White House, it became clear that the White House is looking to reduce support for Ukraine and focus on negotiations with Russia. In contrast, Europe still emphasizes the continuation of the war and pressure on the Kremlin. However, the main disagreements between Europe and America can be explored in three issues.

1. Financial and military support for Ukraine: Trump has spoken

out about reducing American aid to Ukraine, while Europe wants to increase support.

2. NATO's role: Europe is concerned that Washington might reduce its role in NATO and weaken the alliance.

3. The path to peace: Trump is seeking a quick agreement with Russia, but Europe is worried about an imposed and unstable peace.

At the London summit, European leaders tried to send a strong message to Washington that they do not intend to leave Ukraine alone, but the absence of America at this meeting has made the future of transatlantic cooperation even more uncertain.

Europe inching toward strategic independence?
One of the outcomes of the London summit was the emphasis on Europe's security indepen-

dence and reducing dependence on America. France and Germany proposed strengthening military cooperation and even sharing nuclear weapons, but this issue still faces opposition. Europe's military independence faces challenges, including the need for massive investments, the traditional dependence of European countries on American military support, and differing views among European countries on the future path of defense. However, the London summit showed that Europe is moving towards a more independent role in global security, even if this process is slow.

Future of Europe-America relations
The London summit, instead of strengthening the alliance between Europe and America, emphasized the existing divides. While Europe is trying to play a more prominent role in the Ukraine crisis, America is distancing itself from its traditional commitments. Therefore, after this meeting, several scenarios could unfold.

1. Strengthening Europe's military independence: If Europe can deliver on its promises, we might see a more Europe-centric NATO.

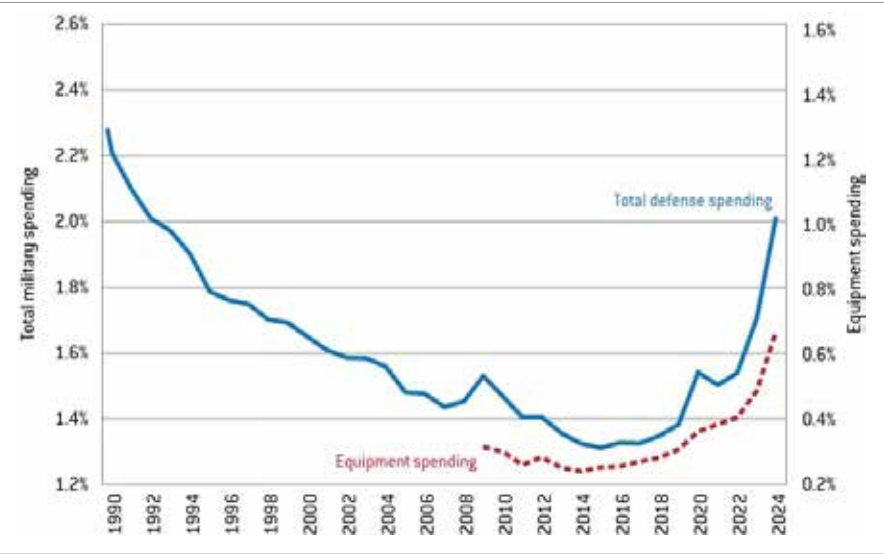
2. America's return to its commitments: If pressure on Washington increases, the White House might continue its support for Ukraine.

3. Escalation of disagreements and weakening of NATO: If tensions continue, NATO might face structural changes or even a survival crisis. Ultimately, the London summit showed that the future of transatlantic relations is more uncertain than ever, and the Ukraine crisis is just one of the factors intensifying this divide.

The article first appeared in Persian on Tasnim.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (R) speaks with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as the latter arrives for a summit on Ukraine at Lancaster House in London on March 2, 2025.
● CHRISTOPHE ENA/POOL



The chart shows the defense spending of the 27 members of the EU from 1989 to 2024 as a percentage of GDP.
● bruegel.org

At the London summit, European leaders tried to send a strong message to Washington that they do not intend to leave Ukraine alone, but the absence of America at this meeting has made the future of transatlantic cooperation even more uncertain.