

Reasons for Europe's abstention from participation in war against Iran

PERSPECTIVE

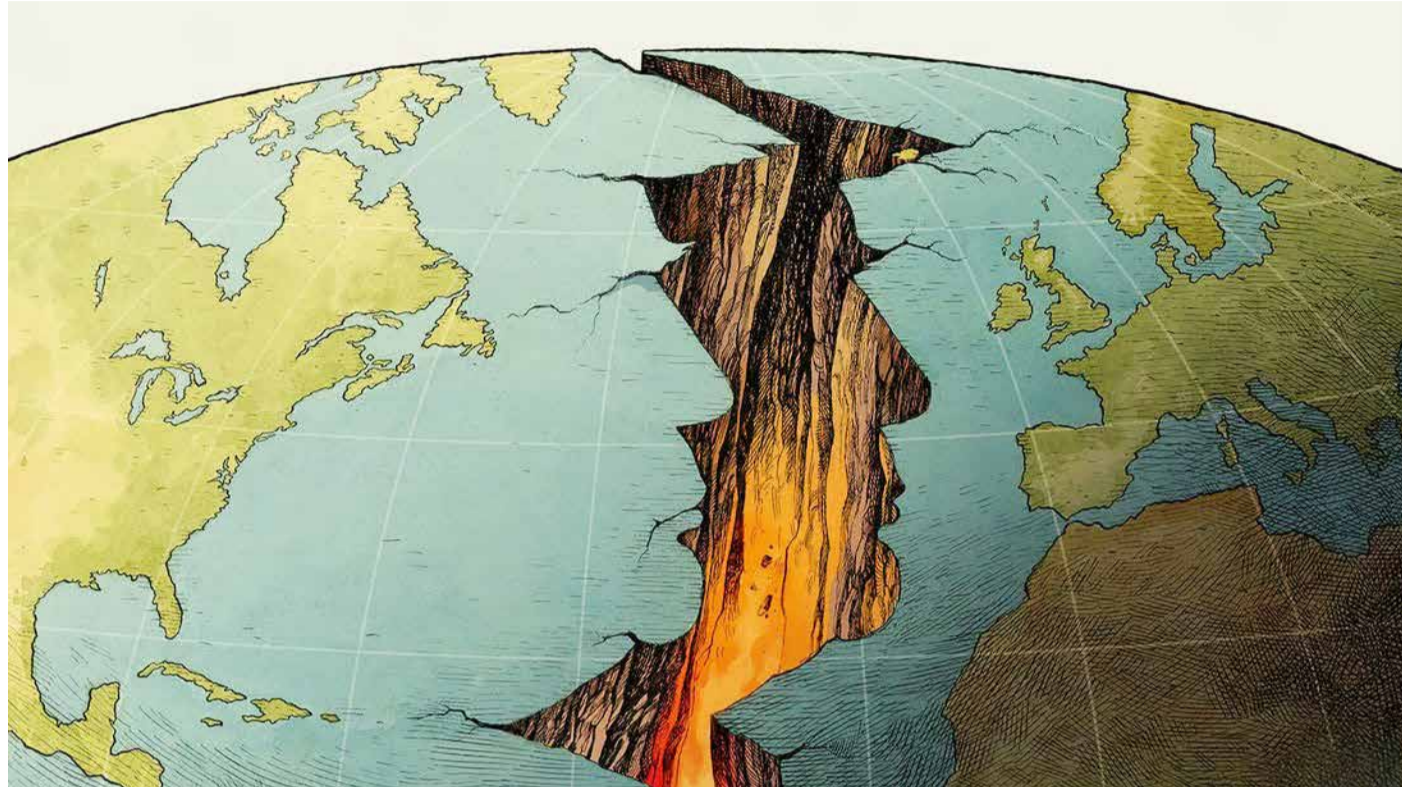
Europe's abstention from participation in the war against Iran constitutes a reflection of a profound metamorphosis within the continent's strategic, juridical, and security-related calculations. An ensemble of interconnected factors has precipitated this unprecedented posture, which shall be elucidated forthwith:

• The crisis of juridical legitimacy and the United Nations Charter

The primary factor resides in the absence of juridical legitimacy for the conflict. Europe, professing its commitment to a "rules-based international order," evaluated the military operations undertaken by the United States and the Zionist regime as devoid of legal grounds within the framework of the United Nations Charter. From the perspective of numerous European jurists, these actions exemplify an "aggressive war" for they possessed neither authorization from the Security Council nor could they be convincingly justified under the rubric of self-defense. For powers such as France and Great Britain, participation in such a conflict would signify the erosion of international credibility and the calling into question of those principles for which they had long served as advocates.

• The ominous shadow of the Greenland crisis over Transatlantic relations

At a more profound level, this abstention originates from a fissure that culminated subsequent to the Greenland Crisis. Washington's endeavor to exert pressure upon Denmark, coupled with threats of commercial reprisals against Europe, fortified the perception that the geopolitical competition under Trump's America encompasses not merely rivals but also encompasses allies. Within such an atmosphere, Washington's entreaty for accompaniment in the war was interpreted not as a collective security imperative but rather as a continuation of that same unilateralist approach.



● DAVID PARKINS/THE ECONOMIST

• Economic calculations and energy security

Europe is profoundly dependent upon the stability of the Persian Gulf, and any perturbation within this region directly precipitates an escalation in energy prices and exerts pressure upon domestic economies. The surge in petroleum prices, alongside the threat of a closure of the Strait of Hormuz, sounded the alarm regarding economic instability and social dissatisfaction. Furthermore, apprehension concerning disruptions to the supply chain of indispensable commodities — including chemical fertilizers — extended the crisis beyond energy into the realm of food security. Under such circumstances, Europe preferred that, if it could not play a stabilizing role, it would, at minimum, refrain from exacerbating the crisis.

• The strategic priority of the Eastern front and the Russian threat

From a geopolitical perspective, Europe's strategic concentration remains upon the Russian

threat. While the war in Ukraine persists and anxieties regarding the expansion of Moscow's influence endure, involvement in a novel conflict within the Middle East is perceived as a diversion of resources and a weakening of defensive capacity. Numerous European governments are concerned that such an action would, in practical terms, afford Russia a greater opportunity to attain the upper hand on the Eastern Front. This concern intensified when certain decisions emanating from Washington — including the reduction of pressure upon Russia's energy market — ultimately worked to Russia's advantage.

• Madrid's resistance and European solidarity

The resolute stance of Spain, alongside the European Union's endorsement thereof, transformed into the principal emblem of European resistance against this war. Pedro Sánchez, with the slogan "No to War," characterized the attacks as "unjustifiable" and "dangerous," and refused to authorize the utilization

of his nation's territory for these operations. This resistance, in turn, emboldened other countries to adopt a more autonomous posture.

• The marginalization of Europe within the decision-making process

One complementary factor is Europe's dissatisfaction with its exclusion from major decision-making processes concerning Iran during the Trump administration. The Trump administration, regarding the Iranian dossier, neither involved Europeans in pre-war negotiations nor consulted with European allies on the eve of the war, effectively pushing Europe's role to the periphery. This approach markedly diminished the inclination of European states to participate in a conflict over whose formation they had exercised no influence.

• Dread of a refugee wave and social instability

Domestic and social factors also exercise a vital influence upon this decision. The experience of the refugee crisis in 2015 remains

vivid within Europe's political memory. The prospect of a new, and far more extensive, deluge of displaced persons could imperil the social and political stability of numerous European countries and furnish fertile ground for the reinforcement of extremist movements. Consequently, abstention from fomenting a war whose humanitarian repercussions would directly confront Europe transformed into a strategic priority. In summation, Europe's abstention from participation in this war does not emanate from an idealistic posture but rather is a pragmatic calculation, wherein the costs of entering the conflict were appraised as far exceeding its prospective benefits. As a result, Europe elected to distance itself from involvement in a crisis that could have intensified its domestic and international difficulties, prioritizing diplomacy and the preservation of stability.

The article was first published by the Abrar Moaser Tehran International Research Institute.



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Ready or not — Europe's post-American future has arrived



By Joschka Fischer
Germany's former
foreign minister and
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OPINION

What will Europe be like without a US military and political presence? Europeans had better start preparing themselves for this eventuality because there is no longer any doubt that US President Donald Trump wants to end the North Atlantic alliance and is well on his way to doing so.

The only remaining question is whether he will formally withdraw the United States from NATO, or simply hollow it out through neglect and contempt. Either way, the alliance's dissolution has already begun. Ar-

rangements as long-standing and as tested as NATO usually do not collapse in a single day or through a single act. Rather, they erode as trust in their defining commitments — namely, mutual defense — diminishes. That is precisely what has been happening during Trump's second presidency, especially now that Europeans have refrained from joining his disastrous war of choice in the Middle East. Meanwhile, despite the Republican Party's supposed dedication to maintaining a strong US defense, no major figure in the party has called Trump out on the irreversible damage he has done.

Throughout the Cold War and the period following it, America's presence in Europe was the decisive factor in European se-

curity and internal stability. The US underwrote the peace and prosperity that allowed for economic integration and, ultimately, the creation of the European Union. But Trump and his MAGA movement could not care less about this history. For scarcely coherent reasons, they harbor deep hostilities toward the EU and are bent on dragging Europe back to the age of self-destructive nationalism.

It is a dangerously misguided objective, given that success would ultimately leave America itself much weaker and more isolated. But such arguments have no purchase on Trump. Following the electoral defeat of his illiberal ally in Hungary, Viktor Orbán, he will be even more inclined to leave Europeans to their own devices.

For the first time in eight decades, Europe will find itself on its own. Europeans will need to decide their own fate and take responsibility for their own security. This might sound like a banal observation, if not for Europe's uniquely bloody history. The US withdrawal from the European theater after World War I set the stage for Hitler's rise and, eventually, World War II. Had the world's premier military and economic power remained during the interwar years, German revanchism would have been a non-starter.

That was the lesson that the WWII generation drew from the war and applied in its aftermath. US President Harry S. Truman maintained a strong US presence in Europe, not only to

