

# An Emerging International Partnership Is Succeeding

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**By incorporating Ukraine and other like-minded states from the Middle East and Asia, the G7 Summit highlighted the net progress made on countering Iranian, Russian, and Chinese threats to the American-led global security and economic system.**

**T**he week of 15 June saw an important international event, the G7 Summit in France, albeit overshadowed by the World Cup, the New York Knicks basketball victory in America, and the drama around the Iran ceasefire. Beyond the headlines and news clips, however, this meeting carries far more long-term significance.

First, it saw a gathering not only of the G7, but other key members of what could be called an international “Partnership,” characterised by security alliance with the US, integration into the global trade and financial system, and regional significance, including South Korea and Ukraine, as well as Arab states Egypt, the UAE and Qatar.

This partnership looks to be replacing the geographically and culturally limited “West” as the expression of this loose but dominant global assembly of nations. And this coalition of states was there for a specific purpose: to signal support for the American-led global security and economic system and to signal their willingness to confront the military challenges to Eurasia, specifically Russia and Iran, involved in hot wars for dominance respectively in Europe and the Middle East. The **final communique (<https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-statement-on-geopolitical-issues>)** (“unwavering support for Ukraine;” “prevent Iran from acquiring any nuclear weapon;” “reaffirm our opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo...across the Taiwan Strait”) makes this explicit.

Those present also decided on various trade and economic steps towards China, the third major outside threat, posing trade and technological challenges, but also potentially military ones, to Eurasia. And it appears that this

coalition of states is winning on all fronts against these myriad threats.

This would have been surprising a few months ago. Media, polling, elections and academic analysis over the past few years leave the impression of an American-led international collective security community split by internal divisions and public frustration, and incapable of meeting outside security threats. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Iran and Iranian proxy assault on the Middle East have raised critical questions about the partnership's ability to defend itself, as China eyes action against Taiwan and in the South China Sea. This was exacerbated by economic weakness in many alliance states, deep ideological divisions between nationalist conservatives and progressive internationalists in North America and Western Europe, and the particular divisiveness President Trump brings to the international order, which his country informally has long led.

Nevertheless, the situation in mid-2026 is far better than most discussion and analysis would indicate. This alliance has mostly held together in the face of these challenges, including the disruptive impact of Trump's two presidential terms.

## Enemies Weakened

**M**ost important has been the response to the two major military challenges since 2022. The significance of Russia's assault on Ukraine, and Iranian proxies, soon joined by Iran, combating Israel but later various other states in the region, Europe and the United States, cannot be overstated. Both Moscow and Tehran have been waging "grey zone" conflicts, Russia first in 2008 in Georgia, then in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, Syria and Libya, and Iran from 2000 on throughout the region, usually through proxies, taking advantage of internal conflicts in Gaza, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon to advance its and its proxies' interests.

Russia's attack on Ukraine was a breakthrough to world disorder. Since World War II, major states, while they have been involved in conflicts from colonial struggles to internal wars such as Korea, Vietnam and repeatedly Afghanistan, have avoided aggression to overthrow entire states, such as seen in the run-up to World War II with Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. But Russia's obvious effort in 2022 to blot out Ukraine and annex its territory and people—clear aggression by one of the world's major nuclear and Security Council permanent member states—threw Eurasia into crisis.

Likewise, the October 7 2023 Hamas attack on Israel went beyond minor rocket barrages, terrorist attacks and brief firefights to seize part of Israel, and was soon joined by all other Iranian proxies and by 2024 Iran itself in two major ballistic missile barrages. The fighting eventually spread through much of the region, including ground campaigns in Gaza, then Lebanon, finally Syria, an air-sea war with the US, Houthis and at times European navies off the coast of Yemen, and finally in 2025 and 2026 American-Israeli bombing campaigns against Iran and Iranian retaliation. This represented an Iranian bid for regional control not seen since Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

But by the G7 Summit, it had become clear that the various nations within the partnership had held off both Russia and Iran. Russia has been literally stopped on the ground in Ukraine this past year, and Ukrainian drone strikes deep into Russia have targeted Russian energy effectively. The war has become a stalemate due not only to Zelensky's leadership and the courage and skill of the Ukrainian people, but also to financial, military, and intelligence support from Europe, Turkiye, and the United States.

While President Trump stopped direct financial support, the United States has continued providing critical targeting intelligence, weapons deliveries to Kyiv and NATO partners (delayed to some degree because of the Iran campaign), and signed up in the G7 statement to powerful sanctions on Russia. As a result, over the past several months, Putin has begun calling for direct talks with Europe about the war's outcome.

While the MOU implementing the ceasefire in the Iran conflict cannot be considered a total defeat for Iran, given the sanctions relief and other financial transfers offered, the entire three-year conflict since 2023 leaves Iran seriously

weakened. Hamas has been all but destroyed, the Houthis and Iraqi militias sat out the most recent campaign against Iran, and the only proxy that engaged, Hezbollah, was decisively defeated by Israel and driven out of the south. Lebanon is now negotiating directly with Israel. And in Iraq, politicians, under US pressure, rejected the two most pro-Iranian prime ministerial candidates and selected Ali al-Zaidi, who has stressed cooperation with Washington.

As for Iran itself, much of its military hardware and industrial capacity has been destroyed. Its missile and drone barrages did almost no damage to Israel, and only moderate damage to Gulf states, who impressively intercepted the large majority. While Iran's closure of the Straits shot up global energy prices and crippled GCC state economies, the overall global energy impact was much smaller than during the 1974 and subsequent oil cutoffs. Iran itself, once Washington imposed a blockage on shipments to and from Iran, also suffered significantly.

The impact of this relative success by the partnership is not lost on China. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines are all increasing defence expenditures and coordinating better together for a first island chain defence, supported strongly by the United States. Moreover, Russia's failed offensive in Ukraine and the extraordinary tactical success of American arms (if not always American strategy) in the Iran conflict are important cautionary lessons for Beijing.

To be sure, the Iran Memorandum of Understanding could still fail, and with it any return to normalcy. And no one knows how brittle the Ukrainian people and combat forces are after four years of ferocious attack, so a sudden collapse cannot be ruled out (likewise with Russia, if less likely). And Putin could, if facing failure, escalate by attacks on NATO states if he assumes Trump would not rapidly and effectively respond. Nonetheless, the smart money should stay with the assumption that Russia's and Iran's violent challenges to the world order will further fade.

More generally, the partnership's economic health remains strong. Buoyed by an extraordinarily creative American high-tech sector, the total GDP of North America, Europe, Turkiye, the Arab states, and the East Asia rim is about half of global GDP, and it contains most of the world's hydrocarbons. That of the adversary coalition, China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, is less than half that. The large rich nations of the South, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, India, and Indonesia have no organising principle, common values or linked institutions to form a coherent diplomatic-economic bloc.

## Unity Challenges

**T**he main challenge to this informal international partnership in the months ahead is not outside threat but internal disunity. Arab states are somewhat divided on approaches to both their adversary, Iran, but also their informal ally, Israel, as long as it continues its oppressive policies in the West Bank.

Europe faces populist uprisings over immigration policy, aggressive measures to address climate change and social welfare due to poor economic performance. At the same time, it faces an ideological challenge from a US currently governed by people who sympathise with that European populist upsurge.

The United States, Europe, and East Asian states are trying to curb China's mercantilist exploitation of trade relations while, at least in the short term, maintaining highly profitable economic relations with Beijing. This challenge is most evident in the US, not only as the partnership's most powerful member but also as its informal leader for eight decades.

Furthermore, the Trump administration's condescending treatment of partners and allies, its stressing of limits to its security guarantees, and some of its actions have infuriated leaders and populations and called into question basic assumptions about American reliability. But these are all tactical; Trump has not done anything serious to the US military posture that undergirds its collective security system and thus the core of the partnership. With his repeated use of force, he reassures through his actions while simultaneously questioning basic relationships and

behaviours, as in the Greenland issue.

More serious, however, is the possibility that future American leaders will heed calls from both the political left and right to abandon America's strategic global role since the 1940's. Working to avoid this will be the biggest task for this international partnership in the years ahead.

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