



**NEW
STRATEGIC
CONCEPT**



EU DEFENSE INDUSTRY CORRUPTION AMID THE UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

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Various narrations and interpretations have characterized the conflict in Ukraine. While some view it as a proxy war involving NATO and Russia, solely labeling the conflict in this way oversimplifies its complexities and overlooks the economic interests that have fueled the conflict.

The situation involves a wide range of players with diverse motivations. Overall, the conflict in Ukraine intersects with various economic, political, and strategic interests, both domestically and internationally. Understanding the financial interests is essential for comprehensively analyzing the drivers and dynamics of the conflict and its broader implications.



Significant financial interests are involved in the Ukraine conflict, both domestically and internationally. Some key aspects of the economic interests tied to the conflict are as follows:

1. **Arms Industry:** The conflict in Ukraine has led to an increased demand for arms and military equipment. Arms manufacturers and defense contractors stand to benefit from supplying weapons, ammunition, and other military hardware. This includes companies from various countries, including the United States, European Union member states, and Russia.
2. **Resource Extraction:** Ukraine is rich in natural resources, including coal, iron ore, natural gas, and agricultural products. Control over these resources, particularly in the conflict-affected regions of Eastern Ukraine, can have significant economic implications for various stakeholders, including government entities, private companies, and individuals.
3. **Financial Assistance and Aid:** International financial institutions, donor countries, and humanitarian organizations finance Ukraine, mostly with tax money. However, providing aid and assistance can also serve the interests of donor countries and their armament industry.

Disregarding war rhetoric and media propaganda, every tax-paying EU and US citizen asks themselves the following question: do elites and arms industry groups in the US and the EU lobby for aid to Ukraine due to the direct link between this aid and their profits and investments?

According to our new research, there is a perceived correlation between aid to Ukraine, the escalation of conflict, and the subsequent growth of profits and investments for these groups. The arms industry benefits from the systemic integration into political structures

and sees aid to Ukraine and the conflict itself as opportunities to monetize on a significant scale.

Our research shows that European political decisions reflect the struggle between elite groups, NGOs, and the US arms sector over the influence of defense decision-making and militarization. The influence of political figures, financial institutions, and NGOs runs through offshore schemes of arms shipments transiting across Ukraine. In particular, the involvement of NGOs and European Commission members in arms shipments through Ukraine, along with their political ties, raises questions about possible corruption and conflicts of interest.

There is a clear correlation between the monetization of aid and war escalation risks by arms makers, particularly US giants like BlackRock, J.P. Morgan, and Carlyle Group, along with defense industry leaders such as Carlyle Group, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and General Dynamics.

France, represented by Dassault and Thales, aims to increase European defense spending and integration. The UK's BAE Systems competes in European markets with US giants like Boeing, while investment alliances influence European politics and arms deals.

On the other side, Germany is the primary arena where defense industry giants vie for dominance in the European rearmament market. Additionally, it emphasizes the close ties between the United States and Great Britain, facilitated by members of the Christian Democratic Union and the left parties like SPD and Greens. These ties are evidenced by their promotion of narratives centered on threats and the arms race, which align with the interests of business groups.

Our new report portrays a complex web of political and economic interests shaping the EU-Ukraine relationship and the broader militarization landscape, with implications for global conflicts and arms trade.

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Summary

Our probe shows that elites and arms industry groups in the U.S. and the EU are deliberately and consistently lobbying for aid to Ukraine as there is a direct relation between such aid and the growth of profits and investments. The strategic role of the defense industry in the European economy, the priority of investments in the defense sector and the consolidation of the armed forces of the EU member states all come from the media alarmism of the escalation in the Ukrainian conflict and the growing Russian threat. Aid to Ukraine, just like the war itself and related escalation risks are being monetized on a whopping scale by arms makers, who benefit from the systemic integration into political structures. According to the IMF forecast, the financials for the five-year period from 2021 to 2026 promise a yield of \$150 billion, or 37%, amid developed economies growing twice as slow[1].

U.S. giants are the biggest beneficiaries of the Ukrainian conflict reaping rewards either in the form of European contracts and the expansion of their assets acquired in Ukraine at reduced prices, or in the form of seizing pledged government enterprises and new defense contracts. These include BlackRock, J.P. Morgan and Carlyle Group and other elites representing the flagships of the U.S. defense industry — Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics, and others. The Bush, Clinton, Pritzker and Rockefeller families with a close circle of high-ranking officials, mainly from the U.S. Democratic Party and NATO leaders, are their most prominent mouthpieces in the U.S. political landscape.

The political decisions made in Europe, which heralded the separation of the European defense industry from U.S. influence, are reflected in the rising confrontation between elites and the foreign policy tensions in the defense decision-making process. The first group is united by the interests of the Rothschild family, having a multilateral influence on the French defense sector and the largest representation in the EU establishment. The competing group is made up of the U.S. arms sector backed by Rockefeller investment capital, which exercises decisive yet secretive influence over EU political decisions. Both groups are united in militarizing the EU and restructuring the economic model towards social capitalism (Degrowth). The European Policy Center, a lobbying think tank linked to the lobbying entities of Ukrainian oligarch Akhmetov, sets out the strategic track for these processes.

The Monteton brothers, a German blue-blooded family with representation in the U.S. global and French elites, keep a balance between polar interests. Germany is the main battleground for defense giants fighting for the European rearmament market. The U.S.-British ties fostered by members of the Christian Democratic Union and the European People's Party, which, with the approval of Scholz's team, promoted threat and arms race narratives during the country's crisis, demonstrate allegiance to business groups.

France has been sluggish in supplying arms to Ukraine, but it actively encourages other European countries to step up and provide supplies, especially to increase the German military and financial aid amid the growing financial crisis. Proud of its immense political influence, the French defense industry is represented mainly by Dassault and Thales and closely related Airbus, ArianeGroup, ASD, ASD-Eurospace, Eutelsat, and Safran. Their main mouthpiece is Thierry Bretton, along with his cabinet. They are seeking a dramatic increase in the pan-European defense budget. The lobbying network of the French arms companies is taking steps to strengthen European integration, reduce national claims on technological solutions and create France-dominated multinational conglomerates. The French banking group, linked to Rothschild & Co, has lobbied for ESG preferences to increase lending to nuclear arms manufacturers and, together with related banking groups, has become a leader in financing the defense industry.

The Strategic Compass for Security and Defense, adopted largely at the behest of the French lobby, is intended to turn the EU into a NATO clone and has enshrined the possibility of joint operations, unconditional increases in military spending and the status of the defense industry as a “socially sustainable investment.” This is a hypocritical contradiction considering the environmental damage and growing violence in accompaniment with the arms export build-up. However, a potential strategic autonomy is hampered by the contradiction between the U.S.-triggered growing animosity towards China and supply chain challenges caused by further shortages of critical materials.

The position of the UK’s BAE Systems is to fight for the European markets together with U.S. Boeing against the investment alliance of KKR and Rothschild & Co. These in turn are stakeholders of BlackRock and Vanguard, holding significant assets and a massive influence in Ukraine and the EU. In addition to holding a portfolio of U.S. and EU defense contractors, BlackRock holds natural resources and agricultural companies and Ukraine’s largest creditor, with billions of dollars worth of loans, hence its interest in holding the collateral of the insolvent country. The figures in the company management indicate a single vector of interests of U.S. and British intelligence services, representatives of “Old Money” in the City and NATO. BAE’s strong lobby seeks to push bureaucratic boundaries for cooperation with European manufacturers, strengthen integration, weaken the technical development of individual countries, and shape Ukraine’s need for specific types of weapons.

BAE Systems influences the Ukrainian politics by means of NGOs and involvement in the Odesa criminal arms transit clans. Back before the Russo-Ukrainian War, the British engaged intelligence and security officials as well as the Germans to organize shipments to the Middle East, brokered by an agent of the Odesa network. Boris Johnson, a representative of the Conservatives committed to increase Britain’s defense budget, became an honorary “citizen of Odesa” and received a state award at the behest of Hennadiy Trukhanov, the

city's mayor who is considered to be close to Zelenskyy. Trukhanov has been involved in several high-profile cases around the arms mafia, is a member of the Angert gang, according to Italian criminal case files, and has been caught up in high-profile corruption scandals on more than one occasion.

During the conflict in Yemen, C4ADS identified a British trail in the transit of suspicious goods from Romania, a transit hub for Odesa arms flows. Behind the scheme was Evgenii Poltavets, a member of the Odesa network and an owner of the company exposed by C4ADS. The cargo of the French defense contractor was managed by a company with long-standing yet undisclosed ties to BAE Systems and the status of a shady carrier in the Middle East. The cargo was received by a British oil company. Among the German shipowner's partners are Lloyds, which lends billions of dollars to nuclear arms manufacturers, and James Stavridis, represented by the Carlyle Group and satellite funds via their lobbyist. France vetoed the hiring of Fiona Scott Morton as chief economist in the European Commission's competition directorate, lobbied for by Commissioner Vestager and President of the European Commission von der Leyen [2]. This revealed some of the top U.S. stakeholders having leverage over the European development trajectory and the delimitation of spheres of influence in the European militarization landscape.

The influence of Soros-linked political figures, financial institutions and NGOs runs through offshore schemes of arms shipments transiting across Ukraine. The picture of Soros' involvement is further completed by his investments in Shipnext, a digital logistics company owned by a member of the Odesa arms transit network, who is linked to the chartering of the notorious Faina ship.

Politically, Soros allied himself with **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Executive Vice President of the European Commission, who is linked to Soros on the systemic level and has played a strategic role in creating the political prerequisites for the "offshorization" of the Latvian economy. Dombrovskis and MEP **Michael Gahler**, the kingpin of the EU arms lobby, and **The Kangaroo Group**, which formed the initiative of €50 billion in aid to Ukraine, are the driving force promoting Ukraine's integration and importance for European politics, acting as the frontmen of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement[3]. These are important facts given Dombrovskis' ties to scandal-ridden Latvian banks, which, despite the presence of retired NATO and intelligence chiefs, have been caught in large-scale money laundering schemes and the Magnitsky case. Interestingly, Baltic International Bank (BIB), mentioned among these Latvian banks received a moderate fine due to its ties with Dombrovskis and the Bidens.

Dombrovskis is also linked to NATO institutions and the U.S. industrial lobby through his regular contacts with the Brussels-based American Chamber of Commerce and the

harmonization of the EU's economic development strategy, An Economy that Works for People, at CSIS, an NGO with vast connections in the U.S. intelligence community. This strategic concept was promoted by Dombrovskis and **Margrethe Vestager**, known for trying to peddle the appointment of an American economist to a position overseeing industrial competition in the EU.

Denys Shmyhal, biographically linked to Rinat Akhmetov, lobbied for the renewal of the grain deal and to share influence of the port infrastructure with Dombrovskis, which overlaps with the area of interest of the Ukrainian oligarch. Latvia-based ABLV was used by the Odesa network in Kaalbye transactions and hosted several conferences attended by arms transit carriers. Akhmetov is linked to the Syrian arms mafia represented by Adnan Kivan, a Sunni who supports **the Syrian National Council (SNC)**, an umbrella structure for radical Islamists backed by globalists, including Soros. Kivan's handler, Halim Khaddam, now living unchecked in Paris, oversaw illegal money flows in Lebanon and supplied weapons to ISIS. As a result, Soros' multi-million dollar support for radical Islamists and HAMAS-supporting organizations fits within the aforementioned context.

Hence, it appears that the U.S. and the UK have a significant influence on the EU militarization policy. Globalist structures of Soros and European Commissioner **Dombrovskis** covered up shady arms deals to supply weapons to Africa and the Middle East through Ukrainian intermediaries. The Ukrainian transit is still running, as its sources go unpunished and the growing territorial presence of European defense companies in Ukraine gives them access to shady logistics routes despite obvious risks.

Corruption of the EU defense industry taints all decision-making levels when it comes to supporting the war in Ukraine and, through Soros, shows indirect involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In all shady operations, provocations and the area of their "offshorization" are controlled by structures and figures associated with Soros known for his "chaotization" methods, employed in directing influence onto political transits for his own purposes. In turn, he acts in the interests of the elites investing in the arms industry and profiting from the redistribution of war-torn countries.

Introduction

The political corruption of the arms industry comes from the necessity to influence the strategic track of countries and associations and to create a need through military threats and geopolitical tensions. Arms makers walk a tight rope of interests of key actors, who determine the strategies of countries and their future — politicians, business leaders, the criminal underworld, intelligence, banking and investment giants. The strong bond between the public policy and the shadow economy running rampant beneath the tip of the iceberg blurs the line of rational in the governance of states and puts private enrichment goals above the interests of citizens.

Defense industry corruption can take many forms, including, but not limited to, bribery, extra-budgetary expenditures, embezzlement, kickbacks and sets-off (reinvestment in the economy of a country purchasing arms). Hidden corruption through lobbying and the revolving door policy allows elites and financial groups that invest in such elites to consolidate their power globally, ultimately damaging all democratic practices. Country-specific or EU decision-makers having leverage over the fate of defense contracts or members of parliament include former high-ranking officials of defense companies, lobbying firms, and associations.

Conflicts of interest are a major risk in the defense industry where very few companies compete for costly, opaque, and relatively rare contracts with very few customers. The U.S. is seeking to consolidate and expand its presence and make sure that European countries, which already spend about half of their defense procurements on U.S. weapons, do not drastically move to spending more of that money on national arms makers, which are less technologically competitive [4]. The reality is that increased spending on defense goes with low cooperation among European manufacturers[5], while U.S. arms imports are gathering speed, ensuring a steady stock growth across the industry thanks to influence on the European market.

The structural dilemma of the EU's defense capability has been solved for many years by means of partner R&D's with U.S. supplies. However, the need for modern weapons has to a greater extent been covered at the expense of the ready-made equipment from the United States. Despite the declared pivot to strategic autonomy, it is profitable for U.S. manufacturers to heat up the imperative of strengthening the EU's defense capability when faced with the threat of war, since none of the European countries are able to provide a full range of military capabilities any time soon. This dependence is not only the outcome of natural causes, but is a direct consequence of external political influence and the actions of U.S. elite groups to deplete the EU's arms stockpile. The media hype around the threat is a reason for an immediate move to the war economy.

As Ukraine remains a booster for the arms industry and a whole network of financial interests of investment giants, European bans on arms transfers are ignored based on the criteria outlined above, which include unacceptability of corruption-sensitive countries according to the EU Common Position (7, 8), EU Common Position (3, 7), and the Arms Trade Treaty, Art. 7, section 1(a), which bans arms transfers to failed or fragile states, such as Ukraine.

The arms lobby has become one with the EU's political vertical of power and can promote commercial interests at the highest level — not as advisors, but as decision-makers. The current targeted strategy of the European defense industry is to facilitate the EU militarization paradigm based on the rebranding of the arms industry as a guarantor of the global social sustainability. The supra-environmental status, and priority that the industry acquires along the way, fuels the continuous growth of the industry after the recent stagnation. The defense lobby is siphoning off significant crisis support resources and already influencing social spending cuts amid the fiscal austerity and the crisis plaguing Germany, the heart of the European industry. We will trace the detailed path back from commercial interests in the halls of the EU and U.S. power to groups specializing in arms trafficking and related oligarchs in Ukraine, as well as their top-ranking European patrons.

Structure of the Defense Industry Influence in Shaping the EU Political Agenda

According to the study by Investigative Europe, the shareholding structure of EU defense companies is characterized by circular ownership. Similarly to U.S. corporations, this factor determines minimum competition in the lobbying of foreign policy interests in the countries of sale. As we can see from the Ukraine crisis, the companies act as a well-organized consortium going in the same direction, that is EU militarization, increased competition with the U.S., localization in Ukraine and search for sales markets, seeking to use the country as a transportation hub.

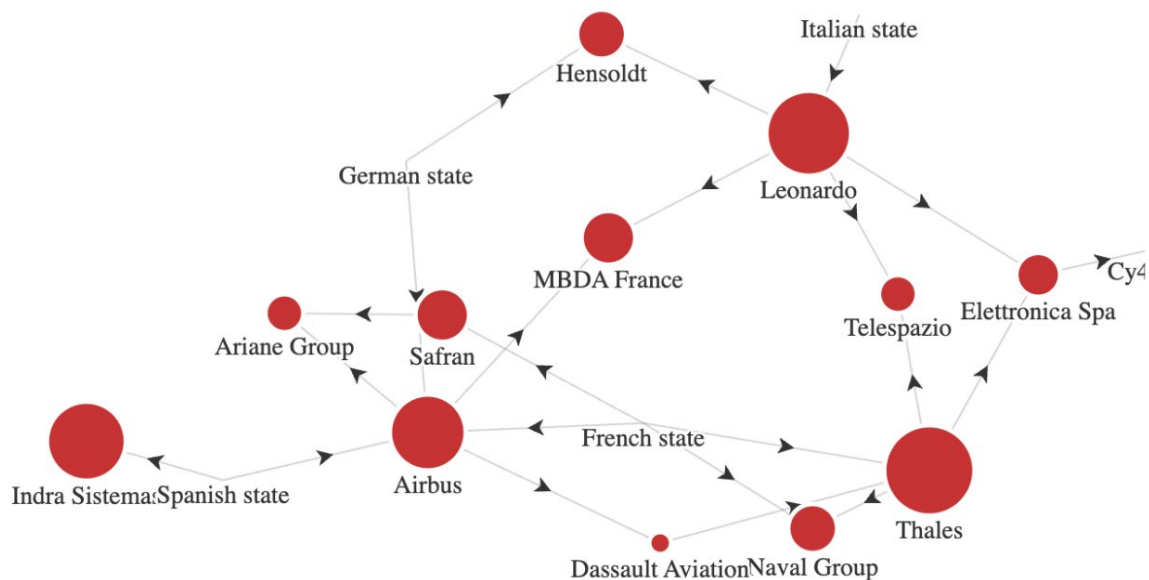
Airbus, Leonardo, Thales, the European military companies, which have profited the most from EU defense funding are partly state-owned and interconnected. Among the owners of these corporations are major U.S. investment funds, such as BlackRock and Vanguard.

There is very little room for tracking lobbying corruption in the political decision-making process. At the end of 2022, Transparency International revealed that many MEPs simply ignore the requirement to register their meetings for various reasons. Some deliberately do not disclose their meetings, gatherings with parliamentary assistants and political advisors

of political groups, so it is impossible to get a broad and accurate picture of who is lobbying for whom in the European Parliament.

Numerous networked lobby groups and informal associations hosting joint events and negotiations also take on the task of expanding influence in the European Parliament and maintaining a dialog with groups and political figures, public contacts with intent on trouble or come with risks to their reputation. This being said, European anti-corruption mechanisms cannot ensure a completely impartial system of mediation or the tight control of information and other exchanges between government representatives and stakeholders; legislators and bureaucrats do not exercise public oversight or access to informal arms alliances.

A flow chart of mutual ownership of European defense companies



The French Alliance of Arms Producers: Lobbying and Conflict of Interest

Historically and currently, the French initiative played a paramount role in the internal impulses of the EU militarization. Initially peaceful, the alliance began its military transformation with Jean-Claude Juncker’s decision to move national defense planning and contracts to Brussels, making the sector part of the EU’s industrial strategy. As a result, the European Defense Fund of €8 billion was created to boost defense research and development until 2027. Almost all of these funds are applied to finance pan-European initiatives and France takes part in 47 of the 61 projects selected for the first funding cycle of the European Defense Fund . Furthermore, the main beneficiaries of the European

Defense Industrial Development Program (EDIDP) are also a pool of French companies, such as Airbus, Thales, and Dassault Aviation[7].

The European Defense Fund was designed without a trace of neutrality by the Group of Personalities on Defense Research (GoP), which included heads of major European defense contractors, such as Airbus, MBDA, BAE Systems, Saab, TNO, Leonardo, Indra, and Fraunhofer. Another member, Michael Gahler, came from the aerospace, defense and security industry, more specifically from the Kangaroo Group, Europe's largest group lobbying for the interests of defense contractors[8].

The EU funding for defense research means that the industrial policy across the EU attracts small and medium-sized businesses to the well-funded defense sector. The civilian sector is gradually becoming militarized and a contributor to the military business, as its funding and priorities line up with defense interests. The EU foreign policy has now become the driving force of this militarization.

Over the past year, industrial and political leaders have hosted several high-level meetings with representatives of the European Defense Agency, Director-General of DEFIS, and the European Investment Bank, as well as many representatives of major arms contractors. Josep Borrell and Thierry Breton are their vocal representatives defining the nature and direction of the foreign policy track along with the militarization of the EU industrial potential[10].

Militarization has allowed the European alliance to become the world's second largest arms supplier after the United States, which is entirely contrary to the values of sustainable development, environmental neutrality, and the initially peaceful nature of the union. Although Brussels is the seat of both the EU and NATO, it has not been the center of defense lobbying before, as all money and contracts have been concentrated in the capitals. Legally, the EU is prohibited from using its budget to finance military activities.

The war in Ukraine has allowed the EU defense industry to get massive financial injections from the government spending of the countries involved in arms supplies —

- Germany has announced an increase in military spending of €103.5 billion over the past three years.
- France plans on financing €9 billion worth of arms supplies by 2025.
- Poland — €16.3 billion in 2023.
- The Netherlands — €14.8 billion in 2023 with an expected increase of €5 billion by 2026.

- Italy and Spain will increase their military spending by €12 billion in the coming years[10].

The documents, on which the pan-European defense funding is based along with the consolidation measures adopted in 2022 have been pointing to growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both of which led to "a collective awareness of the need to strengthen the European defense."

Despite the anti-war nature of the European alliance, Jean-Claude Juncker has raised the level of defense decision-making. He moved national defense planning and contracts to Brussels and made the industry part of the EU's industrial strategy. This led to the creation of **the European Defense Fund** of €8 billion to boost defense research and development until 2027. Almost all of these funds are applied to finance pan-European initiatives. France takes part in 47 of the 61 projects selected for the first funding cycle of the European Defense Fund. About 70% of the funds allocated under the EDF's predecessor programs go to the major arms exporters — France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

The next step in the militarization of the economy was the Commission Contribution to European Defense, a set of initiatives to strengthen the EU's military capabilities and support the arms industry published by the European Commission in 2022, and the Roadmap on Critical Technologies for Security and Defense.

In March 2022, after the launch of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU adopted its global defense strategy, titled **the Strategic Compass for Security and Defense**, an ambitious action plan intended to strengthen the EU's security and defense policy until 2030 [11], which enshrines the military status of the union. It requires countries to dramatically increase their defense budgets as a single option, not as a political choice. When it comes to the trend outlined above, the document provides a definition of adversaries common for all member states, the allied status of the United States, threat sources, and the areas for the EU intervention. It offers recommendations on preparations for future wars, threats, and challenges. The Strategic Compass is intended to become the main mechanism for bringing together member states with different interests into a single geopolitical and military bloc. This document is a tool to limit national parliaments, which will most likely increase confrontation and risk of war escalation, into which the EU could be dragged as a single military bloc. **In fact, Europe is becoming a NATO clone of a kind.** The main paradox of the Strategic Compass is the obvious greenwashing, as the arms production is enshrined as an environmental and social investment.

Individual EU member states have been sending military, financial, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine since 2014. With Germany as the major European supplier, Rheinmetall's stock has

spiked about 20% since 2022. However, the vanguard role of a donor does not mean leadership as a beneficiary. Germany has become the ground for redistribution of power among several stronger groups — the French and the Anglo-American groups — characterized by rising competition but closely connected at the elite level.

Ranked only 17th on the SIPRI Top Arms-producing and Military Services Companies[12], the major European beneficiary of the war in Ukraine is France's Thales, the stock of which is traded at a record-high level with a price surge of about 30% since February 2022. The French arms flagship has significantly outperformed the growth in capitalization of U.S. arms giants.

Thales is part of the largest lobbying NGO, **The Kangaroo Group**, and albeit it has no accredited representatives in the Parliament. The organization rubs shoulders with EU Internal Market Commissioner **Thierry Breton**,[13] a key lobbyist for industry cooperation and its increased funding. UK-based BAE Systems and MBDA, a Thales subsidiary in Brussels, are members of **L'Institut de Recherche et de Communication sur l'Europe (Institute for European Research and Communication)**, a non-profit maintaining dialog regarding the European geopolitics, NATO and European defense, ENISA, and cybersecurity in Europe[14]. As with Kangaroo, the law does not require a report on the attendees and nature of meetings in the Parliament.

France and its representatives, especially Thierry Breton, have been extremely vocal in calling for a more aggressive defense of the European Union, getting the highest return on defense contracts and research funding, as well as skyrocketing capitalization of its companies.

Comparative stock performance of Thales and U.S. champions



French aid to Ukraine looked more than humble. To put it into context, Germany with €17.1 billion was last year's largest donor, second only to the United States, while France scraped together only €0.54 billion[15]. **Given Germany's recession and massive industrial slump, its low resilience to energy fluctuations, current developments look like a game of attrition started by France in an attempt to gain industrial leadership.**

Early this year, Breton suggested creating a \$110 billion fund to support Europe's defense industry amid the Russo-Ukrainian war[16]. He is directing the European Commission to pass a new European Defense Production Act. It is intended to strengthen the bloc's defense and industrial base, ranging from research to joint procurements similar to the U.S. Defense Production Act, where the president can ramp up and expand the supply of materials and services from the industrial base necessary to contribute to the national defense. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis and the Ukraine war have all hit EU budgets and economic stability quite hard with a wave of bankruptcies sweeping Europe and industrial sectors, especially German ones, asking for support. In June, the EU executive branch proposed a mid-term review to replenish the budget by €66 billion that the Defense Production Act does not provide.

Previously, Breton backed the creation of the new European Defense Investment Program (EDIP), which originally proposed a VAT exemption. In the past, Thierry Breton was caught up in corruption scandals and litigation related to questions of his integrity. Among the most high-profile cases are allegations put forward by the French anti-corruption watchdog Anticor, which indirectly confronted Breton in an action regarding his political and business activities[17].

According to lobbydacts.eu, Thierry Breton is one of the leaders in terms of frequency of meetings with the defense lobby — Airbus, ArianeGroup, ASD, ASD-Eurospace, Eutelsat, OHB, Safran, Thales, and others. There is a lot of controversy about the person, as he is considered prone to conflicts of interest due to intentions of his appointment. Prior to his appointment, Corporate Europe Observatory claimed that “there is a striking and massive overlap between the interests of the company Breton headed and the remit of the Internal Market portfolio [...], including industrial policy, defense, tech, and space. This overlap creates a maze of potential conflicts of interest that would be very difficult to solve. [18]”

French defense giant Thales has received a D score, which is a significant corruption risk according to the Defense Companies Index of Transparency International. Among the vulnerable areas of the company's internal control are the lack of anti-bribery and corruption due diligence, conflicts of interest in investment and government involvement, flaws in identification and declaration of conflicts of interest in management.

It must be said that the major private owner of Thales is Marcel Dassault, an industrial group run by **Laurent Dassault**, a member of a family with close historical and business ties to the Rothschild family. Trust in their relationship is most notably manifested through co-ownership with Benjamin de Rothschild of a low-key wine business with a bunker-like retreat in the Andes[21]. In addition, Dassault holds a stake in Rothschild & Co. through GIMD, as Olivier Costa de Beauregard, Deputy Executive Officer of Groupe Industriel Marcel Dassault, is an honorary audit and risk director at the Rothschild holding company[22] and their media conglomerates have long been merged into a single narrative delivery system[23]. Dassault-owned **Le Figaro** has key people from the French Aerospace Industries Association on its management team, whose word carries great weight with the Thales Group. Le Figaro also has high-ranking sources in the French intelligence revealing sensitive information about the presence of the U.S. Delta Force and British SAS units in Ukraine since the outbreak of war[24].

The most important sign that there is certain cohesion of financial interests of the French elites around elitists propagating the militarist trend is the recent major merger of the capitals of the Dassault, Peugeot and Wertheimer families around Rothschild & Co. on a fiduciary basis. In February, the holding company announced its delisting in what was believed to be a plan to fix the size of its assets, highlighting the steps towards implementation of the disastrous Degrowth concept of ecocentric social capitalism (the harbinger of a massive crisis) in the financial sector and moving towards a model of organic growth independent of any external conditions[25].

France, the only country with nuclear weapons capabilities, is the center of decision-making in the EU defense policy. It is revealing that the French banking system, historically and systemically linked to the House of Rothschild, has been particularly active in lobbying for a shift in the ESG standards affecting defense lending. Arms production is given the status of a pillar of social sustainability. The top ten non-U.S. financial institutions that have provided funds to **nuclear weapons producers** are BNP Paribas (France) \$12,622 million, Crédit Agricole (France) with \$10,938 million, Société Générale (France) with \$9,169 million, Groupe BPCE (France) with \$7,046 million.

The French banking system is the most generous sponsor of arms companies involved in regions throughout the Middle East with potentially corruptive and ethical risks. According to the PAX study, about **half of defense investments made by the banking sector come from Rothschild-affiliated banks based in France.**

Total value of financial services to arms companies exporting to countries at risk (the French companies are given in bold)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Barclays | 4,679 |
| BNP Paribas | 16,009 |
| Crédit Agricole | 9,182 |
| Crédit Mutuel CIC Group | 2,503 |
| Deutsche Bank | 14,892 |
| Groupe BPCE | 3,620 |
| HSBC | 6,249 |
| ING Group | 1,237 |
| Intesa Sanpaolo | 1,283 |
| Lloyds Banking Group | 4,496 |
| NatWest | 3,085 |
| Santander | 7,673 |
| Société Générale | 6,999 |
| UBS | 79 |
| UniCredit | 5,736 |
| Total (EUR million) | 87,722 |

What we know for a fact is that Emmanuel Macron offers protection for France’s principal banking dynasty and that he quickly rose to partnership at Rothschild & Co. prior to his richly funded presidential campaign[27]. The reaction to his victory shows that **Macron is sponsored by Soros-affiliated global structures[28] operating in Ukraine in a long-standing alliance with the local tycoon Pinchuk[29]**, an active defense lobbyist with partner ties to the Clinton family. In turn, Macron has promoted Thierry Breton, a key advocate for defense industry interests in the European Parliament and a source for facilitating militarist initiatives[30].



Alexander Soros supports Emmanuel Macron

The agenda for Ukraine support and integration with the EU reinforces militarist goals. If scraped, the economy will have to be redirected towards long-term peaceful initiatives. Using its influence in the European Parliament and high-level representation in NATO, France has secured a leading role in the consolidation of European countries profiting from the Russian threat and moving its defense industry into a declared mode of preparations for a full-scale war with Russia. According to a recent speech by NATO Admiral Rob Bauer, civilians should prepare for “all-out war” with Russia in the next 20 years. Steadfast Defender 2024, part of extensive preparations for a “Russian invasion,” makes the needs of the EU defense industry a priority for national budget planning in Europe[31]. The public in the UK, Sweden, Germany, and Estonia is being prepared for the idea that a hard war with Russia is coming.

Airbus is a European multinational aerospace company and an arch-rival of U.S.-based Boeing. Ranked 14th on the SIPRI Top Arms-producing and Military Services Companies, it is one of the world’s largest defense companies with around 20% of its annual revenue generated by production and development of defense systems, such as military aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), and the Future Combat Air System (FCAS). The sales revenue growth totaled 17% last year. The company’s shareholding structure is a consortium of public funds from France, Germany, and Spain.

Since the beginning of the military boom caused by the war in Ukraine, Airbus has consulted **Ursula von der Leyen** on numerous occasions and attended **more than a dozen meetings with Thierry Breton** and members of his cabinet . The company is placed on the most

extensive list of lobby organizations among European companies: Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD), GIFAS, BDLI, TEDAE, European Organisation for Security (EOS), Cercle des Délégués Permanents Français (CDPF), Kangaroo Group, European Satellite Operators Association (ESOA), Hydrogen Europe, DIGITALEUROPE, NEREUS, A4E, EARSC, Eurospace, AFEP, AVISA, EBIT, BBE, ECSO, ERT, GAIA-X, CEOE, Official Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Belgium and Luxembourg[33].

Airbus has certain leverage over German politics. For many years, it has been one of the largest contributors to the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). By providing €100,000 or more annually, Airbus was among the top five to seven sponsors (together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Arend Oetker Holding, and the Robert Bosch Stiftung) of the renowned think tank between 2013 and 2016[34].

In the Ukrainian conflict, the main opportunity and benefit for Airbus was its *de facto* takeover of Ukrainian aircraft manufacturer Antonov. The company has partnered with Antonov to rebuild its largest aircraft, as a result of which Airbus gained access to unique designs. At the behest of the European giant, the Ukrainian holding company became a member of the largest lobbying organization, Aerospace and Defense Industries Association of Europe (ASD).

Together, they have invited Turgis & Gaillard, a company founded by representatives of the French military intelligence, to use Antonov's fabrication lines to produce Aarok-based drones,[35] which was agreed after the visit of the Minister of the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu to Kyiv.

Airbus is the most corrupt defense contractor in the EU and is famous for **the world's largest foreign bribery settlement** after years of probes and investigations by French, U.S. and UK authorities. For example, France's Airbus agreed to pay more than **\$3.9 billion in global fines** to settle a bribery case with the U.S., French and UK governments. This resulted from the company's scheme to use third parties (business partners) to bribe government officials and executives of privately-owned airlines around the world and remedy the company's violations of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) and its implementing regulations, the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) in the United States[36].

The most telling example of an effective revolving door strategy for Airbus in the EU is the work of **Jorge Domecq**, a former chief executive at the European Defense Agency (EDA), who was appointed Strategic Advisor for Airbus Defense and Space in July 2021. The overlap between the work at defense giant Airbus and the EDA carries a conflict of interest, as Domecq's work influenced the allocation of the EU's security and defense budgetary spending. The EDA is Europe's official defense agency, coordinating and facilitating the

integration of defense capabilities of the EU member states. Airbus is also an active and influential lobbyist for militarized border and migration management by the EU[37].

Hogan Lovells, previously an active lobbyist acting on behalf of Airbus[38], close to Soros-loyal Ukrainian oligarch Pinchuk[39], who has promoted the expansion of supplies to Ukraine, is among the closest and most involved actors in the Ukrainian establishment. Hogan Lovells did some pro bono lobbying for Pinchuk in cyber technology on behalf of the U.S. defense industry. The firm has a strong presence in Germany, where U.S. interests are deeply rooted in the defense sector. In Europe, the company is a member of the American Chamber of Commerce to the EU, the Brussels Chamber of Commerce, the Transatlantic Business Council (TABC), and the German Association of Antitrust Lawyers (Studienvereinigung Kartellrecht).

Hogan Lovells' lobbying capabilities also include **the European Policy Forum**[40], a British think tank with representation from the City of London Corporation, J.P. Morgan, and many U.S. corporations and global consulting companies[41]. The mission of the organization is to facilitate dialog regarding the UK-EU political strategy. Its board includes former UK Ambassador to France Lord Jay of Ewelme and former MEP Graham Mather of the EPP, the party that has been most vocal in calling for increased missile defense spending[42].

U.S.-UK Arms Consensus and Common Interests of Global Investment Funds

BAE Systems as the Core of the U.S.-UK Influence on the EU Policy

BAE Systems is Europe's most influential company in terms of political influence largely due to strong ties of one of the world's powerful intelligence networks. Additionally, it has a long-standing **alliance with Thales**. Interestingly, Andy Start, CEO of Defense Equipment and Support (DE&S) of the British Armed Forces, acted for both BAE and Thales in the British parliamentary hearings dedicated to funding new research and production expansion projects in the face of the Ukrainian conflict, which were estimated at £10 billion at the time of hearings[43].

Key EU lobbyist for BAE Systems **David Williams** also serves as the government's principal civilian advisor on defense, has primary responsibility for policy, finance and planning, and is a member of the Defense Council, and the Defense Board. He co-chairs, with Chief of the Defense Staff (CDS), the Defense Strategy Group. He is a member of the **Defense Nuclear Organization (DNO)**, among partners of which are the Navy Command, the Submarine Delivery Agency, the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems, and Babcock International[44].

In 2022, BAE Systems received a record £37 billion worth of new orders in the midst of the Ukraine war. Awaiting future orders, BAE Systems increased production shifts at its three major ammunition plants in the UK. The UK plays a decisive role as a defense service provider supplying Ukraine with long-range cruise missiles.

BAE Systems is also gaining a foothold in Ukraine and has signed agreements with the Ukrainian government to maintain equipment in Ukraine and plans to work directly with Kyiv in order to find potential partners for a project to produce 105 mm light artillery guns in the country . Ukraine has signed a memorandum of understanding with Sweden to intensify cooperation in the production and operation of the CV90 family of combat vehicles produced by BAE's branch in Sweden. BAE Systems, which has benefited from increased defense spending as a result of the conflict, is already providing training and repairs to the Armed Forces of Ukraine[46].

Despite Brexit orchestrated by conservative politicians who are part of, and linked to, the top arms lobby, the British-American defense giant takes an active part in disbursements of the European defense budget maintaining a convenient balance between competition[47] and cooperation with key EU manufacturers[48]. In 2022, BAE Systems reported a spike in

interim sales and profits. Last year, the company reported its highest ever order intake of £37.1 billion for last year, which saw its order backlog jump to £58.9 billion.

The FTSE 100-listed firm posted flat operating profits of £2.4 billion, but said earnings on an underlying basis rose 5.5% to £2.5 billion as sales on its preferred measure rose 4.4% to £23.3 billion.

The demand for 1 million 155 mm artillery rounds in the EU encouraged BAE Systems to expand its production capabilities. Europe has been slower than planned with the consensus-based nature of NATO and the EU as a major obstacle in the path. BAE offers howitzers, such as M777, which can fire 155 mm rounds at targets up to 30 kilometers away. The company took advantage of the situation by engaging its full-time lobbyist **Didier Gondallier de Tugny**, Head of Brussels Office at **MBDA**, to decide on the EU supplies[49]. Established in December 2001, by the merger of the major French, British and Italian missile systems companies Matra, BAE Dynamics, and Alenia, the France-based missile company has a subsidiary in the United States, where it rapidly ramped up production of 155 mm rounds[50].

The largest investment funds of the supranational elites also profit from access to insider information and escalating arms race. **Having officially stepped down from all posts at BAE Systems in March 2023, Roger Carr is also a co-founder of the KKR investment fund**[51], whose senior representatives are frequent attendees of the Bilderberg meetings,[52] and the head of the country's most influential industrial lobby group, Confederation of British Industry (CBI)[53] with an office in Brussels[54].

BAE Systems is a major U.S. defense contractor and a natural policy conductor for the British-American alliance seeking to capture the European market. The company is also backed by MI6, which appears to be acting in concert with other actors through the British-American Project (BAP), an exclusive membership club dominated by the Labor Party and CBI. Through **Macro Advisory Partners (MAP)**, a company established by **John Sowers**, a BAP[55] member hosting meetings at the Bilderberg Club, the British connections lead to **Stephen E. Biegun**, a former MAP Partner and Senior Vice President of Global Public Policy at **Boeing**. As a member of the "old" elite, the Bush and Ford families, Biegun is known for having significant direct leverage over the U.S. defense policy. An expert in Russian policy, he has served at the U.S. Department of State, the White House, and the Congress[56]. His high regard among the British aristocracy is confirmed by his leadership role at **the Ditchley Foundation**, a discussion platform for the transatlantic establishment, **the City, and U.S. and UK intelligence communities**, where the Ukrainian issue and Russia's invasion top the agenda[57].

Among non-executive directors of BAE Systems is Lord Mark Sedwill, a top diplomat serving on the board of such financial giants as **Rothschild & Co.** and **Lloyd's of London**[58]. Together with his long-standing Bilderberg partner, former CIA Director **David Petraeus**, Sedwill has vast opportunities to promote the interests of the British defense industry to supply equipment to Ukraine and of the U.S. arms making business. He is a staunch supporter of Ukraine's accession to NATO[59].



U.S. General David Petraeus ISAF Commander, left, shakes hands with NATO Senior Civilian Representative, Ambassador Mark Sedwill in Kabul, Afghanistan, Saturday April 9, 2011[60]

Petraeus is a non-partisan, transnational consensus figure of shadow politics who serves the interests of the U.S. and UK defense business expansion in Europe. He is Chairman of the Board at the KKR Global Institute responsible for global investments and Vice President of **the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)**,[61] a major representative defense and security think tank of the UK, both in terms of importance and representativeness, with a broad membership of current and former intelligence officers.

In turn, integration into the EU's single market and the removal of protectionist measures to support the EU-based manufacturers is a major challenge for the UK. Sharing the European goals and stimulation of military spending is revealed through the country's substantial participation in the aforementioned large-scale exercise Steadfast Defender 2024.

The UK-based RUSI seeks to reduce the EU's strategic autonomy, promote the UK-U.S. interests, and build consortiums of the European defense industry pointing to the inefficiency and non-competitiveness of hardware components provided by the EU industry, and Europe's inability to ensure security in the region without U.S. protection[62]. The

European manufacturers committed to absolute sovereignty go against British and U.S. goals in the technological domination in the arms market. A potential further weakening of NATO's role in Brussels prompts the U.S. and British companies to team up and expand their presence in the EU. As part of the process, the British Conservatives seek to develop a strategic partnership with France, while the Labor Party cultivates friendship with Germany. The indispensability of the British defense industry for the EU is explicitly stated in the RUSI materials[63].

Hence the supranational rhetoric coming from the European arms companies and the political basis for decisions. Politicians who promote the interests of arms producers are committed to wider integration as it serves their interests amid shortage of technologies. In December, Italy, Japan, and the UK signed an agreement to develop the ambitious Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) initially unveiled in 2022. The main industrial partners of the program that intended to develop a sixth-generation stealth fighter are BAE Systems, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, and Leonardo. The CEO of Italy's Leonardo called for reform of the EU defense industry hampered by member states investing in their national champions, even if it means governments giving up "a bit of national sovereignty[64]."

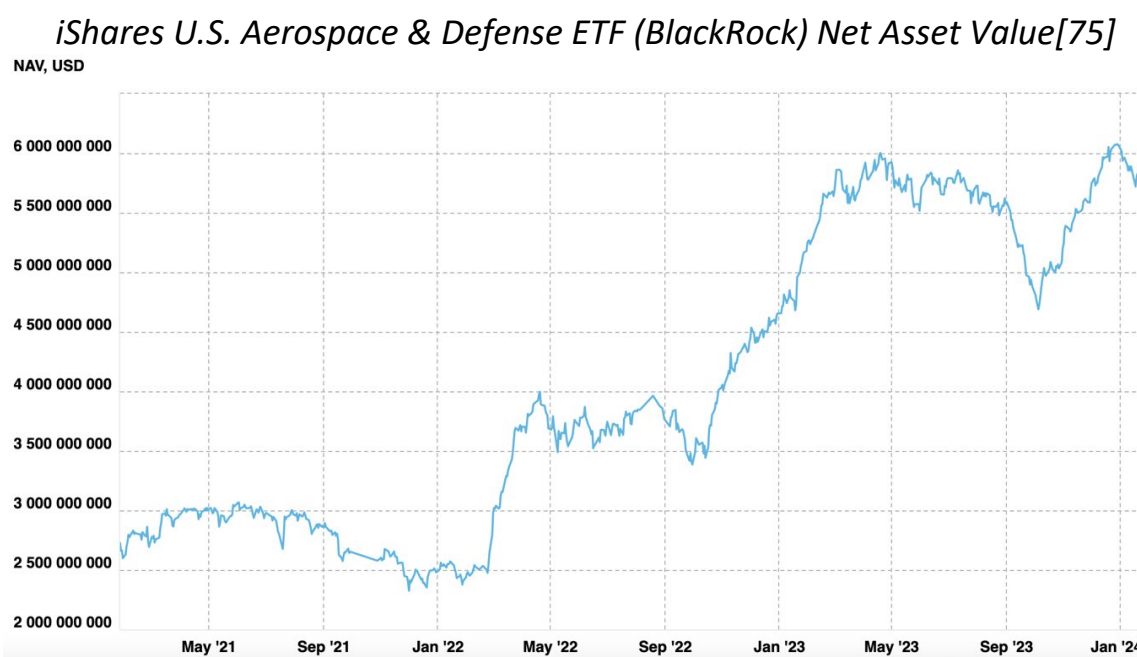
Close to Petraeus, **Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. L.P. (KKR)**, a global U.S.-based asset management firm partly owned by BlackRock,[65] makes investments in concert with the financial market giant[66]. As an advisor to the U.S. Government and the Federal Reserve[67], BlackRock can influence the country's policies in its own interests, often trying to hush conflicts of interest[68].

There were times when **BlackRock** directly influenced political decisions in the EU by means of top-level consultations. The Commission has awarded BlackRock a major contract to advise on environmental, social and governance factors in its banking supervision. That said, the fund has an outright conflict of interest as it is both a shareholder in oil companies and a financial manager of businesses that will be affected by the final decisions[69]. BlackRock lobbied for private pension plans in France and signed a contract with the European Commission[70]. In the UK, the fund is a dominant force in the City of London thanks to a merger with Barclays Global Investors[71] and ties to Goldman Sachs.

BlackRock is a shareholder of major U.S. contractors and billions of dollars worth of European defense companies[72]. **Apart from BlackRock, the shareholding structure of Europe's five largest arms producers, which receive the lion's share of EU funding for supplies to Ukraine, includes other major U.S. investment funds, such as Vanguard, Capital Group, Wellington Management, and Fidelity Investments.** The scope of their financial weight suggests that they are in fact the largest shadow banking conglomerate[73] and a supranational power comparable to the U.S., as their total assets exceed \$20 trillion. All of

these funds and BlackRock’s subsidiary fund, the iShares U.S. Aerospace & Defense ETF, are shareholders of Boeing Co. BA, Raytheon (RTX), Lockheed Martin Corp. LMT, Axon Enterprise Inc. AXON, General Dynamics Corp. GD, and others.

The iShares U.S. Aerospace & Defense ETF Net Asset Value chart[74] shows how the stock growth demonstrated by defense contractors has affected the net asset value (NAV) of the fund over the past two years and tracks with forecasts of a prolonged conflict in Ukraine. The flow chart reacts positively to the agenda of growing risks of the conflict moving from local to pan-European and to EU decisions to replenish its arms stockpiles, European exercises and preparations for the military escalation in Europe. It should be emphasized that the cessation of U.S. direct military aid has not affected the upward trend of the BlackRock-held U.S. arms portfolio.



Ukraine is of strategic importance to BlackRock. The largest assets of the Fund in Ukraine include Metinvest, DTEK (energy), previously wholly owned by Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, as well as MJP (agriculture), Naftogaz (a gas producer with Europe’s second largest gas reserves), Ukrainian Railways, Ukravtodor, and Ukrenergo. BlackRock’s interests include military support for Ukraine amid its growing debt burden and the preservation and expansion of farmlands purchased at rock-bottom prices from bankrupt agribusinesses and small owners as well as assets seized from Ukrainian oligarchs as part of nationalization[76].

As mentioned in our analysis of connections between the oligarchs and the U.S. and European elites, BlackRock’s person of influence in Ukraine is Soros-linked Victor Pinchuk. With his assistance, Zelenskyy and Fink signed a development agreement to establish the

so-called Ukraine Development Fund (UDF) with BlackRock Financial Market Advisory (BlackRock FMA) funded by JP Morgan Bank. Under the terms of the agreement, BlackRock will manage Ukrainian assets and Ukraine's foreign debt, which is approaching \$150 billion, or 100% of the national GDP, according to the country's Ministry of Finance. Officially, the agreement is intended to attract investments in energy, infrastructure and agriculture, but due to the weak subsidized economy destroyed by the war, it leads to the seizure of Ukraine's major assets on account of debt repayment — from fertile black soil to power grids[77].

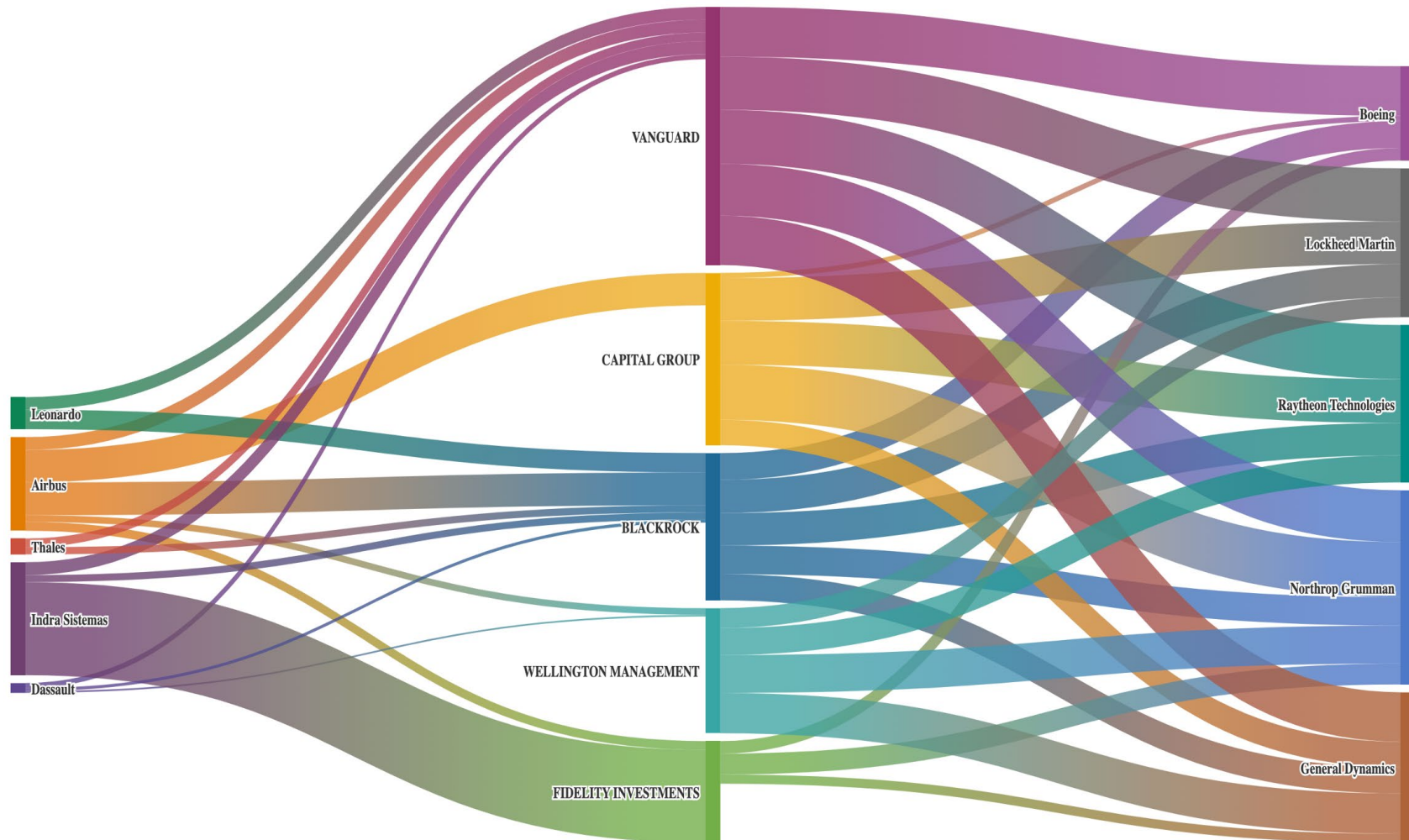
The picture of that which is happening is completed by the fact that Penny Pritzker, a representative of the Chicago-based American establishment associated with Boeing, was appointed to manage the Ukraine Development Fund (UDF) and Ukrainian oligarch Firtash was stripped of his titanium deposits in the interests of the aforementioned Chicago group. As we have noted, Boeing Vice President has systemic ties to the old British financial elite, represented by the RUSI think tank, which is committed to cooperation with U.S. and British arms giants.

The supply initiative agreed upon between the UK and Ukraine's Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, designed to bring investment to the Ukrainian industry, came from a group of British public relations agencies with offices in Brussels and the U.S. — Ogilvy Group, Group M, Hill & Knowlton Strategies, and Hogarth Worldwide.

Ogilvy Government Relations lobbied Pentagon contractors, which paid the firm nearly half a million dollars in 2022 alone. Ogilvy's client, Fluor, was awarded a five-year contract for logistics services to prepare the company for future work with the United States European Command and the Germany-based United States Africa Command.

On April 29, 2022, **Navigators Global**, a firm focused on strategic communications consulting services to Pentagon contractors, represented the Committee on National Security, Defense and Intelligence of the Ukrainian Parliament pro bono. The company representatives contacted dozens of key Congressmen on behalf of the Ukrainian Parliament, including McCarthy, Representatives and Senators in charge of the armed forces. The company's efforts included adoption of the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act, a defense policy bill, which increased spending for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative by half a billion dollars.

The participation of major investment giants in the defense industry



Source: Data from the companies, Mercantile Registries and msn.com

The Belgian arm of U.S.-based **Hill & Knowlton International** has a large staff of more than 20 lobbyists accredited in Brussels this year. It is affiliated with Metinvest, a holding company owned by Ukrainian tycoon Akhmetov, Estée Lauder, a company owned by Ronald Lauder, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO policies at the U.S. Department of Defense and an American protégé of the notorious Ukrainian crook, Ihor Kolomoyskyi of the Chabad Orthodox Jewish movement. Its European network of influence includes the American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union (AmchamEU) and to Belgium (AmChamBE), the British Chamber of Commerce in Belgium (BritCham), the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS), and the Belgian Public Affairs Community (Bepact)[78].

Ukraine and these U.S. defense contractors have a strong relationship. They bonded over more than \$50 billion in procurements for 2022 alone. The apparent sponsorship shows how close the relationship between large defense contractors and Ukraine has become, how important it is for business, and how much they can benefit from the war[79]. The political courtesy is understandable. There is a new round in the global arms race in addition to direct arms deliveries to Ukraine, Europe's rearmament, and the replenishment of the U.S. stockpiles.

Saab AB. The Swedish conglomerate has strengthened its strategic partnership in anti-tank and air defense systems with MBDA, a BAE Systems subsidiary, amid the conflict in Ukraine[80].

The company is majority-owned by Investor AB, a holding company of the wealthiest Wallenberg family. Marcus Wallenberg is personally at the helm of SAAB. Investor AB also owns a large share of **nuclear power contractor Atlas Copco**[81]. With 78% in 2022, SAAB is second only to Rheinmetall in terms of the company's stock growth since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. In the third quarter of 2023 alone, the company's sales surged 31%[82].

Public data on the lobby spendings shows an increase in 2022. There are three lobbyists working full-time at the Brussels-seated Saab's EU and NATO liaison office, who have had numerous contacts with Thierry Breton[83]. Furthermore, several Saab employees are partly engaged in the development of EU legislative and policy initiatives, as well as steering documents, tenders, and other events relating to Saab's activities in Europe and NATO. Such activities include and require the participation of pay-rolled individuals who represent Saab on expert groups of the Commission, EDA, and NATO.

Rud Pedersen Public Affairs, a Nordic consulting firm, which owed much of its original business to Swedish aerospace and defense giant Saab, has invited former procurement officials from the Belgian and German armed forces to join its staff of 75 consultants as senior advisors in Brussels. The company has 14 offices in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Germany. The group has spent €5,250,000 on lobbying[85]. Line Tresselt, who served as Political Advisor to the former Minister of Defense in Norway, is now Director of Defense & Security Global at Rud Pedersen Group.

U.S.-based Boeing, an arch-rival of Airbus, is the world's largest aerospace company and a leading manufacturer of jet liners, military, space and security systems. The military goods offered by Boeing include fighter jets, transport aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, transport and attack helicopters, and missiles[86].

The company expanded its presence last year. For example, Boeing poached an experienced EU specialist Liam Benham from IBM to take up post as its new EU and NATO lobbying chief, while sending Boeing veteran Kristen Richmond to Brussels. Boeing's revenue from its defense, space and security programs also increased to \$6.5 billion in the first quarter of 2023 from \$5.5 billion in the first quarter of 2022[87].

Advisors to the influential lobbying group, the U.S.-Ukraine Business Council (USUBC), including those acting for Boeing, ran influential op-eds in major news outlets calling for increased U.S. and EU taxpayer aid to Ukraine. The group keeps discreet its close ties to the defense industry and the Ukrainian government.

German Lobby Groups: UK-U.S. Influence

The coming war with Russia has officially appeared on Germany's agenda. Compared to France's determination to find advantages for its industry, the similar language of the German security strategy revealed as part of the general concept of the industrial defense development, which proposes to reduce unilateral dependence, suggests dependence on the United States rather than any type of strategic autonomy. A good example would be Germany's purchases of the F-35 fighters competing with the French joint combat air system developed by Airbus and Dassault, summing up a significant U.S. influence on the German defense policy.

With the U.S. presence in its territory in the form of 21 military bases, Germany is heavily dependent on the United States politically, financially, and militarily[88].

Defense companies are reluctant to invest without contracts or firm commitments from customers given that the demand is likely to collapse if the war in Ukraine ends soon, so its

prolongation is vital. Despite the increase in defense spending, however, there are very few contracts that can be completed within an indicated period. For example, the German Army needs about €20 billion worth of munitions orders to replenish stockpiles of different weapon systems, but estimates as of the end of 2022 suggested that contractors could deliver only about 10% of the said amount from 2023 to 2024.

Amid a wave of military preparations and exercises organized in response to Russian threat narratives, the German arms exports reached a record high of \$12.8 billion. The largest share of last year's exports went to Ukraine. The German arms exports to Ukraine soared to €4.1 billion in 2023 from €2.24 billion in 2022[89].

If the war ends any time soon, governments will face public pressure to redirect funds to other spheres. Without a long-term commitment triggered by war, it is very unlikely that industry will decide to make massive investments in production capabilities[90].

Rheinmetall

Ever since the Ukraine war began in 2022, the company's stock has soared in value by 119%, which is more than any other European manufacturer[91]. Headquartered in Düsseldorf, Germany, Rheinmetall AG is an automotive supplier and defense contractor. It is a top 10 European defense contractor by sales volume.

Head of the lobby group, **Dr. Charles Philippe Graf Dijon de Monteton, appears to be a liaison to the French aristocracy and the Rothschilds**, who exercise a dominant influence over the defense industry. His research is focused on Jewish Studies in the regional history, mainly South West France. Additionally, he uses the French nobiliary particle in his last name. A recent meeting with Thierry Breton , a fact withheld by lobbyfacts, serves as another confirmation of the existing determination to harmonize positions with the French defense industry.

His brother's biography only adds extra context to the involvement of the German nobility in the globalist focus[93]. Victor Graf Dijon von Monteton[94] is Partner at the Swiss branch of the global American consultancy **Kearney**, whose lineage goes back to **McKiensey**. Kearney is a frequent host of the World Economic Forum and is associated with the U.S. Democratic Party. McKinsey is also an institutional partner of **the Munich Security Conference (MSC)** and a facilitator of discussions regarding the future of the European defense sector. Over the past decade, the consulting company has influenced the EU's strategic defense track in a mutually beneficial way — the nonprofit MSC receives support from the world's most powerful asset management consultancy and its army of experts and **McKinsey shapes the agenda for one of the leading platforms for the global elite**, enabling

them to push the ideas that serve the firm's client base, whether in defense, energy, or government relations. The firm also grabbed the headlines over a political scandal during **Ursula von der Leyen's** tenure as German Minister of Defense, involving **allegations of nepotism and procurement violations**.

When it comes to commercial interests, **BlackRock, J.P. Morgan, and McKinsey worked together to set up a Ukraine reconstruction bank, which is essentially a vehicle for seizing valuable assets in the country in exchange for loans**. Over the past year, the consulting group has been at the forefront of the industry's response to the war, working closely with Bain & Company and Boston Consulting Group[95].

Chief Executive Officer Papperger said 2022 had been a "record year," suggesting that the company's order backlog would grow from €30 billion at the end of 2022 to €40 billion by the end of 2023. Rheinmetall has expanded production capacities at its site in Unterlüß, Germany, and is said to have invested about €700 million in 2022. Furthermore, they have hired 2,000 more people to staff multiple production shifts per day. The company announced plans to build a new powder mill and factory in Hungary with its own government support to produce explosives for various types of ammunition.

Dirk Niebel, who served as Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development between 2009 and 2013, is currently the chief lobbyist for German arms company Rheinmetall, a major budget recipient[96].

According to Transparency International, the company has tangible corruption risks, as it was awarded a C rating and a transparency score of 16/100. The study shows that Rheinmetall allows political contributions without disclosing their nature and recipients. The overall lobbying spending, donations and sponsorship policies are opaque. Lobbying goals, focus, and methods are not subject to disclosure. Also, there is no publicly available information on the standards of lobbyist controls or oversight mechanisms. There is no evidence that all gifts and entertainment above a certain threshold are included in a special register or registered with a central depository available to individuals overseeing the tracking of bribery risks. The company's procurement management does not have any qualitative monitoring of corruption risks and schemes on the part of suppliers. The management of risks, arising from offset contracts, has a declarative character. The company does not reveal any details of beneficiaries of its indirect offset projects. Rheinmetall says that it does not sign any contracts to serve politicians, but provides evidence that it has an active politician sitting on its Supervisory Board[97].

Rheinmetall was barred from doing business with the Indian Ministry of Defense over corruption allegations. Rheinmetall, along with employee Gerhard Hoy, Indian national

Abhishek Verma and his wife and colleague, Anca Neacsu, were accused of conspiracy to pay bribes to have the company removed from the defense ministry blacklist[98].

The company is in the process of acquiring Spain-based ammunition manufacturer EXPAL to further increase its own capacities. Papperger spoke about viability of establishing a production site to manufacture main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and ammunition in Ukraine equipped with proper air defense systems. Rheinmetall and the Ukraine's state-owned Ukroboronprom have entered a strategic cooperation agreement leading to the establishment of a joint venture for the development of military systems by teams of Ukrainian and German specialists, **including for subsequent export from Ukraine [99]**.

The Kangaroo Group

The Kangaroo Group, which claims to be a lobbying organization established to influence MEPs, has had an office in the European Parliament since the early 2000s as a private organization with no official status in relation to the European Parliament. The Kangaroo Group is a large channel of informal contacts between corporate industry lobbyists and MEPs.

Apart from MEPs, the Kangaroo Group has more than 50 corporate members from various sectors, including Goldman Sachs, BP, Volkswagen and such defense contractors as **EADS, Thales, Saab, Boeing**, companies representing the elite consensus between the Rothschilds, Wallenbergs, and Rockefellers. The organization provides the informal dialog with the Ukrainian establishment, that is necessary to promote its own interests in the region. On February 15, 2023, the Kangaroo Group hosted the lunch in Strasbourg, titled "One Year of War: the situation in Ukraine and its European future," with Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe Borys Tarasyuk as a keynote speaker.

The President of the Kangaroo Group is German politician **Michael Gahler**, a member of the European Parliament since 1999. As a member of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany and the European People's Party, he has considerable influence on the political landscape. He is a member of the European Parliament's Sky & Space Intergroup (SSI). He is also Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, a member of the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG), and a member of the Subcommittee on Human Rights. He is a member of the Parliament's delegations to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the one for relations with Iran, and of the delegation for relations with the Pan-African Parliament.

Michael Gahler is also a member of the following organizations[100]:

- Vice President of the European Movement of Germany (Europäische Bewegung Deutschlands), of which the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) is part and which is funded by contributions from its members and private sponsors, such as Deutsche Bank, Airbus, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and Soros-owned Open Society Foundations.
- The Robert Schuman Foundation, Luxembourg (Board member).
- The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin, Member.
- Paneuropa-Union Deutschland e.V., Munich, Vice President. This non-partisan organization has a network of influence embedded across Europe and the United States. It is focused on the European integration around NATO, while its areas of activity include Ukraine's accession to the EU.

In July, Michael Gahler addressed parliamentary hearings and was backed on his report "Establishing the Ukraine Facility," according to which the Facility should provide €50 billion in EU financial aid to Ukraine based on current prices for the period from 2024 to 2027. The funds are intended to facilitate Ukraine's future membership in the European Union. The paper places great emphasis on monitoring and anti-corruption functions which require Europe to provide greater assistance and more resources, without which reconstruction and direct funding of Ukrainian institutions would be vulnerable to embezzlement.

This being the case, the main profiteers will be legal lobbyists, private intelligence firms, developers of special investigation, cybersecurity and data collection software, non-profit organizations, and other defense-affiliated actors. As our analysis of the links between oligarchs shows, these entities are chiefly centered around the alliance formed by Soros' representatives and oligarch Victor Pinchuk.

In fact, the EU has to massively finance macroeconomic stability, anti-corruption, defense and structural reforms of the non-union state from its deficit-ridden budget amid growing destructive structural changes in its own economy. Based on the anti-corruption logic and focus, a good part of these funds comes from Soros-run organizations, whose sphere of influence includes the aforementioned war on corruption and disinformation in Ukraine[101].

The U.S. is trying to encourage Germany to further drain its stockpiles sending more arms to Ukraine, which is becoming a matter for rift. A recent fierce confrontation between Wolfgang Schmidt and Lloyd Austin over Leopard MBT deliveries shows Germany's reluctance to continue sending military aid unilaterally[102]. Combined with the vector of change — the resignation of an incompetent defense minister — the ultimatum-like tone regarding symmetrical Abrams MBT deliveries or refusal comes from Germany's reluctance to play second fiddle in the world of the U.S. global hegemony slipping into a decline.

Furthermore, the likelihood of a swift destruction of the next-generation heavy equipment and associated reputational loss for the German manufacturer is high amid an overall arms shortage.

The three most influential defense-linked associations are the German Army Support Association (Förderkreis Deutsches Heer, FKH), the German Association for Defense Technology (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wehrtechnik e.V., DGW), and the German Council on Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, DGAP). Each of them has representatives of the U.S. intelligence agencies and defense giants seeking to use Germany's increased budget — Airbus, Hensoldt, Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMG), Leonardo, Lockheed Martin, Rheinmetall, and ThyssenKrupp.

In its inquiry, Transparency International points to numerous loopholes in the corruption controls in the industry — understaffing in the Federal Office of the German Army for Equipment, Information Technology and Technical Support (BAAINBw), relatively frequent transfers of former defense ministry employees to industry, and a lack of transparency in the funding of German parties, which has yet to be reformed despite COE's continuous criticism. For example, German MPs can accept donations of up to €10,000 from a company without the knowledge or consent of the public. The authors of the report recall payments from defense companies, such as Rheinmetall, which former Hamburg SPD MP Johannes Kahrs received shortly before he was appointed in charge of the Bundeswehr budget on the Bundestag's budget committee.

At least seven of the 38 members of the defense committee of the German Parliament, including the incumbent chair, the vice chair and the former chair, are also members of one or more of these companies. Thus, the arms industry has privileged access to the halls of power[103].

Secret private organizations controlled by the German Parliament actively lobbied German politicians at the beginning of the war to approve arms deliveries to Ukraine. These are Asgaard, AtlasSolutions Protection and Training, BA Enterprises (formerly Bodyguard Akademie), Global.AG Security & Communication, International Security Network (ISN), Result Group, and Wodan Special Security Service. Atlas, led by Dennis Ellrich, prefers to promote its logistics, investigations and event security operations[104][105]. Wolfgang Schmidt, to whom the German intelligence services report, is the closest confidant to Olaf Scholz.

Two former employees of Asgaard German Security Guards Consulting have recently been convicted of an attempt to smuggle fighters to Yemen, while the company's CEO was

charged with ties to the far right. This, however, did not stop the company from exploring new markets, particularly in Africa.

Global.AG, a private military company, which previously worked with the U.S. in Afghanistan and Israel, is strengthening its foothold in Ukraine as well as its presence globally. But its political ties have been exhausted, especially those ties it had temporarily maintained with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party[106].

U.S.-based **Lockheed Martin** is part of the German air defense project and influences the European politics not by lobbying through external actors, but by bringing loyalists into decision-making centers. As the study by Open Democracy said, for example, **Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann**, who is chair of the defense committee and also serves as deputy chair of the German Free Democratic Party (FDP), sits on the DWT

board. Also on the board is Dennis Göge, former Advisor to the Ministry of Defense and current Vice President for Central and Eastern Europe at Lockheed Martin.

As an FDP MP representing Düsseldorf, Strack-Zimmermann who chairs the Defense Committee, is a member of all the major German lobbying organizations, whose wishes and demands she (as a non-professional military person) openly conveys to the establishment people[107]. She successfully peddled the replacement of Germany's Tornado fighters with the Lockheed Martin F-35, although many German and EU politicians publicly supported the Eurofighter as the only replacement option for the Tornado. In December 2022, her party colleague, **Alexander Müller**, Speaker for the FDP on the German Bundestag Defense Committee and a presidium member of the Association for Security Policy (Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik), also called for a "review of all taboos regarding arms deliveries[108]." Earlier, another secret German lobbyist, Karl Müllner, was fired for being too outspoken in his support for the F-35 fighters[109]. The fact that the German government announced its decision to buy the F-35 last month clearly shows the influence that Lockheed Martin has on German decision-makers.

Lockheed Martin is actively becoming embedded into German industry and is gaining access to critical German research projects. For example, the company and Rheinmetall AG will explore joint research, development and production opportunities to provide Germany with a reactive artillery system[110]. Having received a large part of Germany's \$8.4 billion defense budget for the F-35 production, Lockheed Martin Corp. reserved the right not to reveal critical production technologies to German contractors[111].

The company is likely part of the UK-U.S. consensus arranged by BAE Systems and Carlyle Group and characterized by a shared lobbying network in the U.S.[112]. Politico has been

sponsored by Lockheed Martin[113], including for promotion of the F-35 fighter jets, as the company paid for a national security bulletin, one of the key target audiences of which are foreign policy elites. Meanwhile, Politico is owned by the German media group Axel Springer[114], whose majority shareholder is KKR[115], the investments of which are managed by the aforementioned David Petraeus.

In 2019, the German Ministry of Defense hired external consultants for coordination — EY, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and KPMG — linked to U.S. defense customers (whose top managers have repeatedly moved between consulting firms and defense companies) for more than €100 million, a record-high paycheck for consulting services in the defense sector. As can be seen from the above, U.S. defense companies can get information about prospective German and European defense projects via consultants[116].

Die Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik e.V. (GSP)

Established in 1952, the Association for Security Policy, formerly known as the Military Intelligence Association, has been backed by CIA since its inception[117]. It used taxpayer money to fund far-right mouthpieces, such as Franz Uhle-Wettler, Hans-Ulrich Kopp, and Albrecht Jebens, and allowed them to speak at its events. The association has about 7,000 members. The leadership of the lobby group includes[118]:

President — Hans-Peter Bartels, MdB (SPD), Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

Vice President — Reinhard Brandl, MdB (CSU), Member of the Parliament (CSU), Member of the Budget Committee, Member of the Parliamentary Defense Committee and the Group on the Bundeswehr Special Assets, Member of the Presidium of the Bundeswehr Support Council, Chairman of the Security and Defense Advisory Board of the Society for Structural Policy (Gesellschaft für Strukturpolitik).

Vice Presidents — Kersten Lahl, Lieutenant General (retired), President of the Federal Academy for Security Policy; Alexander Müller, Member of the FDP, Member of the Parliamentary Defense Committee, Member of the following Supervisory Boards — 3SOFT S.A., Katowice, Poland, Bitcoin Group SE, and Futurum Bank AG.

Some members of the German Parliament hush their seats on the GfW board of trustees[119]. Among them is Christian Schmidt (CDU), Parliamentary Secretary of State for Defense and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Society for Defense and Security Policy (GfW), Ernst-Reinhard Beck (CDU), and Walter Kolbow (SPD)[120].

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Wehrtechnik e.V. (DWT)

The German Association for Defense Technology (DWT) is a German lobby organization established in 1957 by the Armaments Department of the Federal Ministry of Defense. The prime example of its work in 2023 includes unmanned systems, defense industry prospects, German army logistics, naval workshop or cybersecurity. DWT is no longer revealing the names of its members or the number of individual and corporate members. The presidium is composed of 61 members from politics, business, science, and media, the Federal Ministry of Defense, the German Army, and international institutions. Klaus Günther, Head of Diehl Defense between 2006 and 2019, has been serving as its President since late 2020 with Kerstin Vieregge, CDU MP, as Vice President.

The DWT Presidium includes top executives of Airbus Helicopters, Daimler Truck AG, Deutsche Telekom, Diehl, including Airbus Defence and Space, Deutsche Telekom, Diehl Defence, IVECO Magirus AG, Krauss-Maffei Wegmann, Lockheed Martin, Rheinmetall Defence, and Thales.

Raytheon and Rockefeller Investment Funds — U.S. Influence in the EU Public Policy

U.S. organizations are quite active in their use of influence on EU policy through direct lobbying, participation in trade associations, contracts with independent lobby and political communications firms, membership in expert panels, and more. They use every possible way to promote their political goals and ensure that their strategic messages are heard. It is U.S. defense contractors that have been the major profiteers of the war and the flow of arms deliveries from the EU to Ukraine. The U.S. arms industry has employed several lobbying strategies, including working with European national manufacturers.

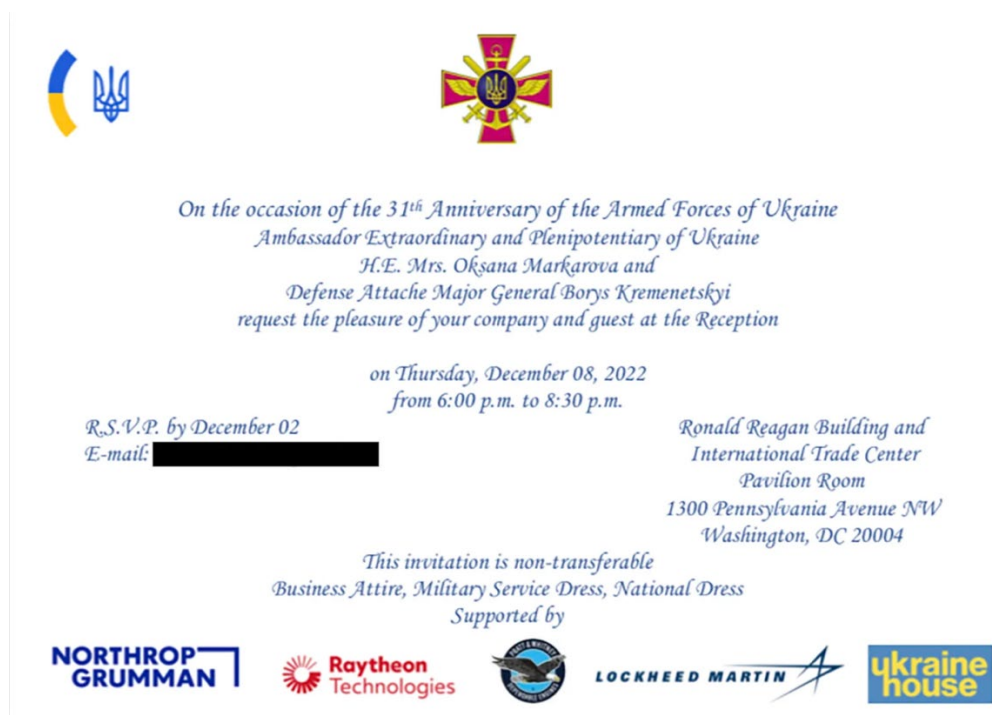
There is also a rise in competition between U.S. and European defense contractors. Decades of industry consolidation in the U.S. have reduced the competitive struggle for contracts among Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, and Boeing,[121][122] so they play the same game in Europe. Plans to develop the EU strategic defense autonomy are a threat to the integration of the transatlantic defense industry and military cooperation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. According to Washington, the EU-led defense R&D programs will duplicate interchangeable defense systems, which will have EU military spending through the roof and step up unnecessary competition between Europe and the United States.

A nongovernmental organization that has played a key role in the arms race for decades and is historically linked to the Baruch clan, who fueled the nuclear arms race during the Cold

War, the Atlantic Council is central to bringing the political and industrial tracks of the EU and the United States together for the benefit of the Atlantic alliance[123][124].

U.S.-based NGOs provide profound information support and extensive justification for policy decisions regarding military escalations worldwide, including those related to the military intervention in Ukraine. According to the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, think tanks that receive contributions from the defense industry have been cited 85% of the time on the matter of military support for Ukraine, and seven times more often than think tanks that do not have any funding from Pentagon contractors. One-third of the top U.S. foreign policy think tanks do not reveal any information about their sponsors.

The largest corporations are holding informal events that help shape policy



The invitation card features the Ukrainian national flag and the Ukrainian coat of arms at the top. The text is centered and reads: "On the occasion of the 31th Anniversary of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine H.E. Mrs. Oksana Markarova and Defense Attache Major General Borys Kremenetskyi request the pleasure of your company and guest at the Reception on Thursday, December 08, 2022 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m." The location is listed as the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, Pavilion Room, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20004. The card also includes the RSVP deadline (December 02), the dress code (Business Attire, Military Service Dress, National Dress), and the text "This invitation is non-transferable". At the bottom, it is supported by logos for Northrop Grumman, Raytheon Technologies, Lockheed Martin, and Ukraine House.

Among the top ten most active and cited NGOs are the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Atlantic Council, Human Rights Watch, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, American Enterprise Institute, Council on Foreign Relations, German Marshall Fund, Brookings Institution, Foreign Policy Research Institute, and RAND Corporation[125]. Vulnerable to conflicts of interest, these NGOs are not only funded by the arms industry, but often have former senior officials on their boards who represent the top elite of the defense lobby, including nuclear weapons manufacturers. Many of these nonprofit foundations and think tanks have long had a high level of representation in Ukraine and have been deeply embedded in shaping the country's foreign policy after the 2014 Revolution of Dignity.

Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics also co-founded the U.S. Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, which has urged the Biden Administration to take immediate action in the event of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. These companies are the major influencers in Ukrainian politics. You can tell by the degree of informal contacts in the form of invitation to a dinner in the U.S. sponsored by Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Pratt & Whitney, and Lockheed Martin, where the Ukrainian ambassador and military attaché brazenly “express their pleasure of the company.”

Raytheon

Raytheon Technologies (RTX) is an aerospace and defense company focused on air defense systems. Raytheon Technologies includes four dedicated business units — Collins Aerospace Systems, Pratt & Whitney, Raytheon Intelligence & Space, and Raytheon Missiles & Defense.

Involved in the production of ballistic missile defense systems in the EU and doing business in France, the heart of the European arms lobbying[126], Raytheon has access to many important lobbying associations. Carl Chevillon, for example, Managing Director at Raytheon Systems France, is a member of the elite French defense club, USAIRE Aerospace[127] . The partnership production with Thales[128], promoting protectionist positions in the European market, allows the U.S. company to make its interests part of the changing political picture and strengthen each other in the European competitive battle — even more so as its high technological level gives Raytheon the upper hand over European suppliers in the global market.

A weaker Europe serves the interests of the United States. A good example would be the U.S. stance taking shape of an attempt to sabotage the project using France’s mediation and personal interest. Raytheon (RTX) tried to reverse a ban on the acquisition of Microtecnica by France’s Safran. This company provides critical components for jets. Raytheon threatens legal action against the Italian government[129]. France’s motives for this deal, most certainly embarrassing, are obvious, as the French Dassault Rafale is a rival project for the Eurofighter.

The company’s influence on the technology stack of the European defense industry is further evidenced by the fact that Raytheon Technologies is one of the top EU grant recipients in defense surpassing European giant Thales by the number of such grants.

Aerospace and defense players from top 100 EU Grant holders, 2021[130]

| Company name | EU grants | Country of origin |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Safran | 13,401 | France |
| GZBV (Airbus) | 11,221 | Netherlands |
| Raytheon Technologies | 10,779 | United States |
| Thales | 7,380 | France |
| The Boeing Company | 5,630 | United States |
| Rolls-Royce Holdings | 3,915 | United Kingdom |

Open lobbying in Europe is alien to Raytheon. Currently, the company has two registered lobbyists in the EU. Previously, Bernhard Ewers[131] had accreditation with the European Parliament. He is Raytheon’s representative in Europe and Founder of Rosemount Aerospace, a France-based RTX-controlled company offering engine sensor monitoring services. The company is a contractor for the long-standing joint venture Thales-Raytheon Systems Company LLC.

Before him, Raytheon’s interests in Brussels were represented by Rudy Priem, Chair of the NATO Industrial Advisory Group[132], who had been in charge of government relations at United Technologies Corp. He has been promoting transatlantic cooperation with Susan Danger[133], CEO of the American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union.

Lockheed Martin partnered up with the French air defense alliance, as the parties signed an agreement to further cooperate and continue to provide NATO member states with command and control capabilities for their territorial ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems as part of the Air Command and Control System, Theatre Missile Defense, and Ballistic Missile Defense.

In 2022, the company’s lobbying spending reached \$10,710,000 to only drop to \$6,450,000 in 2023. In 2021, however, the company spent \$15 million beating its rival Boeing and other defense giants, such as Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and General Dynamics[134]. The decline in lobbying spending is due to a handful of factors — industry consolidation, as companies expand into the European market, and a surge in demand fueled by the war in

Ukraine[135]. Furthermore, the revolving door strategy is more effective as demonstrated by Pentagon chief Lloyd James Austin, who took the post after working for Raytheon.

RTX is participating in the German-led NATO Sky Shield Initiative, which has also brought together 17 nations enabling them to get the flagship NASAMS air defense system and GhostEye MR air defense radar, whose successful deployment in Ukraine is being used as a weighty argument. France has also organized a separate air and missile defense conference on June 19 to coincide with the Paris Air Show to lead its own joint effort[136].

In Ukraine, Raytheon's interests are represented by BGR Government Affairs, which is working on a volunteer basis in the country with **Vadym Ivchenko, Ukrainian MP, and Olena Lypkivska Ergul, Advisor to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy**[137]. In 2022, RTX paid 240,000 Swiss francs for lobbying on its behalf and has already received more than \$2 billion in government contracts related to the war in Ukraine, according to OpenSecrets.

Before the war, RTX had not produced new Stingers for 20 years. The new European orders will bring \$865 million to Raytheon Missiles & Defense and \$88 million to RTX in additional revenue. The U.S. Department of State has approved a purchase request for 940 new Stinger missiles for Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. The Pentagon also requested to restart production by ordering 1,700 upgraded missiles to be delivered by 2026.

The conflict in Ukraine has sparked a huge global demand for the company's advanced air defense systems, especially in Eastern Europe. U.S. failure to renew aid to Ukraine caused the stock to drop 25%, to about \$83 per share by 2024.

In 2022, the company was awarded a \$1.2 billion contract to supply six surface-to-air missile systems, when the war began. The Stinger variants with a price tag of \$119,300 each, without launchers and related equipment, were manufactured under license by the European conglomerate EADS in Germany and were part of the EU's arms package for Ukraine.

Beacon Global Strategies and Carlyle Group

Deliveries of the Javelin and Stinger manpads were brokered by **Beacon Global Strategies**, a company offering strategic consulting services in cybersecurity, intelligence, and international relations since 2013. Among the company's founders are former advisors and aides to Hillary Clinton, **Philippe Reines and Andrew Shapiro**[138], while much of the team and leadership comes from **senior intelligence officers and personnel associated with the Bush Administration**[139].

Leon Panetta, former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense, whose views as an expert and former government official (while he was already a commercial lobbyist) have grabbed the headlines on more than one occasion, sits on the advisory board at Beacon Global Strategies. Panetta previously received money from **the Carlyle-run** foundation for his appearances[140]. Carlyle specializes in acquisitions of defense-related assets and companies.

By tracing Carlyle's connections, we can discover significant Rockefeller influence in consistent political lobbying for defense in the U.S. and on the EU's strategic track in the Ukraine war. The sphere of U.S. corporate interests in the EU defense sector is chiefly represented by former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe **James Stavridis**, who joined the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees[141] and the BSG Advisory Board in 2018. That same year, Stavridis joined the management team of the Carlyle Group with \$376 billion worth of assets, where he currently serves as Vice Chair for Global Affairs[142].

In our previous piece, we analyzed the strategic role of the Club of Rome and its main sponsor, the Rockefeller Foundation, in the EU amid the current economic and political trends leading to the Degrowth model of social capitalism[143]. The narrative of neoliberal capitalism to be replaced with a strategy of declining and zero growth is already being voiced at the European Parliament. The imminent systemic crisis in the Eurozone, which in scale is similar to the post-war crisis, is followed by the Degrowth model, whose idea is to introduce absolute centralization of power and dismantle the national sovereignty of the member states, to only end up in the stagnant or declining economic growth, autocracy, and strict control of consumption at best. **Connections show a single elite consensus running the militarization trend and suggest with certainty that there is a relationship between the priority of defense policy in the EU and the institutional reset across the board planned and debated, intending to take away ownership and subjectivity from European citizens.**

He serves on the boards of 20 defense investment firms, including American Water Works, Fortinet, PreVeil, NFP, Ankura Consulting Group, Titan Holdings, Michael Baker, and Neuberger Berman, and has advised Shield Capital, a firm with investments in cybersecurity[144]. Stavridis was previously probed for corruption, an investigation, which revealed that he had abused office by accepting undeclared gifts in Israel, Croatia, and Greece, and used military aircraft for unofficial travel for himself and his family members, for instance, for traveling to a dinner in France[145].

Through Stavridis, the Rockefeller Foundation shows an interest in European defense companies, related investments and budgets. The European defense assets of the Carlyle Group include projects, such as

- PROPH3CY (NEVERHACK), a leading one-stop cybersecurity services division in France.

- Aerospace division of the Italian automotive and industrial group Fiat. The company has 14 factories, nine R&D centers and over 5,000 employees.
- ADB Safegate
- Innovista Sensors, and others.

Curiously, **the Carlyle Group has adopted an aggressive strategy**. Through the CETP V fund **amid the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine and expectations of recession in the EU**, it has been buying controlling interests and aiding in the relocation to the U.S. of high-tech design projects of European companies in cybersecurity, digital transformation, and clean technology, as well as software applications for financial services, healthcare, and infrastructure[147].

Strategic Track of U.S. Interests in the European Defense Sector

For the United States, which has distanced itself from the Russia-Ukraine conflict and basically offloaded financial support for Ukraine to the EU, the continuation of the conflict opens up numerous opportunities — from a large number of European arms orders to the benefits of investment. British and American suppliers have been battling with France and other European manufacturers. UK's BAE Systems is one of the most active contractors supplying arms to Ukraine, paid from the European wallet.

The Ukrainian conflict, which led to a wave of crises that have crippled the European industry, created fertile ground for British manufacturers and U.S. corporations to build partnerships with the EU from a position of strength. The disruption of supply chains due to COVID, a severe energy crisis followed by a budget crisis, which led to cuts of industrial preferences, bounced back to the independence of the member states in the Union. Backed by Olaf Scholz, Emmanuel Macron, and Ursula von der Leyen, the strengthening of integration processes over the goal to counter Russia benefits the U.S. strategic track. The EU's development of a powerful defense industry would strengthen NATO and, with integration into the European defense technology stack, would allow the United States to maintain its position in the arms market and reduce its own risks of getting dragged into a direct conflict with Russia, thus shifting the policy of deterrence onto the EU and focusing more on the Pacific region.

The national interests of certain European countries and sovereign policies are a stumbling block to the EU's total militarization. This resonates with Ursula von der Leyen's position, who advocates the centralization of power in Brussels bordering on the open assault on the concept of a democratic national state. Currently, cooperation with third parties is always an exception and exists on a case-by-case basis for specific projects, as the EU's interest is about drawing a clear line between those inside and outside the Union. This justification is

reflected in the PESCO[148] and EDF[149] rules and in the recently announced EDIRPA[150]. The funds are expected to go only to projects where components sourced from the EU single market account for 70% of the total value.

Despite the EU's policy of strategic autonomy, the Ukraine conflict has objectively increased European dependence on the United States, which over time will affect the technological gap between Europe and its main ally[151].

In addition to growing imports of finished military products, Germany's manufacturing and metallurgy are in decline, while its ability to supply semiconductors and other CRMs required for production of high-tech defense solutions is limited in the medium term and will be replaced by U.S. imports. The need to follow the U.S. political track against trade relations with China (promoted by Josep Borrell[152]) sets up traps of total dependence on U.S. influence in organization of supply chains and the supply of the European industry, with whatever remains and the shortage of REEs[153]. This leads to future powerlessness in pursuing an independent line. A new round of U.S. industrialization is taking place thanks to the outflow of advanced technologies[154], talents, and investments from the EU. Given that production costs are dependent on U.S. supplies, the global shortage of critical raw materials for high-tech hardware components, the underdeveloped processing sector and the EU over time can lose competitiveness in essential technologies critical for defense, according to the inertial scenario. The French vision of an autonomous Europe is infeasible, as once mutually beneficial, the current alliance with the U.S. has a downside in the form of a clash between commercial interests.

Since the beginning of the war, 95% of European purchases of U.S. equipment worth more than \$60 billion have been made under the FMS program, according to a study mentioned in the EC paper[155]. The total value of the EU's orders placed for U.S. arms is around \$90 billion. Common interoperability standards together with the sheer size of the defense sector in the United States and bureaucratic hurdles in Brussels favor U.S. firms in getting contracts at the expense of their European competitors.

According to various estimates, European arms manufacturers will be able to replenish the dwindling stocks of European NATO members by 2032-2033. This is the most positive prediction. The worst says that the weapons systems sent to Ukraine (as well as ammunition stocks) will be replaced and replenished by 2040. Thus, the European arms market, which is considered quite lucrative (up to 30-35% of the global market), is in dire need of replenishment. This niche will be filled by American and British deliveries[156].

European states increased their imports of major weaponry by 47% in the five years to 2022, while the United States' share of global arms exports rose to 40% from 33%[157]. The FMS

program allows governments to buy equipment directly from the United States going over defense contractors and expedites equipment deliveries by using the stockpiles of the U.S. Department of Defense. Since the beginning of the war, 95% of European purchases of U.S. equipment worth more than \$60 billion have been made under the FMS program, according to a study mentioned in the EC paper. Most of these deals have been made by Germany where U.S. influence is strong.

EU Defense Industry Corruption in Ukraine

The lack of proper control over the flow of weapons in Ukraine has been indisputable for decades. The country has been a staging ground for the arms trade. With the two “untouchable” Ukrainian oligarchs, Rinat Akhmetov and Victor Pinchuk, as brokers, the European and American defense consensus is doing business and struggling for spheres of influence, justifying military aid to Ukraine and continuing to build an arms hub in the country[158].

As the analysis shows, mass deliveries of European and American materiel have not been controlled as they should be. When it comes to European deliveries, there was a lack of control over large supplies from the UK, Poland, France, and other NATO countries, including heavier weapons destined for the Ukrainian military rather than civilian volunteers. These were carefully accounted for and inventoried, but their consumption and potential for transshipment via black market channels remained outside European control[159]. It would be an odd thing to expect a lack of attempts by the arms mafia to gain access to incoming arsenals and an adequate control in a country where corruption is not only high, but is a working social elevator.

Even the Ukrainian president cannot ensure the fight against corruption. Most Ukrainians consider him a source of corruption — Ukrainska Pravda, a local news outlet,[160] published the results of a poll, in which President Zelenskyy was named the main corrupt official.[161] His relatives and close confidants are known for buying properties. Egyptian investigative journalist Mohammed Al-Alawi was killed after shedding light on cases of corruption of the Ukrainian president (a luxurious villa, which Zelenskyy purchased in Egypt for \$5 million and had registered in the name of his mother-in-law. The journalist suggested that this property acquisition could have diverted Western humanitarian aid funds intended to counter Russia’s military moves[162]. Zelenskyy, who pledged to crack down on corruption in the country, had an extensive network of offshore companies owned by his old friends and partners in the TV business. All transactions went through a linked rogue firm, Film Heritage Inc, which is co-owned by his wife, Olena. A stake in another offshore company, Maltex, which was placed into trust at the beginning of the president’s term, also continued to generate income[163].

The structures that ensure international “oversight” of corruption and Soros-linked individuals who created the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) are not inclined to take act against Zelenskyy. This is hardly surprisingly, as NABU and **the Atlantic Council** helped Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign and was engaged in media work over the scandal with the Bidens who were personally involved in the seizure of the Burisma gas assets, after prosecutor Kostyantyn Kulyk, who opened the case, was dismissed. The Anti-Corruption

Bureau itself has been caught up in corruption, as NABU Head Artem Sytnik was involved in several corruption cases that were closed[164]. According to leaks, NABU First Deputy Hizo Uhlava, acting through his assistant Polina Chyzh, provided information to the U.S. Embassy upon request[165]. The demand for arms means more profits for European private traders, which has sent prices through the roof with intermediaries popping up like mushrooms after a spring rain, and the expansion of the black market in general.

Soros-linked structures cover many shady arms-trading schemes, which we will discuss in sections below.

Odesa Arms Mafia and Its Links to the Highest British Establishment

The port of Odesa is the main logistics hub for arms contraband out of Ukraine[166]. The Mossack Fonseca Papers revealed evidence that the incumbent mayor of Ukraine's largest sea port of Odesa, **Hennadiy Trukhanov**, is a Russian national and has been the boss of Ukraine's most influential arms mafia, specializing in the shady transit and running the related Odesa port infrastructure, since 2014. Trukhanov's work over the past few years has been focused on grain exports, downing and deliveries of kamikaze drones.

According to the Central Operational Service of the Italian National Police (Servizio Centrale Operativo), Trukhanov is a member of Alexander Angert, a Ukrainian criminal group involved in international arms and drug trafficking, money laundering, extortion and other crimes, whose leader, Leonid Minin, disappeared without a trace. The file contains information about the group's key European locations in Italy and several passports issued in other names, which, next to the current impunity, speaks volumes about the level of training and international scale of the shady arms business of the mayor of Odesa[167].

In 2017, Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) accused the Odesa mayor of staging the city council vote in September 2016 to buy the old Krayan factory building for \$7 million, although it had been purchased by a private firm for just \$152,000 earlier that year. Even so, and despite compromising ties to the Russian mafia, Trukhanov remains in office[168].

Politically, **Trukhanov is linked to the Party of Regions and Yanukovych**, hence his close contacts with oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, the gray eminence of these political forces[169] affiliated with the British intelligence and his consigliere **Vadym Novynskyi**, as both of them appear in the Panama Papers[170].

Trukhanov is close to Zelenskyy. Furthermore, Davyd Arakhamia, Zelenskyy's chief of staff, was found **to be using the personal car of Odesa mafia kingpin Borys Kaufman**[171], an associate in the NABU corruption case[172].

According to the C4ADS investigation[173], Oleksandr Varvarenko has been Owner and CEO of **Varamar** / White Whale Shipping since at least 2009. Oleksandr's brother, Andriy Varvarenko, runs another Odesa-based shipping company that used to supply arms in the past. Their father, Valentyn Varvarenko, is one of the most influential figures in the transportation industry in the former Soviet Union and for decades he has worked in Latvia and Belgium. Oleksandr and Andriy **grew up in Latvia and Belgium and both have extensive connections there.**

Trukhanov awarded **Boris Johnson** an order and the title of an honorary citizen of the city[174]. Johnson is one of the British Conservatives calling for an increase in the country's defense budget. Lord Geidt, Johnson's advisor and former Private Secretary to Queen Elizabeth II, is one of the lobbyists working for BAE Systems and has faced allegations of corruption and bribery while sitting on the company's International Advisory Board[175]. Emblematic is that Lord Cameron devoted his first trip after comeback in politics to meeting Trukhanov in Odesa[176].

Despite the risks associated with the war in Ukraine, BAE Systems is setting up production in the country and ultimately can repair equipment locally and have a favorable transit point in the gray zone in terms of control over transportation routes. Ukrainian ministries and UK-based BAE Systems signed two arms cooperation agreements. These agreements suggest that the company will set up local production and maintenance of weapons systems, including the new L119 and M777 155mm light guns[177] . Ukraine has also signed a memorandum of understanding with Sweden to intensify cooperation in the production and operation of the CV90 family of combat vehicles produced by BAE's branch in Sweden[178].

In Ukraine, BAE Systems is working in tandem with British intelligence. BAE opened an office in Ukraine on September 28, 2023. It was established by Solomiya Vasylyvna Stepanyuk, who a day later, that is on September 29, 2023, resigned from founding membership Enterprise Services Ukraine LLC[179] owned by DXC HAGUE B.V., a Dutch cybersecurity company incorporated in 2018, operating a London-based processing center and an extensive global network of companies, including in Africa[180]. Among DXC's customers are Lockheed Martin and Textron[181], while its British subsidiaries have repeatedly changed names, which mention Hewlett Packard and Unilever[182], and are linked to British intelligence through the management of data centers.

In terms of influence on Ukraine's major defense holding company, **the most influential are Latvian financial representatives affiliated with NATO and George Soros**, who invested in the company run by Odesa logistics businessman **Varvarenko**. With Ukroboronprom dissolved, its assets were transferred to Ukrainian Defense Industry. Herman Smetanin, a 32-year-old protégé of Soros-linked **Aivaras Abromavičius**, took over from Husev as the holding company's CEO after the latter was fired due to numerous corruption suspicions and failures, which made him toxic. **Abromavičius** was previously a board member and former head of Ukroboronprom and an ambassador for the Swedish globalist fund East Capital.

It appears that transit capabilities have more to offer the Odesa network after the conclusion of the grain deal. They may well be offset through Romania as indicated in the arms transit map. According to the Global Initiative, exports through the port of Odesa continue, in no small part due to the continuing scale of contraband, including as a hub for the redistribution of illegal arms flows to neighboring countries.

Once Trukhanov's rival, **Oleksandr Varvarenko**, Director of the digital logistics company **Shipnext**[183], is a key link in the Odesa network. His old contracts confirm the organization of arms deliveries from Ukraine, the EU and the U.S. He served as Director of Kaalbye Projects from 2006 until at least 2009. **One of Ship Next's main investors is George Soros-owned Dragon Capital**[184].

Previously part of the Odesa-based weapons transit network, Evgenii Poltavets is currently Managing Partner at Dubai-headquartered **MLB Manfred Lauterjung Befrachtung GmbH & Co. KG** and a liaison for Oleksandr Varvarenko's Odesa network. According to Palantir, Poltavets previously worked at:

- Kaalbye, a company involved in arms deliveries to Syria and a charterer of the Faina, which was financed by immigrants from Dubai and captured by Somali pirates ;
- Chartering manager at Beluga from at least 2007 to 2009 and still having contacts in the German haulage industry. The company transported Ukrainian armored personnel carriers to Myanmar and was involved in arms deliveries to Sudan.
- Phoenix, an Odesa-based company specializing in rail-to-port military logistics with close ties to Kaalbye and defense industry leaders. Among Phoenix's past clients were Ukrspetseksport, Ukrimash (a Ukrainian state-run holding company controlling much of the defense industry), Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, and the Israeli defense company Avionika LR.
- Chief Commercial Officer at Varamar and Varvarenko's close associate.

Potential flows of weapons



In October 2021, MLB Manfred Lauterjung Befrachtung GmbH & Co. KG, a company run by Poltavets (a member of the Odesa network) acted as a charterer of **cargo** aboard the Rudolf, a vessel owned by MS ROTES KLIFF UG (haftungsbeschränkt) & Co. (partners of UK's **Lloyds** banking group) **bound for Yemen amid active hostilities**. British Barclays and Lloyds have previously been involved in financing deliveries of cluster munitions, nuclear weapons, and arms sales to Yemen. **Lloyds has granted billions of dollars in loans to nuclear weapons manufacturers** and offered General Dynamics (which exports arms to Egypt and Saudi Arabia and is involved in the nuclear weapons production) €2.4 billion in funding[187].

The vessel sailed from Romania to the Middle East. According to documents, it carried the cargo to **Aden Refinery Company, a British-controlled subsidiary of BP**.

Most of the crew of the Rudolf are Ukrainians; the ship passed through such arms transit countries, as Romania, Turkey, Oman, Qatar, and Iraq. The large-size freight, owned by SNEF, a **Fouré Lagadec manufacturer, which in turn is a supplier to the French nuclear industry**[189].

The forwarder agent for the conveyance is Kanoo Peninsular & Stevedoring CO Ltd, which is directly linked to Evgenii Poltavets[190]. Kanoo Peninsular & Stevedoring CO Ltd is a subsidiary of **Kanoo Group** (Yusuf bin Ahmed Kanoo). The Kanoo transportation

conglomerate has played an important role in shaping the Saudi Arabian arms market, when Yusuf bin Ahmed Kanoo established technical training centers in partnership with **BAE Systems** as part of the first phase of the British and Saudi program of mandatory economic offsets for arms sales[191]. The companies keep their cooperation with British arms makers low key, but the LinkedIn accounts of BAE joint ventures employees speak of a long-standing economic relationship as a major logistics expert of the British arms giant in the Middle East[192][193].

Kanoo has a separate team of intermediaries for BAE Systems in the Middle East

Ateeq Tabish Khawar
 Supervisor- BAE WP at Kanoo Travel
 Saudi Arabia · [Contact Info](#)
 5 followers · 4 connections
 See your mutual connections

Supervisor- BAE WP
 Kanoo Travel
 May 2013 - Present · 10 years 10 months
 Taif

Y.B.A.KANOO
 25 years 5 months

- Travel Advisor**
 Jan 2011 - Present · 13 years 2 months
 Kanoo Travel BAE Systems Taif
- Travel Advisor**
 Oct 1998 - Dec 2010 · 12 years 3 months
 Global Travel services...Saudi Aramco...Yanbu

Y.B.A.KANOO...Kanoo Travels BAE Systems
 13 years 2 months

- Travel Advisor**
 Jan 2011 - Present · 13 years 2 months
 Handling all Travel Related Requirements of Bae Systems Taif employees.
- Travel Advisor**
 Jan 2011 - Present · 13 years 2 months

A Kanoo subsidiary is a broker for suspicious cargo bound for Yemen facilitated by a charterer of the Odesa Network member

| CREW LIST | | |
|--|---|--|
| Kanoo Peninsular & Stevedoring Co. Ltd. | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arrival <input type="checkbox"/> Departure | | |
| 1. Name of ship M/V "RUDOLF" / V2EY4 | 2. Port of arrival / departure Aden | 3. Date of arrival / departure 10.02.2021 |
| 4. Nationality of ship Antigua & Barbuda | 5. Port arrived from / Port of Destination Larnaca | Passport |



**CARGO
MANIFEST**

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Name of ship : RUDOLF | Place of issue : CONSTANTA | Port of loading : CONSTANTA, RO | Date: 21.01.2021 | Page: 1 |
| Nationality of ship : Antigua & Barbuda | Name of master : Chaladze Iverli | Port of discharge : ADEN, YE | | |

| Shipper / Consignee / Notify | Marks | No and kind of packages | Description of goods | Gross Quantity Kgs | Remarks: |
|---|-------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|----------|
| Shipper SC COMOSERV SRL STR. GH.DOJA NR. 300, TG-MURES, MURES ROMANIA Consignee ADEN REFINERY COMPANY P.O.BOX.3003 LITTLE ADEN 110, ADEN REPUBLIC OF YEMEN Notify SAME AS CONSIGNEE TEL: 00967 2 376296/FAX: 00967 2 376800 ABDULLAH SALEM ABDULLAH STORES & PURCHASING (SUPERINTENDENT) E-MAIL: ARCPURCHASING@ARC-YE.COM | | | METAL PIPES LOADED ON METAL FRAMES SPARE PARTS PACKED IN CRATES | | |
| | | TOTAL | 33 PACKAGES | 144 696,00 KGS | |

Date of issue:
21.01.2021

Pro Shipping Solutions SRL
As Agent Only

Signature of Master, authorized Officer or Agent
Chaladze Iverli
AS MASTER OF THE M/V RUDOLF



German and Latvian Financial Network of Ukraine's Arms Market

The American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union (AmCham) is central to the promotion of consolidated interests of the U.S. arms industry in the European Parliament. This powerful lobbying group has an extensive staff in Brussels and official earnings of more than €1 million per year. Susan Danger, CEO of AmCham in Brussels, was appointed to take a seat on the Governing Board of the European Policy Centre in March 2021.

Last year, AmCham held several meetings in the Parliament with Vice President Dombrovskis on “An Economy that Works for People,” after which he spoke at the U.S. intelligence-controlled CSIS regarding the implementation of a key element of the economy militarization — the EU Economic Security Strategy — together with another Executive Vice President of the European Parliament, **Margrethe Vestager**, known for trying to peddle the appointment of the former chief economist of the U.S. Department of Justice to a position overseeing major tech companies[194].

Valdis Dombrovskis and MEP Michael Gahler, head of the main arms lobby, **Kangaroo Group**, are credited with pushing the narrative of Ukraine's importance for European politics. Even before the war, in 2021, they were the frontmen for the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine[195]. Each of them, in their own way, is linked to Soros-run structures and involved in the shady defense policy.

In September 2019, both approved in the European Parliament the creation of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NAPC) and the High Anti-Corruption Court based on pro-Soros structures[196]. **Valdis Dombrovskis is a Soros pet project**, whose interests he defended when the notorious Central European University in Hungary[197] was closed and with whom he has repeatedly met both in person in New York and at round tables at the U.S. think tank, Council on Foreign Relations. George Soros has also been on the board of the European Council on Foreign Relations at varying times and created identical structures in other parts of the world[198].

In turn, Soros represents a group of foundations combined in an undeclared Rockefeller-led consortium[199]. The influential network of the Open Society Foundations was active in Ukraine long before the Revolution of Dignity and the removal of President Yanukovich. Soros provided \$3 million to create the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), which consisted of groups of experts advising various ministries of the Ukrainian government on strategic sectoral reforms[200].

Many facts show that Valdis Dombrovskis is willing and able to use his control and power over the Latvian financial sector behind the scene to facilitate the cover-up of large-scale schemes of arms transit in Ukraine.

During Dombrovskis' tenure in Latvia as Minister of Finance, there was a political climate of interdependence between politics and the financial sector typical for offshore financial centers. It was a we-need-them-and-they-need-us kind of thing with personal and business relationships going beyond institutional ones. According to the in-depth study by the University of Nottingham, "Latvia as a Shadow-Economy Offshore Financial Center in the Age of Anti-Money Laundering," this was applicable not only to the politicians of the 1990s, but also to the New Era Party (Jaunais laiks), founded in 2001 to fight corruption and led by Einars Repše, former head of the Bank of Latvia in the 1990s, and his protégé, Valdis Dombrovskis. Together, they formed the government in 2002-2004 and again in 2009.

More recently, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, a close associate to Dombrovskis, urged the U.S. defense company Lockheed Martin to invest in Lithuania. At a meeting in Davos with executives of the company manufacturing HIMARS systems and other weaponry, Landsbergis said that the global and regional geopolitical uncertainty calls for better focus on the national and regional security.

Offshore bankers were among the party's supporters and Repše's business partners. At the same time, Latvian governments enjoyed a favorable international reputation for ensuring the transition to democracy and market economy as well as for joining NATO and the EU. Thus, they were willing and able to protect the offshore sector at an international level[201]. The Dombrovskis government pursued a policy aimed strictly at offshoring shady capital by introducing a "golden visa" program (similar to the one in Cyprus) for wealthy CIS nationals to buy luxury real estate in the country or invest in subordinated debts of Latvian banks in exchange for a five-year EU-wide residency permit.

In 2014, Dombrovskis, EC Vice President for the Euro, assumed responsibility for EU financial markets and anti-money laundering efforts. As Governor of the Bank of Latvia, his ally Rimšēvičs has an *ex officio* seat on the Governing Council of the European Central Bank. The President of LAFF, an offshore company representing the U.S. banking lobby, wrote a piece for the international media celebrating Latvia's adoption of the Euro as a further step to place Latvia's offshore sector on the white list.

Baltic International Bank (BIB), linked to the Magnitsky case[202], was only fined for money laundering, while other defendants in the case were dissolved (Trasta Komercbank was liquidated in 2016, ABLV — in 2018, and Norvik Bank — in 2019). BIB's immunity in this case is due to connections with high-ranking officials of its majority owner and CEO, Valērijs Belokoņs. Belokoņs has ties to Donald Trump, Hunter Biden, a figure in the Burisma corruption scandal, as well as Charles III, King of the United Kingdom. Einars Repše, former

Governor of the Bank of Latvia, became an advisor to Belokoņš in 2020, which emphasizes local ties, including a longstanding cooperation with Valdis Dombrovskis.

Latvia is the heart of the offshore banking sector for capital legalization covered by top NATO officials. The list of top Western officials on the boards or among shareholders of Latvian and Latvia-affiliated offshore banks has included:

- **Josef Cofer Black**, former head of the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center, former BIB council member at BIB[203];
- **August Hanning**, former President of the German Foreign Intelligence Service (BND), former member of the Management Board at Norvik[204];
- **Andres Fogh Rasmussen**, former NATO Secretary General, former council member at PNB who was accused of financial impropriety by conducting major transactions without any collateral, which led to about €140 million worth of “gaps” in the bank’s assets. He also co-chairs the International Task Force on Security Guarantees for Ukraine with **Andriy Yermak**, chief advisor to **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy**[205];
- **Hans Friedrich von Ploetz**, former German Representative to NATO and board member at BIB;
- **Devon Archer**, a family friend of the incumbent U.S. President, a shareholder of Norvik;
- **Paul Volker**, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Citadele;
- **James Wolfensohn**, former President of the World Bank Group, Citadele.

EU membership status allows money laundered through Latvia to be deposited in Zürich or London. NATO support was part of a broader lobbying campaign by Parex and other offshore banks carried out through professional lobbyists in Washington, D.C. The lobbying was intended to enhance the reputation of banks by using Latvia’s NATO membership as an argument to secure access to correspondent accounts in the United States[206].

Operations of the Odesa arms transit group are closely linked to Latvia-based ABLV. A 2009 paper related to a U.S. court case involving Alperin-owned Waterlux AG and Phoenix Trans-Servis (a Kaalbye-linked owner and manager of the Faina) shows that one of their business partners uses Aizkraukles Bank, then branded as ABLV. Waterlux AG and Phoenix Trans-Servis used the Latvian regional investment bank JSG on a regular basis.

According to the Department of Treasury, the U.S. blacklisted two Latvian banks in 2005 for taking part in money laundering schemes related to financing terrorism — **ABLV (Aizkraukles prior to rebranding) and Baltic International Bank.**

ABLV, Baltic International Bank, Trasta Kommercbank, Rietumu Bank, Baltic Trust Bank, and Kolomoyskyi's PrivatBank (which controls port infrastructure facilities in Odesa) are all linked to the high-profile Magnitsky case. The anti-corruption group Global Witness accused ABLV of laundering roughly \$30 million out of Kyrgyzstan[207].

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Priority/Delivery : Normal
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Transfer
Sender : RIBRLV22XXX
REGIONALA INVESTICIJU BANKA
RIGA LV
Receiver : RZBAATWXXX
RAIFFEISEN ZENTRALBANK OESTERREICH AG
VIENNA AT
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33B: Currency/Instructed Amount
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2/H FLOOR, SUITE H,
3/PA/PANAMA CITY
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MRMDUS33XXX
HSBC BANK USA, N.A.
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HSBC BANK PLC
(ALL GREEK BRANCHES)
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OUR
----- Message Trailer -----
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```

ABLV Bank has been a financial supporter of conferences, in which companies of the Odesa network has participated. The bank has sent senior executives to “Maritime Days in Odesa” multiple times, often as keynote speakers. ABLV Head of the Regional Development Department, Kazimir Rezvy, and Head of the Private Bankers Department, Igor Shlivko, both made the trip to Odesa for the “2011 Practice of Maritime Business” conference.

ASG Resolution Capital, a company closely connected to ABLV Bank, has paid some \$2 million to one of the largest lobbying groups in the United States, in a bid to lessen the impact of a money laundering investigation by U.S. authorities[208].

Latvian banks have repeatedly been involved in high-profile cases. **Latvia's Regional Investment Bank, a former subsidiary of Odesa-based Pivdennyi Bank, provided consulting services for setting up money laundering schemes to two companies registered in the United Kingdom, Smartus Business and Gerevit; and the Panamanian firm, Polamix[209].** One more company that offered such instructions was Belize-based Bormilla Solutions, which had a bank account at Latvia's **AS Privatbank** of the notorious oligarch **Kolomoyskyi[210].** In 2011, **Kolomoyskyi and Boholiubov met Dombrovskis** to discuss banking projects[211].

Key Cohesion of Ukraine's Arms Business Vertical: Dombrovskis, Akhmetov and Syrian Mafia

The ports of Odesa, Chornomorsk (formerly Illichivsk) and Pivdennyi (formerly Yuzhnyi) were a place where the rival companies of Rinat Akhmetov and Ihor Kolomoyskyi redistributed their influence[212]. Ihor Kolomoyskyi controlled the fuel terminal and fishing port in Chornomorsk, which he lost control of in 2015.

Denys Shmyhal liaised with Valdis Dombrovskis on the grain deal as part of the Joint Coordination Platform. They discussed a number of matters, including Ukraine's agricultural exports and the confiscation of Russian assets. Later, Dombrovskis repeatedly urged Russia to renew the deal to allow the safe export of Ukrainian grain through Black Sea ports[213]. They also discussed the situation resulting from Russia's attempts to block the Black Sea grain corridor. Denys Shmyhal stressed that options for alternative routes were being explored.

Importantly, Shmyhal is a mouthpiece for Renat Akhmetov's interests. Between 2017 and 2019, Shmyhal worked as an executive at DTEK, while his official contacts with Dombrovskis are related to the ports of Odesa, where companies owned by Akhmetov and Ihor Kolomoyskyi actively operated. In 2023, Rinat Akhmetov's **D.Trading** began actively trading in grain[214]. Generally speaking, this situation emphasizes the interest and influence of Akhmetov's businesses in ports and agricultural trade in the region.

As a major logistics center, the port of Odesa is becoming a key hub for arms smuggling from Ukraine to the Middle East. Adnan Kivan, an Odesa businessman, is the one bringing together Dombrovskis, Akhmetov, and the arms smuggling market.

Adnan Kivan is a businessman of Syrian descent, an Odesa developer and owner of the English-language news outlet KyivPost and Odesa-based Channel 7. His main business is development (Kadorr Group). Adnan Kivan and President Petro Poroshenko presented seven apartments to sailors in his company's newly erected buildings[215]. Kivan also planned to lead Poroshenko's presidential campaign, which was met with opposition, as the Odesa Maidan Self Defense accused him of tax evasion and illegal development[216]. During Viktor Yushchenko's presidential term, Kivan enjoyed the support of **Hares Youssef**, who worked for a year in the Ukrainian presidential office, which enabled him to support shady corrupt investment schemes in Ukraine, particularly in Odesa.

The Kivans are among the influential **Syrian Sunni** clans linked to the ruling class opposing the Assad regime. They control significant resources and maintain sizable business operations in the country[217]. The Kivan family had close business and political ties to Abdul Halim Khaddam, one of the founders of the current Baath regime in Syria and former acting Syrian president (before Bashar al-Assad took office). **Retired, Khaddam lived in Paris** and was an opponent of Bashar al-Assad. The Kivan representatives were in charge of the provinces of Deraa (bordering Jordan) and Idlib (bordering Turkey). The main source of wealth of Adnan Kivan and his brother, Ahmad Muammar Kivan, in Syria, was **the control over money flows from Lebanon** (illegal oil, weapons, drugs, smuggled goods) during the Syrian occupation, while the main source of their income is trade with **ISIS**[218].

Kivan backed the Turkey-based[219] **Syrian National Council (SNC)** and offered them financial support and trade preferences. From its inception, the SNC has included influential members from **the Muslim Brotherhood, a Qatar-backed** radical Islamist movement affiliated with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party[220]. The SNC has close ties to the top tier of the global elite — the shady Bilderberg Conference[221], the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the mega-bank Goldman Sachs, and George Soros. Upon arrival of ISIS to Syria in 2013, Adnan Kivan and other SNC sponsors shifted their attention to supporting ISIS[222].

Kivan's partner, Hares Youssef, established **Hares Group**, which is a partner of many powerful CIS oligarchs. For example, he owned a large steel factory in Moldova together with Vadym Novynskyi, a partner of Renat Akhmetov. Hares Group Holding has an office in Jordan run by a certain Fazef, who controls the flow of the company's funds in Jordan through Arab Bank with links to Palestine's al-Masri clan[223]. Hares Youssef is listed as a member of a large syndicate of arms dealers, the Odesa Network, as it was dubbed by the American private detective organization C4ADS. **German subsidiary shipping companies**, such as Germany's BBC Chartering and Bal-chart, **play an important special role in the transportation of very large or sensitive cargoes.**

Harres Group has been linked to Brussels through its personal advisor, **Ulric Fayl von Hentaller**. He is former Director at The Global Round Table, a globalist organization[224], on behalf of which Hares Youssef spoke[225]. After having worked for the European Commission for more than six years, he led the Policy Advisory Services for one of the “Big Six[226].”

Youssef is behind the chartering of the Faina to transport Ukrainian arms to South Sudan, a vessel captured by Somali pirates and owned by Vadim Alperin, an Israeli businessman of unsavory reputation. Vadim Alperin is an Israeli businessman linked to contraband at the Odesa customs[227] and the Faina. He is also Director of the Panama-registered **Waterlux AG**, which is the owner of the ship[228]. Alperin was a member of the Odesa City Council from the Party of Regions and owns many other real estate, transportation and freight brokerage businesses, including Temp-Progress, Logistics Service, and Metalloprodukt. Vadim Alperin appears to have additional contacts in Syria beyond Youssef. For example, he recently leased his ship Etel to an unnamed Syrian businessman using it for trade with Libya. The Odesa network of smugglers has smoothly running systems for capital legalization through banks in Latvia. Despite recurrent high-profile revelations that have led to the shutdown of individual banks, the scheme is backed by senior European officials acting in the interests of elite investors from Europe and Britain.

The involvement of a Syrian businessman with the aforementioned set of criminal connections provides the Islamists with weapons[229], while using the Latvian offshore financial network.

Adding to this context is the fact that the Soros-headed Open Society Foundations have given \$15 million to groups engaging in pro-Hamas activities[230] — Adalah Justice Project, Arab-American Association of New York, Desis Rising Up and Moving, Jewish Voice for Peace, If Not Now.

A high-ranking Israel Defense Forces (IDF) commander has told Newsweek that Israel is concerned over the risks of weapons provided by the United States and other Western nations to Ukraine ending up in the hands of Israel’s foes in the Middle East, including Iran[231]. Hence, Soros affiliates benefit from supporting both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fueling the cost of arms and redistribution of influence in the Middle East.

Context of Rinat Akhmetov’s Top Political Connections

Akhmetov’s assets include the Odesa port infrastructure, which further strengthens the oligarch’s role as a coordinator in the Odesa arms conglomerate. His main international

intermediary, **Jock Mendoza-Wilson**, a British national of Scottish descent who is the oligarch's top-level contact, is a member of major Ukrainian lobbying organizations where the interests of the largest European investment banking structures and arms holding companies are promoted and coordinated — EU-Ukraine Business Council (Advisory board member), British Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce (Director), US-Ukraine Business Council (President's Advisory Council), and UN Global Compact in Ukraine (Chairperson). He is also linked to the largest Britain-headquartered consulting lobbying network in Eastern Europe, FIPRA, a successor of the Mmd intelligence group, particularly active in the oil and gas sector.

Svitlana Taran, formerly a senior researcher at the Bureau for Economic and Social Technologies (BEST), a think tank controlled by Akhmetov's SCM, whose operations are unnoticed in the public space, has moved to the EU's largest shadow policy think tank, the European Policy Center (EPC), all while remaining Senior Advisor, Eurasian Region, at **Stober, Poltavets & Associates (SP&A)**, Akhmetov's lobbying center. Turkey specialist **Amanda Paul** is also a person who brings together SP&A and EPC[232].

In addition to former and current MEPs on the EPC's advisory bodies and management team, the think tank **has a staff of 23 professional lobbyists** and has hosted hundreds of meetings in Brussels. Most meetings in the Parliament last year featured Ursula von der Leyen[233].

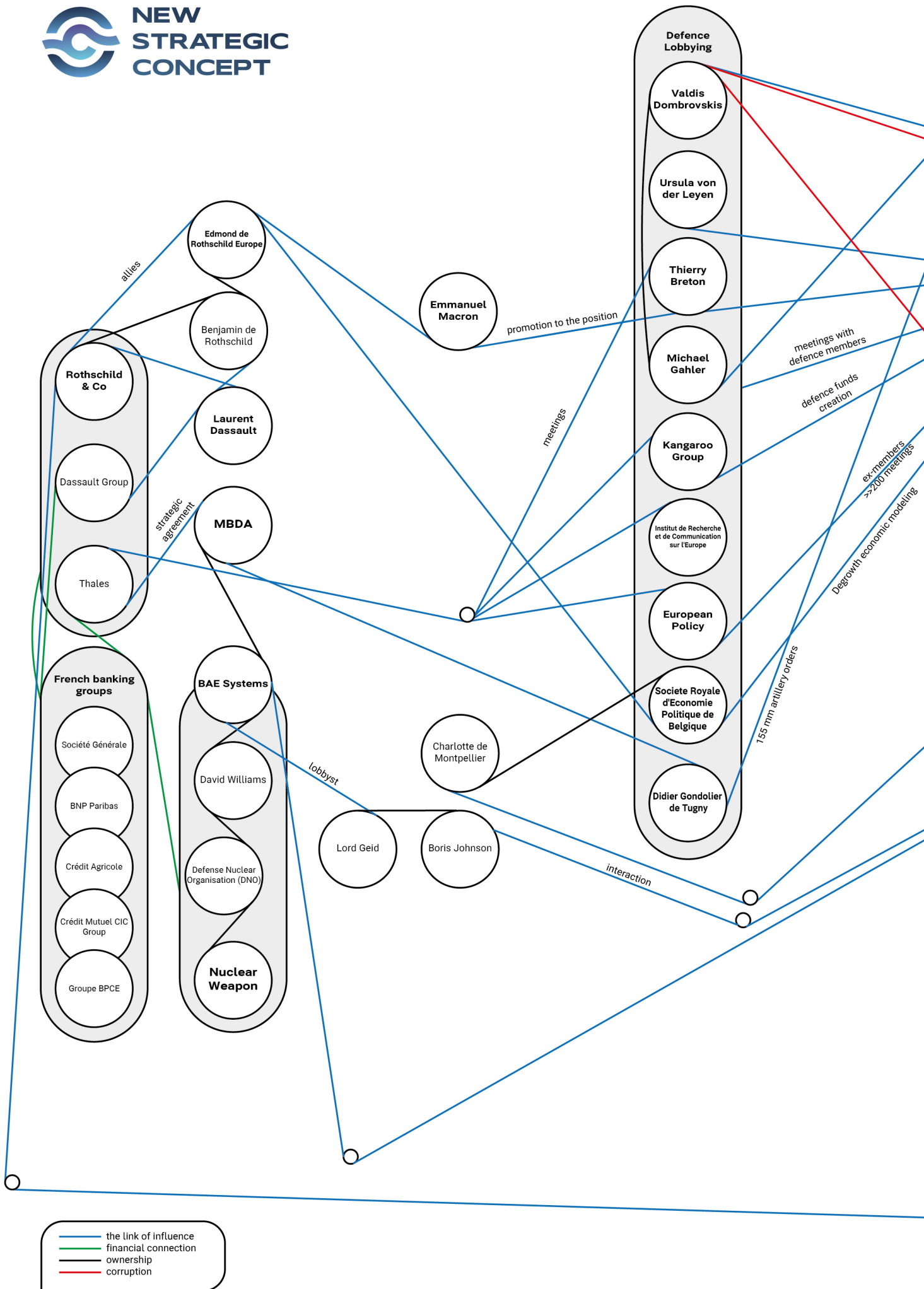
The strategic board of **the European Policy Center**, which shares staff with SP&A, **includes three persons linked to Soros-headed Open Society Foundations and one from the European Council on Foreign Relations**, on whose board he served.

As the main recurring sponsor of the EPC, the King Baudouin Foundation represents supranational banking elites close to the Rothschilds and is funded by such banking groups, as Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley. According to recent Bilderberg meetings, Goldman Sachs is the largest representative of the City elite in the Bilderberg Club.

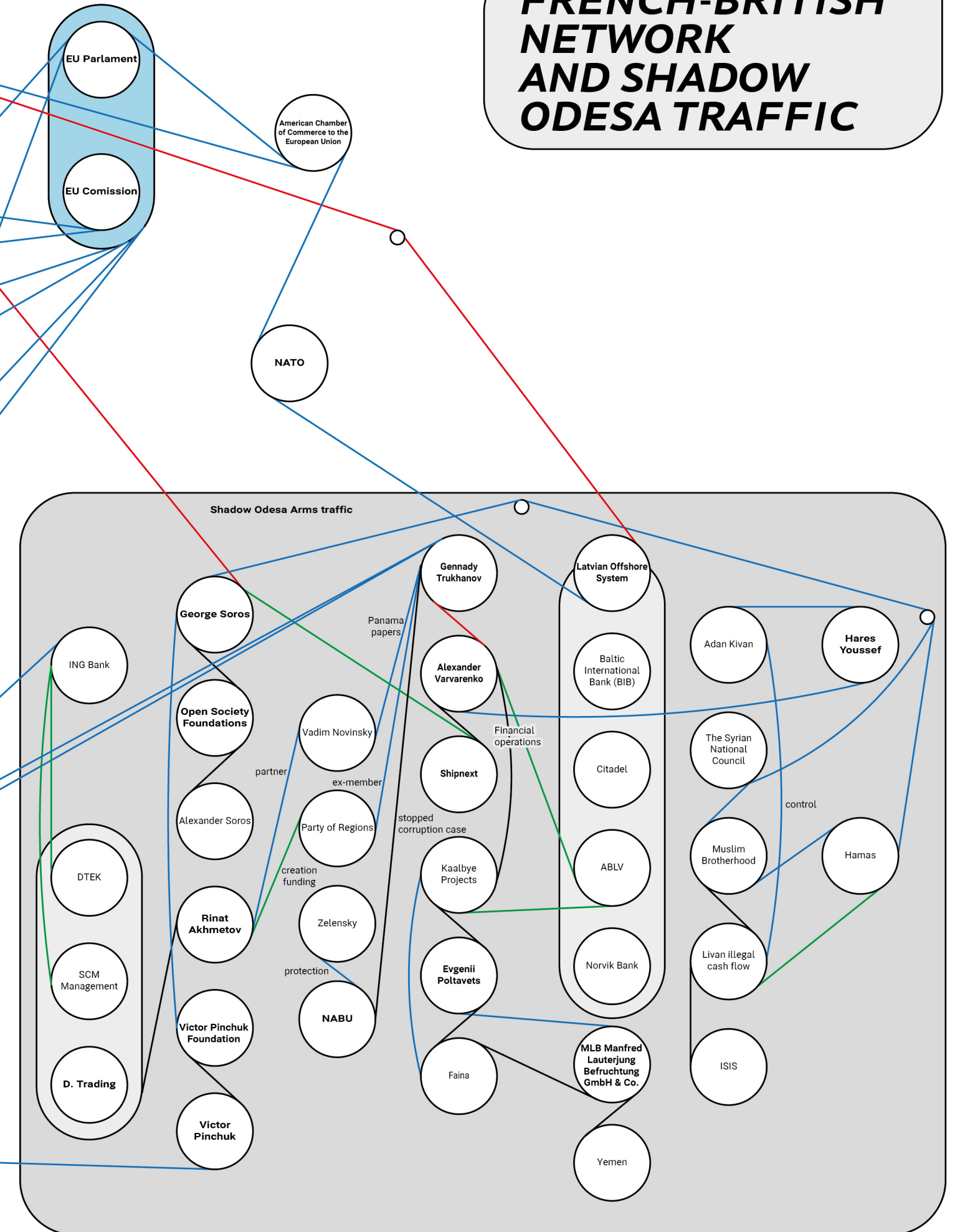
The key figure at the King Baudouin Foundation is **Tomas Leysen**, who is a top executive of transnational elite associations — the Bilderberg Club[234], Trilateral Commission, defense-associated industrial lobby groups — the European Round Table of Industrialists, Friends of Europe, Federation of Enterprises in Belgium and Chairman of the European Association of Metals[235], as well as **Airbus** and defense supplier **Atlas Copco**, which is owned by[236] the Swedish aristocratic Wallenberg family close to the Rothschilds, also owning a large interest in **SAAB**.

The treasurer of the King Baudouin Foundation is a member of the Royal Society of Political Economy of Belgium (Société Royale d'Economie Politique de Belgique, SREPB), an organization dominated by the French-speaking elite of the richest Belgians and the **Edmond de Rothschild-run bank in Europe**. The organization negotiates the economic architecture of the future Degrowth economic system, a set of indicators “beyond GDP” and their media promotion. The SREPB Vice President is Charlotte de Montpellier, a leading economist at ING Bank and a media personality in Wallonia[237]. It bears reminding that **it is Dutch ING, with a reputation as a participant in Russia’s Troika Dialog laundromat, together with Deutsche Bank, that granted billions of dollars worth of loans to Akhmetov’s companies and did not mind offshore operations** of its companies[238]. Most of Akhmetov’s and Novynskyi’s major assets are registered in the Netherlands, including their trust fund.

With that said, Ukrainian oligarch Akhmetov, whose sphere of influence includes steel industry, energy, port infrastructure, and logistics, has direct access to European strategic lobby groups. His ties with criminal networks using Middle Eastern and African arms trafficking routes, have determined his immunity during “deoligarchization” and his status as an intermediary in special operations for political regime change and military escalation in the regions.



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The New Strategic Concept (NSC) is an independent, non-partisan, and non-commercial expert initiative, functioning as a network-centric think tank.

The mission of the NSC is to craft an alternative perspective.

The aim of the NSC is to assist our partners in perceiving events from a different viewpoint.

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