Europe in the Strategic Competition

Between the International and Regional Order

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NATO and EU leaders hold a press conference following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, February 24, 2022 (Reuters/Aflo)

INTERNATIONAL ORDER generally refers to "a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society."[1] In this sense, Europe has historically held a position of leadership in shaping the international order. Since the Treaty of Westphalia, which established the sovereign state system, until the beginning of the 20th century, Europe demonstrated the international order it had formed to the rest of the world. However, during the Cold War that followed two world wars, the international order came to be defined by two great powers: the United States and the Soviet Union. For the first time, this created a situation in which "the balance of power was largely being shaped outside the European continent."[2] Although Europe was the front line of U.S.-Soviet rivalry during the Cold War and had no choice but to be involved in the war, the division of Europe into East and West had undermined its ability to act autonomously.

Later, following the end of the Cold War, it was argued that each region, emancipated from the leadership of the United States and the Soviet Union, would rise up to establish a new multipolar order. In other words, the argument over transition to a multipolar system developed in parallel with the argument that respective regional orders were emerging in lieu of a single international order. David Lake, for example, mentioned that regional orders are "how states [in each region] manage their security relations and range from balances of power, to regional power concerts, collective security organisations, pluralistic security communities, and integration."[3] In this context, the term "region" refers to that which retains a certain degree of autonomy and is not necessarily a subset of the international order. Although geographical factors are also part of what defines a region, the extent to which states share security concerns, such as concerns about the influence of extra-regional powers, is considered more important.

Post-Cold War Europe was the poster child of discussions of multipolarity and regional order. In Europe, which had been divided into East and West, a movement to integrate Europe started as Germany was reunified, and Eastern Europe called for a "Return to Europe." In this sense, European integration was primarily an attempt to build a regional order, but it was also an attempt to seek the establishment of European autonomy, or, put differently, an attempt to participate in the construction of the post-Cold War international order as Europe, an autonomous actor. To establish regional order, Europe built relations with Russia while advancing European integration. As for shaping the international order, it pursued autonomy as Europe while redefining its relationship with the United States, leading to the realization of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the

subsequent Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) by the European Union (EU).

However, Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine (the Ukraine crisis) in 2014 marked a resurgence of the threat from the East. Since around that time, China had been increasing its international influence and gradually became a "systemic challenge" to security and democracy in Europe. Furthermore, while the United States, in particular the Donald Trump administration (2017–2021), emphasized the strategic front with the Indo-Pacific, adopting the "U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific" to advance strategic competition with China, it also made many moves to downplay Europe, which had the effect of magnifying uncertainty in U.S.-European relations. In this way, since 2014, Europe has gradually become involved in a strategic competition between the United States and China while responding to the Russian threat. And, while strategic competition between the United States and China destabilizes the international order, the European regional order has also been shaken to its foundations following Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022.

Regarding the issue of Europe's role in the strategic competition between the United States and China, previous studies so far can be divided broadly into two perspectives. One perspective discusses Europe as "a subject," or how Europe will involve itself in the strategic competition. Here, the issue is about what kind of policies Europe could develop on its own with both the United States and China. The other discusses Europe as "an object," or how Europe is affected by the strategic competition. Here, the issue is about how to deal with influence from China while addressing Russia as a neighboring threat, amidst U.S. interests shifting to the Indo-Pacific.

Discussions on Europe as "a subject" or "an object" in the strategic competition are complementary to each other rather than binarily opposed. If Europe as "a subject" is to pursue its autonomous position between the two major powers of the United States and China, it is certainly better to pursue unity and solidarity as Europe. On the other hand, there are certain limits to the pursuit of unity and solidarity. As "an object," Europe may be affected by the United States, China, and Russia, causing discrepancies in the stances of individual European countries. Luis Simón points out the need to examine Europe's role in the strategic competition based on this dual perspective of Europe as "an object" and "a subject."[4]

Discussions of Europe as "a subject" and "an object" can be paraphrased as the relationship between Europe's autonomy in the international order and the stability of Europe's regional order. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine how Europe's behavior in the international order and changes in Europe's regional order are interrelated. Accordingly, the

first section explains the perspectives of Europeanism and Atlanticism, the classical arguments about Europe's stance in international politics. The second section provides an overview of Europe-Russia relations since 2014 and the spillover of U.S.-China strategic competition into Europe, then analyzes the concepts of European strategic autonomy and strategic sovereignty that have developed in such circumstances. The third section analyzes how Russia's aggression against Ukraine changed Europe's behavior in the strategic competition, based on the discussion in the previous sections, and finally leads to the conclusion.

Perspectives on Europe

Two Sides of Europeanism

In the post-Cold War international order, the constructs of Europeanism and Atlanticism were once frequently used as perspectives to explain European behavioral patterns.[5] First, Europeanism in this case is a perspective that advocates the unification of Europe as an autonomous actor in the international community. Europeanism emerged as a political ideology in the modern era, but its manifestation in the fields of diplomacy and security can be regarded as having occurred during the Cold War period, when European integration began. In this context, Europeanism has one of its sources in Gaullism, led by French president Charles de Gaulle. Gaullism is, in the simplest of terms, the idea of autonomous diplomacy against the United States that manifested itself in French diplomacy during the Cold War, as seen in France's approach to the Soviet Union, its withdrawal from the military structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and its refusal to allow the United Kingdom, which has close ties to the United States, to join the European Economic Community (EEC).

Based on Richard Sakwa's argument, there are also two intersecting schools of thought within Europeanist tides.[6] One is the aspect of Greater Europe, meaning the establishment of a regional order in Europe that includes Russia. This applies to concepts of a European regional order that follow along the lines of the above-mentioned French diplomacy by President de Gaulle during the Cold War, Ostpolitik (Eastern policy) promoted by West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, and the "Common European Home" concept espoused by General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev. The other is the aspect of Wider Europe, which refers to the European regional order centered on the EU, excluding Russia. In fact, in Europe after the Cold War, countries in Central

and Eastern Europe joined the EU one after another in the movement of "Return to Europe," and European integration developed. However, Wider Europe can also refer to non-EU countries in and around Europe. To avoid confusion, this chapter will refer to the idea of pursuing a stable regional order based on the relationship between the EU and Russia as Greater Europe, and the idea of building a European regional order centered on the EU as Europeanism rather than Wider Europe.

While Greater Europe and Europeanism are two sides of the same coin, the relationship between them is sometimes contradictory. After the Cold War, what we actually saw in Europe was the realization of Europeanism in the form of the EU's eastward expansion. This promoted European integration and stabilized the European regional order after the collapse of the Soviet Union, while at the same time increasing the EU's presence as an autonomous actor in the emerging multipolar international order. In this sense, Europeanism includes a similar meaning of European autonomy and is more closely related to the international order. On the other hand, the expansion of Europeanism, which could mean the West, led to a sense of insecurity in Russia and undermined the regional order of Greater Europe. In this sense, Greater Europe has a deeper relationship with the regional order of EU-Russia relations.

Europeanism is often used to characterize the foreign policies of the EU and its two largest member states, France and Germany. In particular, it was France that led the EU's CFSP/CSDP after the Cold War, and French diplomacy, which derives from Gaullism, strongly reflects the characteristics of these policies. German policy is also sometimes referred to as Europeanist in the sense that it pursues the aims of the EU as a global actor by strongly promoting EU integration in terms of political economy. However, both France and Germany still regard NATO as the most crucial factor in the defense of Europe even after the Cold War, and in this sense, stable relations with the United States remains the keynote of their defense policies. Nevertheless, the phrase Europeanism is sometimes used when there is significant conflict between the United States and Europe, mainly in contrast to Atlanticism, which will be discussed next.

Europeanism and Atlanticism

Traditionally, Atlanticism is a perspective that emphasizes a cooperative relationship with the United States and NATO. On the European side, the representative for this position is undoubtedly the United Kingdom. Based on the "special relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom, successive U.K. administrations have viewed NATO as the

primary entity for European security and have basically taken a skeptical stance on the development of the CSDP and other EU policies which relate to security issues.

Central and Eastern European countries that became new NATO members as a result of NATO's eastern enlargement after the Cold War are also often seen as Atlanticist. Poland and the Baltic states, in particular, are representative examples. Their reasons for joining NATO can be explained by their trust in the United States from a historical and capability perspective, as well as their deeply rooted negative view on Western European countries. Historically, the United States is believed to have liberated Central and Eastern European countries from the Soviet Union, and conversely, there is said to be lingering suspicion of Germany and France due to their initial reluctance to allow Central and Eastern European countries to join NATO and the EU after the Cold War. It was also believed that, should the Russian threat resurface in the future, the United States was the only country that could be relied upon capabilities-wise. Western European countries, in contrast, were thought to lack the motivation and capabilities to ensure security and could not be relied upon as much as the United States.[7]

However, of course some believe that Europeanism would contribute to Atlanticism as well, since the United States and Europe are allies in general. Europeanism and Atlanticism are no more than one aspect. They are not fully subsumed under the other, and they are not necessarily in a binary relationship. In addition, their reality varies depending on the country, the administration, and the strategic environment at any given time. For example, the U.K. administration under Tony Blair supported EU security policy, French president Nicolas Sarkozy was seen as an Atlanticist who promoted security cooperation with the United States and United Kingdom, and Germany was seen as Atlanticist because it emphasized NATO for security while promoting European integration. Thus, Europeanism tends to converge with Atlanticism depending on the state of affairs. Because of this tendency, some have argued that Europeanism exists in a nested structure within the larger framework of Atlanticism.[8] Presumably, this would be a fair description of reality. Especially when U.S.-European relations are relatively calm, Atlanticism and Europeanism are rarely on the table for discussion in the first place.

These perspectives become controversial whenever there is a significant U.S.-European conflict. For example, during the Iraq War in 2003, the United Kingdom participated in the war with the United States, and Central and Eastern European countries supported it, while Germany and France joined Russia in condemning the United States. This situation was even described at one time as "the end of Atlanticism."[9] In other words, the Europeanism-Atlanticism debate is apt to occur when the United States acts unilaterally or in a manner that disregards Europe, and Europe reacts by acting in opposition to the United States.

This can also be seen in the U.S.-European relationship in the context of the U.S.-China strategic competition. As the United States shifts its strategic focus to the "Indo-Pacific" with China in mind, the relative importance of Europe to the United States is waning. However, while dealing with the U.S.-China strategic competition, Europe must also respond to the Russian threat. Given this situation, Sakwa argues that in order to analyze Europe's behavior in the U.S.-China relationship, it is important to link it to the relationship between Russia and Europe.[10] That is, Europe's behavior in the strategic competition must be examined in relation to the perspective of the regional order of Europe in the U.S.-Russia relationship and the perspective of the international order of Europe in the U.S.-China competition.

From the Ukraine Crisis to the Strategic Competition: Europe after 2014

A Return of Atlanticism: The Ukraine Crisis

The 2014 Ukraine crisis, to put it simply, led to the phenomenon of "a return of Atlanticism."[11] This is because Russia's actions have caused NATO to focus once again on collective defense. From the standpoint of European defense, there were concerns about a possibility of Russian aggression against Poland and the Baltic states, NATO members that border Russia and Belarus. To address these concerns, since 2014, NATO has strengthened European defense through a wide range of reforms, including reforming the NATO Response Force (NRF), which involved the creation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF); deploying forces in the Baltic states and Poland through the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP); establishing new joint force commands in the United States and Germany; and further enhancing the readiness for rapid response and reinforcement through the NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI).

The enhancement of the defense of member countries in NATO's Eastern Flank has been led primarily by the United States. Under the Barack Obama administration, the United States showed its commitment to European security by deploying forces to the Baltic states and Poland even before the EFP was established. In 2014, it launched the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), with budgets for enhancing the U.S. military presence, exercises and training, prepositioning of assets, infrastructure

development, and partner capacity building. Even under the Donald Trump administration, the ERI was updated to the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) in 2018 and its budget was increased to prepare for U.S. military reinforcements.[12] Furthermore, the United States has concluded a series of bilateral defense cooperation agreements with Poland and each of the Baltic states to strengthen its support.

Following the United States, the United Kingdom has also led initiatives on European defense, not limited to the NATO framework. A typical example is the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).[13] Established in 2014, the JEF is a framework for security cooperation with the Baltic states and Nordic countries whose missions include the operation of joint forces for the defense of the Baltic Sea region. It is recognized as a framework for rapid response before NATO invokes Article 5, and it would contribute to collective defense.

The United Kingdom voted to leave the EU in a referendum in 2016, but has since continued to pursue this type of security cooperation with European countries on both a bilateral and multilateral basis. For example, in 2017, Finland and Sweden joined the JEF. It is assumed that both countries, which were non-NATO members at the time, joined the JEF in order to maintain security ties with the United Kingdom after Brexit. The United Kingdom also signed a security and defense cooperation treaty with Poland in 2017, and has since signed joint declarations and Memorandums of Understanding on security with other European countries.[14] Furthermore, the United Kingdom has been providing basic combat training and medical expertise to Ukraine since 2015.

NATO has also contributed to strengthening the defense capabilities of non-member countries. In 2014, NATO created the Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP) framework. Among them, Sweden and Finland, which later started the process of joining NATO, were acknowledged as EOPs and have since had success in improving interoperability through joint exercises and information sharing at a high level. In addition, since 2016, NATO has been providing comprehensive aid packages to Ukraine, with extensive assistance from military reforms in command and control to the cyber and medical sectors. Then, in 2020, NATO also acknowledged Ukraine as an EOP, which has facilitated defense cooperation at an even higher level than before.[15]

In parallel with these reforms, NATO worked to formulate a new military strategy. After the Cold War, NATO essentially did not recognize Russia as a threat and was therefore seen as having no comprehensive military strategy for the North Atlantic region on par with that of the Cold War era. However, this changed in 2019, when the NATO Military Committee approved a military strategy titled *Comprehensive Defense and Shared Response* (CDSR).[16]

Because Stuart Peach, then chair of the Military Committee, referred to it as "a new NATO military strategy for the first time since 1967,"[17] it is seen as the first formal military strategy since the flexible response strategy of the Cold War era. The main focus of the CDSR strategy is said to be countering the power and threat of a resurgent Russia. It can be argued that NATO's reform since 2014 has also led to the formulation of this new military strategy.

Remnants of Greater Europe: Europe-Russia Relations

While NATO has been strengthening its defense of Europe since the Ukraine crisis in 2014, diplomacy to resolve the Ukraine problem has stalled. Mediation by the United States and the EU failed, but in June 2014, peace negotiations by Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and France began under the so-called Normandy format, which led to the signing of the Minsk Agreements. However, the process reached an impasse due to differences in perception of the provisions agreed upon by both Russia and Ukraine, among other factors. The Minsk Agreements were also tied to economic sanctions by the United States and the EU, and full implementation of the agreements was a condition for easing sanctions against Russia. This condition was intended to coerce Russia to implement the agreements, but it failed to influence Russia's behavior, and the economic sanctions were not lifted.[18]

However, negative opinions about the sanctions have gradually emerged in Europe. France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands were skeptical of the sanctions' effectiveness. Southern and Eastern European countries such as Italy, Austria, and Cyprus, as well as Hungary and Greece, which have strong economic ties with Russia, appeared to be against the extension of sanctions.[19] Germany had taken the lead in aggressive diplomacy and economic sanctions at the outbreak of the crisis. However, Germany eventually maintained its Nord Stream 2 program with Russia, openly opposed the Obama administration's proposal to provide Ukraine with weapons, and took no notable measures to strengthen its defense capabilities for the defense of Europe. This attitude of the European countries may be partly due to the fact that, since around 2016, the perception of Russia as a threat has gradually been declining in Europe, with the exception of some Central and Eastern European countries.[20]

The logic of Greater Europe was largely at play in the attitude of the European countries, especially Germany and France, toward Russia. Germany's conciliatory attitude toward Russia in the post-Cold War era can be explained by the legacy of the Eastern policy, which was considered to be a successful policy that brought the Cold War to an end. Still, the fact that

Chancellor Angela Merkel led diplomatic negotiations after the 2014 Ukraine crisis, while simultaneously leading economic sanctions despite concerns about the impact on the German economy, was also noted as a change in policy to a "hybrid Ostpolitik."[21] However, there were no major changes in German diplomacy after that. Chancellor Merkel also asserted in 2015 that peace in Europe could only be achieved with Russia, not against it.[22]

As far as France was concerned, the logic of Greater Europe was something like a vague geopolitical concept. Indeed, as the name of the Normandy format suggests, France under François Hollande's administration (2012–2017) led constructive dialogue immediately after the beginning of the Ukraine crisis. President Hollande has been described as having taken a stricter approach toward Russia than typical of France's stance in the past, which also led to strained France-Russia relations.[23] On the other hand, Emmanuel Macron's administration (2017–) announced that its basic stance was to pursue a cooperative relationship with Russia on European security. There was a recognition similar to Germany's that stability and security on the European continent could not be achieved without easing tensions in relations with Russia, as seen in President Macron's remarks.[24]

The logic of Greater Europe was criticized by Central and Eastern European countries. They even submitted a letter to the EU opposing the maintenance of Germany's Nord Stream 2 project. It is also true that since 2014, the EU has been criticized for the conciliatory stance toward Russia taken by its leadership, including High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, who was elected from Italy. For this reason, Donald Tusk, who was elected president of the European Council after serving as Poland's Prime Minister, sought to strike a balance by taking a tough stance against Russia. Indeed, the concept of the Energy Union, which had been proposed by Poland, gradually became an EU-level initiative. Its aim was to break away from natural gas dependence on Russia through the diversification of energy import sources and other measures.[25] In reality, however, energy dependence on Russia remained relatively high after that, and it was difficult to say whether progress had necessarily been made in decreasing dependence on Russia.

U.S.-China "Strategic Competition" Spills Over into Europe: Deteriorating Relations with Both the United States and China

Compared to the deterioration of Europe-Russia relations, which had a clear starting point, it took some time for Europe to seriously recognize the challenge posed by China. After the 2008 global financial crisis, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China surged in Europe, where the financial situation had worsened. Furthermore, in 2012, the "16+1" economic cooperation framework consisting of 16 Central and Eastern European countries and China was established. At its peak, it expanded to "17+1" with the accession of Greece. The development of economic relations between Europe and China can also be seen in the participation of European countries in the China-led Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Then, in 2016, China's FDI in the EU reached its record high. Including the relationship between the United Kingdom and China, which was described as the "Golden Era" of their relations, Europe and China had built a good relationship centered on the economic sector.

At the same time, however, skepticism about developing relations with China has become more prominent since around that time. This shift can be attributed to China's growing assertiveness from around 2016 on issues such as the debate over China's market economy status and disputes in the South China Sea; the failure of the EU-China Summit to announce a joint statement for the first time in its history marked a turning point in EU-China relations.[26] Since this period, there has also been a growing recognition of the security risks posed by economic relations with China. These included concerns about the outflow of advanced technology from European companies through Chinese FDI, followed by the risk of introducing Chinese products in 5G networks. Thus, the policy document *EU-China: A Strategic Outlook* published in March 2019, described China as a "cooperation partner" and "economic competitor" as well as a "systemic rival."[27] Subsequent exchanges of accusations between Europe and China over the response to the COVID-19 brought about further deterioration of sentiment toward China in Europe. Furthermore, with regard to the issue of human rights, the EU has imposed sanctions against China in light of the deteriorating situation in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Hong Kong.

The EU's deteriorating perception of China is gradually manifesting itself in concrete terms. First, the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), which had been agreed upon in principle at the end of 2020, stalled when the European Parliament suspended its ratification in May 2021. In addition, as Lithuania's withdrawal from the "17+1" in May that same year illustrates, Central and Eastern European countries are moving away from China as they no longer see any actual benefit in China as their relations with the country are deteriorating. China imposed sanctions on Lithuania in response to this move, whereas the EU issued a statement supporting Lithuania and even filed a complaint against China with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Thus, tension between the EU and China has been

increasing.[28]

The EU side also expanded its approach to the Indo-Pacific. Following its EU-Asia connectivity strategy in September 2018, the EU announced a comprehensive *EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, which includes security cooperation, in September 2021.[29] These strategies are generally seen as designed to counterbalance China's growing influence in the region. Furthermore, by 2021, Europe's perception of China appears to have taken a harsher turn, judging by European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen's policy speech in September that year, which is reported to have included a number of criticisms of China.

However, the problem in Europe during this period was that even the relationship with the United States under the Trump administration, which came to power in 2017, deteriorated markedly. The alliance has become unstable, with ambiguous U.S. commitments to the defense of NATO members that do not meet the NATO standard of two percent of GDP on defense. In the area of trade and commerce, the Trump administration, with its "America First" policy, imposed import tariffs on steel and aluminum from the EU in the lead-up to the 2018 midterm elections, and the EU responded by taking retaliatory measures. Thus, when looking at overall U.S.-EU relations, the relationship became what could even be described as hostile.

Restoring deteriorated U.S.-Europe relations was an urgent task for the Joseph Biden administration, which took office in January 2021. Shortly after taking office, President Biden affirmed the U.S. commitment to NATO's collective defense in a telephone call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Then, in a meeting with the EU in March, he called for improved U.S.-EU relations, saying that a strong EU is in the United States' interest. Following this, the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) was established as a forum for cooperation on a wide range of trade and technology issues, including investment screening and export controls, and it helped to restore and strengthen the U.S.-EU relationship.[30] Behind this rapprochement was that China's influence in these fields has been growing and the United States and Europe shared their recognition that they need to deal with it together.

In addition, as the United States' and Europe's perception toward China are converging, there have been more mentions of China in NATO in recent years. NATO began considering its stance toward China around April 2019. At its London Summit in December that year, NATO recognized for the first time that China presents both "opportunities and challenges" to the Alliance.[31] Subsequently, a change in wording was observed at the Brussels Summit in 2021, where only "challenges" were mentioned in the similar sentence to the previous version, while "opportunities" for a constructive dialogue were left for the following paragraph.[32]

On the other hand, such sensitive changes in the wording concerning China may represent differences in perception among member countries. Making China a focus of NATO policy appears to be a U.S. initiative since the Trump administration, and it is generally supported by the United Kingdom, parts of Central and Eastern Europe, and others. Meanwhile, France has expressed strong doubts about the establishment of NATO's policy toward China, claiming that NATO is an alliance for the North Atlantic region, and Germany seems to concur with such stance. It will take some more time for these countries to come to an agreement on their perception of China in terms of security.

Other differences in security policy were observed between the United States and Europe. European countries that had been working together with the United States in Afghanistan criticized the U.S. unilateral approach and haste of its decision to withdraw U.S. forces from the country in August 2021, but the Europeans were ultimately unable to have any part in the decision. The following September, the launch of the Australia-U.K.-U.S. security partnership (AUKUS) was suddenly announced, and this move was detrimental to French interests. The EU expressed strong concerns at the fact that such a strategic decision was made without any coordination between the United States and Europe. On the other hand, criticism has been less noticeable from Central and Eastern European countries, which value their relationship with the United States and the United Kingdom, making it inappropriate to say that concerns about the United States have necessarily been a "European" response.[33] Indeed, this series of events was nothing short of damaging to U.S.-European relations. From a different perspective, however, this can be interpreted as an indication of Europe's lack of ability to adapt to an ever-changing international strategic environment centered on the competition between the United States and China, as well as an indication of the United States' perception that Europe is in such a situation.

Revitalizing Europeanism:
Strategic Autonomy and Strategic Sovereignty

Aiming to improve the capabilities of European countries to ensure their own security as U.S. interest in Europe wanes, in June 2016, the EU published the *EU Global Strategy* (EUGS), the first strategy document to mention strategic autonomy.[34] Nathalie Tocci, who was responsible for drafting the strategy, explains that strategic autonomy is "the ability of the Union to decide autonomously and have the means to act upon its decisions."[35]

Coincidentally, just days before the announcement of the EUGS, the United Kingdom, which had been dismissive of the EU's security policy, voted in a referendum to leave the EU. The following year, President Donald Trump, who had no clear commitment to the defense of Europe, took office in the United States. These events increased the momentum for strengthening the strategic autonomy of the EU.

Strategic autonomy is a concept with a strong military aspect, given that it stems from the aim to break away from dependence on the United States for security. Tocci also explained that "while it ought not be confined to the military domain, it is evident that it is in this area that the EU's strategic autonomy has not yet been realised."[36] After the strategy was announced, initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) have been launched since 2017, and plans are underway to develop equipment and improve the capabilities of member countries.[37] In addition to this, President Macron announced a new framework, the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), during his Sorbonne speech in September 2017. The aim of this framework was to foster a shared strategic culture in Europe through cooperation among able and willing states regardless of whether they are members of the EU, but it also considered cooperation with other institutions, including the EU.[38]

What was even more notable about the Sorbonne speech was that it advocated introducing the concept of sovereignty to the EU not only in the military sphere, but also in the broader security sphere.[39] Generally, sovereignty belongs to states, but EU members may pool together their sovereignty by delegating some of their powers to the EU. However, this function of the EU does not fundamentally apply to the security sphere, which is the basis of national sovereignty. President Macron nevertheless asserted the need to act in unison as "a sovereign Europe" for security not only in the military sense, but also in the broader sense, encompassing foreign policy, technological development, digital, economic, and industrial security.

This was also France's answer to the U.S.-China strategic competition. Addressing the conflict with the Trump administration and the infiltration of Chinese political influence through its economic activities, President Macron stressed the need to respond not only with military strategic autonomy, but also with security in a broader sense, as the EU. Afterwards, the concept of strategic autonomy also took on additional dimensions. In particular, when the supply chain slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, dependence on the Chinese economy, and deterioration of trade relations with the Trump administration began to be considered as serious issues, the EU said it would strengthen its "open strategic autonomy," referring to the diversification of

economic relations.[40] Other expressions using the concept of sovereignty began to appear in the EU around this time in various policy areas, such as digital sovereignty, technological sovereignty, and economic sovereignty. These eventually developed and converged into the concept of European strategic sovereignty.[41] The Olaf Scholz administration in Germany, which took office in December 2021, also supports the strengthening of the EU's strategic sovereignty.

The strengthening of the EU's strategic sovereignty was an action that could be described as the pursuit of Europeanism in the face of deteriorating relations with both the United States and China, but it was also inseparable from the remnant of Greater Europe. Behind France's stance toward Russia at that time was the aim to improve relations with Russia in order to reduce both Europe's dependence on the United States and Russia's dependence on China, which in turn would increase Europe's relative influence in the international order.[42] This logic does not seem to have been widely supported in Germany, but there was at least a similar understanding of the consequences and objectives of maintaining relations with Russia.[43] But whether it was Europeanism or the logic of Greater Europe, the biggest problem with strategic sovereignty was that it did not have the support of the Central and Eastern European countries. This drawback is a problem that shakes the unity and solidarity of Europe and must be resolved for Europe to respond to the strategic competition. Indeed, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has imposed this challenge on Europe.

Russian Aggression against Ukraine and the Strategic Competition: Europe in 2022

Solidified Atlanticism: NATO Deterrence and Defense

It is indisputable that that Russian's aggression against Ukraine after February 24, 2022, has solidified Atlanticism. The start of the aggression prompted NATO to hold an emergency meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, through which it condemned Russia for launching the attack and Belarus for enabling it, and demanded that Russia immediately cease its military action and withdraw its forces. In addition, NATO activated its defense plans for its Eastern Flank countries. The following day, it mobilized the NRF for the first time in history to deter aggression against and defend NATO territory. Outside of the NATO framework, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and other countries individually sent reinforcements to the Baltic

states and Poland before and after the attack.

Since then, there have been further significant changes in NATO. The first is NATO's perception on Russia. At the Madrid Summit in June 2022, NATO approved a new *Strategic Concept*, NATO's top-level strategic document, for the first time in 12 years. Beginning with the statement that "the Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace," the concept officially identified Russia as the "most significant and direct threat" for the first time since the end of the Cold War and noted that "we cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies' sovereignty and territorial integrity" in Europe.[44]

Following this, NATO launched new measures to strengthen the forward defense of the Eastern Flank and its readiness for rapid response and reinforcements. First, it mentioned enhanced forward deployment. Since 2016, battalion-size battlegroups of approximately 1,000 soldiers have been deployed as EFPs to Poland and the Baltic states, respectively. These are expected to be expanded to brigade-size battlegroups of up to 5,000 soldiers in the medium to long term. Furthermore, it was decided that battlegroups similar to the EFP will be deployed in Southeastern Europe (Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria). Among those countries on the Eastern Flank, Pro-Russian groups have had a certain political influence, and the deployment of NATO forces had been delayed.[45] Although Hungary and Bulgaria contribute their own troops to lead the battlegroups in their respective countries, the fact that NATO battle groups including U.S. forces have been deployed in those counties is evidence of the changing perception of Europe as a whole towards Russia. In addition, a new NATO Force Model was announced, expanding the rapid response force to a maximum of 300,000 troops.[46] This does not necessarily mean that NATO will expand the existing 40,000 troops that make up the NRF to 300,000, but there is no doubt that it increases the number of troops available for rapid response by a considerable amount.[47]

The Madrid Summit also officially launched the process of Sweden and Finland joining NATO. Prior to the summit, NATO membership had been discussed in both countries since 2014 but was unlikely to be realized. On the other hand, the process of accession for the two countries, which already have advanced interoperability through training and information exchanges with NATO members via the United States, United Kingdom, and JEF nations, is now proceeding at an unparalleled pace. Until recently, both countries are said to have maintained neutrality while deepening ties with NATO and its member countries, hoping to receive support from them in the event of an emergency. However, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has undoubtedly made both countries keenly aware that they still need to be covered by the treaty in order to receive defense assistance from NATO.

As discussed above, while the changes in NATO following Russian's aggression against Ukraine are certainly significant, they did not begin abruptly. As we have seen in this chapter, it is clear that these changes are based on NATO reforms and cooperation with the United States and the United Kingdom since 2014. On the other hand, the impact of Russia's aggression has been so profound that it demands NATO to respond faster than the speed of its reforms. NATO has defense plans adapted to each region of its territory, but given the lessons learned from Russia's aggression and the new NATO enlargement, NATO will be reviewing its defense plans for the Baltic Sea region and the Black Sea region, as well as the CDSR, its military strategy.[48]

Breakdown of Greater Europe:
Challenges to German and French Leadership

The logic of Greater Europe, which was partially entrenched in German and French diplomatic thought, was maintained until shortly before Russia's aggression against Ukraine. President Macron had visited Moscow in an attempt to continue dialogue with President Vladimir Putin until just before the outbreak of war; meanwhile, Chancellor Scholz had been reluctant to suspend approval of Nord Stream 2 until just before the start of Russia's aggression, and his policy was to not provide weapons to Ukraine. The stance taken by Germany and France toward Russia was met with disappointment from Poland, the Baltic states, and even the United States. However, the Russian government's recognition of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and "Luhansk People's Republic" on February 21, 2022, constituted nothing other than a change in the status quo that violated the Minsk Agreements led by Germany and France. When Russia actually launched its attack on Ukraine on February 24, it was clear that the logic of Greater Europe had broken down.

In response to these moves, the German government announced a halt to the Nord Stream 2 project on February 22. Furthermore, following the start of the aggression, Germany announced a radical reform of its security policy. First, it announced that it would establish a 100-billion-euro special fund to upgrade military capability, and that it would increase future defense spending to at least two percent of GDP. In addition, Germany started to provide weapons, including heavy weapons, to Ukraine, even though it had not provided weapons to parties to the conflict in the past.

The French government, in addition to providing military assistance to Ukraine, contributed French troops to lead the newly established Romanian battlegroup under the NATO framework. The 2022 NRF was also composed

mainly of French land and air forces.⁴⁹ France also played a certain role in the EU by pushing for an embargo on Russian oil and supporting the EU's sanctions package against Russia. However, these actions may have been driven more by timing than by active change in France. France's contribution of troops to the NRF had been planned previously, and the French presidency of the EU for the first half of that year had also been decided in advance.

In any case, Germany and France began to fundamentally review and change their policies toward Russia only after the signs of aggression had become dire or after the aggression had already begun. It is true that some aspects of their review were a surprise, as exemplified by the historic shift in the security policy of the Scholz administration led by the Social Democratic Party (Germany), which has traditionally placed importance on relations with Russia. However, Germany's cautious stance on the EU oil embargo was criticized in Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech to the German parliament. Similarly, the stance expressed by President Macron in his opinion that "it was vital that Russia was not humiliated"⁵⁰ in order to pave the way for diplomacy drew criticism from Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba.

Even in terms of support for Ukraine in the early stages of the aggression, Germany and France lagged behind Poland. Since then, the Scholz administration's hesitancy to supply the main battle tank Leopard 2 to Ukraine, which has been a frequent topic of debate, and the Macron administration's attempt to keep channels open with President Putin have undeniably caused distrust among Central and Eastern European countries. In response to the stance taken by Germany and France, EU Parliament member Radosław Sikorski, who has served as Poland's foreign and defense ministers, questioned, "I wonder if France and Germany realise how much credibility they are losing in Central Europe with their policy on Ukraine."⁵¹

Under these circumstances, France has proposed the creation of a European Political Community (EPC), which is supported by Germany and the EU.⁵² The EPC is described as a forum for political decision-making and coordination within a looser framework than the EU, and includes non-EU European countries such as the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Eastern Partnership countries, and Balkan countries. At its first summit in October 2022, participants confirmed the fundamental consensus, such as their condemnation of Russia for its aggression and their support for Ukraine. This meeting can be said to symbolize the breakdown of Greater Europe, as it served as an opportunity for France, Germany, and the EU to show that they are excluding Russia for the time being and emphasizing solidarity between the EU and its neighboring countries.

But it does not necessarily imply that Europeanism has been established immediately either. It is true that, if the EPC can reach some agreement on European issues that cannot be resolved solely by the EU, such as the Ukraine issue, this may be a step toward the establishment of a broader form of Europeanism. However, the participating countries' visions for the EPC are not necessarily aligned, and if coordination does not go well, it could simply increase the number of occasions that show the division of Europe. The question is whether Germany and France can demonstrate leadership in coordinating European policy towards Russia, thereby whether they can regain the trust of the European countries.

Russian Aggression against Ukraine and the Strategic Competition: U.S.-Europe versus China-Russia?

China reaffirmed its commitment to promoting "strategic cooperation" at a summit meeting with Russia in February, just prior to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Even after the attack, China did not condemn Russia, but rather took actions and made statements backing Russia. This attitude on the part of China has prompted NATO to take a tougher stance toward the country. In 2022, NATO's new *Strategic Concept* mentioned for the first time that "the People's Republic of China's stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values." It also expressed alarm at "the deepening strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation."⁵³ In addition, the dropping of the phrase "opportunities," which had been used continuously since 2019, when NATO first began making references to China, suggests that member countries' perceptions of China had hardened.

However, as Secretary General Stoltenberg has long emphasized, mention of China is not meant to show the military presence of NATO in the Indo-Pacific, at least in the current situation. NATO perceived China as a challenge because "China is coming closer to us [NATO]"⁵⁴ through a wide variety of political, economic, and military tools, such as its active cyber and space activities, spreading of disinformation, penetration of industry, technology, infrastructure, and supply chains, and strengthening of its economic power to increase political influence. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine a military conflict taking place between NATO and China. On the other hand, NATO has recently stated that cyberspace and space-related attacks can also trigger Article 5. NATO could invoke Article 5 if it identifies China as the main actor in such an attack, although the method of response would depend on the circumstances.

Perhaps more important is the aspect of NATO as a political alliance.

That is, the promotion of cooperation in the strengthening of economic security and resilience based on Article 2 (economic cooperation within the Alliance) and Article 3 (maintaining the capacity to resist armed attack). However, in Europe these are areas that are managed by member governments and the EU more than by NATO policy. In addition, such risks do not originate only from China, but also from Russia. In other words, rather than discussing the pros and cons of adopting policies towards China, about which stances are divided among NATO members, it would be more accurate to say that NATO needs to strengthen its own resilience through NATO-EU cooperation against risks from both China and Russia.

The EU and NATO are also converging in their understanding of the situation, which has led to a policy of enhanced cooperation. On March 10–11, 2022, leaders of the EU and its member states held an informal meeting in Versailles, France, to discuss Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the EU's response. The Versailles declaration, adopted there, condemned Russia and Belarus and indicated a policy of enhancing "European sovereignty" in three key dimensions: bolstering defense capabilities, reducing energy dependence, and building a more robust economic base.[55] In addition, at a summit with China in April, the EU demanded that China halt its support for Russia and its actions that circumvent the sanctions against Russia, but China reportedly refused to accept the EU's demands.[56]

In March, the EU also released the *Strategic Compass*, a document that sets forth its policy for strengthening the EU's defense and security policy by 2030. In that document, the EU mentions Russia and China after stating that challenges to the European security order are increasing in this "era of strategic competition."[57] To cope with this strategic competition, the document calls for strengthening a wide range of measures, including intelligence, cyber defense, countering disinformation, space strategy, and maritime security, while improving capabilities in conventional military forces.

What is important to note here is that the document emphasizes that the strengthening of the EU's capabilities is only meant to be complementary to NATO. It goes without saying that NATO is indeed a unique organization in terms of its defense of the territory of its member countries. However, as threats to Europe now extend beyond simple military power to encompass the political, social, and economic spheres, whatever the EU manages and strengthens will contribute to NATO's deterrence and defense, and thus the momentum for NATO-EU cooperation has never been greater. Three main areas of NATO-EU cooperation are considered to be important.[58]

The first is cooperation on Military Mobility, which means enhanced military logistics to support the deployment of each country's armed forces in Europe. It will take some time to develop military infrastructure and simplify procedures for troop movements and border crossings, but these improvements by the EU will contribute to large-scale NATO deployments. The second is cooperation on cyber security and information warfare, in which the civilian sector is heavily involved. In this area, it is expected that personnel exchanges, information sharing, and joint exercises between NATO and the EU will lead to the creation of a more comprehensive strategy and doctrine that encompasses military aspects. The third is cooperation on capability and technology development. Greater integration of the different defense procurement standards used by NATO and EU is expected to reduce reliance on supply chains with high geopolitical risk.

Joint declarations between NATO and the EU on cooperation in the above areas were already issued in 2016 and 2018, and cooperation in some areas is already underway.[59] Such transatlantic cooperation is not limited to NATO and the EU but is also being pursued in parallel between the United States and the EU, as illustrated by the TTC. It is likely that this type of NATO-EU or U.S.-EU cooperation will continue to be explored in the future.

Rethinking Europeanism: Based on Solidified Atlanticism, the Breakdown of Greater Europe, and the Strategic Competition

EU solidarity is growing stronger in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. However, given that no one can predict when the war will end, it is unclear whether the EU will be able to maintain its hard-line policy towards Russia. A public opinion poll of European countries released in July 2022, about six months after the start of Russia's aggression, showed a split between a "Justice" camp which supports the continuation of Ukraine resistance, and a "Peace" camp which supports a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine.[60] While there are various interpretations of this poll, some argue that it is undeniable that something may trigger an atmosphere of so-called "sanctions fatigue" or "aid fatigue" to spread among European countries, and that this could be reflected in their foreign policies.

So far, the EU has been reducing dependence on Russia for energy as part of its efforts to achieve strategic sovereignty. In March 2022, the EU announced REPowerEU, a plan to secure alternative energy supply sources other than Russia, mainly of liquefied natural gas in the short-term, while investing in renewable energy and promoting energy efficiency in the medium to long term.[61] So far, the EU is finding alternative energy supplies in the United States and other regions around Europe, but due to factors such as fluctuating price trends, questions remain about the long-term

sustainability of diversification. Increasing energy efficiency also requires new machinery and equipment that, in turn, require metal and mineral resources. Such resources are required in a wide range of sectors, including energy and digital, but since the EU imports much of its resources from China, it has been pointed out that attempts to reduce dependence on Russia carry the risk of leading to dependence on China.[62]

However, the attitude toward China is not aligned across Europe, either. Following Lithuania in 2021, Estonia and Latvia announced their withdrawal from the "17+1" in August 2022. This seems to have been influenced by China's cooperative stance towards Russia, but, in the first place, the importance of their economic relations with China was relatively low. On the other hand, some Southern and Eastern European countries, such as Hungary and Greece, are continuing to maintain relations with China. These policy differences will be problematic when the EU reviews its stance toward China. Establishing strategic sovereignty also requires reducing dependence on China because the relationship with the country involves high levels of uncertainty. Taking these circumstances into account, new policies and strategies such as the EU's 2021 *Trade Policy Review* and the 2022 *EU Strategy on Standardisation* are being developed. The rationale is that even if the EU relies on China as a temporary alternative to reduce its dependence on Russia, the relationship will eventually reach its limits as long as the EU and China do not share the same values.

Ultimately, in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU's medium to long term agenda would be reducing its dependence on China and Russia and establishing strategic sovereignty, but in the short term it is likely to become more dependent on the United States.[63] In many areas, including European defense, energy, technology, and trade, the EU's strategy for the foreseeable future will be to strengthen its strategic sovereignty while cooperating with NATO and the United States. In other words, Europeanism will once again be forced to be nested in Atlanticism, and for the time being, it is unlikely that there will be any forces at work to extricate it from this structure.

The question, then, is where the United States is heading. With the start of the Biden administration, U.S.-European relations have temporarily recovered from their lowest point. However, if a kind of "Trumpism" remains in the United States and U.S. diplomacy falls into a similar ideology that was advanced under former president Trump in the future, it could again worsen U.S.-European relations. Moreover, regardless of the course of U.S. domestic politics, as long as the strategic competition between the United States and China continues, U.S. interests and assets will have to focus more on the Indo-Pacific. In this case, there will be a discrepancy again

between European states that are negative towards U.S. leadership and aspire to be an autonomous EU vis-à-vis the United States, and those that still actively embrace U.S. leadership, especially in NATO. Here, Europe will stand at a crossroads: can it be involved in the U.S.-China strategic competition as an autonomous subject, or will it be left on the sidelines of the competition and become a mere object with less influence?

Conclusion

Based on the perspectives of Atlanticism, Europeanism, and Greater Europe, this chapter examined the changes in the regional order in Europe since 2014 and their relevance to European behavior within an international order that is increasingly uncertain due to the U.S.-China strategic competition. The European regional order from 2014 to 2022 consisted of strengthening NATO on the one hand, while maintaining control in relations with Russia on the other. In the meantime, both relations with the United States and relations with China deteriorated, creating momentum for the EU to pursue strategic autonomy and sovereignty. Partially behind these developments is the desire to increase Europe's relative influence in the international order through stabilizing relations with Russia, and thus reducing both Europe's dependence on the United States and Russia's dependence on China.

What actually happened, however, was the opposite. The maintenance of substantive relations with Russia—pursued by the EU, Germany, and France from the perspective of the regional order of Greater Europe—led to distrust and unease from Central and Eastern European countries that directly faced the Russian threat, and it caused disarray within Europe. Central and Eastern Europe, basically seen as Atlanticist, showed no interest in strategic autonomy or sovereignty through Europeanism, and this made it difficult to respond to the strategic competition as Europe. It also resulted in the decline of Europe's relative position in U.S. strategy and its influence in the international order, as the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the announcement of AUKUS illustrated.

On the other hand, after 2022, Europe was forced to change the logic of its foreign policy. Following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Atlanticism was further solidified while the logic of Greater Europe broke down. In addition, Europe's relations with China have been deteriorating, and China is attempting to impose economic coercion on Europe. Under these circumstances, the EU has been trying to break away from its multifaceted dependence on China and Russia in order to establish strategic sovereignty. This sovereignty, ostensibly, also includes a break from dependence on the

United States. However, at least during the period when U.S.-European relations are cooperative, cooperation with the United States is necessitated in a wide range of areas, including European defense, energy, and economic security. In this sense, the nested structure of Europeanism within Atlanticism is now being strengthened.

Furthermore, this structural change may lead to a more concerted basis for U.S.-European cooperation in countering China and Russia. Certainly, China and Russia are not allies, and so far China has not directly supported Russia's aggression against Ukraine. However, at the very least, Europeanism will be nested into Atlanticism considerably, and the collapse of Greater Europe will promote Russia's dependence on China. In this situation, U.S.-European cooperation may also work effectively in the Indo-Pacific. Spearheaded by the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, European and EU involvement in the Indo-Pacific continues, and NATO is likewise strengthening cooperation with its Asia-Pacific partners (known as the AP4). This increased involvement of NATO and Europe in the Indo-Pacific may lead to a new phenomenon: the expansion of Atlanticism into the Indo-Pacific, which means U.S. allies in each region expand their partnership mutually.