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# Conscription in Europe



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## 1. Summary

The imminent war effort which is looming in the European landscape comes with a lack of military personnel. This rearming effort requires personnel and equipment. Recruiting personnel requires time (volunteers) and some countries deem it appropriate to speed up that process by means of conscription.

## 2. Features and methodology

**Twenty countries located in the European continent** have been observed. In Europe countries have opted for different models to face defence issues. There are countries which have professional troops, others have chosen a mixed model, some are members of NATO, others are **neutral** or have a special relationship with NATO. GDP varies dearly from country to country within Europe as well as the military spending (as percentage of GDP).

Some countries have **nuclear weapons** and are members of the European Union, some are tiny, and others are huge, landlocked, or open to the seas, and all of them quite densely populated. **Distance to Russia** (the main current threat) has also been considered.

All these features have been considered to assess the need for conscription in each country.

The study applied various clustering **algorithms to identify similarities** among the countries involved. Correlation and other factors were analysed to gain deeper insights.

The countries involved are Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

## 3. Analysis

The distinctive features analysed show that **the situation of each country varies greatly as well as the way each country faces its needs differently**. The internal political situation, the economy and historical background determine different answers to the same problematic.

Correlation among features demonstrate that **they behave independently**. There is only a moderate correlation between the size of the armed forces of a country with the population of that country. In the other cases, correlation is weak and on occasions is inverse. For instance, GDP per capita and military spending are moderately opposing features (for instance, the bigger the GDP per capita, the smaller the military spending).

Another feature we have been paying attention to is the **militarization of societies**. The number of members of the armed forces per 1,000 citizens has been calculated and used to compare countries.

This item shows clearly that countries closer to Russia are already much more militarized than others:

COUNTRY	SOL_1000	CONSCRIPTION
Austria	1.9	YES
Bulgaria	4.3	NO
Denmark	2.4	YES
Estonia	6	YES
France	2.9	NO
Germany	1.3	NO
Greece	14.2	YES
Hungary	2.9	NO
Italy	2.9	NO
Latvia	3.6	YES
Lithuania	4.8	YES
Netherlands	1.6	NO
Norway	2.9	YES
Poland	3.8	NO
Romania	4	NO
Slovakia	2.9	NO
Spain	2.5	NO
Sweden	1.7	YES
Switzerland	2.7	YES
UK	2.2	NO

Conscription increases the ratio SOL\_1000 (soldiers per 1,000 citizens), that's why Greece stands out.

### 3.1 US troops in Europe

The United States has roughly **90,000 military personnel deployed across Europe**. Of these, about 60,000 are permanently based, while the rest rotate in and out through training exercises and temporary deployments. For example, in 2024, around 35,000 US troops were stationed in Germany, 12,000 in Italy, and over 10,000 in the United Kingdom, with smaller numbers spread among other European countries.

These figures reflect the ongoing commitment of the US to support NATO and maintain a forward presence in Europe despite evolving security challenges.

But it also shows the different efforts that different countries must do to replace the US troops presence in their respective territories. Considering the numbers provided, it's quite clear that Germany really needs to think seriously of **resuming conscription**. But Italy or the UK, although not affected at the same level, they must rethink at least **how to better attract younger generations to engage in the armed forces**. If it doesn't work, conscription will be the only way out.

A general overview of the US presence in Europe is shown in the following table:

Here's a clear table summarizing the presence of U.S. troops in various European countries as of the most recent data available (2024):

Country	US Troops Presence (approx.)
Germany	34,894
United Kingdom	10,180
Italy	12,319
Spain	3,292
Greece	405
Latvia	Included in NATO rotations (~4,000 multinational)
Lithuania	Included in NATO rotations (~3,700 multinational)
Estonia	Included in NATO rotations (~2,200 multinational)
Denmark	140
Norway	254
Sweden	Limited rotational presence (part of NATO exercises)
Austria	No permanent presence (Neutral country)
Switzerland	No permanent presence (Neutral country)
Netherlands	393
Poland	11,600 (Largest NATO battlegroup)
Hungary	1,054 (NATO rotational)
Slovakia	1,100 (NATO rotational)
Bulgaria	1,650 (NATO rotational)
Romania	4,700 (NATO rotational)
France	No permanent significant presence

**Notes:**

- **Germany, Italy, UK, and Spain** host permanent U.S. bases.
- **Poland** hosts the largest U.S.-led NATO battlegroup.
- **Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)**, along with **Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria**, host rotating NATO Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroups involving U.S. troops.
- **Sweden** has recently joined NATO activities, though U.S. troops' presence is rotational and limited.
- **Austria and Switzerland** maintain neutrality; thus, no permanent U.S. military presence is stationed there.

Data sources: NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (2024), Statista (2024), U.S. European Command (EUCOM, 2024).

In the case of Germany there are several issues to consider. US troops in Germany amount to 35,000 soldiers. The country is likely to be obliged to replace a great part of those men, due to the threat of a decreased presence of US troops. In addition to it, Germany has to increase its own military due to a certain level of detachment from the military environment (historical heritage). **Combining both topics with an urgency of time, makes it compulsory for Germany to impose conscription** or find ways to lure younger generations to engage with military life swiftly.

## 4. Final remarks

The clustering attempts clearly indicate that **some countries should adopt conscription as soon as possible. They are Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia.** Poland, however, has a substantial number of volunteers who feed the reserve army, and they are not counted in the data. Hungary may believe that Russia is not a problem for them but if there is a change of government in the country, Orban would have paved the way for an easy invasion. The case of Germany has already been discussed.

In any case, the militarization in Europe is far from a war. In the most recent case of the war in Ukraine, the ratio of Ukrainian soldiers per 1,000 Ukrainian citizens is around twenty-five, while the ratio for Russia is a bit less than 9.

During the II World War, a global war, ratios were:

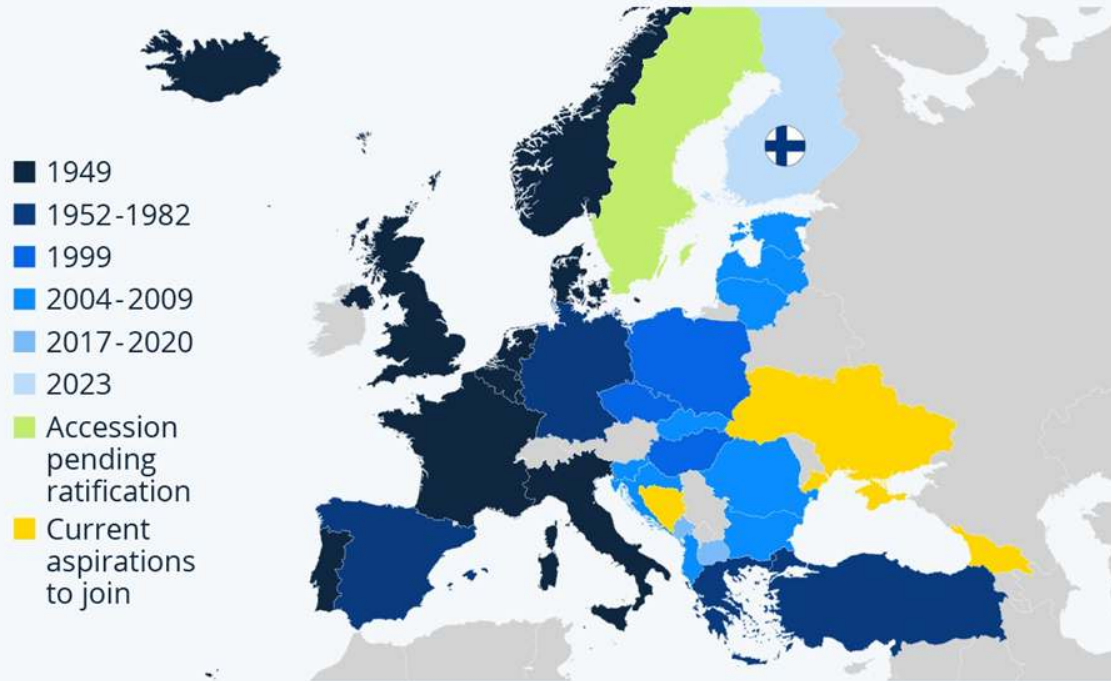
COUNTRY	SOL_1000
Germany	257
Russia	200
Japan	137
UK	125
France	134
The Netherlands	33

It is also important to highlight that modern warfare requires fewer human resources than before. But it is still a reference to gauge how the threat is being regarded at this moment.

Regarding numbers, **Europe is still far from being at war**, but it may happen almost overnight. Situation can dramatically change in months.

# Finland Becomes 31st Member of NATO

European countries by year they joined NATO



Map excludes the United States and Canada, both founding members of NATO.  
Source: NATO