

Europe must adopt a wartime mindset as conflict with Russia becomes inevitable

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 01.10.2025

According to all signs, the processes that unfolded in Europe in the 1930s are now reappearing before our eyes in present-day Europe. Nevertheless, the European states, as then, at varying levels of intensity, refuse to see the danger standing at their threshold, right before their very eyes.

In an interview given a few days ago to the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs*, Poland's Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski presented aspects of the negative change striking Europe before our very eyes. The UAVs that penetrated Polish territory, he emphasized, were not the result of human error, as some tried to claim. This was a Russian offensive step, deliberate in nature. The UAVs were unarmed, which allowed for an increased amount of fuel. They flew for more than seven hours on their way to their target.

Testing NATO

Russia, he clarified, wants to test NATO's resolve. Poland indeed invoked Article 4 of the NATO treaty, which enables a member state under attack to call for consultations with its allies. These, Sikorski said, expressed willingness to assist in strengthening Poland's air defense systems. The US response to the incident did not satisfy Poland. If UAVs had flown from Cuba toward Florida, he said, and rightly so, the US would have responded differently.

This somewhat recalls the abandonment of Czechoslovakia to the Nazi jaws in the infamous Munich Agreement (November 1938) by its "allies" - Britain and France.

Poland has already doubled, even tripled, its defense spending since US President Donald Trump took office. About 10,000 American troops are stationed on Polish soil. The Polish government bears part of the cost of maintaining them there. All these are steps in the right direction. However, it is difficult to assume they will deter the Russian Bear from continuing aggression in Europe, if it so desires.

Targets of Russia

Even Denmark, the fairy-tale land of Hans Christian Andersen, peaceful and calm, has not escaped Russia's heavy hand. Before it could recover from Trump's demands to hand over Greenland, it already faced the much more dangerous Russian threat. UAVs also penetrated its territory from Russia's direction.

Like his counterparts in Poland, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen refused to accept the explanation of an accidental malfunction. The UAVs' flight path toward airports and military bases, he clarified, leaves no doubt that this was a deliberate Russian attack.

Under these circumstances, one can understand the statement and warning of NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte that Europe is not prepared for the military challenges it will face in the next four to five years, and it must adopt a "wartime mindset."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "Sparta speech" allows for the assessment that, on Israel's part, the penny dropped following the October 7 attack. Israel understands that in the current international reality, in a time of trial, every state will need to stand on its own fate. Will European states follow suit? It is highly doubtful. Published in The Jerusalem Post, October 01, 2025.