Europe at an Existential Crossroads: Lessons from the Interview with Gabrielius Landsbergis



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Introduction

On September 5, 2025, Forbes Ukraine published a major interview with Gabrielius Landsbergis [1] — former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and one of the most consistent and principled European politicians of our time. His voice has long become a symbol of sober assessment of Russian aggression and the lack of an adequate Western response.

In this interview, Landsbergis openly addresses Europe's main challenges: the illusion of "security guarantees" without readiness for real war with Russia, the dangerous inertia of the European Union, the Kremlin's dependence on China, and the price of compromises that are being imposed on Ukraine.

This analytical review not only outlines the key points of the interview but also evaluates their significance in a broader civilizational context: the future of Ukraine, Europe, and the world will depend on whether the West becomes a genuine geopolitical actor or ultimately loses its subjectivity in the face of aggression and dictatorship.

Key Points of Gabrielius Landsbergis' Interview

Security guarantees for Ukraine. All discussions of "guarantees" are meaningless if European states are not prepared to fight alongside Ukraine against Russia. Without genuine readiness, such guarantees are nothing but illusion and self-deception.

Europe's passivity. The EU does not act as an independent subject but waits for decisions from the United States, Putin, or Ukraine itself, thus avoiding responsibility.

Economic contradiction. During the war, Europe paid Russia more for energy resources than it provided in aid to Ukraine — effectively financing the aggressor.

Russia's dependence on China. About 80% of Russia's industry operates on Chinese equipment. China is interested in the war, turning Russia into its vassal.

The danger of compromises. Any attempts to impose “limited sovereignty” on Ukraine are unacceptable and cynical. Only the Ukrainian people can determine the future of their territories.

The European Union as a geopolitical actor. Europe must amend its founding treaties and finally become a true force capable of shaping its own political and security reality, instead of remaining an object of others’ decisions.

Analytical Assessment and Strategic Insights

1. The Russo-Ukrainian War as a Civilizational Challenge

Russian aggression against Ukraine is not merely a local war over territories but an existential threat to the entire system of international relations. Fundamental norms of international law have been violated: state sovereignty, the inviolability of borders, and the prohibition of aggression. Moscow’s aggression challenges the world order established after World War II. Defending Ukraine means not only protecting its territory and people but also safeguarding human rights and the foundations of democracy that secure the future of the civilized world.

2. The Crisis of the European Union and Its Double Standards

The EU has demonstrated political inertia, often hiding behind bureaucracy. As Landsbergis aptly noted, the reaction would have been different had Germany or France been directly threatened. This reveals double standards in the approach to security. For Ukraine, such policy is unjust and dangerous: it leaves vulnerable the country that has become Europe’s shield. The EU must recognize that Ukraine’s security and interests are an integral part of its own security.

3. The Role of the United States: Inconsistency and Responsibility

The United States remains a key player in global security. At the same time, successive administrations in Washington have shown inconsistency: from promises of strong support to dangerous signals of appeasement. This undermines trust in the U.S. as the world’s leader of democracy. For Ukraine and Europe, it is vital to demand that the U.S. uphold the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international law, as the refusal to lead could open the way for authoritarian dictates.

4. The Chinese Factor and the Global Threat

The war in Ukraine has become a field for China’s strategic ambitions. By supporting Russia economically and technologically, Beijing seeks to weaken the West while preparing for a potential military scenario against Taiwan. Russia’s dependence on China makes it an even greater threat: Moscow is turning into Beijing’s vassal. Thus, the war in Ukraine has become part of the global confrontation between democracies and dictatorships. For the civilized world, this is not only a geopolitical but also a values-based challenge.

5. International Institutions and Spiritual Responsibility

The UN, once considered a guarantor of peace and law, has proven powerless in the face of aggression. Its inability to act effectively has undermined trust in the international security system.

A similar moral failure is evident in church and religious structures, which, instead of defending truth and human dignity, have often become instruments of evil propaganda. The Russian Orthodox Church and its Ukrainian branch (the UOC-MP) legitimize aggression by covering up the crimes of the “Russian world” with pseudo-religious rhetoric.

Of particular concern is the fact that representatives of other Churches have, at various times, openly flirted or continue to flirt with this ideological-religious tool of the Kremlin. Chief among them is the Roman Catholic Church (the Vatican), whose leaders — the Popes — have repeatedly engaged in diplomatic “dialogue with Moscow” even during times of active military aggression. Similar tolerance or direct cooperation with the Moscow Patriarchate has been demonstrated by other Orthodox Churches as well:

- The Polish Orthodox Church, which systematically supports Moscow’s positions;
- The Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, maintaining loyalty to the Kremlin and its ecclesiastical policies;
- The Serbian Orthodox Church, historically and presently allied with the ROC and the ideology of the “Russian world.”

To this list may be added other ecclesiastical structures that take a position of dangerous “neutrality,” which in reality amounts to complicity in legitimizing aggression.

This is not only a crisis of international politics but also a profound crisis of spiritual morality. Religious institutions, called to be bearers of peace and truth, are turning into a façade for war and lies. In response, democratic states and the true Churches of Christ must unite around genuine civilizational values: dignity, freedom, human rights, peace, and justice.

Forecast and Strategic Recommendations

1. **Recognition of existential threat.**
   Europe must acknowledge that the Russo-Ukrainian war is not a local conflict but a challenge to its very existence as a civilization founded on human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. Without such recognition, no guarantees or declarations make sense.
2. **Real defense alliances.**
   European states and NATO must move from declarations to genuine readiness to fight alongside Ukraine. This means building effective defense structures, joint planning, and force deployment. Only this can guarantee the security of Ukraine and the entire continent.
3. **Sanctions pressure against the aggressor and its allies.**
   Russia and China must face tough, effective economic sanctions that will truly limit their military and technological capabilities. Formal “packages” should give way to comprehensive measures that undermine the economic base of dictatorships.
4. **Ukraine as the center of European subjectivity.**
   Ukraine today defines the future of Europe. Its victory or defeat will determine whether Europe becomes an independent geopolitical subject or remains an object of others’ decisions. Ukraine’s security must become an integral part of EU security.
5. **Guarantees of Ukraine’s independence, security, and integration.**
   The preservation of Ukraine’s state independence and sovereignty over all its territories

must be non-negotiable, with categorical rejection of any recognition of occupied Ukrainian lands by the aggressor state — the Russian Federation. Strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities — from its Armed Forces to modern weapons and air defense systems — is essential not only for Ukraine's security but for that of the entire EU.
Accelerated EU membership. Ukraine's swift accession to the EU in a shortened format is a necessity for both sides: for Ukraine, it is a guarantee of political and economic stability; for Europe, a new resource in demographic, social, and security terms.

6. **Restoring the authority of international law.**
   Defending Ukraine's territorial integrity must become a true test of the effectiveness of international law. Without this, the legal order will collapse, and aggression will be legitimized. Restoring trust in the UN Charter, The Hague, and Geneva Conventions is an urgent need.
7. **Values dimension: rejecting illusions of compromise.**
   Compromises such as "limited sovereignty" or concessions to the aggressor are morally unacceptable. They contradict civilizational values — freedom, dignity, justice. Europe and the world must abandon the false logic of "appeasing" dictatorships.

Conclusion

Gabrielius Landsbergis' interview has become not only a critical assessment of today's West but also a mirror reflecting the weakness of international institutions, the EU's double standards, and America's inconsistency. At the same time, his words are a call to awakening — to the realization that the security of Europe and the world is being decided today on Ukrainian soil.

Ukraine's victory is not only a matter of its statehood but also the guarantee of preserving international law, human rights, and fundamental civilizational values: freedom, dignity, justice, and peace. Without this, the world will slide into a new era of dictatorships, aggression, and legal nihilism.

Defending Ukraine means defending Europe, democracy, and civilization itself. That is why the EU, the U.S., and other democratic states must move from declarations to decisive action: real military support, economic pressure on the aggressor, and the establishment of a new security architecture.

Ukraine has already proven capable of defending not only its own sovereignty but also the future of the free world. The fate of Europe and the entire international community in the 21st century depends on how well the West hears this lesson and supports the Ukrainian people.

Source:

Forbes Ukraine. Interview with Gabrielius Landsbergis. September 5, 2025. (accessed: September 8, 2025).