



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# Europeans played a significant role in Mike Johnson's historic shift



House speaker Mike Johnson's shift regarding the Ukraine aid bill might cost him his job, but he has accepted the price as he was already at the top of the political league.

After serving as House speaker for just 6 months, the Republican backbencher earned a global ovation for his surprising shift last Wednesday.

There are many reasons to expect that Mike Johnson's decision to put a package of around \$60 billion intended for Ukraine to the vote, after months of blockade, will perhaps even be a **turning point** in the war in Ukraine.

In explaining his decision, Mr Johnson cited many reasons for the shift, many of which were emotional, such as thinking about the future of his son, who will join the Naval Academy in the autumn.

But he did not mention some reasons, even though they undoubtedly strongly influenced his decision.

## Joint prayer with evangelistic bishops from Ukraine

Strong and what will prove to be fruitful pressure has been coming to Mr Johnson from Europe for months. It certainly was not decisive, but it undoubtedly pushed Mr Johnson in the direction he was headed.

Johnson himself assured us of this, given that the vocabulary he used to explain his decision to end the blockade of the foreign aid bill was partly taken from Europe.

"I think that Vladimir Putin would continue marching through Europe if he were allowed", said Johnson. In recent months, other European leaders have repeated these exact words to assure Republicans that their choice would affect the security of the entire continent.

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Last February, the conservative Republican representative hosted a delegation of Ukrainian evangelistic protestant bishops in Washington.

In an informal conversation, they told a fellow believer about "horrors committed by Russia and other dark forces in Ukraine, destroying and ruining churches, killing and persecuting pastors and priests, kidnapping children, and raping infants", as reported by one of the Ukrainian participants.

This meeting was probably one of the small but significant pieces from which Mr Johnson assembled the mosaic of his decision, which he presented to Congress, his GOP colleagues, and the world last Wednesday.

## European warnings about the Russian attack

He was pushed towards the decision by his trust in estimates and intel that, in case of victory, Russia would not stop in Ukraine but would continue to the West, which is already a NATO zone.

"I really do believe the intel and the briefings that we've gotten", said Johnson.

He definitely talked about the data and estimates of US intelligence, but we could also recognise the strong **influence** of European partners in this significant motive for Johnson's decision.

**Mike Johnson could not ignore a series of warnings from Europe's leading security officials over the past months that the threat of war with Russia was certain**

Mike Johnson simply could not ignore a series of warnings from Europe's leading security officials over the past months that the threat of war with Russia was certain, with the only difference being whether it would come sooner or later.

Last January, the British Defence Secretary, Grant Shapps, **said** in his first major speech that the country should prepare for war against China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea in the next 5 years.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius also warned last January, referring to his experts, that it was entirely possible for Russia to attack a NATO member in Europe in the next 5 to 8 years.

The Polish National Security Bureau rated such assessments as optimistic because, according to them, NATO and its eastern flank have about 3 years to prepare to deter Russia from attacking one of its members.

"We have to understand that it's not for granted that we live in peace, and that's why we have plans; that's why we're preparing for conflict", NATO Military Committee Chairman Dutch Admiral Rob Bauer **said** last January, on the eve of the largest drill of the Alliance since the end of the Cold War.

## Pressure from David Cameron

In addition to the alarming security assessment results, European politicians exerted significant pressure on Mike Johnson to end the blockade on aid to Ukraine.

UK Foreign Minister David Cameron led the push. Last December, he visited Mr Johnson in Washington with the view that the US was "a lynchpin for the entire war effort and that the money would make a huge difference."



*"Congress does listen to what others say and what America is capable of doing" - David Cameron*

He continued on his return to the UK, asking his European colleagues to join him in persuading Mike Johnson to unblock US aid to Ukraine.

"We need to get on the phone, or in my case, go in person to see Speaker Johnson... to get that supplemental through. European foreign ministers have a real role to play in that. Congress does listen to what others say and what America is capable of doing", said Mr Cameron recently at the NATO headquarters in Brussels.

And indeed, Mike Johnson's shift comes not only as a result of his political calculation but, above all, as a strategic decision that will have positive repercussions on US relations with all its allies, not only in Europe.

## A strategic decision with a global effect

While waiting for the unblocking of the fund for Ukraine in the US Congress, Europe has stepped up its own efforts to help Kyiv, aware that the passage of time plays a significant role in its defence.

Mike Johnson's decision also means that he recognised the reputational risk for the US if it remained on the side-lines in the case of Ukraine, which could later bring severe consequences in another conflict hotspot—in the Indo-Pacific, for example, or in the Middle East.

European allies have been joining major US military operations in crisis zones without any discussion. They have been active for months in the operation against the Houthis in Yemen, most recently through the participation of the UK and French air forces in protecting Israel from an Iranian missile attack.

### Without Mike Johnson's decision, the US would have a lot to explain to its European partners at the forthcoming NATO Summit in Washington in July

Without Mike Johnson's decision, the US would have a lot to explain to its European partners at the forthcoming NATO Summit in Washington in July. If it were not for the courageous action of the House speaker, the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Alliance at the summit would have been overshadowed by American responsibility for blocking the delivery of potentially vital help to Ukraine.

Mike Johnson's move is a significant step forward from Donald Trump's much-loved policy among his Republican supporters (Johnson was certainly one of the more ardent) about American isolationism regarding global crises, particularly those in Europe.

Many have recognised Mike Johnson's decision as a return to Republican politics from the Ronald Reagan era, and they have plenty of reasons for such a comparison.

Furthermore, we must remember that the House's decision to unblock military funding affects not just Ukraine but also Israel and Taiwan, which emphasises how important the outcome of this vote will be for the US's standing internationally as well as in Europe.