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The Future of NATO

Demise, Reform or Rebirth?

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Abstract

Pax Americana and the US-led global order as we have known it are vanishing. US President Trump has driven a wedge between US and European security, and is eroding NATO – to the delight of Vladimir Putin. However, *si vis pacem, para bellum* – this old adage is as true as ever. As the tectonic plates continue to shift beneath us, NATO needs to prepare for all eventualities. With the US becoming more transactional or even antagonistic, Europeans in NATO and the EU must change gear and focus on what is needed to become a serious geostrategic actor. The stakes could not be higher: If Europeans want to prevent the world from returning to an era where might makes right, they need to forge a shared vision of their future, including for defence and security. They need to find new leadership formulas, take a fresh look at institutional frameworks and laser-focus on building a broad range of capabilities.

This policy paper outlines the strategic context, defines plausible scenarios, and then charts out key policy recommendations focusing on three main areas: leadership, enabling frameworks and structures, and key capabilities.

Europeans in NATO and the EU can avoid a doomsday scenario where they would become the playball of strongmen in Washington, Moscow, or Peking. But that requires leadership, a firm belief in their strength, and determination to acquire the tools of an assertive geostrategic actor.

Keywords:

NATO – EU – US - Deterrence – Defence – European defence – European security – European strategic responsibility – European capabilities

1 Introduction

An ostrich policy will not help to navigate the storms. Instead, we need to face the hard reality: US President Donald Trump and his MAGA movement have caused a new existential crisis for NATO. What are the main reasons for this crisis?

- With his disdain for democracy, Donald Trump is infringing on NATO's shared values and principles as enshrined in the Alliance's 1949 founding treaty, the Washington Treaty. In the preamble, Allies commit to "safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisations of their people, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and human rights."
- His neo-imperialistic coercion targeted, inter alia, against two fellow NATO Allies, i.e., Canada and Denmark's self-ruling territory, Greenland, over whom he wants to achieve control, violates both the UN Charter and the NATO Treaty.
- By raising doubts about the US willingness to contribute to defending other Allies in case of an armed attack, he is putting into question the bedrock of NATO, the collective defence clause of Article V, Washington Treaty.
- Trump's entire strategic orientation, like his cosyng up with Russia's despot Vladimir Putin, or insulting Ukraine's democratically elected President as a "dictator" is in blatant contradiction with consecutive NATO Summit decisions. It is symptomatic of a political U-turn away from overarching NATO strategic policies agreed among all Allies, including the US, be these the 2019 Military Strategy, the 2020 Concept for the Defence and Deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) or the 2022 Strategic Concept.¹
- His so-called "peace plan" for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is not only in obvious disregard of all previous decisions taken by all Allies, including the US. The plan also rewards the aggressor, i.e., Russia, which is tantamount to an invitation to more aggression, be it in Ukraine or elsewhere. As a "Diktat-Frieden" (imposed peace), it coerces the attacked country, which suffered and continues to suffer myriads of Russian atrocities, into submission. It constitutes a massive threat to the European security order and Europe's political interests, not to mention international law.
- All of this in conjunction with Trump's blatant contempt for, and ignorance of, multilateral cooperation – be this in NATO, the EU or elsewhere – has led to an erosion of what is arguably the spirit and soul of an Alliance: the trust in each other. Donald Trump

¹ NATO, *2022 Strategic Concept* (Madrid, 2022)

succeeded, to the dismay of other Allies, in turning the US from an indispensable nation into a pariah.

With all this, *Pax Americana* is vanishing. Donald Trump has handed to Vladimir Putin two major policy gains on a silver tablet: the decoupling of the US from European security and the neutralisation, if not destruction, of NATO.²

2 A New Reality for NATO

Against this backdrop, does NATO have a plan for dealing with the multiple assaults? How would NATO cope with a potential US withdrawal from the Alliance?

Perhaps there is something well hidden in NATO Secretary General Rutte's mind, but so far, there is little visible or tangible resembling a coherent plan or policy options. The focus seems to rely on talking to key US interlocutors and activating Rutte's talent as a "Trump whisperer", – which was eventually also one of the main reasons why he got the job as Secretary General. Big parts of NATO seem paralysed or in the same state of denial. These concerns work on defining a new Russia policy (a task from the 2024 Summit) and other work strands. How can the North Atlantic Council still discuss sensitive matters ranging from cyber security via support to Ukraine or steps to strengthen Allied resilience, given Russia's intensifying shadow war against all of them, when nations cannot exclude that the US may well share such insights with Moscow?³ A coherent plan worth that name, or options on how to deal with the assaults, are lacking.

While the key function of any NATO Secretary General is to keep the Alliance together and therefore the US in NATO, there is no guarantee whatsoever that this is achievable this time round. The risk that Trump will further demolish NATO is high. Marc Rutte would therefore be well advised to pursue in parallel other options and scenarios.

However, what seems to dominate is the fear that starting to prepare for the worst could turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy and only accelerate a movement the remaining 31 Allies still hope to avoid. For the upcoming NATO Summit in June 2025, this entails the risk that the Alliance will focus on appeasing Trump and mount a smokescreen, pretending that which must not be, cannot be. This would be fatal, as in essence, it would imply that NATO has not

² In this sense also Sir Richard Shirreff, former DSACEUR, 'Silicon Curtain Podcast', 28 April 2025.

³ Based on off-the-record conversations with NATO diplomats.

found the strength and determination to muster the new existential challenges. It would further weaken NATO's credibility in deterring and defending against all threats and thus its ability to protect its populations.

Instead of remaining reactive, anxiously anticipating the next barrage from Washington or confined to wishful thinking, nations as members of NATO and the EU need to prepare for what was long considered unthinkable: *a partial or full withdrawal of the US from the Alliance*.⁴ Considering the US disregard for Europeans in NATO and the EU, the logical focus of these efforts must be Europe, with the overarching goal of becoming a serious geostrategic player. The days of Europe's childhood are over. The decades of geopolitical outsourcing are over. It is high time to grow up and behave like an adult. As Europeans in NATO or the EU, we must change gear: We must get out of the prevailing reactive mode and instead focus on what we can do and take our destiny into our hands. As a rule, Europeans should include Canada and, as much as possible, Ukraine in all these efforts.

3 Why bother? What are we defending?

It may seem obvious. However, considering that the "Why?" is at least as important as the "How?", it matters to clarify the point of departure. In a nutshell, we are defending the civilised world against the jungle. With "Pax Americana" eroded, and the global order as we have known it for decades shattered, the challenge for Europeans and likeminded partners is to stand up for a world where rules and values matter, where might does not make right, and where interests are being pursued with dialogue and negotiation and not with brutal force. As former NATO Secretary General Rasmussen recently put it: "Rising to this challenge requires a fundamental reconsideration of long-held assumptions and beliefs. Clinging to old orthodoxies is not an option. Europeans cannot preserve democracy and our way of life with soft power alone. We must dispense with entrenched taboos and relearn the language of hard power. That is the only way to deter and defend against those who directly threaten our values and interests."⁵

⁴ The recently leaked Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance from Defence Minister Hegseth seems to confirm this.

A. Horton and H. Natanson, 'Secret Pentagon memo on China' homeland has Heritage fingerprints', *The Washington Post*, 29 March 2025.

⁵ A.F. Rasmussen, 'What it means for Europe to fend for itself', *Project Syndicate*, 22 April 2025.

4 Key assumptions

The following analysis and recommendations are based on **two key assumptions**:

- Russia is and will remain the most significant and direct threat to our security, peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. With one possible exception, all factors speak in support of this assumption: Putin is not interested in peace. He wants to rebuild the Russian empire, starting with the subjugation of Ukraine and the annihilation of its existence as a sovereign nation. Russia continues to consider itself at war with NATO, in fact, since 2014. Also, for that reason, Putin continues to pursue the withdrawal of NATO's presence across Eastern Allies back to the borders of 1997, i.e., before the consecutive rounds of NATO enlargement.⁶ The only (and not very likely) factor in the years ahead that might trigger a substantive modification is a regime change in Russia, which may not end the threat. Depending on the new power constellation, it could also lead to a confirmation of the threat or even, *in extremis*, its further intensification.
- **US military support to Ukraine in its defence against Russia's war of aggression is phasing out or ending.** This is in line with repeated policy by President Donald Trump and his entourage. The alleged "peace plan" under discussion between the US and Russia does not aim to provide Ukraine with the tools it needs to defeat the Russian aggressor in Ukraine. At best, it may reach a fragile truce which is not a basis for just and lasting peace, also as Russia will use the respite to re-arm. Theoretically, Donald Trump could still realise that the best, if not only, way to achieve peace in Ukraine is by enabling the country to defeat Russia in Ukraine or forcing Russia to withdraw. However, there are no real signs of such a learning curve, be it because Trump and Putin connect as strongmen, or because Putin and Russia can offer other "bargains" to the US, e.g., linked to Iran and the Middle East, China, or the Arctic. Relations with Ukraine may in future be dominated by US commercial interests. As a case in point, Trump allowed, following the US–Ukraine mineral deals from April 2025, the sale of parts, maintenance, and training for F-16 fighter jets,⁷ and the transfer of Patriot ammunition from Germany.⁸

⁶ G. Tétrault-Farber and T. Balmforth, 'Russia demands NATO roll back from East Europe and stay out of Ukraine', *Reuters*; M. Fornusek, 'Putin to push for barring Ukraine's NATO accession in potential talks with Trump, FT reports', *The Kyiv Independent*, updated 10 January 2025. See also Wikipedia, 'Vladimir Putin's Speech on the Start of the Invasion of Ukraine', *Wikipedia*, updated 14 May 2025.

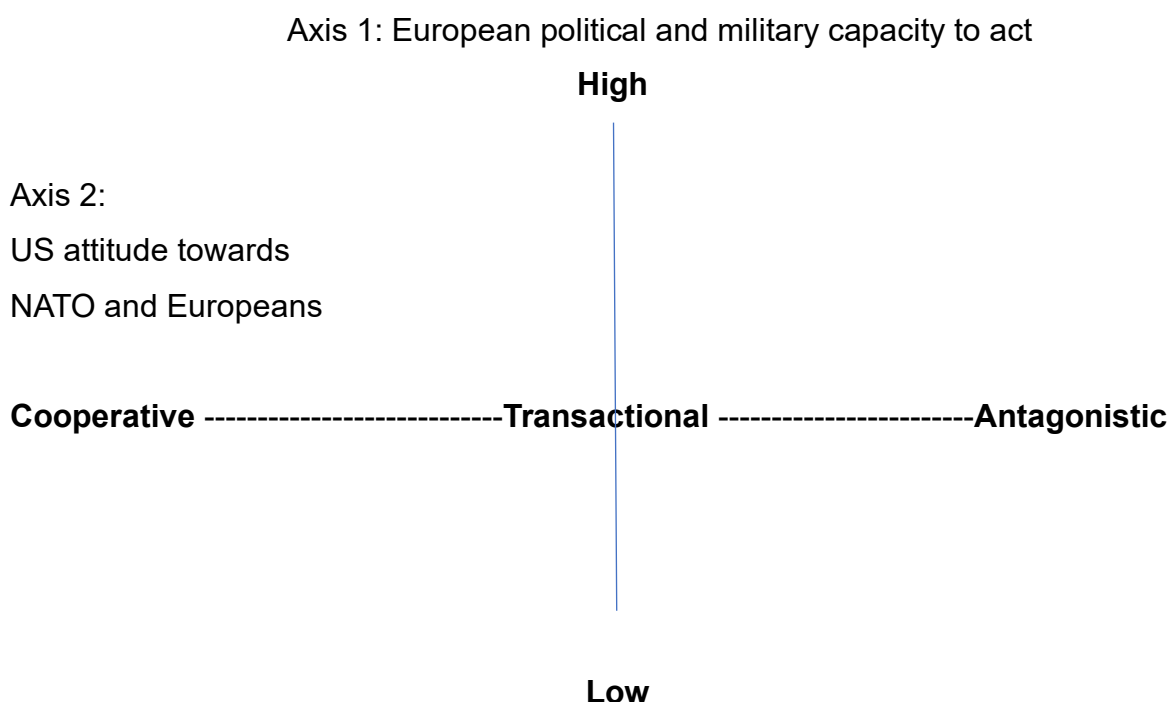
⁷ S. Walker and A. Roth, 'Trump administration readies first sale of military equipment to Ukraine', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2025.

⁸ A. Fenbert, 'US approves transfer of 125 long-range missiles, 100 Patriots from Germany to Ukraine, NYT

5 Main scenarios

The analysis will use two **main drivers** to map out future scenarios for Europeans:

Figure 1: Axis for building the scenarios



Explanation:

Axis one: European political & military capacity to act – ranging between high and low capacity.

Axis Two: US attitude towards NATO and Europeans – ranging from cooperative, via transactional to antagonistic.

Scenario 1: New Partnership among Adults

High European political and military capacity to act, and a cooperative US attitude towards NATO and EU

This is, at least theoretically, the best-case scenario. Assuming that Europeans in NATO and the EU have substantially strengthened their capabilities to act independently from the US, and the US would have engaged in such a process constructively, it would allow the transatlantic partnership to reach a qualitatively new level, as a partnership "among adults" and on an equal footing. The rebalancing would result from a negotiated process between

reports', *The Kyiv Independent*, 11 May 2025.

the US and all other Allies, synchronising the relative US reductions with corresponding growth of military capabilities among the other 31 nations, over an agreed period. The remaining Allies could also take the initiative and offer the US some forms of further burden shifting, thereby facilitating the US' growing focus on the Indo-Pacific.⁹, in exchange for an assured US presence with forces, conventional capabilities in all domains, and the continuation of the US nuclear umbrella.

The process would have led to a much more equal sharing of the burden and responsibility. The European pillar in NATO would have been substantially bolstered, in conjunction with a significantly strengthened EU as a more capable actor in the realm of security and defence. European defence capabilities and related industrial capacities would have grown substantially. In fact, in this scenario, Europeans would have significantly built up their conventional military capabilities to a level that would provide at least half of the forces and capabilities required for deterrence and defence against major power aggression, i.e. Russia.¹⁰ This includes a strong boost of those European capabilities that were typically mainly provided by the US over the past decades, such as air and missile defence, communication and intelligence, or deep strike capabilities into enemy territory. Europeans would be "first responders" to preventing or managing a crisis in their immediate neighbourhood. This implies that Europeans also shoulder most of the burden and responsibility for supporting Ukraine in its defence against Russia. The rebalancing process would have allowed the US to direct more of its military capabilities to the Indo-Pacific region and the containment of China. A new quality of the NATO-EU partnership would have enabled the process.

Scenario 2 —Transactional security

Weaker European political and military capacity to act, and a predominantly transactional US approach towards NATO and Europeans

In this scenario, Donald Trump would use US leverage in other areas, notably in terms of

⁹ The Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance recently issued by US Defence Minister Hegseth and leaked to US media underlines that "China is the Department's sole pacing threat, and denial of a Chinese *fait accompli* seizure of Taiwan – while simultaneously defending the US homeland is the Department's sole pacing scenario." Cf. Horton and Natanson, 'Secret Pentagon memo'.

¹⁰ H. Binnendijk and A. Vershbow 'A New NATO Deal for America', *Foreign Policy*, 17 January 2025. Reaching this level would in fact be a major boost, as most Allies are currently far away from that benchmark of NATO's defence planning process.

economic relations with Europe, to push Europeans to accommodate US interests in the realm of defence and security. This can lead to Europeans increasing defence spending, buying (more) US weapons, or giving US defence companies access to the EU market. In case of a perceived failure to provide satisfactory concessions, the US commitment to European defence and security would be reduced as a punishment. Furthermore, transactionalism would fuel European divisions as some would rush to meet US demands. Instead of further integration and Europeanisation, transactional security would foster the bilateralisation of defence and security relations, thereby weakening European solidarity and unity. Ultimately, this scenario would also severely undermine the credibility of NATO's deterrence and defence. With defence and security being tied, if not subjugated to, deals in other areas, opponents, starting with Russia, would exploit the weakened commitment for their benefit.

Scenario 3 – Phoenix Europe

The US continue to pursue a predominantly antagonistic approach towards NATO and Europeans, while Europeans fully embraced the challenge and succeeded in establishing themselves as a serious geostrategic actor, independently of the US.

US withdrawal from NATO could come in different degrees of intensity and largely as a *fait accompli*. To free resources for a rebalancing towards the Indo-Pacific, it could be a more focused reduction, including cuts in the rotational US land forces, a possible merger of AFRICOM and EUCOM (both based in Stuttgart, Germany), or the non-replacement of SACEUR.¹¹ Or it could follow the "Dormant NATO"¹² The approach is popular in some conservative Republican and MAGA circles. In this approach, the US "will remove soldiers and equipment from Europe and allow Western European states to return to a pre-1990 force posture."¹³ However, the United States will continue to provide an overarching nuclear umbrella to NATO members. Its formidable Second Fleet would protect sea routes, support the continent's major naval powers, and continue to provide extended deterrence."¹⁴

More recently, the leaked Interim National Strategic Guidance from the Pentagon suggested

¹¹ B. Hodges, 'Europe Has the Capability', *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, 24 April 2025.

¹² S. Maitra, 'The Best NATO is a Dormant NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, 4 November 2024.

¹³ The author probably refers to the robust deterrence and defence force posture during the decades of the Cold War.

¹⁴ S. Maitra, The Best NATO.

that the US would support Europe with nuclear deterrence of Russia, but is "unlikely to provide any substantial, if any, support to Europe in the case of Russian military advances, noting that Washington intends to push NATO allies to take the primary defence of the region."¹⁵ While only an interim guidance, the document further weakens NATO's Article 5, as it states that "NATO should only count on US forces not required for homeland defence or China deterrence missions."¹⁶

Considering the unpredictability of US policy under Trump, US disengagement from NATO could, however, also come in the form of a full US withdrawal from NATO:

NATO's founding treaty from 1949 envisages in Article 13 the possibility of any part of the treaty to "cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the United States of America". While so far this clause has never been used, considering the intergovernmental nature of NATO, membership is, by definition, voluntary. This also applies to the US.

A full withdrawal of the United States from NATO, assuming it would not be stopped in the US Congress, would fundamentally transform the Alliance, requiring unprecedented adaptation across political, military, financial, and organisational dimensions. A full US withdrawal from NATO would represent the most significant transformation of European security architecture since the Alliance's founding. It would in essence be the end of NATO as we know it and would require a fundamental reconceptualisation of its strategic outlook and posture. Every aspect of NATO's core tasks (deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security) and the related military strategies and plans would need comprehensive revision.

The resulting to-do list for NATO would be daunting. To name but a few: reorganising command structures, addressing critical capability gaps, increasing and coordinating defence spending, developing European defence industries, maintaining interoperability, and articulating a new strategic vision. Success would require unprecedented levels of political will, leadership, and cooperation among European members, unified by the recognition that collective security remains essential in the face of persistent threats, especially from the East.

The sudden absence of critical military capabilities that European NATO members currently

¹⁵ Cf. Horton and Natanson, Secret Pentagon memo; H. Bishop, 'US will not defend Europe if Russia launches an attack, leaked Pentagon document reveals', *GB News*, 31 March 2025.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

lack in sufficient quantities could well be exploited by Russia to assert greater influence, coerce NATO and EU members, intensify its shadow war, or even prepare for (limited) incursions.

In its most extreme form, such a withdrawal could, at least in theory, include the "nuclear option", i.e., the US also withdrawing its nuclear umbrella. Tackling this major challenge would be Europe's nuclear trilemma, as there are no easy but only difficult and dangerous options for a post-American nuclear deterrence.¹⁷ On balance, as Bell and Hoffmann (2025) conclude, some version of British or French extended nuclear deterrence may ultimately prove the least bad option. It would provide a path to deterrence without the political costs and security risks of proliferation and could be put in place comparatively quickly if Paris and London are willing to act decisively. Even if that version of extended deterrence would still be riskier and more fragile than what the US has provided over past decades, "Europe is better off acting than not, even if that means accepting the costs associated with the least bad option."¹⁸

Altogether in this scenario, remaining NATO members in close synergy with the EU have been able to use the crisis to re-emerge like a phoenix from the ashes: They have been mustering the political will and leadership, finally believing in their own strength. As such, they succeeded in essence in building their conventional military capabilities to a level that would provide over two-thirds of the forces and capabilities required for deterrence and defence against major power aggression, i.e., Russia. As part of this, they have been able to fill gaps in strategic enablers including air and missile defence, intelligence, battlefield command and control, transportation, and industrial production. This allowed them to robustly support Ukraine in its defence against Russia's war of aggression. What is more, Europeans have achieved this with the needed sense of urgency: With Russia preparing for more,¹⁹ The informed assumption from analysts and planners is that Europeans have until 2029(!) to close capability gaps. They have succeeded in developing a credible approach to extended nuclear deterrence based on the French and British nuclear capabilities.

¹⁷ M. Bell and F. Hoffmann, 'Europe's Nuclear Trilemma. The Difficult and Dangerous Options for Post-American Deterrence.' *Foreign Affairs*, 31 March 2025.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ M. Alander, 'Russia is preparing for more. Developments along the North-Eastern Front', *Substack*, 30 April 2025.

Scenario 4 – Doomsday or *Putin in Domo*

The US continue to pursue a predominantly antagonistic approach towards NATO and Europeans, while Europeans have largely failed to establish their political and military capacity to act.

The different degrees of US withdrawal from NATO (and Europe), as outlined above, equally apply to this scenario. But in stark contrast to the preceding scenario, Europeans would have failed to embrace the challenge and failed to establish themselves as a serious geostrategic actor, independently of the US.

National egoisms and resulting disunity would have prevailed. Eroding democracy, rising populism and political extremism in many European nations have led to stark divisions among Europeans. The remaining NATO Allies have been unable to maintain a credible deterrence and defence posture, implying that NATO has failed. Europeans have equally largely failed to compensate for the reduction of US support to Ukraine. Raising Russian influence and coercion limits the capacity of Europeans to act independently even further. Russia has succeeded in reinstating a sphere of influence not only over Ukraine, but also over Georgia, Moldova, and the Western Balkans. The European Union has failed as a peace project. In a nutshell, Europeans have become the pawns of history and the victims of strongmen leaders in Washington, Moscow, and Beijing.

Scenario 5 – Missed opportunities

The US continue to pursue a predominantly cooperative approach towards NATO and Europeans, while Europeans have largely failed to establish their political and military capacity to act.

In this scenario, similar to the doomsday scenario, Europeans have failed to establish themselves as a serious geostrategic actor, independently of the US. In light of the prevailing cooperative US approach towards NATO and Europe, Europeans would have remained in their role of a US junior partner, continued the geostrategic outsourcing, and endured as followers of US leadership and command. This would include the risk of European nations (and Canada) continuing the free-riding for their defence and security. The US would reward those nations which are investing more in their defence and security, or offering better commercial deals e.g., for the purchase of US weapons, with a more privileged partnership. This, in turn, entails the risk of sowing or deepening divisions both within NATO and the EU.

For deterring or defending against Russia, Europeans would remain largely dependent on the US. However, with US military support to Ukraine phasing out or ending, Europeans would have stepped up their capacity to help Ukraine in its defence against Russia, with the exception of a potential future Ukraine reassurance mission which would still count on US backing. In this scenario, the US has been, on balance, impaired or slowed down in directing more of its military capabilities to the Indo-Pacific region and the containment of China, creating the risk of overstretching US power.

6 And now what? Key policy recommendations

Europeans (and Canadians) can forge their future. If they want to avoid the "missed opportunities" or "doomsday" scenarios, they must act and deliver on building up their strategic responsibility now and with a sense of urgency. To achieve a position of geopolitical strength akin to the "new partnership" or the "Phoenix Europe" scenarios, they should focus on *three main lines of action: leadership, enabling frameworks and structures, and capabilities*.

6.1 Agree on a new leadership formula.

US disengagement or various degrees of withdrawal from NATO have created an enormous leadership gap in the Alliance. Over the decades, Europeans and Canadians have got used to following US guidance, sometimes willingly, sometimes reluctantly. And the US got used to having followers in the Allies. These days are over. Europeans and Canadians must overcome their self-inflicted immaturity, believe in their strength, and agree on a new leadership formula. This will require drive, determination, and courage. European nations and Canadians are not trained in this role, and some of the bigger players come with their caveats. France and the UK would qualify for the role, as Europe's two remaining nuclear powers. However, the UK has, unfortunately, decided to quit the EU, which would make such a leadership role questionable to some in the EU camp. And France, with President Macron weakened internally and the looming perspective that the extreme right may well win the next presidential elections, will not be considered as sufficiently reliable. Germany, as the biggest economy in Europe and with a new government under Friedrich Merz, seems to be willing to take on a leadership role, but as a principle, would always see that as a joint effort. Poland would be another candidate for leadership: As a frontline state, it has one of Europe's largest armed forces, and with defence investments close to 5% of GDP it is a front-runner among all Allies. However, its brand as a nation with strong bilateral ties with the US and a "fixation"

on the Russian threat may cause it to lack credibility in some European capitals.

Considering this mixed picture, the best solution would be to forge a leadership group to combine the strengths and balance the weaknesses. There are several options: One way forward could be to use the already existing Weimar Triangle with its track record of cooperation between Poland, France, and Germany as a nucleus, and extend it to include at least the UK and Italy, to also integrate a nation with a sizeable defence industry from the Southern flank. As a variant, the leadership group could be derived from the recently launched Weimar+ format.²⁰ An alternative could be to widen and deepen the current E3 format for diplomatic cooperation between the UK, France, and Germany.²¹ Finally, Europeans could also consider using the Quintet, which has started forming itself in conjunction with preparing European plans for a future peacekeeping or reassurance mission in Ukraine. The group is equally composed of Poland, Italy, Germany, France, and the UK, with the latter so far in the driving seat.

Regardless of which approach is being pursued, the resulting Quintet or Sextet²² should give itself a new name to reflect the new role and mandate. Possible options could be the European Quintet, European Leadership Quintet, the Euro-Quintet, or the European Quintet Entente.²³ At least in the early phases, the Quintet or Sextet would still function as an informal coalition of the willing. This has the significant advantage of flexibility and capacity to act, which comes as a premium for European strategic responsibility. Over time, it may be necessary to integrate it into the broader reformed structures of European defence and security.

6.2 Review and reform the enabling frameworks and structures of European defence and security.

A potential US withdrawal from NATO would not make the NATO Treaty per se obsolete. At least *de jure*, it would remain in place. The remaining members may argue that the Alliance is the best and already existing structure for the collective security of all its members. It has a tried and tested machinery, an established international secretariat (both civilian and military), and includes apart from Canada also Norway, the UK and Türkiye as significant

²⁰ Involving in addition to Poland, France, Germany also the UK, Italy, Spain, and the European Commission.

²¹ A. Billon-Galland, T. Raines and R. Whitman, *The future of the E3*, Chatham House, 26 September 2024.

²² Sextet, in case Spain is included in such a new leadership group,

²³ To be adapted to Sextet or even Septet in case the membership becomes larger, which would have pros and cons in its own right.

non-EU security powers. Notwithstanding, the remaining members cannot pretend that they can do business as usual. For starters, they would be obliged to update NATO's founding treaty from 1949. Articles 5 and 6 focusing on NATO's collective defence provisions explicitly refer to include Europe and North America. With the US gone, this would no longer be valid. What is more, NATO's institutional identity forged over more than 75 years has always centred around the transatlantic link between Europe and the US/America. As outlined above, a potential US withdrawal would in essence be the end of NATO as we know it and would require a fundamental reconceptualisation of its strategic outlook and posture.

The resulting political dynamics could well lead to transforming or transitioning NATO into a new European Defence Alliance or Organisation, or broader, a Western Defence Alliance, as a new body and ideally based on a coalition of the willing. Setting up such a new institution could also be a useful move to reinforce European capability to act.²⁴

However, there could be an even better way forward: If we want to create the institutional basis for Europeans (and Canada) to become a serious geostrategic actor, we need to stop thinking in old institutional NATO and EU silos which, often based on mutual ignorance, lead to an increasing fragmentation, a growing maze of clouded responsibilities, and often unnecessary duplication.²⁵

Therefore, an even more holistic approach with significant strategic advantages would be to undertake this reform jointly from the EU and NATO angle and, in fact, with the overarching goal of creating a joint new body akin to a Western Defence Union. As a basis, both sides would "create a real joint security strategy between the EU and NATO which integrates NATO and EU threat assessments, capability targets, regional and thematic responsibilities".²⁶ In essence, such a new joint body with its roots in NATO and the EU would be a further development and merger of all EU efforts currently undertaken as part of a future European

²⁴ There are also some voices advocating for a revival of the European Defence Community from 1952. See e.g. Project Alcide: *Getting serious about European Defence Integration*. 2025. While intellectually stimulating, the approach will hit the hard political realities: The EDC and its treaty envisage in essence the creation of a supranational undertaking. However, when it comes to defence not only in the NATO context but also in the EU context nations remain firmly wedded to the principle that they decide about their defence forces. This was recently reflected also in the recent White Paper on European Defence Readiness 2030: "Member States will always retain responsibility for their troops, from doctrine to deployment, and for the definition needs of their armed forces."

²⁵ Examples of the latter concern defence planning with Capability Development Mechanism (CDM), the Capability Development Plan (CDP) and the Coordinated Annual Review (CARD) on the EU side, and the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) on the NATO side; or defence innovation and defence production with various initiatives on both sides.

²⁶ Volt, 'Unite to prevent war. A capabilities-based European NATO is the best path to a European Defense Union', *Press Releases*, 28 March 2025.

Defence Union, which currently focuses on support to Ukraine, ramping up European defence industry and production, and investment in defence,²⁷ With all defence and security efforts undertaken then hitherto in the NATO framework.

As both the EU and NATO are frequently gridlocked by the unanimity or consensus principle, such a new institution based on a coalition of the willing would avoid the notorious blockages from Russia's Trojan Horses like Orbán and Fico. It would include Canada, and in fact, should also include Ukraine as the country which is defending European security on its soil. Ideally, a new institution would also opt for a qualified majority voting formula as the standard decision-making process. This would further enhance the institution's capacity to decide and deliver at a speed of relevance.

Such a new framework could also include a mutual defence clause which is more demanding on members than NATO's Article 5 whereby members only commit to "taking forthwith, individually or in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of force, to restore and maintain international peace and security."²⁸ Political discussions among capitals about reforms of frameworks and structures must be pursued with urgency. The above outlined Leadership Quintet or Sextet could be a useful testbed or precursor.

6.3 Boost capabilities at all levels.

As a principle, the pressure on Europeans (and Canada) to build up the key capability areas outlined below will grow (even further) the more and faster the US disengages. Since one can only prepare in advance, Europeans are well advised to expedite and intensify their efforts across all of them. As a positive sign, important foundational work is advancing via NATO's defence planning process (NDPP): "This NDPP cycle will ensure there are no areas in which the US share of capability targets is disproportionate. By the end of the decade, the NDPP will have significantly reduced the overall share of such targets borne by the United States."²⁹

²⁷ European Commission, *Joint White Paper for European Readiness 2030*, White Paper COM (2025) (19 March 2025).

²⁸ A starting point could be the present 42.7 TEU, but then without the current strong caveats: "Mutual defence clause: If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, following Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States. Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation."

²⁹ A. Lapsley and P. Vandier, *Why NATO's Defence Planning Process will transform the Alliance for decades to come*, Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, 31 March 2025.

Prepare a robust and substantial support package for Ukraine: The most pressing issue of strategic relevance is clearly how to ensure European support for Ukraine considering the dwindling or even ending US engagement and the ill-conceived "peace negotiations", happening so far by coercing Ukraine and behind the backs and at the expense of Europe.

The cornerstone of any meaningful European support package must address Ukraine's immediate battlefield needs while building long-term defence capacity. Most urgent needs include air defence systems, anti-missile capabilities, artillery systems, ammunition, and long-range precision strike weapons. To do all this, boosting European defence production is key.

Training of the Ukrainian armed forces is mainly pursued outside of Ukraine via the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) and NATO's Security and Assistance to Ukraine (NSATU). The latter also provides support for the development of Ukraine's Armed Forces and supports Ukraine through the planning and coordination of donations with Allies and partners, as well as the transfer of security assistance material and equipment repair. However, this must happen within Ukraine to scale up training to the required levels. Europeans, therefore, need to find a formula to enable this, e.g., by tasking relevant EU or NATO agencies or setting up a consortium of commercial contractors to provide training in Ukraine.

Mobilising the financial resources for a robust package will remain key. According to new research from the Tony Blair Institute, just 0.2% of the GDP of European NATO members would be needed to match Russia's resources on the battlefield.³⁰ That is a feasible amount, especially when considering that in the event of a Russian victory in Ukraine, European NATO members would have to move to some 5% to 6% of GDP on defence. In addition to the various European funds, Europe should also use Russia's frozen assets in the region of \$300 billion. So far, Europeans have only started using revenues from these assets to help Ukraine. A helpful first step, but more is needed. At best, Europeans should confiscate these assets, as countries such as Poland and the Baltics argue. Because of ongoing concerns, particularly from Germany and France, a feasible way forward could consist of considering these assets as collateral for an International Claims Commission to assess damages owed to Ukraine. If

³⁰ S. Jensen et al., *A Secure Future: The Price of Peace in Ukraine and Europe*, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 13 February 2025.

Russia refuses to pay, the assets will be confiscated.

Some parts of the support provided or to be provided can, at least for now, still be mobilised via existing institutional frameworks in the EU and NATO, as long as they do not require new agreements of all members. This concerns the EU side regarding the continuation of EUMAM and humanitarian assistance. Further financial and budget support would require the European Commission and EU member states to find new ways to circumvent Hungary's notorious blockages. On the NATO side, this applies to the long-term support of Ukraine's defence and security sector reforms via the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP). While the NATO Support and Assistance to Ukraine (NSATU) mission with its headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany, was in essence created to make NATO support to Ukraine "Trump-proofed", it may now face the challenge of replacing the circa 40 US staff as well as the US Commander.

However, any potential future peacekeeping mission or reassurance mission in Ukraine would become a victim of the unanimity principle in both the EU and NATO. In NATO, the US is paralysing these and similar discussions. In both NATO and EU, Putin's Trojan Horses, in particular Hungary, Slovakia, and NATO Janus-faced Türkiye, would derail consensus. For that reason, extending the existing mandates of the EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM) or NSATU is not an option.

The best and most productive formula for planning such a new mission is for leaders from both EU and NATO to establish a new enabling framework, based on a "coalition of the willing" to take things forward. This effort is already taking shape, with so far France and the UK in the driving seat. In perspective, and especially if the new mission moves from planning to implementation, the political lead could come from a Quintet consisting of France, the UK, Poland, Italy, and Germany. The operational lead could come via the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Forces (JEF), which would have to be enlarged to include France, Poland, Germany, Italy and ideally more nations such as Canada.

However, the most important strategic element of a robust support package would be the clear and expeditious path to EU and NATO membership. While the former is, by and large on track, NATO integration is now ruled out by Putin and Trump. Europeans, together with Canada and Ukraine, must push back. Integrating Ukraine into NATO or a future Western Defence Alliance or Union would provide the Alliance/Union with the most capable and combat-experienced armed forces in Europe. What is more, this experience has been won

by defending their country against the biggest threat to Euro-Atlantic peace and security: Russia! Which of the other European armed forces would be able to do that?

Boost European combat-capable troops: On paper, European armies have a total of 1.9 million military personnel, with 1.33 million in the EU alone. In case of a US withdrawal, a recent analysis from Bruegel concludes that an increase in European capacities equivalent to the fighting capacity of 300,000 US troops would be needed for Europe to defend itself against Russia as the most direct and imminent threat.³¹ This implies that the focus must be on reinforcing the Eastern flank.³²

To date, the effectiveness of European troops is hampered by myriad issues. These range from lack of equipment, including stocks of weapons and spare parts, lack of strategic enablers, and lack of training and unified command to issues with readiness in line with the much higher requirements of the new NATO force model. In essence, European armies have not been set up to fight without US support. "Therefore, Europe faces a choice: either increase troop numbers significantly by more than 300,000 to make up for the fragmented nature of national militaries, or find ways to enhance military coordination rapidly."³³

The deficits are often compounded by Europe's armies not meeting their recruitment and retention benchmarks. If not solved, these staffing gaps imply that NATO's obligations related to readiness and sustainment, especially for the follow-on forces, are not met. The situation is even more critical should European nations (and Canada?) be called upon to deploy a peacekeeping or reassurance force in Ukraine. As a case in point, Germany is already struggling to deploy a 5000-staff brigade to Lithuania. Mobilising more forces to deploy to Ukraine would at present, be next to impossible.

Close critical equipment gaps: In case of a partial or full withdrawal of the US, the pressure on the remaining Allies and the EU would be gigantic. In line with the outlined scenarios, the most critical gaps would relate to the following:

- **Air and missile defence:** As Ben Hodges recently flagged³⁴, in case Russia has decided

³¹ A. Burilkov and G.Wolff, *Defending Europe without the US: first estimates of what is needed*, Bruegel, 21 February 2025.

³² Cf. Lapsley and Vandier, 'Why NATO's Defence Planning...'

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cf. Hodges, 'Europe has the Capability.'

to attack any NATO country, then they have already decided to destroy our transportation infrastructure and attack our cities. The remaining Allies and Canada do not have enough air and missile defence systems in Europe to deal with what Ukraine has been facing over the past years. Especially given the lessons learnt from Russia's war against Ukraine, this would have to include a surge in the production of drone and counter-drone systems. In addition, to ensure credible deterrence, the ability to strike deep into enemy territory will need to grow to overcome the range of anti-access/aerial-denial (A2/AD) and electronic warfare challenges they pose.³⁵

- **Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems:** Over past decades, the US has provided the bulk of the data collection and their assembly as a basis for decision-making. While European states have some individual intelligence capabilities, "quickly agreeing on and setting up the architecture to share intelligence among European NATO members will be challenging in the absence of US leadership."³⁶ What is more, most of the targeting capabilities essential in a situation of conflict, are being provided by the US. In the context of a new Western Defence Alliance or Union, members could issue mandatory requests for information from member states intelligence agencies to address joint threats in line with the agreed joint security strategy.
- **Defence production:** Europeans need to turbo-charge European defence production which so far is too small, too fragmented, and too slow. As part of this, they need to spend more together, not side by side, and more European. The EU defence landscape remains too fragmented and ineffective. EU nations have some 180 major weapon systems; the US has 30. Europeans have 17 main battle tanks; the US has one. Common EU procurement to date is still below 20%. The Defence Investment Gap Analysis (2024) estimates €400 billion of economic waste due to inefficient defence spending over the last 30 years. There is a strong need for more projects like the European Air Transport Command or the European Sky Shield Initiative. More joint procurement over larger quantities would reduce costs and increase interoperability beyond the actual equipment, e.g., training and maintenance.

While Europe's defence industries have significantly increased some aspects of production capacity since 2022, esp. in areas where Ukrainian demand is greatest (air

³⁵ G. Niehus, *Ein Mehr für unsere Sicherheit! – Zur Stationierung von US-Waffen in Deutschland*, Zentrum Liberale Moderne, 17 October 2024.

³⁶ P. O'Brien, and E. Stringer, 'Planning for a Post-American NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, 6 September 2024.

defence, artillery), increasing production of more complex systems will take longer. European states remain dependent on the US for some important aspects such as rocket artillery, extended-range air defence and combat air systems. In addition, significant parts of European defence production still go to customers in Africa and the Middle East. What is more, defence production is still too slow. Russia produces in three months what the whole of NATO produces in one year.

- **Transportation:** Transporting troops and equipment over significant distances requires transport platforms, engineering, bridge-building tools, and proper infrastructure. "Yet European logistics and support capabilities have diminished below any reasonable threshold."³⁷ The continuing hurdles with military mobility, e.g., lack of adequate infrastructure like roads or railways, lack of standardised procedures akin to a (non-existent) "Military Schengen", and the abundance of red tape imply that any large move of forces is slow and cumbersome.³⁸

Strengthen the integration of European defence planning efforts and work towards joint defence planning in Europe: In the first phase, NATO European Allies should agree within the NATO Defence Planning Process to the new military level of ambition for European strategic responsibility, e.g. Europeans to build their conventional military capabilities to a level that they would provide, over 5+ years, at least half (or two thirds) of the forces and capabilities required for deterrence and collective defence against a major power aggression (i.e. Russia), including the strategic enablers like air-lift, air-to-air refuelling etc. In the meantime, they should focus on meeting the most urgent need, i.e., reinforcing the Eastern Flank. Defence planners from both NATO and the EU could be tasked to identify initiatives that pool and share national forces under a multinational command to rationalise European defence. A good way forward would be "Defence projects of Common European Interest, starting with a European Air Shield and cyber defence", mentioned in the Political Guideline 2024-2029 of Commission President von Leyen. In a second phase, and eventually, as part of a new institutional framework, NATO and the EU should review and merge the current three capability planning processes on the EU side and NATO's Defence Planning Process (NDPP).³⁹

³⁷ C.Grand, *Defending Europe with less America*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 3 July 2024.

³⁸ See also A. Sollfrank and S. Boeke, 'Enablement and Logistics as Critical Success Factors for Military Operations', *RUSI Journal*, Vol 169 (2024).

³⁹ Cf. Reference 25.

Align defence investment with strategic needs: In view of these deficits and with a looming US disengagement in sight, Europeans and Canada should commit to raising defence spending to a new baseline of 3.5% of GDP⁴⁰ – which was pretty much the norm during the decades of the Cold War in European countries. Ahead of the Summit in June 2025, NATO Secretary General Rutte has now proposed that NATO members raise defence spending to 3.5% of their GDP, and a further 1.5% on broader security-related items to meet US President Donald Trump's demand for a 5% target.⁴¹

The pressure to increase defence investment is confirmed by NATO's new comprehensive defence plans, which require Europe to increase its military capability targets by about a third, making higher defence spending an imperative. This is confirmed by NATO's upcoming report on capability gaps – which is expected to call for 49 new brigades, 1500 tanks and 1000 artillery pieces.

Political leaders need to be upfront with their populations, explaining that peace and security are investments in our prosperity. They should also reinforce the message that defence investments translate into more public revenues, more gross value added, and more jobs.⁴² While the scale of required European defence enhancements appears daunting, economic analysis suggests the financial burden would be manageable relative to Europe's overall economic capacity. According to Burilkov/Wolff (2025), the additional costs to develop autonomous European defence capabilities would amount to some € 250 billion annually or around 1.5 per cent of the EU's gross domestic product – a significant sum (and leading to 3.5% of GDP mentioned above), but far less than had to be mobilised to overcome the crisis during the Covid pandemic. At the time, the EU mobilised a massive multi-tier support package of ca. € 3.2 trillion in total fiscal response. Today's security challenges are far greater. Therefore, the primary constraints on European defence are political will and strategic coordination rather than absolute resource limitations. With appropriate determination and sustained investment, Europe has the economic foundation to develop credible deterrence capabilities.

Boosting defence investment over sustained periods should not only be a national but also a

⁴⁰ In this sense also A. Burilkov and G. Wolff, *Defending Europe without the US: first estimates of what is needed*, Bruegel, 21 February 2025.

⁴¹ Reuters, *NATO's Rutte wants 2032 deadline for new defence spending goals, Dutch PM says*, 9 May 2025.

⁴² Cf. for example: EY and DekaBank, *Wirtschaftliche Effekte europäischer Verteidigungsinvestitionen*, 12 February 2025.

joint European effort. Commission President von der Leyen recently presented the Re-arm Europe plan, which, once it moves to real implementation, includes several useful steps. At the same time, it envisages only limited fresh money and leaves the burden of finding real cash on member states' shoulders. It is, therefore, key that the EU creates a common pot of funding. This could be a combination of joint EU borrowing (similar to the approach adopted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic), or increasing revenue sources through tariffs, pan-European taxation, or other means.

Scale-up innovation: Investment in research, development and defence innovation is another key area that has largely been farmed out to the US over past decades. The scale of US defence R&D investments dwarfs those of its NATO and EU counterparts. In 2017, the US spent \$55.4 billion on government-funded defence R&D, exceeding the combined total of all other OECD countries by a factor of four.⁴³ South Korea, the second-highest spender, allocated \$3.38 billion, while the United Kingdom and Germany invested \$2.38 billion and \$1.53 billion, respectively.⁴⁴ Even among NATO members adhering to the Alliance's 2% GDP defence spending guideline, R&D allocations remain fragmented and insufficient to match US levels.

The US benefits from a long-standing integration of defence R&D into national security strategy, exemplified by agencies such as the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)⁴⁵ And the Space Development Agency. These entities operate with multi-year funding horizons and mandate to pursue high-risk, high-reward technologies, fostering breakthroughs like the internet and GPS.⁴⁶ In contrast, European defence R&D is hampered by bureaucratic fragmentation, short-term budgeting cycles, and persistent underinvestment in collaborative defence research.

With a looming US disengagement, Europeans (and Canada) will have to step up their efforts. NATO and the EU have made a head start, however, as in many other areas, largely in their respective silos: Europeans have launched several initiatives, including the European Defence Fund (with a relatively modest budget), the EU Defence Innovation Scheme, the Hub for Defence Innovation to foster innovation and strengthen the European defence

⁴³ US, Congressional Research Service, *Government Expenditures on Defense Research and Development by the United States and Other OECD Countries: Fact Sheet* (CRS 2020).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See I.M. Ciolan, *The case for a European DARPA*, Martens Centre, July 2024.

⁴⁶ E. Marcy and Gallo, 'Defense Primer: Research Development, Test, and Evaluation', *Congress.gov*, 19 November 2024

technological and industrial base. The recent Joint White Paper on European Defence Readiness 2030 pushes for transforming defence through disruptive innovation.⁴⁷

NATO, in parallel, has intensified its R&D focus in response to Russian aggression and Chinese technological ascendance, also realising that new technologies can mitigate capability shortfalls and reduce the need for conventional mass by increasing precision or effectiveness. The NATO Innovation Fund and the NATO Defence Innovation Accelerator aim to sharpen the Alliance's technological edge. In 2022–2023, the Alliance prioritised investments in AI, hypersonic weapons, and energy resilience, though collective spending remains a fraction of US outlays.⁴⁸

Europeans must overcome historical patterns of fragmentation, underinvestment, and US dependency. They must adopt long-term funding commitments, streamline collaborative mechanisms, and embrace dual-use innovation paradigms. Setting up a European equivalent of DARPA could be part of the solution.⁴⁹ More jointness, like the recent partnership between the European Investment Bank and the NATO Innovation Fund, helps to overcome institutional stovepipes. The stakes are high. The ability to innovate in defence technology will increasingly determine Europe's level of strategic responsibility.

Review nuclear deterrence: As part of gaining strategic responsibility, Europeans in or outside NATO must also think the unthinkable, i.e., the US withdrawing its nuclear umbrella. Arguing that this is unlikely is high risk as it implies not preparing for the potentially most dramatic game changer in European security: Currently, "the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance" (NATO Strategic Concept, para 29).

A potential withdrawal would not only further weaken NATO Europe's deterrence and defence and its credibility and capacity, it would also be an open invitation to Russia for more coercion, shadow war or even outright military aggression.

Europeans acquiring nuclear weapons of their own, i.e., beyond the current arsenal of the UK and France, is the least feasible option here. Nuclear proliferation may well meet opposition not only in Europe but also in the US, where so far, the overarching strategic orientation has been to curtail it, be this in Europe or elsewhere. Proliferation in Europe may

⁴⁷ Cf. European Commission, *Joint White Paper for European Readiness 2030*.

⁴⁸ G. Feller, 'NATO ramping up R&D spending, Part I', *R&D World*, 21 August 2023.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ciolan, *The case for a European DARPA*.

well trigger proliferation elsewhere, further complicating US power projection, especially in the Indo-Pacific. Russia could justify pre-emptive strikes against new European nuclear infrastructure with the argument to prevent proliferation – and refer as justification to pre-emptive Israeli strikes on Iraq or Syria.

There are also significant hurdles to broadening the nuclear-sharing arrangements of the existing nuclear forces of the UK and France to a new European nuclear umbrella. Apart from the significant costs, it will take time for political decision-making, doctrine development, related production, deployment, maintenance, etc. Still, intensifying the analysis, at best with an in-depth cost-benefit study, has merits.⁵⁰ It fosters Europe's lack of strategic culture and helps to correct the old stereotype that "Americans are from Mars, Europeans from Venus". It would also serve as strategic messaging, complicating decision-making in Russia or the US. At this stage, that is useful in its own right.

7 Take action to be fit for the future!

As some quip ironically, NATO stands for "No Action, Talk Only". If that were ever true, it is certainly no option now. If Europeans, be they in NATO, the EU or both, want to survive, urgent, sustained and determined action is required now.

Altogether, Europeans in NATO and the EU should pursue a **three-pronged strategy** to regain the initiative and become a serious geopolitical actor.

As an *immediate and urgent need*, driven by the double imperative to gain more capacity to act and to support Ukraine, work on establishing a "coalition of the willing" or a new Leadership Quintet/Sextet must be expedited as an ad hoc solution. This approach allows Europeans to deliver since spoilers like Hungary or Slovakia cannot block decision-making and implementation.

On a *second track*, they must reinforce the Europeanisation of NATO in conjunction with boosting the EU as a more capable actor in the realm of defence and security.

Europeans have a vital self-interest in expediting the delivery of more European strategic responsibility. This is also a way to keep the US engaged at least mid-term, e.g., with its forces and the nuclear umbrella in Europe. This also buys them some time to build the

⁵⁰ See also A. Vicente, *Why Europe Needs a Nuclear Deterrent. A Critical Appraisal*, Martens Centre, 2024.

capabilities they need to better manage their defence and security.

On *track three*, Europeans also need to envision a potential worst-case scenario of "NATO minus US". This will certainly require new forms of leadership, and potentially a substantial reform of European defence and security structures. It is equally sure that a US withdrawal from NATO, especially when coupled with a "nuclear option", would mean that Europeans would need to shoulder the full costs and responsibilities of "strategic autonomy", at worst at short notice. If that were to happen, this autonomy may go nowhere, as the Russian bear would have used the golden opportunity of a vulnerable Europe to swallow a good chunk of it.

The good news is that NATO survived earlier crises. Thus, there is hope that also this time, it will have the drive and determination to reinvent itself - or be reborn as something new. T

The good news is that Europeans, in NATO and the EU, can forge their future. With leadership, courage, and commitment, they can avoid a doomsday or missed opportunities scenario and achieve a constellation reflecting their assertiveness as a serious geostrategic actor.

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