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Astrid Chevreuil

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Astrid Chevreuil

European Deterrence at a Crossroads: French and British Nuclear Options

On March 5, 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated an invitation he had first extended to his European counterparts in 2020: to engage in a more open and strategic dialogue about nuclear deterrence in Europe. "I decided to launch a strategic debate on using our deterrence to protect our allies on the European continent," he declared.[1] This renewed offer resonates very differently today than it first did five years ago.

First, the war in Ukraine has forced European allies to reengage with the language and logic of nuclear deterrence—once relegated to the archives of the Cold War in many European capitals. Russia has heavily relied on nuclear coercion to further its military objectives and to deter Ukraine and its supporters from actions that could be construed as escalatory. As European states have sought to ramp up their military support for Ukraine, they have also become increasingly aware of the role nuclear weapons play in preventing the war from spilling into their own territories or immediate vicinity.[2] Discussions on nuclear issues within NATO have reportedly reached their highest intensity since the end of the Cold War, and European allies are assuming a greater role in these conversations.[3]

Second and perhaps most significantly, the beginning of President Donald Trump's second term has cast a stark light on the strategic dilemma faced by Washington: in seeking to prioritize domestic issues and the Indo-Pacific

Astrid Chevreuil is a visiting fellow in the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a French career diplomat. She can be reached by email at achevreuil@csis.org and followed on X @AstridChevreuil. The views mentioned in this piece are personal and cannot be attributed to the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

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region, the United States expects its European allies to assume greater strategic responsibilities. Since last February, the Trump administration has made it clear that it expects Europeans to "do more"[4] across a range of areas, from defense to industrial and technological policy.[5] A number of European capitals have responded to this call to action—which is notably more direct and forceful than the traditional appeals for increased "burden sharing" made by previous administrations—with a sense of urgency. Although no authority in Washington, let alone the president, has explicitly threatened to end US extended deterrence, European conversations about diversifying their nuclear options have intensified in recent months.

Until recently, the prospect of Europeans coordinating around additional security guarantees from France and the United Kingdom, Europe's two nuclear-armed states, was seen at best as irrelevant and at worst as dangerously destabilizing. All European states have historically regarded US extended deterrence as the cornerstone of their defense policies since the end of World War II. Exploring modifications to the organization of US extended deterrence in Europe was widely perceived as risky—likely to signal doubt in the transatlantic alliance and potentially provoke a self-fulfilling prophecy which might accelerate the erosion of US security commitments. Accordingly, discussions of a "Eurobomb"[6] or an extension of French deterrence following Macron's 2020 speech remained limited to academic and policy experts, who overwhelmingly agreed on both the limitations of any European deterrence scheme relative to the US nuclear umbrella and the absence of a strategic imperative for such discussions at that time.[7]

Today, the combination of a rapidly deteriorating strategic environment in Europe and a heightened willingness among allies to address nuclear questions necessitates a more open and informed discussion on the future of European deterrence. This article explores how European allies could organize with France and the United Kingdom to create additional security guarantees for themselves, notably in the nuclear domain.

First, the article assesses the extent to which the US extended deterrent is overstretching to address the challenges of deterring both Russia and China at the same time, and why European allies should be proactive in offering solutions in the strategic domain to maintain their own security. Second, it fleshes out the potential role of the two European nuclear powers to provide additional protection to their European counterparts. It then considers the doctrinal and operational frameworks in which France and the UK operate to explain what could realistically be expected from them. Finally, the article proposes concrete avenues through which European allies can contribute to fruitful European talks on deterrence which complement, rather than undermine, the transatlantic alliance over the long term.

How Much US Extended Deterrence is Enough?

Over the past seven decades, the military and political objectives of NATO allies have aligned in such a way that US extended deterrence has been considered the backbone of Euro-Atlantic security.[8] The contribution of France and the UK's independent nuclear forces to Europe's overall deterrence posture—while acknowledged at the NATO level[9]—has historically remained peripheral to the strategic calculations of most European capitals in shaping their national defense policies. Reassuring allies has consistently been a key tenet of US policy, serving as a critical component of the political credibility underpinning its extended deterrence commitments.[10] Following the logic of classic deterrence theory, allies' confidence in their security provider directly influences the credibility of deterrence, signaling to potential adversaries the determination of the United States to honor its defense commitments.[11]

France and the UK's independent nuclear forces have historically remained peripheral to European deterrence policy

Since its inception in 1954, when the United States began forward-deploying nuclear weapons to Europe, extended nuclear deterrence has served as a cornerstone of NATO's mutual security guarantee. In this context, the policy was widely perceived as a "win-win" arrangement for both the United States and its European allies. After World War II, the United States introduced its extended deterrence strategy as part of its broader containment policy aimed at countering the Soviet Union's expanding conventional military presence from Eastern to Western Europe.[12] It has since remained a critical element of US military strategy, designed to minimize the risk of deterrence failure vis-à-vis the Russian Federation—a failure that would otherwise risk direct nuclear confrontation across oceans should US interests in Europe be underestimated. For most European states, the American nuclear umbrella has been essential to developing balanced defense policies—avoiding the need for massive postwar rearmament while still ensuring credible security guarantees in the face of the Russian threat.

Moreover, extended deterrence has been consistent with broader international commitments made by the United States and its NATO partners in the areas of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. During the initial years of NATO's nuclear mission, particularly in the 1960s and the second phase of its early development, the alliance played a critical role in supporting nonproliferation objectives. By integrating nuclear deterrence within a collective security framework, NATO aimed to prevent the emergence of independent nuclear programs among key member and partner states.[13] This strategy was particularly

significant in dissuading countries such as Germany[14] and Italy[15] from pursuing their own nuclear arsenals, while also helping to avert potential nuclear ambitions in non-NATO countries like Sweden[16] through diplomatic and security assurances. In recent official declarations,[17] notably over the past few months, there has been no indication from any participating states of an intention to violate or withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), underscoring continued commitment to nonproliferation norms. Similarly, in the United States, a prevailing consensus within the policy community holds that the spread of nuclear weapons undermines US national security, thus making nonproliferation a central pillar of disarmament policy.[18]

This Time is Different

The conversation about a more active role for Europeans in nuclear deterrence should not be seen as a search for alternatives to US extended deterrence. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the United States has not expressed any intention to reconsider this policy. Nevertheless, the strategic challenges faced by the United States in a two-peer competitor environment compel Europeans to take greater responsibility for the defense of their continent. So far, the main response to this challenge has been a call for conventional "burden shifting,"[19] whereby Europeans would undertake massive investments and deployments to replace significant elements of the current American posture in Europe.[20] Although this is indeed a necessary move to prepare—and Europeans have been moving in this direction by providing critical help to Ukraine and investing more heavily than ever in their defense industries[21]—it is nonetheless paramount to consider how such changes in the conventional domain would interact with the credibility of security guarantees in the nuclear realm.

This should not be seen as a search for alternatives to US extended deterrence

First, European allies must approach nuclear issues on their continent differently, as the "three-body problem"—the complex trilateral deterrence dynamic between the United States, Russia, and China that reconfigures strategic stability and arms control frameworks—could impact their security in the medium run.[22] Since the Obama administration, all US administrations have identified China as the primary emerging strategic challenge. The nuclear dimension of this competition has become clearer since the discovery of hundreds of silos built in continental China in 2021 and the unveiling of a strategy of rapid build-up that could

aim at achieving nuclear parity with the United States by the 2030s.[23] As a result, American nuclear policy has increasingly focused on adapting a strategic posture to deter both Russia, as a persistent peer nuclear competitor, and China, as a rising threat, without triggering unintended escalation or an uncontrolled nuclear arms race.[24] In recent years, bipartisan support has emerged for nuclear modernization efforts, particularly for capabilities designed to manage and contain regional escalation risks.[25]

However, these investments will take a decade or more to fully materialize. In the meantime, the current US strategic posture, which relies on a combination of nuclear and conventional forces, is under growing strain. US officials have acknowledged that simultaneous contingencies in Europe and Asia would pose strategic dilemmas for Washington and its allies.[26] In this new context, most analysts, regardless of their political alignment,[27] agree that maintaining a strong extended deterrence posture sends a vital signal of resolve and credibility across both theaters, and ultimately serves US national security interests.

Nevertheless, a more robust European contribution across both conventional and nuclear domains would help alleviate US pressure in the event of a multitheater contingency. This would be particularly relevant if the United States needed to sustain deterrence against Russia in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, while simultaneously increasing its military presence in Asia in the event of a crisis over Taiwan. It would also be in the interest of Europeans to preserve a resilient posture, sparing them from the detrimental impact of a potential reallocation of vital American assets to the Indo-Pacific.

Second, European allies must develop their own strategic thinking on the articulation of conventional and nuclear capabilities so that they can be a force of proposition instead of being forced to endure the adverse effects of possible burden shifting in the coming years. European governments increasingly recognize that the Trump administration's tougher posture toward its oldest allies does not represent a temporary pressure,[28] but an acceleration of a longer-term trend of lesser US engagement in Europe as a consequence of shifting strategic priorities.[29]

Durable currents in American foreign policy thinking—particularly among Republicans—advocate for either a "restrainer" approach, which focuses exclusively on domestic and hemispheric interests, or a "prioritizer" strategy, which centers on countering China.[30] A pivot toward prioritizing the Indo-Pacific theater in US grand strategy has also been embraced by Democrats, including the last Biden-Harris administration.[31] Both the restrainer and prioritizer schools of thought suggest diminishing American interest in European security, potentially justifying withdrawal of capabilities from Europe to other theaters over time.[32]

Nonetheless, even a "mere" conventional withdrawal of US forces could change the balance of forces in Europe and dramatically change the strategic calculus of potential adversaries, particularly Russia. Since the Cold War, the effectiveness of US extended deterrence has relied on the size and diversity of the American nuclear and conventional arsenal. The combination of conventional superiority and the forward deployment of nuclear weapons on allied soil aims to deter both conventional and nuclear aggression. This posture enables Washington to manage escalation below and beyond the nuclear threshold—not merely to retaliate after a nuclear strike. One of the clear lessons of the war in Ukraine is that US conventional superiority in Europe[33] still plays a key role in deterring Russia from direct military confrontation with NATO. Losing those US capabilities, which currently enable escalation management in the European theater, would likely alter Moscow's strategic calculus regarding conventional aggression against a NATO member.[34] Indeed, one could imagine that Moscow would perceive the cost of violating the territorial integrity of a European ally as significantly reduced in a context where the prospect of a massive US conventional response is no longer credible—particularly if European forces fail to fill the resulting strategic vacuum.

This underscores the critical importance of strengthening European contributions across the full spectrum of deterrence. This effort should include robust conventional capabilities to compensate for any potential US drawdown, but also a reexamination of Europe's deterrents. In this regard, a renewed approach could build on the existing nuclear forces of France and the United Kingdom, either by reinforcing their complementary roles or by enhancing their political and operational coordination within a broader European framework. Such a strategy would not only help maintain credible deterrence in a shifting transatlantic landscape, but also signal to adversaries that Europe is prepared to shoulder greater responsibility for its own security.

Finally, European states must be prepared to defend and even reinforce NATO's nuclear posture to curb Russian requests in the event of an extensive negotiation for a peace deal over Ukraine. If negotiations to end the war in Ukraine extend beyond a ceasefire and delve into strategic issues, Moscow may revisit its December 2021 demands for NATO to dismantle its nuclear sharing arrangements. Since 2023, Russia has deployed some of its nuclear weapons to Belarus, which could be used as additional leverage in strategic negotiations to ask for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons prepositioned in Europe.[35] European allies will more easily make the case for preserving the existing framework of NATO's nuclear mission to the current US administration if they are able to recall how it serves US national interests—by keeping the risk of a direct US-Russia confrontation at a distance—and also if they show that their

contribution with capabilities across domains constitute a robust first layer of protection against the Russian threat.

France and the UK: A "Second Life Insurance" for Europe?

Enhanced European cooperation on nuclear issues would make Europeans more resilient in the nuclear domain, as they could rely on more options than just US extended deterrence. Additionally, it would increase their capacity to adapt their collective posture in a targeted manner, as they could prioritize the most critical domains to continue deterring Russia in a credible way. In this context, the existence of two established European nuclear powers presents a valuable opportunity to reinforce the continent's security architecture.

First, both France and the UK have developed nuclear arsenals and doctrines that are compatible and complementary with US extended deterrence. In particular, it is worth noting that France's long-standing nuclear strategy, developed in the 1950s, has consistently combined the defense of vital national interests with an integration into a broader network of alliances, ranging from European political projects to belonging to NATO.[36] The architects of France's nuclear program—conceived in 1954 under the Fourth Republic[37]—did not envision it as a rejection of NATO, but rather as an internal hedge within the Alliance, aimed at ensuring credibility in the event of a weakening US nuclear guarantee. This dual logic of independence and alliance was further illustrated in General de Gaulle's early attempt, upon coming to power in 1958, to propose a tripartite nuclear directorate with the United States and the United Kingdom.[38] Although the proposal was ultimately unsuccessful, it demonstrated that French nuclear ambitions were not inherently anti-Atlanticist.

> The two established European nuclear powers can reinforce the continent's security architecture

Even as France pursued a more autonomous defense posture in the following decades, it never severed its ties to NATO or abandoned transatlantic dialogue altogether. This historical trajectory offers a useful precedent for contemporary discussions on European deterrence. On the other hand, London has historically intertwined its nuclear policy with NATO's nuclear mission. It suggests that deeper European reflection on nuclear issues, including those involving French or British capabilities, can be compatible with a strong and enduring transatlantic relationship.

More recently, France has explicitly expressed its willingness to initiate a European dialogue on deterrence. Macron's March 2025 renewed offer of deterrence talks demonstrated an ongoing openness to engage European partners despite escalating tensions with Russia since 2020 and the possibility of American withdrawal.[39] Moreover, the notion that French vital interests extend beyond national borders has existed since the De Gaulle era and every French president since the 1970s has acknowledged a "European dimension" to French deterrence —albeit in different terms.[40] This provides a useful foundation for further discussion, enabling European partners to better understand how their own security interests intersect with France's concept of its vital interests. Over time, this mutual understanding could pave the way for defining a broader set of "European vital interests" that could be examined in bilateral talks with France.

The United Kingdom, for its part, has formally assigned its nuclear forces to the protection of NATO allies since 1962 and has a longstanding history of cooperation with other European partners through the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG).[41] European allies could build on this shared NATO-based nuclear culture. Additionally, the UK's alignment with NATO could offer reassurance to those European states that might fear the French approach could provoke unnecessary tensions with the United States.

Signaling an Enhanced French and British Commitment

In terms of political commitment, neither France nor the UK can be accused of trying to push national interests at the expense of the United States (contrary to what is sometimes perceived by some American experts).[42] When viewed in perspective, France and the United Kingdom have fewer incentives than their European partners to alter the status quo on nuclear issues. Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, neither country has modified its nuclear doctrine or posture. This consistency can be interpreted as a projection of confidence in the credibility of their respective deterrents to safeguard their vital interests, as currently defined.[43] It also suggests that they would consider taking concrete steps to extend protection to other European allies only if they deemed such actions strategically necessary and assessed that these steps would not undermine the credibility of their own deterrents or compromise their national security.

From a technical and military standpoint, the independence of the French nuclear arsenal would provide unique advantages to bolster the European leg of the current allied nuclear posture in Europe, for two main reasons. First, the French nuclear program is fully independent, with self-reliant financing and domestic sourcing of all its components. While this explains why France is unlikely to support any proposal for the joint financing of a "Eurodeterrent," this

independence grants Paris full freedom of maneuver in determining the trajectory of its arsenal, thus offering Europe a credible complement to US security guarantees.

Moreover, France's arsenal includes an airborne component—Rafale aircraft equipped with the Air-Sol Moyenne Portée, Amélioré (ASMP/A) cruise missiles[44]—which plays a crucial role in nuclear signaling. Airborne delivery systems are particularly effective for demonstrating posture shifts and conveying "nuclear messaging" due to their observability. This is one reason US extended deterrence in Europe is also delivered via an air leg. In contrast, the seaborne components of both the French and British arsenals consist of ballistic missile submarines, designed to be undetectable and to serve as second-strike capabilities. The visibility and flexibility of France's airborne component could allow it to more clearly signal support for European strategic interests, should the political decision be made. French experts have proposed various measures, such as conducting exercises or patrols over allied territories, to send precisely this signal if necessary.[45] In more drastic scenarios, French fighter-bombers or even nuclear weapons could even be stationed outside of France—though this would be an exceptional decision requiring a clearly defined political and military rationale agreed upon by both Paris and the host nation. It would be an impactful gesture of solidarity towards European allies and a clear signal to potential adversaries.

Independence of the French nuclear arsenal would provide unique advantages for two main reasons

Setting Realistic Expectations

Any meaningful European dialogue on nuclear deterrence must begin with a clear understanding of what France and the UK are both willing and capable of doing to provide additional guarantees to Europe. Regarding nuclear doctrines, the first possible sticking point—and the one that is arguably easier to address—relates to decision-making authority over nuclear use. Following France's 2020 "nuclear offer," some European experts proposed creating a shared decision-making mechanism.[46] However, this idea has been firmly rejected by French experts such as Bruno Tertrais, who emphasize its incompatibility with France's doctrine which centers on exclusive presidential authority.[47] It is worth noting that even within NATO's nuclear framework, the US president retains sole authority over the use of American nuclear weapons prepositioned in Europe. Despite greater transparency in planning, neither the NPG nor the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR)—the American

general in charge of NATO's deterrence and defense posture—has the power to influence this decision.[48] Given this precedent, it would be inconsistent to expect France or the UK to share this critical prerogative, which is central to the credibility of their deterrence in crisis situations.

The second, more complex challenge for Europeans lies in the expectation that France and the UK should assume the role of replacing US extended deterrence. This assumption overlooks both the political intentions of Paris and London—neither of which has ever expressed a desire to take on such a role—and the doctrinal foundations of their respective nuclear policies. Unlike the United States, neither France nor the UK adheres to a counterforce doctrine or maintains sub-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons. These doctrines are supported by the fact that a clear understanding of an adversary's tactical nuclear capabilities does not imply a necessity to mirror them with equivalent assets. In the doctrines of states with minimal deterrents such as France and the UK, the core purpose of nuclear deterrence is to dissuade not only strategic attacks but also the potential use of lower-yield or short-range nuclear weapons.[49] It is not the yield or range alone that defines a weapon as tactical or strategic, but rather the context and intent of its employment. France considers its arsenal strictly strategic and operates under a countervalue doctrine: its nuclear weapons are political instruments of deterrence, designed to protect the nation's vital interests by threatening large-scale destruction of an adversary's key centers of power. The principle of *stricte suffisance*, or minimum credible deterrence, remains central to French and British nuclear doctrines respectively.

While the French and British postures underscore strategic restraint and responsibility, most commentators—accustomed to the US model of extended deterrence—view it as a limitation on the credibility of any new European nuclear contribution.[50] However, *stricte suffisance* does not eliminate the possibility of enhanced strategic cooperation in Europe; rather, it defines a framework that narrows but does not block available options.

One of the key reasons the US adopted "flexible response" and, later, "damage limitation" strategies in NATO was its geographic distance from the European theater, which reduced the immediacy of existential threats to its own territory. In contrast, Paris and London are embedded within the European security environment and, particularly after in-depth consultations with allies, may find it more justifiable to define an attack on another European nation as a threat to their own vital interests, which falls under the scope of strategic deterrence.

This is not a new line of thinking; as early as 1996, President Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Helmut Kohl sought to initiate a Franco-German dialogue on nuclear deterrence. At the 16th Franco-German Security and Defence Council Summit, both countries declared their readiness to engage in discussions on "the role of nuclear deterrence in the context of European defence policy,"

marking an early attempt to explore a shared strategic culture in a post-Cold War world as European integration proceeded.[51] This rationale also underpinned the signing of the Franco-British Chequers Declaration of 1995, which stated that "the vital interests of one could not be threatened without the vital interests of the other equally being at risk."[52] This longstanding commitment—along with a network of bilateral agreements[53] between France, the UK, and other European partners—could form the foundation for future mutual security guarantees, or even for a renewed joint nuclear declaratory policy. A realistic evolution of European nuclear policy would likely proceed through incremental steps—such as updating bilateral understandings, carrying out concrete exercises or signaling, or issuing public declarations of shared strategic interests—rather than through sweeping doctrinal overhauls.

European nuclear policy evolutions would likely proceed incrementally rather than through sweeping doctrinal overhauls

All of this suggests that Europeans may be overreaching when they call for France and the UK to acquire tactical nuclear weapons or fundamentally revise their doctrines. A more constructive approach would involve identifying specific contingencies that Europeans seek to deter or defend against and preparing accordingly, rather than assuming that new tactical capabilities—whose development and deployment would require significant time and substantive doctrinal changes—offer a near-term solution.

Three Steps to Get Started

As outlined at the beginning of this article, efforts to reinforce US extended deterrence commitments and to launch a European reflection on alternative options are not mutually exclusive. Europeans would be justified in considering measures to mitigate their own strategic risks—ranging from a potential attack on European territory to the dangers of nuclear proliferation among European states.[54]

With the doctrinal, political, and operational frameworks of France and the UK in mind, willing European allies should begin by asking themselves two fundamental questions before entering any talks. First, they must define—at the national level—what they expect from France and the UK. This would allow Paris and London to better calibrate their potential future contributions and would be instrumental in shaping the format of any cooperation. For example, national expectations could be grounded in what a given country identifies as their security priorities. Defining these security interests would require building

on national defense strategies and would necessitate approval at the highest levels of government. In most cases, only engagement at the head-of-state level is likely to initiate serious and sustained dialogue with Paris and London.

Second, European countries will need to decide on the most appropriate format in which to hold these nuclear discussions. Confidential bilateral formats are likely to be most effective in launching such sensitive conversations, especially at an early stage. In parallel, informal Track 1.5 dialogues, which bring together current officials (Track 1) and non-governmental experts or former officials (Track 2) in an unofficial setting, could help prepare the ground for official discussions. These forums allow participants to develop a shared understanding of doctrinal as well as technical frameworks while allowing for the exploration of more disruptive ideas, some of which might later be taken up discreetly by decision-makers.

However, bilateral discussions alone may not be sufficient in the end to reassure all European allies, many of whom will want to understand what others have requested from France and the UK—and what responses they received. In this regard, an eventual ad hoc multilateral format involving all willing European participants could help ensure a consistent and transparent level of information sharing. Indeed, the stakes surrounding nuclear deterrence require the strategic community to find a balance between transparency and preserving strategic ambiguity. While a degree of transparency is essential to maintain trust and coherence among allies, it does not necessarily extend to the public domain; instead, it functions within controlled, internal channels to preserve both credibility and security.[55] Confidence-building around such a sensitive issue will require clarity on what topics Europeans are willing to discuss—and how they intend to engage with each other.

The European strategic community must find a balance between transparency and strategic ambiguity

Thirdly, all European allies—including France and the UK—must enter nuclear discussions with the understanding that any new nuclear policy must be backed by an adequate and robust conventional force posture. The rationale for this stems from the persistent risk of a conventional Russian attack on a European NATO member, particularly in the event of a conventional US withdrawal.[56] Outlining the parameters of a future European burden-sharing mechanism would demonstrate European states' proactive commitment to the defense of the continent. In addition, it would provide a framework that is acceptable to France and the UK.

European states must be capable of engaging in a high-intensity regional conflict without the same level of US support that they benefit from nowadays, while simultaneously maintaining a high threshold for the use of French or British nuclear weapons. Nations with dual-capable aircraft (DCA) already possess operational experience in integrating conventional and nuclear capabilities—particularly in the context of preparing for a potential nuclear strike under NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements. Other allies, such as Finland and Sweden, have deterrence strategies focused heavily on conventional capabilities and civil resilience. The complementary nature of these different national approaches—combined with substantial European investment in key conventional areas such as offensive strike systems, missile defense, and strategic enablers—could contribute to the emergence of a robust and credible European defense posture.

Europe must aim to build a security environment that does not normalize or trivialize the use of nuclear weapons but instead promotes long-term stability. Whether Europeans like it or not, Russia will remain their neighbor. The priority, therefore, must be to prepare for potential destabilization efforts across multiple domains, and this is precisely where other European nations can contribute to the credibility of nuclear deterrence.

Navigating a Strategic Balancing Act

As Europe cautiously steps into a new phase of strategic responsibility, preparing to make up for the overstretching of American engagements across theaters is a sound strategy. For now, the priority must be to navigate this transitional period carefully, ensuring that any emerging European initiatives do not alienate the United States—still a cornerstone of Europe's security—nor provoke unnecessary tensions or opportunistic moves from potential adversaries such as Russia. This strongly argues in favor of a slow, discreet, and well-coordinated approach, rooted in close consultation among allies.

For now, the priority must be to navigate this transitional period carefully

Beyond the immediate diplomatic balancing act lies the more enduring challenge: ensuring the long-term credibility and resilience of Europe's collective security framework, with nuclear deterrence as the central pillar. For any viable strategic posture to emerge, it must be protected from political volatility—whether driven by adversarial states or domestic populist movements that oppose European unity. In this context, embedding defense commitments within bilateral mechanisms and fostering broad-based political consensus will be essential

to sustain momentum and prevent policy backsliding. In short, the path forward demands not only mutual understanding and ambition but also strategic patience, careful planning, and political foresight.

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