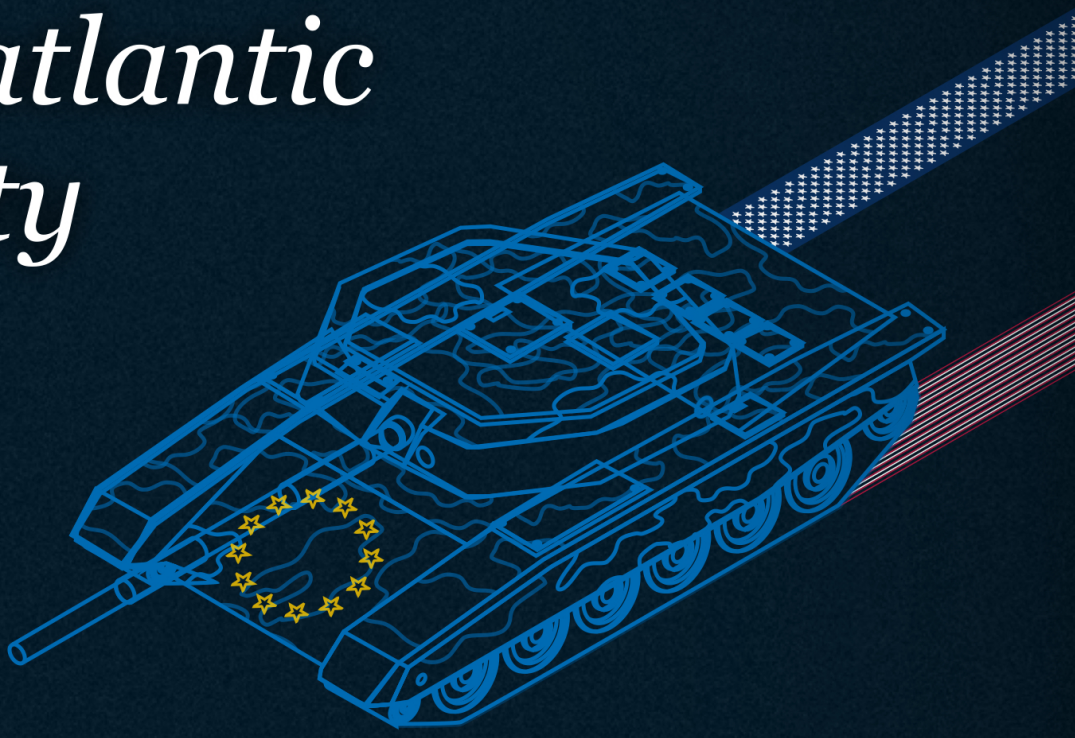
EURO PROSPECTS

European Politics and Policy

Europe in a Post-Transatlantic Security Order



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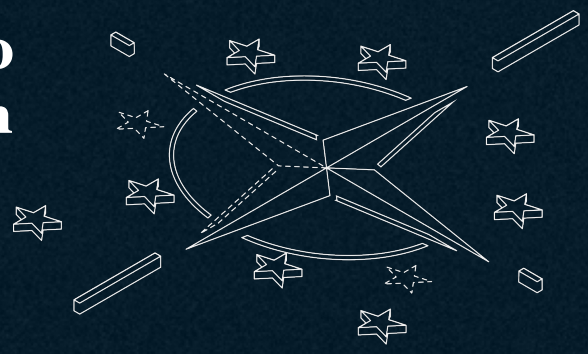

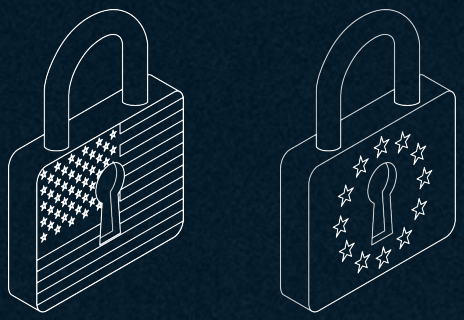

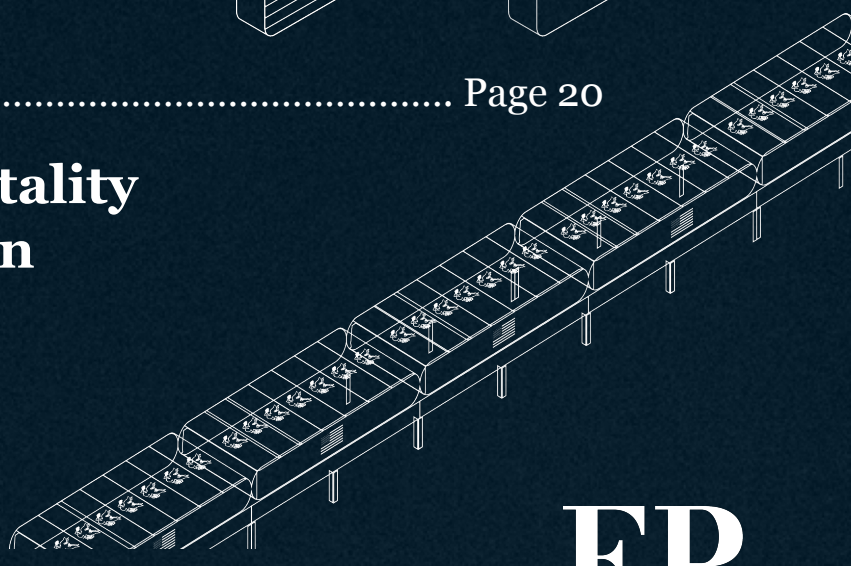

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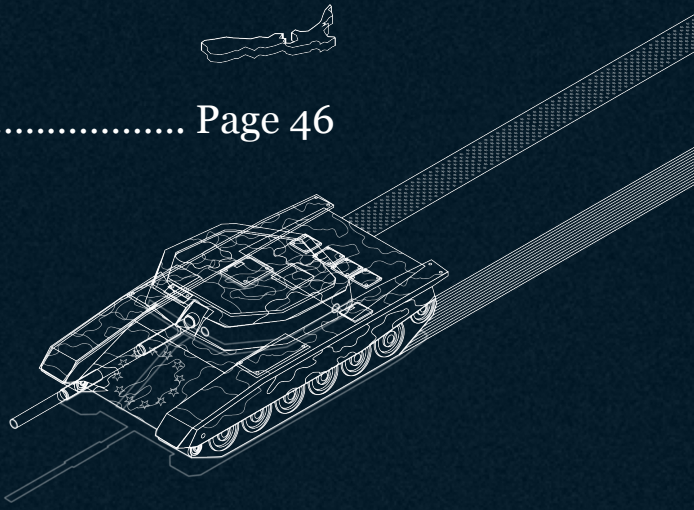

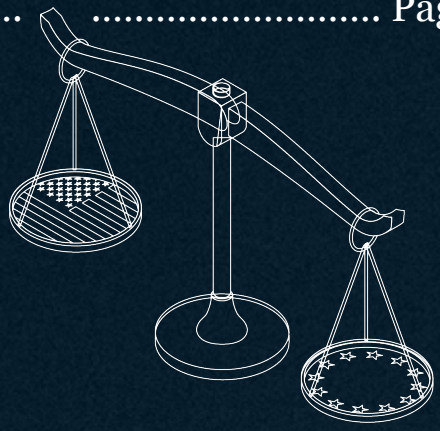

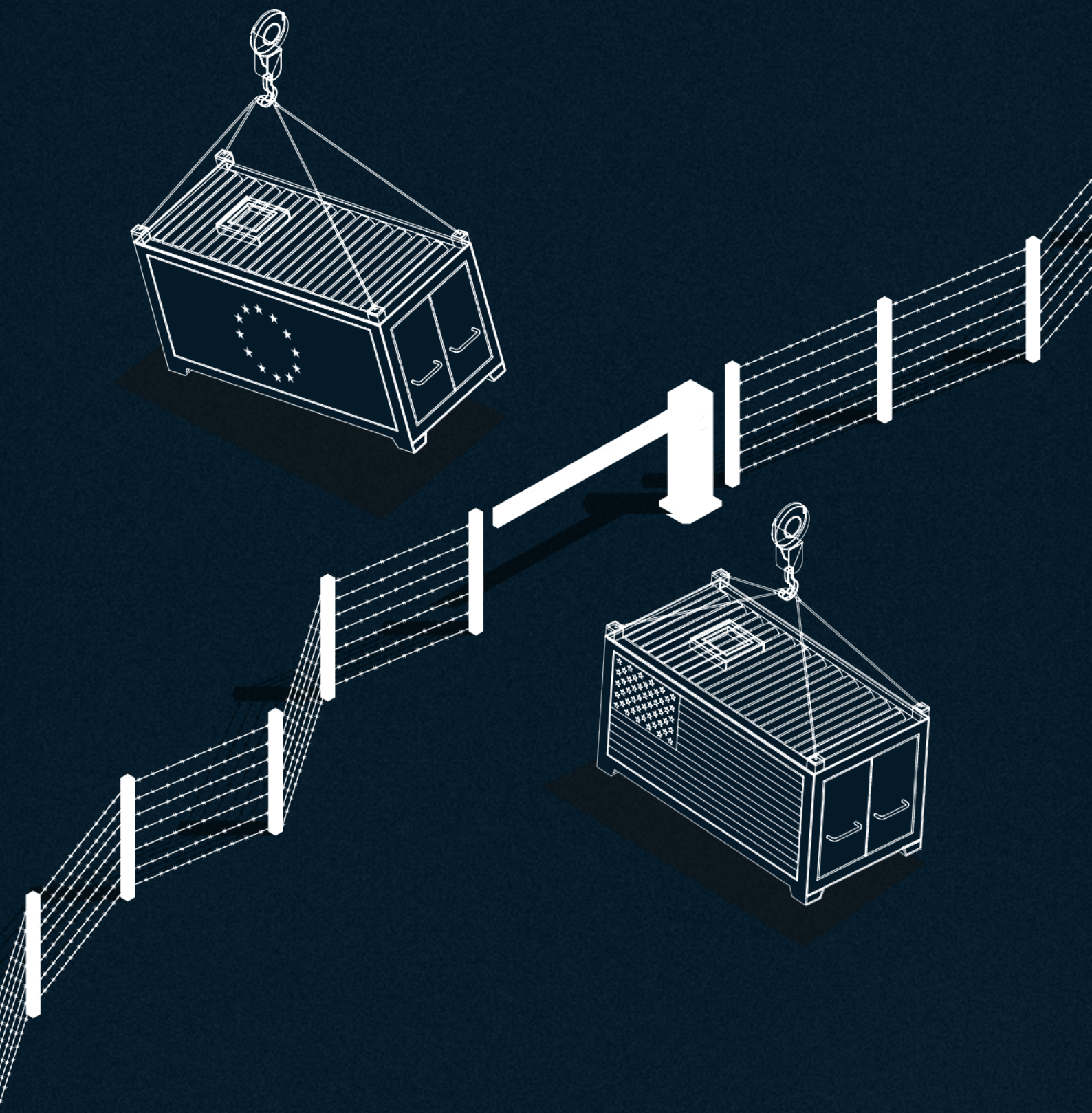

Security & Defence

EP

Editor's Note:

What does Europe look like in a post-transatlantic security order? As Europe's political leadership grapples with that question, policy changes in Washington are already shaping the possibilities for Europe's future security order. Since starting his second term, President Trump has doubled down on the conditionality of US military support, pushing European allies to shoulder their own defence burden.

It's no secret that the transatlantic relationship is entering a period of uncertainty unlike anything seen in recent decades. It is with this backdrop that 'strategic autonomy' has become a rallying point for leaders in Brussels and across Europe. In search of lessening the continent's dependence on American military might, the high-level decisions made today as a result will unmistakably shape the security order that Gen Z and subsequent generations will inherit. With this in mind, we at Euro Prospects have the pleasure of presenting our Security & Defence Unit's inaugural series: "Europe in a Post-Transatlantic Security Order." In it, we delve into the multifaceted nature of how Europe is recalibrating its policies.

So, how should leaders in Europe confront this changing security environment? Across eleven articles, our analysts explore the different dimensions of European security that are ripe for recalibration, from confronting Russia's hybrid threat and rethinking weapons procurement to crafting a new role for Europe within the NATO alliance. We also pulled back the curtain on some of the newer challenges extending beyond Europe's immediate security environment, exploring the militarisation of space, AI's implementation into warfare, Indo-Pacific diplomacy, and efforts to strengthen homegrown innovation across Europe's defence industry.

In a nutshell, our perspectives show just how complicated Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy will be during Trump's second term and beyond. While Europe's security capabilities remain deeply rooted in American military power in many areas, European leaders are increasingly looking to develop new capabilities, technologies, and opportunities to take greater responsibility for the continent's security. That tension sits at the heart of our inaugural series: how can Europe become more strategically autonomous while maintaining the transatlantic relationship that has defined its security and defence architecture for decades? That is the question we hope to explore with you throughout this series.

Happy reading,

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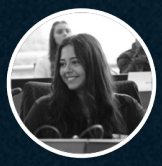

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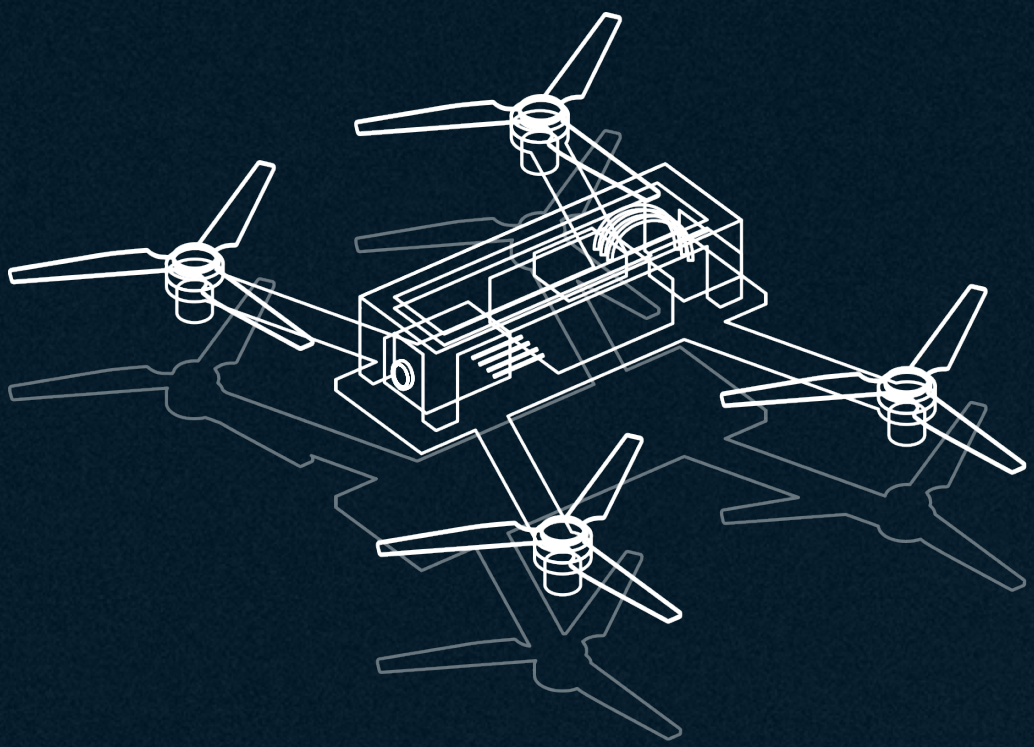
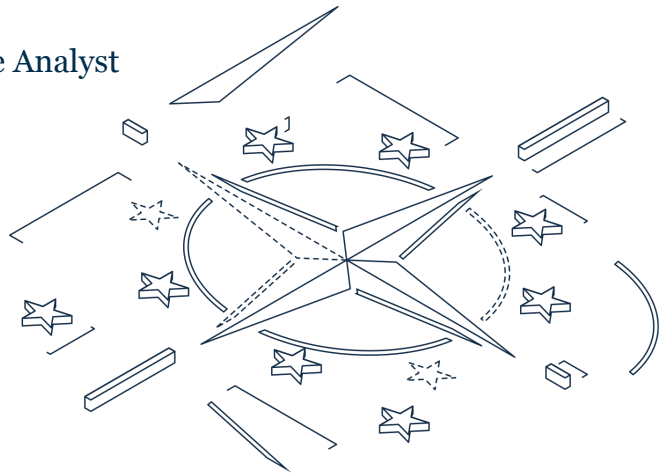


Trial by Fire? Why NATO 3.0 Is a Speed Test for European Defence Innovation

By **Maryna Mincheva**, Next Generation Defence Analyst
Edited by **Pierre Sabot**, Space Security Analyst



Europe is spending more and taking on greater defence responsibility within NATO. The harder test is whether its defence ecosystem can deliver capabilities at the speed this new role demands.

The long-running burden-sharing dispute with the United States has transformed into a trial by fire for Europe. NATO 3.0, introduced in early 2026 as a European-led concept of transatlantic partnership, envisages European allies not only contributing 5 per cent of GDP to defence and security but also ensuring their own conventional defence by gradually replacing US forces and strategic enablers. The 2026 Ankara Summit put the Alliance's collective seal on this forced Europeanisation. Washington's years of warnings to its European partners, reluctant to spend on their own defence and long spoiled by American protection, have now hardened into policy. This May, the Trump administration announced the withdrawal of 5,000 troops from Germany. It also scaled back the assets pledged to the NATO Force Model, reportedly including fighter jets, refuelling aircraft, submarines, warships and strategic bombers. Pressure intensified at the June meeting of NATO defence ministers, where US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced a six-month review of US force posture and basing in Europe, which assesses each ally's contribution.

For Europe, this amounts to an attempt to cut the umbilical cord that has long tied its conventional defence to the US. The main question, then, is whether Europe can turn its NATO 3.0 moment into genuine operational autonomy.

From burden-sharing to speed-sharing

The return of full-scale war to the continent forced member states to act urgently. The cautious language of the 2022 Strategic Compass gave way to the Commission's 2025 White Paper for European Defence and its call for readiness by 2030, reflecting the first signs of emerging strategic autonomy. European defence expenditure reached a record €418 billion in 2025, with expectations of €454 billion in 2026. Twenty-three member states met or

exceeded NATO's former 2 per cent of GDP benchmark, while defence investment rose to an unprecedented 32.2 per cent of total spending, according to European Defence Agency Defence Data. Yet the spending surge has not resolved the transatlantic dispute. The rapid progress demanded by Washington remains difficult for Europe to meet given its fiscal and institutional constraints. Collaborative procurement accounted for only 24 per cent of equipment spending, showing that spending more does not equate to spending better or together.

> *"Spending more does not equate to spending better or together."*

The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) faces a mismatch of clocks. Fragmented cooperation, delayed co-financing and long R&D cycles slow the passage from research to procurement, leaving critical capability gaps unresolved and limiting EU uptake of Ukraine's battlefield-tested innovation at wartime speed. This inertia is reinforced by limited access for smaller, innovative firms. In Germany, Poland, and the UK, less than 30 per cent of order volumes go to firms outside the ten largest contractors, while established giants such as Thales, Rheinmetall, and Polish Armaments Group are booming.

The EU's 2025 Defence Industry Transformation Roadmap called for greater speed and agility in defence capability development, as well as faster procurement and greater openness to new entrants, drawing on lessons from Ukraine. To this end, several measures have been introduced at the EU level. In little more than a year, Europe has begun to plug into Ukraine's battlefield feedback loop. Without a doubt, Ukraine is now a world leader in low-cost drone technology. Kyiv created the BRAVE1 Defence Technology Cluster, bringing DefenceTech companies, military officials, government, voluntary organisations and the media together so that new solutions can materialise into battlefield innovations at speed. This indispensable knowledge is being integrated into EU defence programmes through the joint BraveTech EU project, which incorporates Ukraine's rapid exchange between soldiers and innovators into Europe's defence innovation ecosystem.

Under the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), which entered into force in late 2025, the FAST financial instrument is designed to improve access to debt and equity finance for SMEs and small mid-caps involved in defence manufacturing and supply chains. The recently announced €115 million Agile and Rapid Defence Innovation (AGILE) Programme, expected to become operational in early 2027, is intended to address the problem at its most visible point — time. Its lab-to-field approach aims to shorten the path from technological development to military use while facilitating the participation of SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups in the EDTIB.

At the NATO level, the Rapid Adoption Action Plan, endorsed in 2025, aims to shorten the path from identifying a technological need to acquiring and integrating a solution to no more than 24 months. Meanwhile, NATO's ambition to address the financing and scaling gaps has materialised in the newly launched Innovation Scale-Up Package, which is to provide what young firms have lacked, namely credible demand, access to private capital and manufacturing capacity.

The EU can bring companies together and finance ambitious defence R&D, but it cannot

guarantee that a promising technology will be bought, scaled or fielded. The Commission's own interim evaluation of the European Defence Fund exposes this broken handover. By March 2025, the Fund had committed €5.4 billion to 162 collaborative projects. Yet procurement remains a separate national decision, with no automatic customer waiting at the end of the EU-funded pipeline. Industry stakeholders reported to the Commission that not a single EU-funded defence project had a complete co-financing framework in place when its grant was signed. In some cases, national funding was still missing several years after work had begun, causing serious delays. The memoranda needed to unlock national contracts can themselves take more than two years to negotiate, as governments often struggle to settle intellectual property and user rights.

> *"The EU can bring companies together and finance ambitious defence R&D, but it cannot guarantee that a promising technology will be bought, scaled or fielded."*

The problem, then, goes beyond slow bureaucracy and lies in Europe's long-standing Achilles heel — fragmentation. Member States continue to prioritise national champions and protect domestic defence industries, which is backed by Article 346 TFEU, allowing them to derogate from EU single-market and procurement rules where necessary to protect essential security interests. It is worth noting that each state also has different levels of resources, threat perception, and regional defence priorities, shaped, among other factors, by its geographic closeness to Russia. The gap in NATO commitments illustrates this well, with Poland and the Baltic states, for example, already moving far ahead in terms of defence expenditure, spending up to 4 per cent of GDP even before the new 5 per cent benchmark was announced, while Spain, Czechia and Slovenia remain at around 2 per cent. In practice, frequent reliance on Article 346 helps preserve nationally segmented markets, with most contracts still going to domestic suppliers and competition among European firms remaining limited. Karlsrud and Reykers therefore suggest that the way around this gridlock may lie in coalitions of like-minded and willing states, which will pool demand and procure capabilities together, without waiting for consensus among all twenty-seven member states.

New players are still not fully in the game

Pooling demand is only one side of the scale challenge. The EU must also connect new defence firms with established production networks. Since 2022, the EU has sought to lower their entry barriers through the European Defence Innovation Scheme (EUDIS), which provides business acceleration, matchmaking services and coaching. The 2026 EDF work programme alone allocated €65 million to non-thematic SME calls. Support at the innovation stage, however, does not ensure equal access to defence contracts or information about the operational requirements of armed forces. An SME may emerge from an accelerator with a working prototype but still struggle to secure its first military customer, obtain the necessary certification or survive a protracted tendering process. Established defence companies, by contrast, already possess the customer relationships, specialised staff and resources needed to navigate this system, creating "an

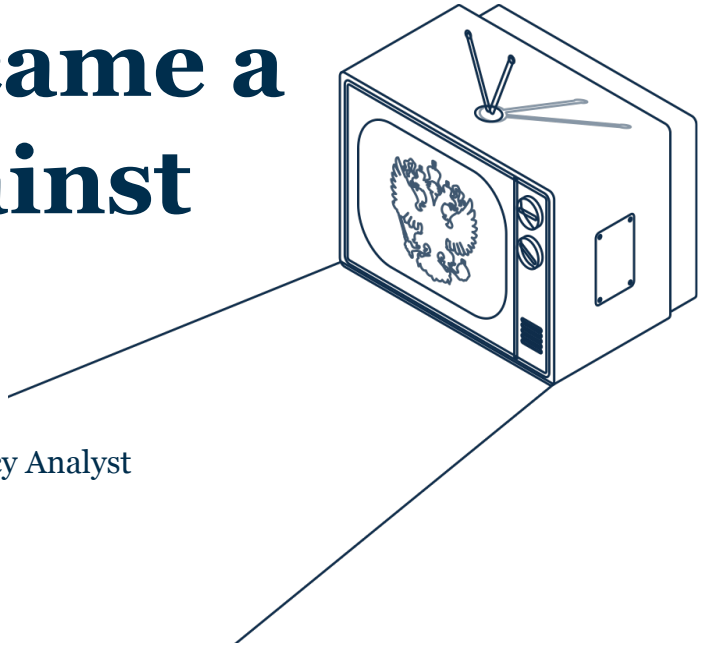
uneven playing field". EU institutions should therefore facilitate the participation of established defence contractors able to provide certification, systems integration expertise and pathways towards industrial scaling, while preserving smaller firms' independent role in experimentation and rapid technological development.

The planned cooperation between the Estonian advanced energy-storage company Skeleton Technologies and the major defence contractor KNDS France illustrates how such a division of roles could work. In June 2026, the companies signed a Joint Declaration to explore the integration of Skeleton's supercapacitor-based power systems into KNDS military vehicle platforms, with potential projects involving 40 CT medium-calibre remote weapon systems and power-system development for main battle tanks. If successfully implemented, the cooperation could provide a practical model for combining technological agility with industrial capacity.

As NATO 3.0 takes shape, it is particularly clear that Europe's main defence challenge is converting budgets into fielded capabilities at speed. This depends on rapid testing, learning through failure and iteration. EU funds, standards and initiatives are increasingly in place, but the funding and procurement architecture remains largely geared towards multi-year development cycles. Prime contractors hold growing order books, while demand signals weaken down the supply chain, leaving smaller companies without the certainty needed to invest and scale. Greater openness among national ministries towards new entrants, combined with the closer integration of smaller companies into prime contractors' production networks, could contribute to a more diverse and adaptable defence ecosystem. In parallel, flexible cooperation among smaller groups of states may accelerate procurement by concentrating compatible demand and capabilities. Whether such coalitions can turn complementary national strengths into faster procurement without reproducing fragmentation at another level remains an open question.

> *"Europe's main defence challenge is converting budgets into fielded capabilities at speed."*

How Russia's NATO Grievance Became a Grievance Against Europe



By **Kit Newman**, Russia Analyst
Edited by **Arthur Langley**, UK & Nuclear Policy Analyst

For twenty years, Russia cast NATO as an existential threat to justify its aggression. Now, as Washington pulls back, that same grievance is being pointed at Europe itself.

During an evening broadcast on January 11, 2026, influential TV host Vladimir Solovyov proclaimed that America is the de facto owner of Europe, capable of chasing them back "into the barn". Coming at the height of tensions between European nations and the USA over President Donald J. Trump's threats to acquire Greenland, Solovyov's comments highlight Russia's political use of discourse to heighten tensions among members of the transatlantic security order. This tension comes at a particularly vulnerable moment for the web of institutions, treaties, and norms that has shaped European security since the Cold War.

The transatlantic security order has been in a disorienting restructuring since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which the re-election of President Trump has exacerbated. President Trump's administration has shifted US policy emphasis towards US domestic priorities, the rise of China, and great-power politics that empower Russian President Vladimir Putin. As Royal United Services Institute analysts Ed Arnold and Darya Dolzikova put it, the rise of populism on both sides of the Atlantic is producing "unprecedented and simultaneous internal political instability, fraying Western unity and multilateral collective action."

Russia has not been a passive observer of this fragmented relationship, and analysis of Russia's narration reveals elements of its strategic thinking. This piece traces how Russian political discourse has framed the transatlantic relationship across three distinct periods, from the pre-2022 'grievance' narrative built on NATO's eastward expansion from as early as 1999 and the Kosovo crisis, through the invasion of Ukraine itself, to the rhetorical pivot that followed Trump's re-election. This rhetorical shift has seen the US under Trump recast as a reluctant ally to a warmongering Europe, in sharp contrast to the pre-Trump narrative, in which the US was the reluctant ally.

Historical roots of discourse

Russian attempts to undermine the Atlantic security order are not new. The opportunistic use of the political turmoil of the overlap between the war in Ukraine and the second term of President Trump is the most recent iteration of an aggregation of 19 years of Russian aggression across Europe. Its clearest starting point is NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo, which Russian politicians of the era regarded as a humiliation and shaped Putin's own rise to power. The alliance's willingness to act unilaterally, over Russian objections and outside of a UN mandate, became the foundational grievance.

The Russian 2008 invasion of Georgia and the 2014 annexation of Crimea were not only violent attempts to undermine the foundations of the transatlantic security order, but were backed by discourse that drew from the Kosovo crisis to portray transatlantic security treaties as causes of Russian aggression. While Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014 were tests of the transatlantic security order, RUSI analysts describe the invasion of Ukraine as a "violent attempt to overthrow and replace it".

In combination with the Kosovo crisis, President Putin and the Russian political elites have traditionally presented the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a threatening "Other" whose expansion threatens the very existence of Russia. Putin used this discourse in 2007, framing NATO as a key factor in the breakdown of trust between Russia and the West. Putin stated at the 2007 Munich Security Conference that NATO "does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe" but instead "represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust." The following year, at a summit in Bucharest, Putin expanded upon this, claiming that further eastward expansion was a "direct threat to the security of our country."

The same argument resurfaced, with Kosovo utilised as the reference point, in the lead-up to the annexation of Crimea. At the 2016 Valdai Discussion Club, Putin drew the comparison explicitly, stating, "bombing Belgrade was clearly an intervention outside the norms and rules of international law... The United States did it unilaterally... What about Crimea? What you did in Yugoslavia is nothing compared to it." Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, made the same case in more legalistic terms, citing NATO's support for Kosovo at a UN Security Council meeting in February 2022 as a reason to disregard Western criticisms of Russia, and describing the Yugoslav war, at a 2014 youth forum, as being conducted "in violation of all conceivable norms and responsibilities."

Across these episodes emerges not a series of isolated justifications but a durable narrative. NATO, and by extension the United States, is cast as the actor that first broke the rules in Kosovo, Bucharest, in the eastward expansion that followed reunification promises Moscow insists it was given. Russian action, however aggressive, is then framed as a belated, proportionate response to a prior violation. This same justification was used to underpin the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and would later be redirected toward Europe following the rift between the continent and the United States.

Discourse used to justify the invasion of Ukraine

Russian discourse utilising NATO and the transatlantic security order to justify regional aggression reached new heights to justify the "special military operation" in Ukraine in February 2022. Putin justified his full-scale invasion of Ukraine, because Kyiv's "long-proclaimed strategic course on joining NATO" would violate the 1999 OSCE Charter for European Security as well as the 2010 OSCE Astana Declaration, as it would threaten "Russian security". This is regardless of both documents asserting every state's right to choose its own security arrangements and Putin's violation of over 400 security pacts since 2008.

Putin stated, "Ukraine joining NATO is a direct threat to Russia's security." He returned once more to the threat that NATO expansion and Atlantic security treaties pose to Russia, emphasising the promises not to expand NATO further. Putin continues to use history to generate this image of NATO that applies to the invasion of Ukraine, citing assurances given to the Soviet leadership "not to lead to the spread of NATO's military organisation to the east". Furthermore, Putin claimed an undisclosed NATO document named Russia as the principal adversary to Euro-Atlantic security, making Ukraine "an advanced bridgehead" for a future strike.

Kosovo did not disappear from this reasoning. Putin's attempted use of Kosovo both sets a precedent and sends a message. As Jade McGlynn summarised Putin's perspective, "if the West can redraw borders for Kosovo, then we can redraw borders for the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in eastern Ukraine." In Putin's explanation, NATO had fabricated a genocide to justify intervention in 1999. He said he was following the precedent set by the Atlantic security order.

There was a shift within Lavrov's rhetoric during this same period, one that contradicts a far larger pivot that would follow Trump's re-election two years later. Addressing the Security Council in late February 2022, Lavrov broke from the standard NATO-centred framing to cast the war explicitly as an American project directed against Europe: "it is surely time for Europeans… to wake up and understand that with the help of Vladimir Zelensky's regime, the United States is not only waging a war against Russia, but also pursuing the strategic objective of sharply weakening Europe as an economic rival." At the time, this was a minor attempt to sow discontent within the alliance by suggesting that Europe was being used. It sits oddly alongside the pro-American tone Russian discourse would adopt after 2025. But the underlying instinct, that Europe's interests and America's interests could be prised apart and Europe cast as the loser, would return with far greater force.

Narratives following rupture in the transatlantic security order

Trump's second term as president saw the US pivot away from the transatlantic alliance. Russian discourse has interpreted this as vindication of its critique of the Atlantic security order. While Russia's political discourse on this topic is constantly in flux in response to the Trump administration's volatile foreign policy, a trend has emerged. The US and Trump are increasingly portrayed more posi-

tively as peace-seeking. In contrast, Europeans are increasingly portrayed as warmongers, painted with the same brush previously applied to NATO and the transatlantic security order more generally.

The emerging rift in the transatlantic security order in 2025 saw Russia's critiques of NATO quickly and deliberately recast as critiques of European political actors. When discussing Washington, Putin's tone was almost conciliatory, stating, "Our countries, as we know, have many points of disagreement... the most important thing is how to resolve these disagreements", adding that the current administration states its political interests bluntly, "but without any unnecessary hypocrisy." In the same press conference at the Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi on October 2, 2025, the tone changed entirely when speaking about Europe, stating that "the ruling elites of united Europe continue to whip up hysteria. It turns out that war with the Russians is practically on the doorstep... They're either incredibly incompetent if they truly believe it... or they're simply dishonest."

Expanding on this, Putin claimed that the responsibility for the continuation of the fighting in Ukraine lay "with a minority in Europe that is constantly escalating the conflict," a militarisation he warned would provoke a Russian response that would be "very convincing."

Read against two decades of Russian rhetoric about the transatlantic order, this contrast in tone shows clearly how Russian political elites are exploiting the current fracture. While Lavrov's 2022 discourse cast President Joe Biden's administration as the warmongering element of the wider transatlantic security apparatus, this pivot since the breakdown in relations is imperative to portraying European countries as the aggressors.

This reframing is further exemplified in 2026. In April, Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, warned the EU can turn "into a full-fledged and extremely hostile military alliance against Russia, in some ways worse than NATO." By late May, Medvedev dropped the conditional tense altogether, stating "European countries are direct participants in the war against Russia, and no one disputes this anymore." Notably absent from this claim was any mention of the United States, with the focus entirely on the European countries. Lavrov struck the same note in more measured, official language in May, arguing the EU had become "almost indistinguishable from NATO," transformed from "an economic bloc, designed to enhance the welfare of European citizens" into "a semblance of the North Atlantic Alliance."

This rhetoric shows how Russian political figures are navigating and exploiting the rift in the transatlantic security order, applying narratives that have traditionally been applied to the collective order, or specifically to the US, onto European countries and the European Union. This shift reflects changes in the security order driven by the Trump administration's policies and Russia's potential to sow discontent and exploit the resulting disharmony for geopolitical gain.

In conclusion, a durable narrative structure emerges across these three periods. The same logic once directed at NATO as an institution has, since the rupture that followed Trump's re-election, been redirected toward Europe. Russian political figures are not improvising in response to transatlantic strain; they are applying a long-established framework to a new target in the contemporary geopolitical context, using the realities of the rift inside the transatlantic security order.

Europe's Improvised Autonomy on Ransomware, Without Washington

By **Margherita Rossi**, *Cyber Defence Analyst*
Edited by **Luca Rastelli**, *AI & Defence Governance Analyst*

In July 2026, the EU and Britain sanctioned Russian hackers without waiting for Washington to act first, proving that the Union can already impose costs on its adversaries. The next step is turning that proven capability into a lasting, repeatable policy.

For most of the past decade, Europe's response has rested on an unstated division of labour. Brussels and the EU member states wrote the rules: data protection, incident reporting, sectoral resilience obligations. However, the instruments that actually raised the cost of attacking Europe were assembled elsewhere, in Washington's sanctions list and law-enforcement operations. That arrangement was never formalised, but it was consistent enough to shape how European institutions thought about their own role: as regulators of resilience, not as authors of deterrence.

> *"Europe, in other words, is already behaving like an independent actor, able to impose costs.*

> *What is still missing is not the capability but the doctrine."*

That assumption no longer describes reality. Over the past year, European agencies have led major operations against ransomware infrastructure, and in July 2026 the European Union and the United Kingdom jointly sanctioned Russia's malicious cyber ecosystem (its intelligence services and the criminal proxies they task) attributing, among other operations, a sabotage attempt on Poland's energy grid to the FSB. This happened without waiting for, or receiving, comparable actions from Washington. Europe, in other words, is already behaving like an independent actor, able to impose costs. What is still missing is not the capability but the doctrine: a framework that treats ransomware as an object of foreign, security, and defence policy rather than as a compliance obligation. This article traces how that gap opened, what Europe's improvised response to

it currently looks like, and what would be required to convert improvisation into a durable posture.

Crime as a service: industrialisation without accountability

The strategic weight ransomware now carries cannot be separated from its industrialisation through the so-called Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) environment. By splitting cyber extortion into a service economy that includes malware development, access brokerage, negotiation, and laundering all handled by separate actors, RaaS has lowered the technical bar for conducting high impact attacks while protecting the developers who profit most from direct operational exposure. Europol has noted that this fragmentation complicates attribution and undermines the deterrent logic that law enforcement traditionally relies on: responsibility for an attack is spread across several actors, none of whom carried out the whole thing, which makes it hard to know who to punish.

The deeper effect of the industrialisation of ransomware attacks is redistribution of responsibility. RaaS ecosystems separate ownership of malware from execution of the attack, which means that liability does not settle on a single identifiable actor. These strategies make ransomware the perfect instrument for criminal grey zones: a model that diffuses blame by design is, functionally, a model built for deniability, which is exactly what makes disruption through RaaS sustainable without triggering the kind of response reserved for clearly attributable state action.

This is where ransomware's strategic function becomes clearly visible. Its persistence depends less on technical sophistication than on state tolerance: many of the most active and damaging groups of recent years, such as REvil, Conti, and LockBit, operated for extended periods from jurisdictions where cybercrime enforcement was weak or subordinated to other priorities. Notably, Conti's 2022 declaration of allegiance to Russian state interests, followed only by fragmentation rather than its dismantlement, illustrated concretely how these ecosystems adapt and persist even after high-profile exposure.

It is worth stressing that groups operating under this kind of permissive cover increasingly resemble de facto proxies. Proxies are usually agents, groups, or entities that act on behalf of a more powerful primary actor to achieve disruption and strategic objectives while keeping the primary actor at a safe distance. In this case, ransomware groups do not act under direct instruction of a state or a primary actor. However, their activity generates disruption abroad while preserving deniability for the states that decline to act against them. The attacks themselves are calibrated to target institutional reliability and erode public trust, rather than causing irreversible damage. Among the sectors that suffer the most from these attacks are public administrations (at the national and local levels), digital financial services, healthcare, transport, and energy providers, precisely because disruption in these areas converts quickly into political pressure and governance stress. However, as mentioned, these effects are cumulative but they sit consistently below the threshold of armed conflict. For permissive states willing to tolerate ransomware activity on their territory, this translates into a strategic asset: pressure on

opponents obtained without the diplomatic cost of an operation they could be linked to.

This is the backdrop against which the July 2026 sanctions should be read. The package did not target a ransomware operation as such: it named a wider state–criminal ecosystem (the intelligence services and the cybercriminals, hacktivists, and front companies they task) and attributed the attempted sabotage of Poland's energy grid specifically to the FSB's Centre 16. Russia operates across a spectrum running from deniable criminal proxies to directly attributable state action, and by naming actors along its full length the EU and UK attempted precisely the move the RaaS model is built to prevent: pushing responsibility up the chain, to the state.

Coercion without a guarantor

What has changed in the European response to this dynamic? Over the past two years, European law-enforcement agencies have taken the lead in some of the largest disruption operations conducted against cybercriminal groups, degrading the criminal ecosystem's technical backbone.

The most recent example is the joint sanctions package issued by the EU and the United Kingdom on 13 July 2026. This operation, the first of its kind, attributed a sustained campaign of infrastructure sabotage and intrusion to Centre 16 of Russia's FSB, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. The package named the FSB unit as responsible for an attempt to sabotage Poland's energy sector in December 2025, possibly causing major disruptions to hundreds of thousands of people during the coldest months of the year. The EU sanctioned nine individuals and four different entities, while the UK designated twenty-four names on the same day. Several member states also summoned Russian diplomatic representatives in protest. Kaja Kallas, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, delivered a statement on behalf of the Union linking the disruption campaign to other targets across Member States.

What stands out about this episode is the actors involved: the coordination for this sanctions package was European and British, with no equivalent American designation issued alongside it and no mention of Washington in Kallas' statement. Moreover, the coverage of the package mentioned NATO welcoming the action but noted no accompanying statement from Washington. This silence itself carries important information. The EU-UK action was announced on a day when US sanctions were concentrated elsewhere, on Iran, following the rising of the tensions in the Strait of Hormuz. This, combined with the Trump administration's rhetorical disengagement from NATO and increasingly hostile posture toward European allies, suggests that the EU-UK action of July 2026 should be read as an early instance of a pattern: Europe acting on its own because it can no longer assume someone else will.

Two clarifications are needed here. First, the dynamic outlined falls into the "coercion by coalition" category, not "coercion by institution." The July sanctions package was a bilateral EU-UK arrangement built *ad hoc* for the occasion and not the outcome of a standing mechanism designed to repeat itself. Second, the European Union leaned on a partner that sits outside of Brussels' institutional reach. The UK's departure from the EU means some

of the most capable coercive tools currently are not directly at Brussels' disposal. This last point raises a genuine question about the practical meaning of European autonomy, given that its most recent coercive expression required a non-member state to intervene.

The Limits of the EU's Regulatory Response

The question about European autonomy also points to a gap within the EU institutions. The disruption operations and coordinated action mentioned above sit almost entirely outside the Union's formal ransomware framework: the Union's regulatory architecture (NIS2, DORA, Cyber Resilience Act) expanded considerably over the past decade, and these instruments have helped considerably in standardising incident reporting, raising baseline resilience requirements, improving cross-border collaboration and information-sharing, and more. But this framework's logic is mostly defensive. Nowhere in NIS2, DORA, or the CRA is there a mechanism that automatically triggers the attribution of an attacker or a sanctions response when a covered entity is hit. Each ransomware attack on a hospital, for instance, is absorbed as a compliance failure to be reported and remediated, not a hostile attack to be answered. In brief, the regulatory framework is built to reduce the probability and impact of attacks landing, not to implement deterrence systems and raise the cost paid by attackers. Sanctions and diplomatic signalling remain *ad hoc* instruments of the foreign policy action of the Union.

One consequence is that the EU's most visible action against ransomware and the EU's description of the problem are starting to diverge. Member states continue to experience uneven implementation of existing directives, which has produced a transposition gap: as of mid-2026, only around 20 of 27 states had transposed NIS2 into national law. Meanwhile, the coercive half of Europe's response, demonstrated in July, is developing largely outside this framework, through coalition diplomacy that has no guarantee of repetition.

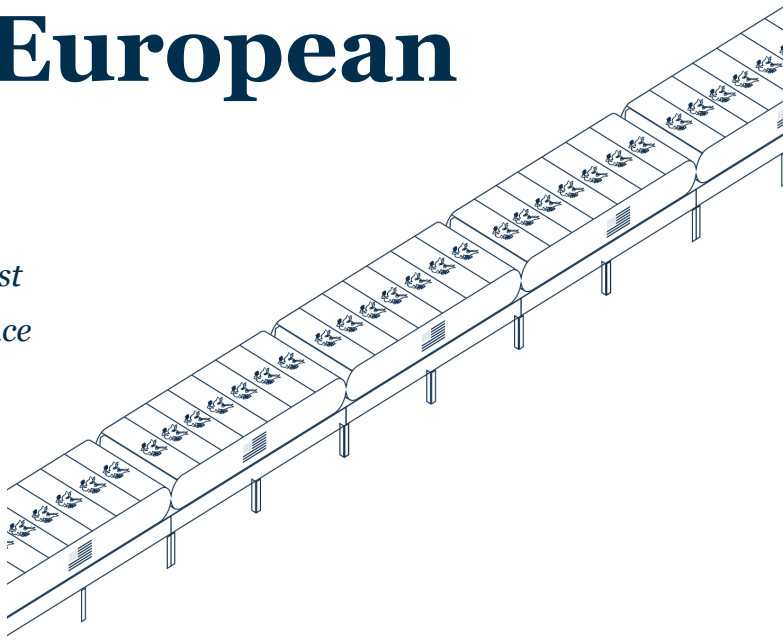
Conclusion

The EU-UK bilateral coalition worked, but coalition is not a doctrine, and that gap is the real subject of this article. It is no longer possible to describe ransomware as a low-level criminal activity managed through compliance obligations. On the contrary, it is a persistent instrument of grey-zone pressure, sustained by permissive jurisdictions and industrialised through RaaS ecosystems, and Europe's recent activity shows that it already understands this. The July 2026 sanctions package demonstrates that European and British institutions can attribute, sanction, and coordinate a public response to state-linked cyber operations without depending on Washington to move first. What Europe has not yet done is turn that capability into a formal policy. That could mean a standing EU-UK cyber coordination mechanism, or a formal trigger linking major ransomware attacks on critical infrastructure to the EU's existing cyber sanctions regime, so that attribution and response are not improvised anew each time.

Addressing and, consequently, closing that gap does not require militarising the response to ransomware or displacing law enforcement. It requires embedding the capabilities utilised in the bilateral collaboration with the UK into the same strategic frameworks that already govern the EU's foreign and security policy.

The Procurement Mentality Undermining European Defence

By **Milán Major**, *Operational Readiness Analyst*
Edited by **Jake Southerland**, *Security & Defence Unit (S&D), Director*



Europe's defence spending surge has a clear winner: American suppliers. National procurement decisions are undermining strategic autonomy before Brussels has finished debating it.

While Europe is debating its new security strategy in Brussels, member states are already busy rearming at home. As a reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO's European members have agreed to increase their defence spending and started an unprecedented buying spree on the defence market. While on its own this is a good thing, in some capability areas these national procurement decisions will shape European defence policy whether policy makers in Brussels agree with them or not.

In order to ensure stable transatlantic relations in the post-Cold War era, procurement decisions faced a significant tradeoff. While factors such as capability and availability continue to be considered, others such as the impact on the defence industry were often overlooked. Europe remained a consistent buyer of U.S. defence products; This relationship is no better demonstrated than in the period of 2020-2024, where European NATO members spent 64% of their procurement budget with U.S. suppliers. However, while European countries represented a significant portion of the American defence industry's international clientele, most cases don't evolve beyond the transactional buyer-seller stage.

This was not a major concern until the war in Ukraine began to deplete significant amounts of munition and vehicle stockpiles. To further complicate Europe's changing defence landscape, the Trump administration stated its intention of holding back cutting-edge capabilities from allies and reducing troop numbers in Europe. The political need has risen for sovereign European defence capabilities. While this is a welcome change, some areas of defence will have a harder time to adapt than others due to decades of reliance on U.S. weapons systems and infrastructure.

The European capability gap is quite apparent in exo-atmospheric (above the atmosphere) Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), where the entire kill-chain runs through U.S.-manufactured systems. In 2025, Russia deployed Oreshnik

Intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) systems to Belarus, and conducted a demonstration strike against Ukraine in November 2024 using inert warheads. No European sovereign system currently deployed can intercept an IRBM threat at exo-atmospheric altitudes.

The core of European BMD is the two Aegis Ashore installations in Poland and Romania, complemented by the U.S. Destroyer group stationed in Rota, Spain. Both the ships and the ground-based installations utilise American SM-3 interceptors, with the Aegis Ashore sites holding 24 interceptors each, enough to engage roughly a dozen incoming warheads before needing to be reloaded. The destroyer force has expanded from its original four ships, and expects a 6th destroyer by the end of the year; but it has increasingly been drawn to the Middle East as a response to the ongoing Iran conflict.

The only sovereign capability in Europe is in detection with the SMART-L radar developed and manufactured by Thales Nederland; it can detect and relay tracking data through the NATO communication network, that allows other systems to target and destroy threats. Detection and tracking are part of the ABM kill chain, but defence experts have concluded that there is no European sovereign targeting radar capability above the SAMP/T air defence envelope; for targeting data and interception Europe depends on U.S. systems. This leaves Europe without exo-atmospheric ABM capability of its own. Both the Aegis Ashore installations and Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are operated by U.S. troops, utilising U.S. radars, Command and Control, and interceptors.

The U.S. has been vocal about wanting to reduce its footprint in Europe. The destroyers in Spain providing critical magazine depth and a second mobile layer of ABM in Europe may quickly become part of a U.S. drawdown. Furthermore, SM-3 interceptors are only produced by the U.S. and Japan, and even with elevated production rates the U.S. has been burning through its interceptor stockpiles in Iran at an alarming rate, with some estimates having the expenditure rate as high as 50%. With delivery timelines rising up to a little over five years, replenishment will be no easy task. During this time, the main BMD supplier for Europe will be critically constrained. This is not a theoretical risk in the future; this is the situation that Europe needs to be aware of.

For its next-generation frigates (F127), the German Navy (*Deutsche Marine*) has selected the AN/SPY-6 radar system equipped with Lockheed Martin's Aegis command and weapon control system. Germany will be the first foreign integrator of the AN/SPY-6. This will create a decades-long dependency for the German navy on U.S. suppliers. In addition to the Germans, the Dutch navy (*Koninklijke Marine*), is considering the Aegis and AN/SPY systems. However, unlike Berlin's decision, domestic producers are also being put into consideration.

The AN/SPY-7 is advertised by Lockheed Martin as "interoperable with major radars and defense platforms". Independent experts say it is virtually impossible to integrate European missiles with the SPY-6. This immediately moves this technical decision into a defence industrial and strategic question of whether European-made missiles will ever be fitted to Aegis-equipped vessels. The Netherlands faces the question of whether to join with Germany and adopt the AN/SPY-6, and lock itself in with U.S. missile supply, or order the AN/SPY-7, which will provide them future flexibility. This and many other seemingly small deci-

sions are being made in the Ministries of Defence every day, with long-term strategic implications not being discussed on a wider scale.

Using U.S. systems is not inherently an issue; they are capable and battle-tested. The issues come from the buyer-seller relationship Europe has settled into in many areas. Japan also equipped its warships with the Aegis Combat System and was able to negotiate a partnership in co-development of the SM-3 Block IIA. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries produces components of the missiles, and Japan also proposed domestic SM-6 production.

Japan and the U.S. recently agreed to co-develop a new Glide Phase Interceptor against hypersonic threats, with a 50-50 workshare in the final product. Japan will produce critical components for these missiles. By fostering a partner relationship in defence industry, Japan can leverage domestic production and will have leverage when supply is constrained compared to allies who are simply buyers. Europe has secured industrial partnership with the U.S. in certain capability areas before, but rarely as a procurement condition, and never for the naval missile systems it now relies on. Europe is beginning to address an issue Japan solved decades ago.

European sovereign BMD capability is now being discussed seriously. Consortia have formed for detection and endo-atmospheric (within the atmosphere) interception under Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO e.g. TWISTER) and European Defence Fund (EDF e.g. HYDEF, HYDIS2) frameworks. Five European states signed a letter of intent to establish Bliksem EXO, aiming to create Europe's first sovereign exo-atmospheric interceptor. A kill vehicle test is aimed for 2027, but there is no confirmed funding, procurement commitment, or in-service date yet. Both HYDEF and HYDIS2 sit around Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 3. An operational interceptor would be TRL 9. The most optimistic timeline for a European endo-atmospheric interceptor is 2035. The exo-atmospheric layer has no confirmed in-service date. The development pace reflects the investment behind it.

The EDF was intentionally designed to be a research instrument, not a procurement one. This was reasonable in 2021, but insufficient for the urgency of 2026. The structural problem is not the total budget, but who is funding it. HYDEF has a total budget of €110 million, €100 million from EU taxpayers through EDF, and €10 million from the five participating member states; industrial investment is absent. The companies that would eventually manufacture and profit from a fielded interceptor have not contributed financially. In commercial R&D, private co-investment in early-stage research signals that industry believes the research will eventually produce something worth pursuing. Private co-investment is not only a funding mechanism; it is a commitment signal.

This is reinforced by the funding structure. EDF reimburses eligible project costs, at a 100% rate for research activities, and at up to 80 to 100% for development activities, with only prototyping funded at a lower rate of up to 55%. For large defence companies, the most rational strategy is to maximise reimbursable costs rather than contribute private capital whose return depends on an uncertain procurement down the line. For SMEs, EDF grants can function as R&D revenue, with participation optimised around reimbursable activities, pushing them towards administrative rather than technological contributions. The result is a project framework optimised for maximum Commission funding rather than

producing operational capabilities. The money flows, the projects happen, and no one has capital at risk in the outcome.

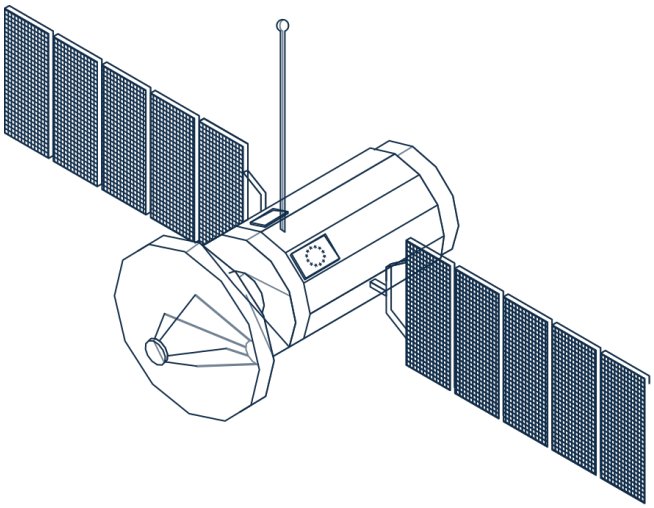
When Germany equips its F127 frigates with American interceptors and procures Arrow 3 from Israel for exo-atmospheric defence, it has little incentive to fund European alternatives. Every state that locks into non-European systems reduces the potential market for European programmes. This reduces industry confidence, which keeps private investment low, which keeps TRL low, which keeps the capability gap wide open. The EDF funds the research but cannot break this loop. The letter of intent mechanism requires states to declare an intention to procure the product, but it is not an actual commitment. Without a binding procurement clause attached to EU-funded R&D, European BMD programmes will continue producing research outputs without an operational product. The ambition to build a sovereign European BMD capability now exists at every layer, but the gap between ambition and deployable capability is a decade-wide, and procurement decisions made this year are making it wider.

The post-transatlantic security order that European policy makers now debate will remain a theoretical aspiration if procurement decisions being made today are not addressed. Strategic autonomy cannot be built on American interceptors, fire-control systems and radar architectures. Every SPY-6 decision, every foreign military sale signed without a co-production condition, every EDF programme left without a procurement commitment is a quiet vote against the decoupling that European policy circles argue is necessary. Europe may spend the next decade debating strategic autonomy while silently making it impossible with national procurement decisions. Partners grow together; buyers get left behind.

> *"Europe may spend the next decade debating strategic autonomy while silently making it impossible with national procurement decisions."*

Europe's Search for Strategic Autonomy in Space

By **Pierre Sabot**, *Space Security Analyst*
Edited by **Maryna Mincheva**, *Next Generation Defense Analyst*



Waves of new-generation satellites and launchers continue to be built by Europe, but institutional fragmentation still stands between it and genuine strategic autonomy.

Changing transatlantic relations: why is Europe adapting?

Space technologies and innovations have long been a sector dominated by a handful of powers like the USA, Russia and, in recent years, China. Middle powers like European countries, Canada or Japan have traditionally played a secondary role in this domain, often cooperating with traditional space powers to enhance their use and access to space technologies. This dependence has been particularly visible in positioning, communications, and human spaceflight. European Space Agency astronauts, for example, have relied on Russia's Soyuz or America's Crew Dragon to access the International Space Station, while GPS was the backbone of positioning services in Europe.

Simultaneously, space technologies have become increasingly relevant for the conduct of modern warfare. Space systems continuously support military activities, as demonstrated by the war in Ukraine and the consequences of disrupted Starlink access for Russian forces. With a return to great power competition and eroding trust in the trans-Atlantic alliance, Europe is ever more concerned about its ability to independently defend its interests and sovereignty. In response, European and national officials have increasingly called for greater strategic autonomy, prompting the EU to develop alternative capabilities in space. The main question, then, is how close the EU has come to achieving its ambitions for space autonomy.

Building capabilities: the European constellation programs and launcher development

Long before the first Trump presidency and the war in Ukraine, Europe was taking its first steps towards greater autonomy. With Copernicus and Galileo respectively announced in 1998 and 2003, the EU aimed to develop its

sovereign infrastructures at a time when its security and American support were almost unwavering. Until Galileo became operational in 2016, Europe had been reliant on foreign systems, principally the US's GPS and, to a lesser extent, China's Beidou system and Russia's GLONASS. With Galileo, Europe developed an independent positioning system controlled by civilian authorities. Nowadays, navigation software combines data from all those different systems to improve reliability and accuracy. However, the development of Galileo means that Europe is no longer entirely dependent on foreign navigation infrastructure and can maintain access to positioning services even if access to other systems is disrupted. Similarly, Copernicus, the EU's Earth-observation system, was designed to provide independent data to support agriculture, environmental monitoring, or disaster response. While not phasing out foreign systems, Galileo and Copernicus significantly improve Europe's strategic autonomy by enabling it to rely on its own capabilities.

However, this strategic autonomy remains incomplete in the field of satellite communications (or satcom). The EU currently lacks its own satcom systems and relies on a handful of satellites owned by some of its member states, such as France's Syracuse or Italy's SICRAL for government communications. This fragmentation limits Europe's ability to provide secure and resilient communications independently at the intergovernmental level. At the same time, the US and China are deploying large constellations, thus reducing the available orbital slots. Planned to become operational in 2029, IRIS2 is the EU's answer to its security concerns regarding independent satcom. With this program, Europeans aim to build a multi-orbital satellite constellation that provides secure, resilient, worldwide communications for EU institutions, Member States, and, later, commercial users. Unlike Starlink, IRIS² prioritises public and governmental services, with commercial services forming a complementary component rather than the primary driver of the system. IRIS² therefore reflects different strategic and political objectives, focusing on secured government communications rather than simply competing on commercial performance. However, analysts argue that its commercial potential could be further enhanced to extend secure connectivity to regions such as the Arctic, the Baltic and the Mediterranean. As the backbone of a broader European connectivity ecosystem, IRIS² could strengthen the continent's satcom industry by creating a common infrastructure around which companies could develop new services and compete internationally.

Another significant obstacle being tackled right now is the gap in European launch capabilities. Compared to the US, Europe continues to lag in key areas, particularly launch cadence, cost competitiveness, and reusability. The bloc has traditionally relied on state-backed launcher programs like Ariane and Vega developed through the European Space Agency and funded by member states' contributions. With the European Launcher Challenge (ELC) competitive program, established in 2023, ESA is attempting to change how Europe develops and builds rockets by increasing private ventures. Companies that successfully carry out an orbital launch by 2027 at the latest become eligible for ESA contributions to operational launches and scaling up. ESA describes this new strategy as a move towards "privately-led launch services" to strengthen "Europe's position in the global space market and ensure sustainable and competitive access to space to European and worldwide customers". While public funding is still a part of

this endeavour, the structure is different, with ESA supporting commercially developed launch services and buying launch capacity rather than simply commissioning an ESA-designed launcher. By moving away from the publicly funded development model, Europe is aiming to foster a new launcher ecosystem that would be competitive, more sustainable and based on European companies.

Remaining gaps and the European objective

Despite these developments, Europe's progress towards strategic autonomy remains incomplete. The main challenge is that the European space sector remains highly fragmented, both institutionally and industrially. Space policy is shared between the EU, the European Space Agency (ESA), and national governments, while European companies continue to depend heavily on national markets and funding. This fragmentation can make it difficult to establish common priorities, pool resources, and develop programmes at the scale required to compete with the United States or China. Rather than operating as a single European space market, Europe still has several national industrial ecosystems competing for public funding and strategic projects. Moreover, Europe still lacks the political will at the scale of its economic and technological power to become a fully autonomous space power. The Draghi Report on EU competitiveness stresses that until then, Europe runs the risk of lagging behind global competitors in the space sector, and all other sectors of the economy enabled and transformed by it.

Most importantly, Europe is still short of responsive space capabilities, generally defined as the ability to quickly replace a lost asset or service. While Europe is making progress in developing new space infrastructure to disentangle itself from the US, it will not be fully autonomous until it is capable of swiftly adapting, redeploying, or replacing these systems. Developing new launchers through the ELC is a first step but won't suffice. Responsive space requires spaceport developments and manufacturing cadence to match commercial and governmental launch needs. While the US has already demonstrated operational responsive launch capabilities, European efforts remain at an earlier stage. These limitations point to a broader issue: Europe's challenge is no longer simply to acquire individual sovereign capabilities, but to connect them into a space system of institutions, industries and infrastructures that can function coherently and resiliently.

> *"Europe's challenge is no longer simply to acquire individual sovereign capabilities, but to connect them into a space system of institutions, industries and infrastructures that can function coherently and resiliently."*

The progress made through Galileo, Copernicus, IRIS2 and the ELC nevertheless demonstrates that Europe is moving in this direction. These programmes have reduced European dependence on navigation, Earth observation, secure communications, and access to space, laying the foundations for a more sovereign European space sector. However, reducing external dependencies does not in itself consti-

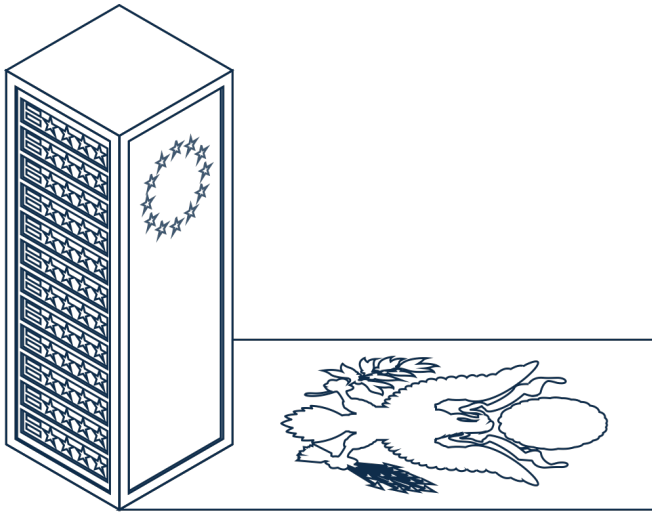
tute strategic autonomy. Rather, the extent of Europe's autonomy depends on whether it possesses the sovereign capabilities required to maintain critical space services and act independently when necessary. Autonomy should therefore not be understood as autarky or disengagement from allied systems. As cooperation with the US and other allies remains an important pillar of the EU's strategy, interoperability with allied systems is meant to complement European capabilities, rather than substitute for them. With changing transatlantic relations, increasing tensions with Russia and ever higher reliance on space technologies for military actions, ensuring Europe's position in space is a pressing matter. True autonomy requires the ability to maintain such capabilities under pressure or, as put by the EU's current framing, to "design, manufacture, launch, operate, protect and replace" critical space systems.

> *"True autonomy requires the ability to maintain such capabilities under pressure."*

For the EU, strategic autonomy in space should consequently be understood not as complete independence from external actors, but as the capacity to retain meaningful freedom of action across all stages of the space value chain. This entails not only developing sovereign capabilities, but also ensuring that the institutions, industrial base, infrastructure and supply chains underpinning them are sufficiently resilient, coordinated and responsive. The objective is therefore not to eliminate interdependence, but to ensure that Europe can choose when and how to depend on others.

The EU's Military AI Gap: Why AGILE Will Not Be Enough

By **Luca Rastelli**, *AI & Defence Governance Analyst*
Edited by **Margherita Rossi**, *Cyber Defence Analyst*



With just a 90-minute notice, the US cut off its allies from the use of its most powerful AI system. Will this be a wake up call for Brussels?

On June 12, 2026, the US government issued an export control directive to suspend access to Anthropic's Mythos 5 and Fable 5 cutting-edge AI technologies to any foreign national, whether inside or outside the United States, including allies. With just a 90-minute notice, both models were offline due to their possible fallible safeguarding systems that could cause national security concerns. The ban was eventually lifted 18 days later, but the message was clear: as Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said during the following G7 meeting in Evian, "the situation we are in collectively now with Mythos and Fable is something that can happen with overreliance on certain models." Reactions in continental Europe, while spreading in some countries, were overall few and not radical. However, the first ever AI ban should be a strong wake up call for the EU, which still heavily relies on US technologies and know-how, especially in the defense sector. As these commercial technologies were reported to be used by Washington during high-stakes operations, as the ones in Colombia and Iran, their impact on the security domain, and especially in warfighting and defense, is now even more obvious than before. In the face of geopolitical shifts and growing global competition, it is fundamental for the 27 Member States to come together and decide on the steps to take to start a strategic decoupling from the US defense systems networks, and the AI sector may be the first one. However, the latest EU's answer to the problem is unlikely to make substantial changes.

EU governments and military AI

European governments have been long curious about AI applications in the military domain, but they are just now starting to implement them directly. Frontier models such as the ones produced by Anthropic and OpenAI improve intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations (ISR), as well as decision making processes, and their practical implica-

tions are daily witnessed on the ground of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Drones and other types of autonomous weapons are now at the forefront of a new military revolution. However, Brussels is still lagging behind, creating an operational defect in case of need. In fact, in the US driven and negotiated NATO sphere, differences in technologies can bring about cooperation difficulties in case of need, making supporting efforts more costly and less efficient. While some AI service providers are present in Europe, of which France's Mistral is the most prominent one, and companies are starting to sign deals with defense contractors, they pale when confronted with the size and funding of US companies which, as of now, still supply 65% of the European cloud services market, the backbone of most AI training and developing networks. For the same time period, the year 2025, European defense startups cumulatively raised $8.7B, while Anduril alone, the California-based company specializing in autonomous systems, has an annual revenue of around $2.1 billion. While financing of research and development (R&D) on novel technologies, especially for military purposes, has been raised over the years, the problems run deeper than raw numbers.

Being composed of 27 different procurement standards, the EU market is deeply fragmented and unfitted, as of now, to accommodate solid commitments by buyers, with companies needing to navigate overlapping NATO standards, security reviews and export controls that can take up to 36 months, significantly slowing down procurement efforts. This problem brings about an important issue of scale, where European VCs are not able to scale up the same way the American counterparts do, lagging behind in terms of innovation and of buyer consolidation.

Different financial instruments for the same Aim

The Commission has proposed various types of actions, most of which revolving around the different financial systems; they are, however, still not enough. ReArm Europe offers 800 billion euro combining national fiscal flexibility with EU-backed loans for joint procurement. The historic cornerstone project of EU defense spending, the EU Defense Fund (EDF), has a budget of just 1 billion euro for 2026 and its area of application spans from conventional defense systems to more modern unmanned vehicles. Coupled with that, the EUDIS enabling instrument, that builds from EDF, allocates around 231 million euro to lower entry barriers to defense SMEs that are the core of the EU market. All these instruments, however, are of general application, and do not clearly tackle the issue of the dependencies on the AI sector.

To try to solve this issue, the von der Leyen's Commission proposed, in March 2026, the new Program for agile and rapid defense innovation (AGILE) that is clearly designed to accelerate the deployment of disruptive defense technologies in European startups and SMEs. The program sits in between the existing EDF, which backs longer-term products across new and conventional capacities, and the EU Defense Innovation Scheme (EUDIS), which supports early stage development. The 115 million euro proposed bill that would be operational until 2027, however, is not to be summed up with the present funding; instead, since it stems from the reorganization of previous efforts, the result is just marginally better coordination between companies, while no meaningful increase in spending is present.

However, the proposed deeper cooperation with Ukrainian defense contractors, now at the forefront of innovating defense approaches, may serve to start building the necessary know-how, infrastructure and systems by using their battlefield data and experience which eventually would prove essential for the development of a properly sovereign and sound-working European military AI. While AGILE improves access to funding for late-stage development and deployment, the overall funding pool is limited, and scaling beyond it will still depend on national procurement efforts. That being said, it is clear that the proposed directive does not completely fulfill the aim for which it was created: given its short term commitment and marginal funding, AGILE will not be able to sustain innovation into deployed capability at scale.

Aside from financing, governance will have to be tackled

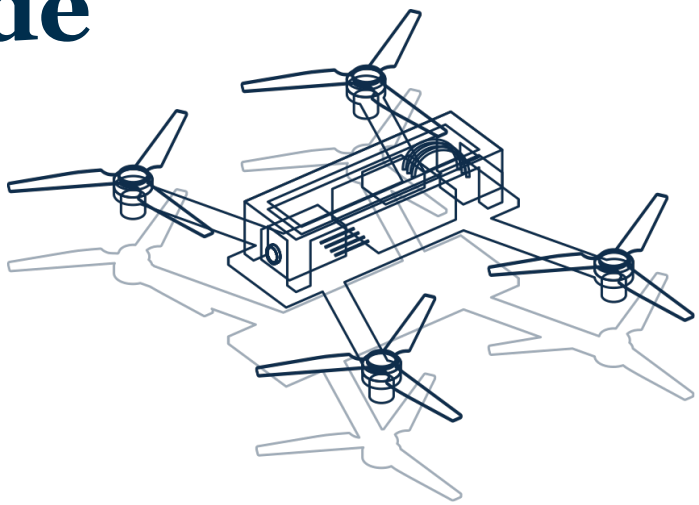
Even if the Commission's proposals and funding were to be efficient to solve the estimated 10-year gap in technology improvements with the US, another major issue would be the governance of this new technology. While Washington has recently moved away from the assumption of the man in the loop and meaningful human control, Brussels would need to put forward a number of safeguards ensuring that the use of autonomous systems complies with EU requirements, especially the ones stemming from the rule of law and the protection of human rights, which have been at the core of the Union since its beginning. At the international level, however, discussions on the regulation of AI systems are still ongoing and are far from the enactment of any type of act. With the creation of the AI act, in 2024, Brussels chose to clearly rule out the possibility of applying it to the military use of such technology as stated in art 2(3). This choice, strongly supported by France, one of the EU's biggest military spenders, is grounded in the division of authorities between the Union itself and the Member States on issues regarding national security; however, this does not mean that the issue is now living in a legal vacuum: standards on military AI are present in the NATO sphere, but what is missing is a true European effort to champion the quest of the governance of this new, disrupting technology. Having clear boundaries on the issue will serve the aim of legitimizing the use of these discoveries while providing more legal certainty on the possible redress solutions.

Conclusion

In a time where transatlantic relations are at their lowest point in decades, the EU should start taking concrete steps to decrease its reliance on US security assurances, which could end overnight. While European defense systems still heavily rely on Washington's support, the novel era of military AI could be the first area where the Union could exercise true control over its own security. The development of a new and comprehensive European military AI is still decades away; nonetheless, an increase in funding for R&D is a clear message on the position Brussels wants to take on the issue. Better coordination between the Member States, more funding, and the creation of a true defense industrial base would incredibly serve the aim of creating strategic independence. However, these efforts cannot fail to consider the need for a regulatory framework within which these technologies can be lawfully implemented. It is, thus, fundamental that, while research is undergoing, serious talks on governance approaches are to be taken by all the States together.

Resilience Building Against Hybrid Threats: A Baltic Self-Help Guide

By **Arturo Simone**, Hybrid Threats Analyst
Edited by **Kit Newman**, Russia Analyst



With NATO losing reliability, and in spite of Europe's promises to step up security, should we be concerned about Baltic hybrid resilience, or should we instead learn from it?

The Baltic paradox

Despite their relative sizes and economies, the Baltics have long attracted the attention of several heavyweights, including Russia and the United States. In a strikingly brief amount of time since their independence between 1990 and 1991, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania became in all but name a laboratory for hybrid warfare. To the East lies Russia attempting to re-establish its sphere of influence, undermine national identity, and test NATO's cohesion; while to the West is the United States and Europe pushing for geo-economic integration via membership in NATO and the EU. The result thirty years later? The Baltics frustratingly maintain the title of the most exposed area to hybrid threats... but also that of the most resilient.

The recipe for such a cocktail is one characterised by self-assessment, bet hedging, and an honest risk analysis. The umbrella provided by the West, while essential, has historically been limited to military-centred deterrence, resting decisively on the 'whole-mighty power' that Article 5 entails. But because hybrid threats combine both military and non-military tools, Russia and other non-state actors remain able to exercise substantial pressure on the Baltics. In doing so, these agents continue to test the limits of Western deterrence and its internal cohesion.

Unsurprisingly, the Baltics never stopped investing in their own security and resilience against these threats - following history's most conventional wisdom of 'learning from the past', best embraced by post-Soviet Eastern European nations. And now that US President Trump's second term threatens traditional NATO reliability in Europe, the Baltics may have a lesson or two for other European countries looking to borrow a page from the hybrid resilience self-help guide.

When deterrence is not deterring

Hybrid threats are potent techniques employed by such actors as Moscow, given that they are cost-efficient, as they remain infinitely cheaper than military action; and deniable, as they do not carry a flag or claim responsibility upon completion. In the Baltics, these tactics come in many forms, including sabotage - cutting deep-sea cables and data lines; cyber - often targeting government websites and the private sector; and disinformation - always a Kremlin evergreen for influencing elections and eroding national identities.

Over almost all areas, the Baltics feature as the most targeted region by Russian hybrid attacks, with the latter responsible for over 40 occurrences between 2022 and 2025. Historically speaking, this is not the first time that great powers exercise pressure over smaller nations - not by a long shot. But the case of the Baltics stands out in the extensive Cold War crowd given the continued relevance of its host. Typically, the host country becomes overshadowed by the contest for influence between the foreign powers, leaving it as little more than a defenceless target. In the Baltics that has simply not happened. There, we witness a case of old-meets-new, where NATO's traditional military deterrence measures fail to eradicate Russia's modern asymmetrical warfare tactics.

The Baltics have been formidable in keeping up with defence expenses, exceeding the 2% GDP NATO requirements long before President Trump's rumblings about it, and have wisely called upon their military allies for support over such areas as maritime monitoring whenever useful. But Western military countermeasures cannot erase hybrid activity altogether, and NATO's modus operandi remains mostly reactive rather than preventive. Henceforth, the region never stopped building on their own operations too. National government programmes have been dedicated to resilience building, societal awareness, and infrastructural stress testing. The so-called 'Baltic model' rests solidly - and historically - on the assumption that no one else will arrive in time, and that effective resilience architecture starts at home.

> *"The so-called 'Baltic model' rests solidly - and historically - on the assumption that no one else will arrive in time, and that effective resilience architecture starts at home."*

Security nowadays goes far beyond territorial defence, and implies continued investments in the functioning of societies despite pressures from both outside and within. Civil preparedness, infrastructure resilience, and cybersecurity now dictate a society's survival just as guns and rockets once did.

Mind the gap

So what does all this tell us about today's security architecture in Europe? The second term of President Trump in the White House has thus far brought little to rejoice in the corridors of NATO HQ Brussels. This year's US National Defence Strategy speaks plainly of a recentering of regional focus, where engagement in Europe is explicitly undermined by shifting priorities elsewhere. The 'eye' of the White House is prioritising its focus on the US home-

land internally, and on China externally, implying several times that Europeans need to pick up the slack on their own continent. Concrete changes include the removal of 5,000 American servicemen across Germany, the cancelling of planned long-range strike capabilities, and the withdrawal of up to 200 US personnel from NATO structures worldwide.

While none of these seem to directly impact the Baltics hybrid defence capabilities, an underscoring message transpires nonetheless. The latter is a terrifying incentive to those agents of chaos - Russian or otherwise - to double down on hybrid warfare, as they see in these developments evidence of destabilisation in the NATO alliance, and what the Kremlin loves calling 'Western decadence'.

One flagship programme that remains operational is the *Baltics Sentry*, launched by NATO on January 14th, 2025, only days before President Trump's second inaugural - speaking of coincidences [...]. The Sentry was meant as a range of assets to be deployed across the region upon necessity, including maritime, technological and surveillance assets. Since then, the programme tested more than 70 drones, hoping to establish an all-encompassing AI-enabled maritime resilience system, meant to offer situational awareness, detection, and deterrence. While successful, the Baltic Sentry showcases two main continued weaknesses. One in that it mainly remains as a military asset limited to detection of attacks, and second, that its scope remains tied to NATO's resolve to invest in it, which is wavering today.

In fairness, Europe has not stood silent on this. The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was the first alarm, and the state of EU-US relations today is but another good reason to wake up in the morning and invest in regional defence. The Commission's Work Programme 2026 and the White Papers Readiness 2030 reflect the importance of increased collective security and defence, as do the cyclical Council presidencies hosted by European Member States (MS) - whose top three focus areas now unsurprisingly all feature defence upgrading. Just days ago, after Russia's drone strike on Leipzig airport in Germany, the EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas pleaded to step up efforts to defend against hybrid threats across the Union. Concretely, much has been put on the *hybrid* table: the Hybrid Toolbox for information sharing; the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox to increase inter-MS cooperation; and the Hybrid Response Teams and FIMI toolbox to combat disinformation and foster media literacy.

Help those who help themselves

Across all these instruments, the Baltics offer a fitting testing ground, and one that unfortunately continues to provide plenty of opportunities to experiment. Hybrid attacks have not slowed in recent months, reporting dozens of instances across Europe's Eastern flank since January 2026. So should Brussels feel confident in all of its new toys to protect Europe's hybrid sphere? Or is the EU just nervously attempting to compensate for the uncertainty left by the crack with its partner across the Atlantic?

The key to this may be in the actors, rather than the numbers

Baltic resilience is currently being stress-tested to the max, with Russia's kinetic operations stretching far and wide to suppress pro-Ukraine actors, Western-leaning Baltic societal figures, and Russian dissidents. But notably

what has changed, or rather, what is changing, are the main actors countering these attacks. Just in April of this year, the Lithuanian authorities uncovered and charged 13 individuals linked to the Kremlin's military intelligence agency (GRU). Estonia similarly exposed a Russian cyber espionage unit known as APT28, which was operating in the territory since 2024. And already in 2025, all three Baltic countries famously achieved full energy autonomy from Moscow, cutting once and for all their economic dependencies on Russian electricity, gas, and oil.

What we see is therefore a region that, while partially empowered by its old allies' traditional military backing and Brussels's new tools, is reaffirming ownership of its actions in the hybrid domain. True deterrence comes from an entity who routinely demonstrates it can defend itself, rather than one whose friends come to back up during crises. The Latvian government recognised this already in 2023, understanding that because society itself was the primary target of these threats, strengthening and restructuring it was essential to countering them.

We never stop learning

Moving forward? Much emerges from the Baltic case, and Europe should pay attention. No one saves themselves alone, but collective action in the hybrid domain can only do so much without true agency from its host. This self-help reliance put forward by the Baltics should be considered in the halls of Brussels as a potential model to apply across the continent, given the increased popularity of hybrid threats in this digital world.

The transatlantic shift is damaging to Europe, but was always in the books, and the Baltics were smart enough to expect it, work around it, and adjust accordingly. In the end, there are lessons for all at this table: a NATO that has to reassess control of its own members, an EU that must invest in itself, and a Baltic regional bloc that despite its continued necessities for Western support still has lots to teach its allies about hybrid resilience building.

> *"The Baltics were smart enough to expect it, work around it, and adjust accordingly."*

We would be wise to listen.

Can UK-French Nuclear Cooperation Substitute for US Extended Deterrence?

By **Arthur Langley**, *UK & Nuclear Policy Analyst*

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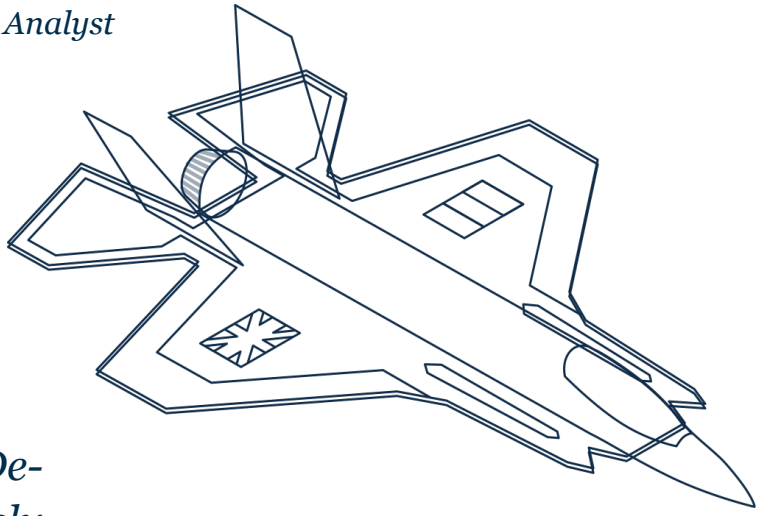
Edited by **Mariona Fortuny Jané**, *Europe in the Indo Pacific Analyst*; and **Orla Harris**, Digital Infrastructure Sovereignty Analyst



Washington's 2026 National Defense Strategy rests conspicuously silent on the future of its nuclear umbrella over Europe. Growing Anglo-French cooperation is being framed as the continent's most plausible fallback, though its doctrinal limits mean it still falls short of a genuine substitute.

The 2026 United States' (US) National Defense Strategy is clear about its expectations from its European allies, positing that NATO allies are 'strongly positioned to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, with critical but more limited U.S. support'. Yet it is notably silent on the question of US extended deterrence. For Europe, a continent that has, for eight decades, treated the US nuclear commitment as a given for its own defence, that omission forces a recalibration of its deterrence posture for the first time in a generation.

This recalibration raises the question of what might replace the US nuclear umbrella, in the event that Washington's nuclear guarantee were to recede. Anglo-French nuclear cooperation has begun filling in some of that space, and is increasingly presented as the most plausible European fallback should the United States withdraw entirely. However, the precise nature of this cooperation remains unclear, as does its adequacy with the lack of clarity likely due to the constitutional constraints on French nuclear command explored in the sections that follow. To address this uncertainty, this article outlines the requirements for genuine substitution and evaluates the Anglo-French relationship against that standard to conclude whether UK-France nuclear cooperation could feasibly substitute for U.S. extended deterrence.

Northwood and Lancaster House 2.0: The institutional base

Any assessment of whether Anglo-French cooperation could complement, or potentially mitigate a reduced US extended-deterrence role, should begin with the Northwood Declaration. Although it builds upon earlier bilateral nuclear cooperation, Northwood is the first Anglo-French framework explicitly to provide for the coordination of their independent nuclear forces across nuclear policy, capabilities and operations, rather than merely technical collaboration or wider conventional-force integration.

Signed on 10 July 2025, the Declaration confirms that UK and French nuclear forces remain independent, but can be coordinated, although it is deliberately limited in what it commits the two states to do. It does not specify how coordination would work in practice, nor does it establish shared targeting, joint command, or any form of pooled decision-making. What it does establish is a UK-France Nuclear Steering Group, co-chaired by the UK Cabinet Office and the French Presidency, tasked with political direction across nuclear policy, capabilities, and operations, significant because it remains closer to the understanding of the Gaullist logic of sovereign deterrence. Gaullist logic here signifies the principle, dating to de Gaulle's presidency, that nuclear command must remain under sole national authority, unshared and undelegated even to close allies. This makes the declaration valuable, but still short of the level of integration, political commitment, and operational clarity that would be required for genuine substitution.

Despite the ambiguity, developments on the ground have moved further than the declaration itself lets on. The Nuclear Steering Group met for the first time in Paris on 10 December 2025, where UK representatives observed Operation Poker – France's strategic nuclear airborne exercise – the first time any foreign officials had been granted that access.The nuclear track also sits within the wider Lancaster House 2.0 architecture, including the Combined Joint Force, the Entente Industrielle, and the Complex Weapons Portfolio Office, further evidence that this is not an isolated gesture but part of a broader institutional convergence. Even so, this amounts at most to trust-building beyond declaratory language, and still falls short of the integrated command, shared targeting, or doctrinal convergence that substitution for the U.S. guarantee would require.

Forward deterrence: dilution or expansion?

Macron's speech at Île-Longue on 2 March 2026 announced the first increase in France's nuclear warhead count since 1992, ending three decades of unilateral reductions that had run from Mitterrand through Chirac. The President also unveiled the concept of forward deterrence where selected non-nuclear allies may have access to French nuclear exercises, and potentially the temporary hosting of nuclear-capable aircraft for the first time. The initial group of eight European partners engaged in France's emerging structured deterrence dialogue comprised the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark.

Two features of the French expansion bear directly on whether the wider Anglo-French rela-

tionship can meet the standard of genuine substitution set out at the start of this article.

The first, concerns integrated command, where Macron explicitly stated that France would not share decision-making under forward deterrence, since constitutional authority over the arsenal rests with the president alone. Therefore, exercises and hosting are on offer, but any degree of allied control over when or how the arsenal is used will be withheld. This is not a limit unique to the eight-state framework, but instead it is the same feature already present in Northwood, where British and French forces remain independent of one another by design. The cooperation now extended to the other eight states rests on the same non-negotiable term the UK itself accepted first. That consistency across eight different bilateral relationships suggests the absence of shared command is structural to how France cooperates with any partner, not a gap specific to the Anglo-French relationship that time or trust might eventually close.

The second issue is the coverage of the concept, whether a French-anchored arrangement could serve as a credible delivery chain for the allies who actually need it. The states most exposed to Russia – Finland and the Baltic three – are not among the current eight participants, since forward deterrence is opt-in and depends on a bilateral invitation from Paris rather than the automatic guarantee Article 5 of the Washington Treaty provides.

What an Anglo-French substitution requires

Genuine substitution, as this article has framed it, would require three things: integrated targeting and command, doctrinal convergence, and a credible delivery chain. As argued above, the Anglo-French relationship falls short – despite progress being made. What currently exists is closer to coordination than integration.

> *"What currently exists is closer to coordination than integration."*

There is no evidence of fused targeting or joint decision-making between the UK's national chain of command and its French counterpart. The Nuclear Steering Group provides political direction, and its co-chairs meet, discuss, and coordinate – but neither declaration nor practice has produced a body with authority over either country's forces. Coordination remains something both chains do to one another, not something either is bound by.

Doctrinally, the two countries' deterrents pull in different directions. Britain's deterrent has been fully assigned to NATO since the 1962 Nassau Agreement, operating within the alliance's nuclear planning structures. France's has followed the opposite path, since de Gaulle withdrew France from NATO's integrated military command in 1966, and the force de frappe was built specifically to answer to the French president only, on the reasoning that Washington could not be trusted to risk American cities over European ones. France's continued non-membership of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, despite its 2009 return to NATO's military command structures, underscores a fundamental asymmetry in any Anglo-French nuclear arrangement. The United Kingdom's deterrent is assigned to NATO's collective-deterrence architecture, whereas France's force de frappe is deliberately maintained outside NATO's nuclear-planning and nuclear-sharing

arrangements under exclusive national authority. Cooperation must therefore reconcile deterrents embedded in materially different institutional and doctrinal settings.

A credible delivery chain is the third requirement, which remains underdeveloped in the British case. The UK's continuous at-sea deterrent (CASD), based on Trident, has operated without interruption since 1969. Yet this sovereign, submarine-based capability is not integrated into the Anglo-French relationship and offers limited scope for the visible, flexible or geographically proximate signalling associated with an extended-deterrence role.The more pertinent issue is therefore the UK's prospective air-delivered contribution to NATO.

The 2025 Strategic Defence Review recommended that the government explore enhanced British participation in NATO's nuclear mission, after which the government announced the purchase of 12 F-35A aircraft and its intention to rejoin NATO's dual-capable aircraft (DCA) mission. However, Air Vice-Marshal Jim Beck clarified in July 2026 that the initial 12 aircraft had been procured for the RAF's operational conversion unit rather than as an operational DCA force. He further indicated that the size, composition and posture of any future nuclear-capable fleet remained subject to review, indicating that the air-delivered element of Britain's deterrent contribution including the relevant aircraft numbers, basing and support arrangements, and enabling infrastructure has not yet been settled. Accordingly, it would be premature to treat a British air-delivered capability as a dependable component of an Anglo-French delivery architecture. At present, it is better understood as a prospective contribution whose operational credibility will depend upon subsequent decisions on force generation, sustainment and NATO integration.

The Verdict

Recent developments have moved Anglo-French nuclear cooperation beyond ad hoc consultation towards a more structured relationship. The establishment of the Nuclear Steering Group, British participation in Operation Poker and the incorporation of a nuclear track into Lancaster House 2.0 provide a basis for more sustained bilateral engagement. However, the relationship still lacks integrated targeting arrangements, as well as the UK's prospective air-delivered contribution remaining undefined. These deficiencies are operational rather than constitutional, although they could be narrowed through capability investment, deeper planning and sustained political direction.

Doctrinal convergence is likely to be more resistant to change than the relationship's operational limitations. French nuclear decision-making remains vested in the President of the Republic, reflecting Article 15 of the Constitution and the Gaullist principle that deterrence must remain under autonomous national control. Non-delegation is therefore integral to French nuclear doctrine rather than a technical limitation that can be overcome through further planning or investment. Current bilateral arrangements do not indicate any move towards shared employment authority: Northwood provides for coordination between independent forces, not joint control, while the Steering Group's remit is limited to policy, capability and operational coordination. Macron's Île-Longue speech similarly maintained exclusive French authority over the nuclear decision. On current evidence, Anglo-

French cooperation has no plausible route towards shared nuclear command.

A relationship that fails one of its three necessary conditions, that of doctrine, is best seen not as a foundation to be built upon, but instead as a ceiling. Anglo-French cooperation can continue to deepen with more exercises, institutional access, and potentially firmer command coordination, but without narrowing the doctrinal gap, it cannot amount to a realistic substitute.

> *"A relationship that fails one of its three necessary conditions, that of doctrine, is best seen not as a foundation to be built upon, but instead as a ceiling."*

This does not mean that Anglo-French nuclear cooperation lacks strategic value. It is more institutionally developed than France's newer forward-deterrence dialogues with other European partners and could provide a degree of reassurance in the event of reduced US engagement. However, reassurance is not equivalent to a guarantee, and at present the relationship does not offer the predictable, integrated and politically binding extended-deterrence commitment required for substitution.

Britain and France may yet develop some of the operational capabilities their cooperation currently lacks. Further investment, bilateral planning and joint activity could strengthen consultation, interoperability and the credibility of a common delivery architecture. The more fundamental constraint is doctrinal convergence. On current evidence, there is no plausible route through which Anglo-French cooperation could acquire the shared authority and political commitment required to stand fully in Washington's place. Institutional deepening alone cannot alter the constitutional and strategic logic of French nuclear autonomy.

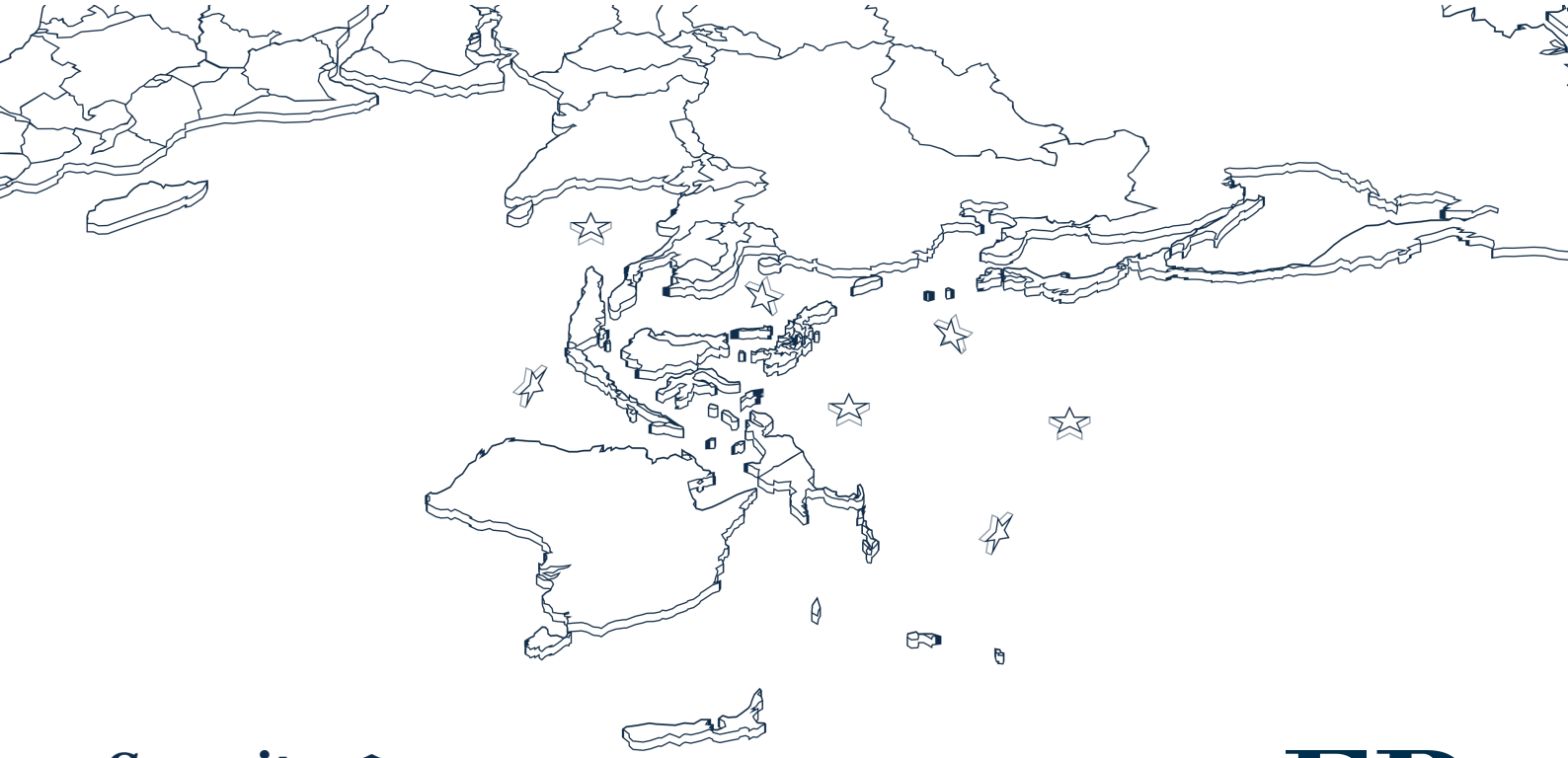
> *"Reassurance is not equivalent to a guarantee."*

Beyond Cheap Talk? The EU's Fragmented Turn to Indo-Pacific Security

By **Mariona Fortuny Jané**, *Europe in the Indo Pacific Analyst*
Edited by **Arthur Langley**, *UK & Nuclear Policy Analyst*

In 2025 the EU committed to more in Indo-Pacific security than ever before. It is not clear it has the means to follow through.

On 20 October 2025, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, first published in 2021, which strengthen and in part invert its priorities: security and defence now appear as the first of three fields of action, and Europe's security is described as increasingly intertwined with that of the Indo-Pacific, with cooperation set out in maritime security, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism and space. This article examines the gap between that rhetoric and effective action, what signalling theory terms cheap talk: communication that is costless to the sender and carries no penalty for non-fulfilment, and which therefore offers no credible guarantee that declared commitments will be followed by action. Closing it is difficult for three sets of reasons, addressed here in turn: the EU's internal fragmentation, the skepticism of regional



partners, and the clash of powers running through both the transatlantic order and the region.

The EU's internal problems

The 2021 Strategy, which called for a greater European presence in the Indo-Pacific and specifically in security and defence, did not originate in a centralised impulse from Brussels but in a bottom-up aggregation built on the positions of France, the Netherlands and Germany. It thus reproduces the structural paradox inherent to the EU as a sui generis institution: intergovernmentalism set against supranationalism.

Member states diverge on key questions of the emerging transatlantic order, and this materialises in their positioning towards the Indo-Pacific, particularly in security and defence. For some the region is a crucial geopolitical space; for others it is simply not deemed important: Croatia, Estonia, Greece and Malta remain largely uninterested, since distance, absent stakes and closer priorities such as Russia or the Mediterranean crowd out attention, while others have no formal regional policy at all. China is the clearest case: Hungary and Bulgaria privilege economic bilateralism with Beijing and resist European de-risking, while the Baltic states withdrew from the 17+1 framework and Vilnius hosted a Taiwanese representative office. On military effort, France remains the only member state for which defence ranks as its top national policy priority overall. Norm contestation erodes the capacity to speak with a single voice, and the result is a persistent preference for intergovernmental interests over the EU as a collective actor.

> *"The EU can announce jointly what it can't execute jointly."*

The consequence is direct. Because the Union's institutions are weakest precisely in security and defence, where national capitals retain most authority, these disagreements reduce any common position to the lowest common denominator. What survives is the declaration everyone can sign; the operational commitment, which requires resources and sustained consensus, doesn't. Hence the persistence of cheap talk: the EU can announce jointly what it can't execute jointly.

How the EU is perceived in the Indo-Pacific

Perception deepens the same gap. The region is defined by heterogeneity, and expectations differ sharply from one location to the next, both in what partners want from the EU bilaterally and regionally, and in how they read their own security environment. A few cases explained in the literature convey the range; the perception evidence comes from the EUIP Network[1]. Japan and South Korea are the principal beneficiaries of the EU 2025 shift, whose preferences are far better represented than in the original Strategy, particularly the explicit naming of North Korea. At the opposite end, India is the most sceptical location of

[1] The EUIP (European Union in the Indo-Pacific) Network is a Jean Monnet Network project funded by the European Commission (grant no. 101085570), comprising 27 partner universities (13 in Europe, 14 in the Indo-Pacific) and over 40 experts. Between 2024 and 2025 it conducted 111 semi-structured interviews with foreign policy decision-makers and influencers across eight Indo-Pacific locations, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, complemented by policy sandpit workshops in each location.

all, criticising a strategic ambiguity on China that erodes credibility, while in Australia key informants place the EU at roughly a third of the weight they give Washington and Beijing, with AUKUS and the Quad providing clear alternatives. Thai respondents see the EU's habit of framing the region through its own security concerns as counterproductive in a setting built on inclusion rather than blocs. China holds a bifurcated view: valued as a normative and economic power, distrusted as a regional actor. Across these differences, partners converge on one point: the EU is accepted as a normative power in low politics, and far less as a key actor in regional security.

Why does this make the gap harder to close? Because the region is a theatre of power politics in which securitisation keeps intensifying: being recognised as a normative power but not as a security actor relegates the EU to a second-order partner, present on the low-politics agenda but absent from the conversation that determines regional order. With limited military projection, a Common Security and Defence Policy that's institutionally weak and incapable of replacing NATO, and recurrent internal divergences, partners conclude that the European contribution would be marginal in a balance settled between Washington and Beijing. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle: excluded from frameworks like the Quad and AUKUS and holding only a marginal role in forums such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, the EU has fewer opportunities to build the track record that would earn it a larger one. Without prior credibility, any European security commitment is read as declaration rather than action.

Modes of cooperation: from drawback to opportunity

The diagnosis would be incomplete without acknowledging real traction since the 2025 review, on a baseline that is not minor: EU trade with the Indo-Pacific reached EUR 848 billion in 2024. In the multilateral register the EU holds the position most consistent with its identity yet one that delivers least: it participates in the ASEAN Regional Forum, implements an Economic Partnership Agreement with four Pacific states, and sustains the IORIS maritime information platform, used by a hundred agencies from fifty countries. Movement is greatest bilaterally, where agreements with five Asian partners have been extended through a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Indonesia, and tailored Security and Defence Partnerships with Japan and South Korea are complemented by regular dialogues with six further partners, India among them. This is legitimacy without leverage in one register and commitment without collectivity in the other.

> *"This is legitimacy without leverage in one register and commitment without collectivity in the other."*

The minilateral and operational register is where commitment materialises: joint naval exercises with seven regional partners, Operation ATALANTA and EU NAVFOR ASPIDES, the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept, and projects such as CRIMARIO, ESIWA+ and the HIPPA pilot action on hybrid threats. The shift towards these formats responds to part-

ners' preference for flexibility over institutionalisation, and to the erosion of multilateral mechanisms. Hence the ambivalence: traction is real and growing, but what grows fastest least resembles a common European policy.

Opportunity: fragmentation as an advantage

Read in terms of opportunity, this admits of a more favourable interpretation. The EU is acting, gradually but steadily, and the route to traction may not lie in multilateralism alone but in complementing it with registers that aren't mutually exclusive but complementary. It could sustain credibility and greater capacity for action, particularly in security and defence, by deepening tailored partnerships with the states inside the region's minilateral formats, and pushing towards action even at the cost of internal fragmentation would merely formalise an existing reality: that those states able to act, act.

Are these movements solid, however? It's unclear how much institutionalisation such efforts require, and the flexibility partners prefer tends to produce temporary structures rather than stable architectures. They must also navigate a dense Euro-Atlantic architecture in which membership and mandates rarely coincide, so that a disorderly proliferation of agreements could produce commitments difficult to reconcile. Abandoning classical multilateralism would also carry a reputational cost for a power that has always defined itself through it. The alternative should therefore function as support rather than replacement.

External challenges: power politics and the clash of powers

The two poles: Washington and Beijing

The external context combines an increasingly unstable transatlantic order with the growing fusion of the economic and the geopolitical, which the literature calls geoeconomics. Recent episodes illustrate it: Ukraine, which has confronted Europe's ideological positioning with its commercial interests while absorbing policymaking bandwidth beyond the Euro-Atlantic space; the Strait of Hormuz, where the EU has diverged from Washington and deploys missions such as EMASOH; and Gaza, which has opened the deepest European division over an external crisis since Iraq.

The second Trump administration has redefined US engagement as a zero-sum contest with China, where every gain for one side is treated as a loss for the other: naval exercises aimed at denying China ground rather than building inclusive security, tariffs designed to shift trade advantage away from Beijing, and cuts to development assistance that hand China the soft-power space Washington vacates. Towards Europe the approach is transactional, combining tariff threats, pressure on NATO burden-sharing and doubts over collective defence, an expectation Vance's Munich speech made explicit. The aggregate effect is an alliance architecture the literature calls "fundamentally disrupted": several Indo-Pacific governments now perceive that aligning with Washington has lost value as a strategy for balancing China.

The second pole is China, which the EU characterises as partner, competitor and systemic

rival at once, a functional ambiguity that preserves the commercial relationship and avoids the confrontational language of other Indo-Pacific strategies. This has not prevented friction over Taiwan, Chinese coercion in the South China Sea, Beijing's support for Russia's military-industrial base, and the scrutiny of high-risk suppliers foreseen in the revision of NIS2 and the Cybersecurity Act, which Beijing calls discriminatory.

A region that is problematic in itself

The second external challenge is the region's own configuration. The term "Indo-Pacific" was coined by the naval strategist Gurpreet Khurana and articulated as state doctrine by the United States, Australia, Japan and India in response to China's Belt and Road Initiative, although each projects divergent interests onto it, which is why much of the Global South still reads it as a Western construct without shared understandings of proximity or identity. The consequence is twofold: the EU operates within a framework it did not help to define, with little scope to set the terms of a debate that does not treat it as a reference actor; and its hedging response, designed to avoid appearing either as an anti-China bloc or as an Atlanticist extension, is read regionally not as calculated prudence but as an absence of high politics.

Synthesis

Both external challenges converge on one constraint. The EU has gradually distanced itself from the defence decisions of the two great powers, yet can't disengage from either: bilateral trade and investment flows with China have almost doubled over a decade, while towards the United States it has developed a documented strategic reliance, from military assistance to Ukraine to imports of liquefied natural gas. Differentiating without breaking, within a framework it did not define and with internal unity under pressure, leaves the EU in structural in-betweenness: autonomous enough not to follow Washington, but without capacity to sustain its own position. It's this indefiniteness that perpetuates cheap talk, since it permits declaring a position without committing resources.

Opportunity: the third way, differentiation through technology

The literature reinterprets this difficulty as a potential opportunity: a third way of differentiation. Although not limited to security and defence, its most plausible vector is technological, combining European regulatory leadership with the supply of its own systems. Regional demand exists, since much of the Indo-Pacific seeks a third option amid rivalry between the two technopoles, and it already has concrete expression in the non-aligned surveillance systems offered by firms such as Thales and Airbus. Its scaling, however, is doubtful: the EU's technological presence is relevant but outmatched by the productive capacity of the two great powers, which limits this differentiation as an instrument for closing the gap.

Conclusion

The gap between the EU's declared ambition and its effective action in the Indo-Pacific has no single cause, but it does have a recognisable structure. Three mechanisms converge. The first is institutional: a strategy born of the aggregation of national positions, resting on an architecture in which intergovernmentalism

and supranationalism coexist uneasily, reduces any common position to the lowest common denominator: EU institutions remain weakest precisely in security and defence, where national capitals retain control over both decisions and capabilities, and the unanimity rule in the Common Security and Defence Policy lets any single state veto a stronger line, so what survives is whatever the most reluctant government will accept. The second is perceptual: recognised as a normative power but not as a security actor, the EU is relegated to second-order partner in a region where debate is heavily securitised. The third is structural: caught between two poles from which it can't disengage, the EU can differentiate itself rhetorically without being able to sustain a position of its own.

These mechanisms share a common denominator, which explains why the gap is most pronounced in security and defence. This is the domain in which the Union's institutions are weakest and national capitals retain most authority, in which credibility requires material capabilities the EU doesn't control, and in which regional partners apply the highest threshold. In trade, technology or the green transition, the EU can deliver with the instruments it already possesses; in defence, it can't.

Even so, the period opened in 2025 shows genuine movement. The EU has ceased to rely exclusively on the multilateral register and has diversified towards the bilateral and the minilateral: tailored security and defence partnerships with Japan, South Korea and India, regular dialogues with Southeast Asian partners, joint naval exercises, operational maritime domain awareness projects and, following the November 2025 Ministerial Forum, a structured initiative on the protection of critical maritime infrastructure. Their significance lies less in volume than in format: they permit the accumulation of verifiable commitments without waiting for consensus among the twenty-seven.

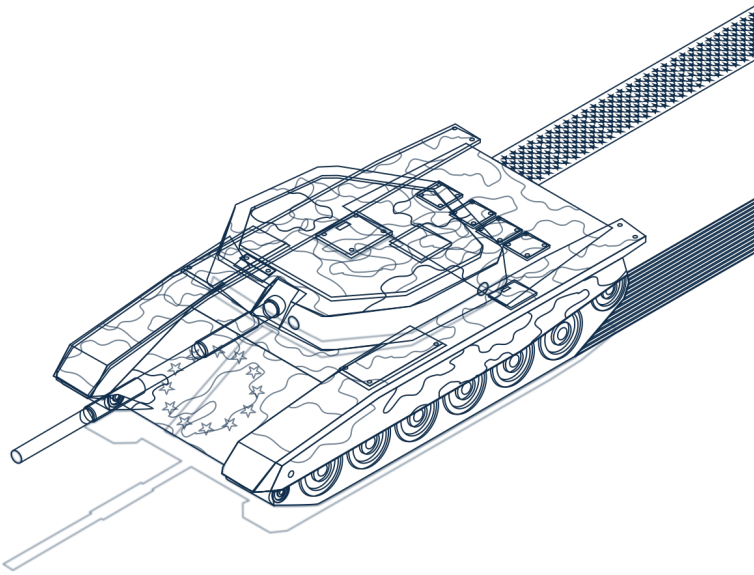
Three challenges follow. Solidity: the flexibility preferred by many partners produces temporary structures rather than stable architectures. Coherence: a disorderly proliferation of parallel agreements, within an already dense Euro-Atlantic architecture with overlapping mandates, may generate commitments difficult to reconcile. And dependence: while the American commitment remains uncertain, the EU needs security arrangements that hold irrespective of what Washington decides, without placing itself in open confrontation with its principal guarantor.

The opportunities are equally identifiable. In the short term, consolidating what already works: European minilateralism has been described as a model balancing flexibility and institutionalised commitment, and as a more effective instrument of influence under strategic competition than exclusive insistence on classical multilateralism. In the medium term, the technological third way responds to genuine regional demand, even if its scaling is constrained by the productive capacity of the two great powers.

Inside NATO 3.0: Where Europe Leads, and Where It Still Can't

By **Matteo Nilsson**, *NATO Analyst*

Edited by **María Gil Martínez**, *Transatlantic Relations Analyst*



NATO's own leadership calls it a new era of partnership, a stronger Europe within a stronger alliance. Europe is taking on more of NATO's responsibilities and is assuming more authority within the alliance, however, it still depends on America for nearly everything that leadership runs on.

In February 2026 at a defence minister's meeting, US Under Secretary of War for Policy Elbridge Colby, reintroduced the concept of 'NATO 3.0'. It outlines a new phase of the alliance's strategy, centering on European powers assuming responsibility for Europe's conventional defence, while the US re-orders its strategic priorities, focusing primarily on deterring China. This categorisation assumes a chronological periodisation of NATO history: where the Alliance has shifted through three distinct phases defined by different threats. NATO 1.0 was built to deter the Soviet Union through conventional military force, NATO 2.0 emerges with the collapse of the USSR and pivots towards the diffuse threats of the Post-Cold War era and uni-polar world order, combating terrorism, as well as cyber attacks. We are now entering this new phase, one that Colby highlights is 'built on partnerships, not dependencies'.

'NATO 3.0' has been a central focal point of the Summit in Ankara this July. Secretary General Mark Rutte stated that he hoped the Summit would 'breathe life into the concept of NATO 3.0: a stronger Europe in a stronger NATO' leading to 'an alliance that is less dependent on the US, but in which the US remains firmly rooted'. The following piece aims to dissect Rutte's claim and ask what a NATO 3.0 actually looks like? Picture NATO as a car, for all of its history the US has been in the driver's seat: it has built the vehicle, it has developed the engine and it has the decision-making power on which direction the car is heading. This new phase describes a shift where European powers are making their way into the front seats, without the US conceding its role as the 'driver'. Beneath the surface however, the picture looks more familiar: Washington has tightened its grip on the Allied Marine, Air and Land Commands, the classified intelligence networks run on a single American

company, most of the alliance's cloud infrastructure sits on American services, and the nuclear guarantee remains fundamentally American. This is the story of what NATO 3.0 actually looks like.

Rutte's 'less dependent' claim sits in NATO's command structure. In February 2026, NATO confirmed that its two most senior warfighting commands: Allied Joint Force Command Naples and Allied Joint Force Command Norfolk would be led by Italy and the United Kingdom, transitioning from a US leadership. This comes together with the decision that Germany and Poland will share command of Joint Force Command Brunssum on a rotational basis. This is not a small transition as all three Joint Force Commands lead at the operational level in crisis and conflict and have always been under American leadership. It is the first time European officers have held operational command at this level of seniority. The passage reflects a shift to 'a more fairly shared responsibility within NATO'. Even as Naples and Norfolk moved to European command, the post of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), the most senior military position within the alliance, remained American. This was confirmed by the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, a US federal law that bans any further US troop reduction from Europe without formal Congressional certification.

Europe's incremental role within the alliance does not end at the command level, financing tells a similar story (at least on paper). Last year's Summit in The Hague centered on a pledge to raise defence related spending to 5% of GDP by 2035 (3,5% on core defence spending, and 1,5% on defence related projects) for all members. This has already translated into tens of billions of Euros in additional spending across the alliance with Poland leading its European partners. NATO's estimates show that as of 2026, five European allies exceed the 3.5% core defence spending already this year, with three more spending more than 3%. These numbers indicate a strong commitment to the target set in The Hague. The total share of the European allies and Canada is forecast to increase to 42,7% of NATO's total spending: this compared to 40,7% last year and 30,3% in 2021. Whether this trend is sustainable and for how long is a separate question, but the direction of travel is unmistakable. European governments are paying more of NATO's bill than at any point since the Cold War.

Europe's defence-industrial base echoes the same growth illustrated by European governments. Ankara alone produced over $50 billion in new procurement commitments, including a 'Drone Edge' initiative worth roughly $40 billion over five years. Most symbolically, NATO's planned acquisition of Swedish-built GlobalEye surveillance aircraft to replace the US surveillance fleet which had been in service since 1982. This development doesn't just highlight the growing European defence industrial base, it spotlights a rare and concrete case of European technology stepping in for a function American systems performed for the Alliance for decades.

The hardware under Europe's rearmament tells an important story: According to SIPRI, for the first time in two decades, the largest share of US arms exports went to Europe between 2021-2025 (38%). Even as European industries ramp up, much of what fills them is American. The figures indicate that it may take some time for European countries to become less dependent on American arms. The European industrial base is growing but it has been growing around American supply.

> *"The European industrial base is growing but it has been growing around American supply."*

The clearest evidence of American dependency sits in the digital layer. In June 2026, NATO's own procurement and command bodies certified that the Maven Smart System, an AI platform built by the American firm Palantir, had reached full operational capability on NATO's classified networks, handling core functions of intelligence fusion and targeting. This is the clearest case of a US tech giant entering the alliance and occupying a fundamental space in the alliance operations. Palantir remains subject to US law, including statutes that can compel American firms to hand over data to US authorities. It raises important questions on the dominance of American digital technology and European digital sovereignty. There are individual allies that are already uneasy about Palantir: Spain blacklisted it from public contracts and Germany and France are both attempting to replace it domestically. Yet at the alliance level, NATO's own institutions certified the same system for wider use.

Beneath that sits a larger dependency. 72% of European defence-industry cloud usage runs on American providers, against just 13% on European ones. Whoever controls the cloud, controls the access to the data and the systems running on it. While NATO remains an alliance based on partnership, this could represent an American political bargaining chip in the future and certainly should raise questions for European states. NATO has recognised the need for a shared digital infrastructure through the 'NATO Digital Backbone' initiative, yet its rationale centers on 'interoperability' rather than American dependency.

Even on nuclear deterrence, NATO's most sensitive and American domain, there has been a European opening. In March 2026, France announced an expansion of its own arsenal and a framework for 'forward deterrence' with willing partners. Yet, nowhere is Rutte's 'firmly rooted' half of his statement clearer than on nuclear deterrence. The US remains the power providing the nuclear umbrella to its European allies. A report of the European Nuclear Study Group, published by the Munich Security Conference in February 2026, explicitly states that neither France nor the UK could 'seamlessly replace' the US as Europe's extended deterrence provider as neither country has the capabilities that underpin America's nuclear umbrella. In January 2026, at the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Secretary General Rutte could not have been more explicit, he claimed that "if anybody thinks that Europe can defend itself without the US, keep on dreaming". He later stated that the "ultimate guarantor of our freedom" is the US nuclear umbrella. On the single capability that ultimately underwrites Article 5, in other words, Europe is behind, it is missing components that cannot be built quickly, regardless of the amount of political will that exists to build them.

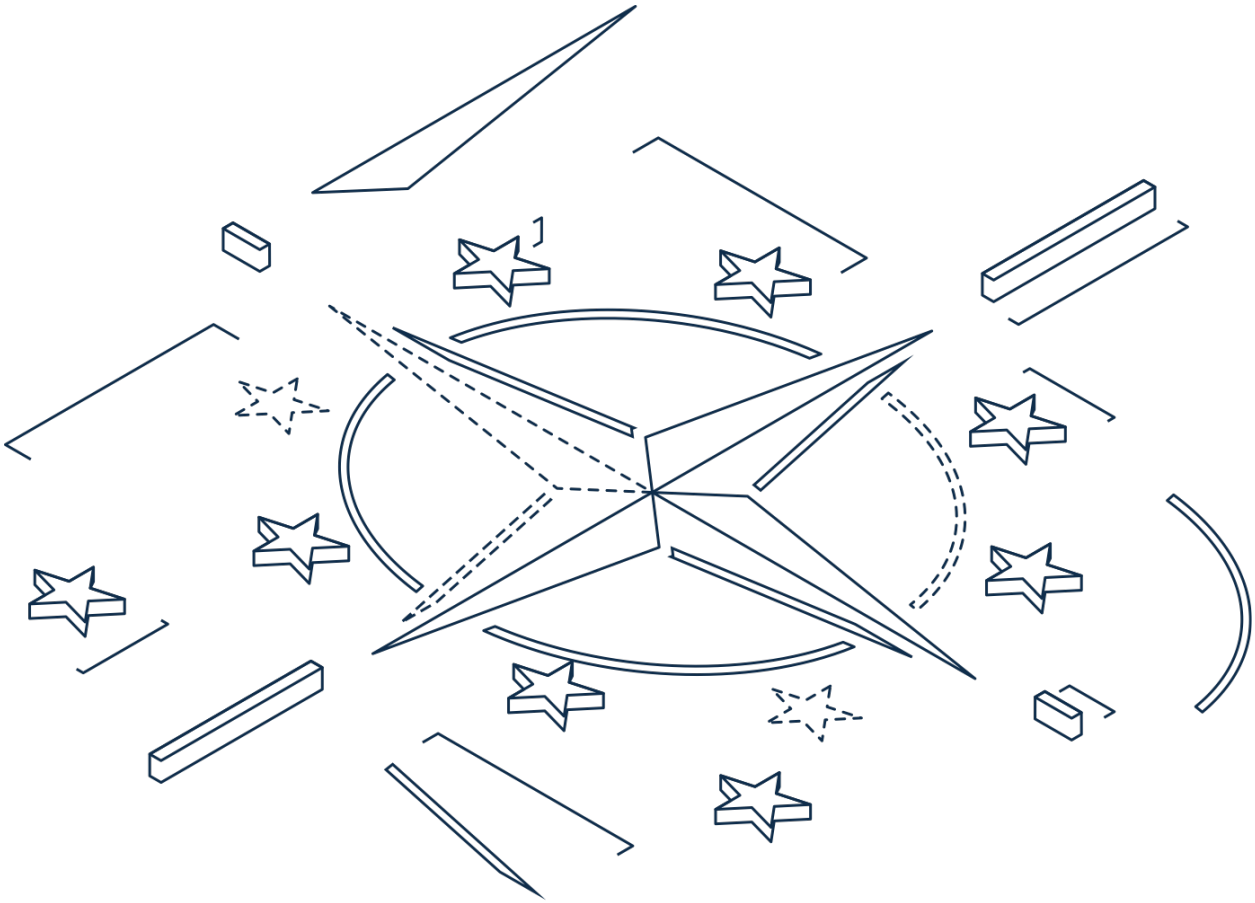
Conclusion

'Less dependent but firmly rooted in the US'. Dissecting this claim and the core developments taking shape, we see that the picture that emerges is not so clear. Europe is not simply stepping into American shoes and nor is 'a more European NATO' an empty rhetoric. We see that Europe is indeed assuming leadership and responsibility on command, financing and increasingly industry, while the system and guarantees that make NATO function, remain American built. As demonstrated by

Norfolk and Naples, command charts can be redrawn in a single statement. The infrastructure and assurances underneath them, cloud, AI-enabled targeting, and above all the nuclear umbrella, cannot be rebuilt on the same timeline.

> *"The infrastructure and assurances underneath them, cloud, AI-enabled targeting, and above all the nuclear umbrella, cannot be rebuilt on the same timeline."*

'NATO 3.0' should therefore not simply be seen as a phase Europe is passing through to full strategic autonomy nor is it a representation for American retreat. NATO 3.0 can best be viewed as a phase of redistribution: a hybrid model where European leadership and American infrastructure coexist and an alliance in which European powers continue to step up on defence yet remain fundamentally tied to the US on several critical aspects.



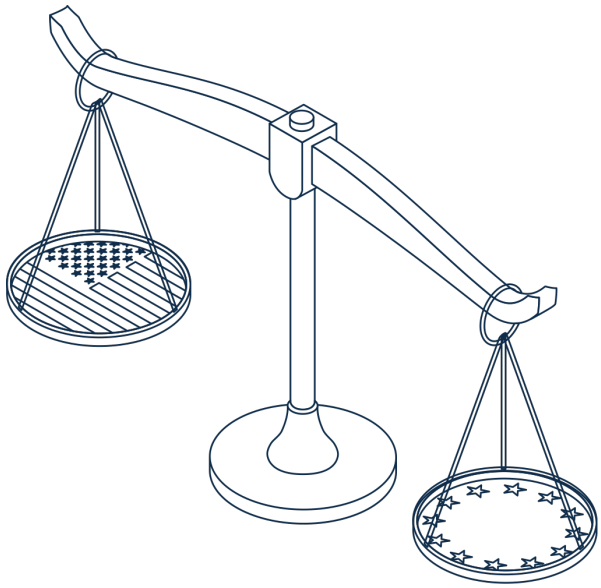
Burden-Sharing or Burden-Shaping? Europe Rewrites the Rules of Rearmament

By **María Gil Martínez**, *Transatlantic Relations Analyst*
Edited by **Matteo Nilsson**, *NATO Analyst*

A United States committed to burden-sharing cannot simultaneously insist on burden-shaping.

For decades, Washington pushed its European allies to shoulder more of the continent's security burden, a demand President Trump made explicit recently, posting that it was "ridiculous" for the U.S. to continue a relationship that he described as "one-sided" and "non-reciprocal". It was a notable accusation for a president who has spent years demanding exactly what Europe now claims to be delivering: higher defence spending. Europe is now responding, through unprecedented investment and new initiatives such as ReArm Europe and SAFE. Europe studied how to spend, designed a plan, and put it into motion. But the result was not quite what Washington had in mind. Was the pursuit of European strategic autonomy ever compatible with continued dependence on the United States? This article argues that in answering America's call, Europe has ended up redefining the terms of the answer itself.

> *"Was the pursuit of European strategic autonomy ever compatible with continued dependence on the United States?"*



The origins of the burden-sharing debate

At the heart of the U.S. demand for greater European defence spending lies a longstanding concern: that European allies, confident in America's protection, would under-invest in their own defence and free-ride on U.S. security guarantees.

With the end of the Cold War, the threat that had justified decades of high defence spending (the Soviet Union) disappeared, and European governments gradually deprioritised defence investment. Even before 2014, warnings were already circulating: former Defense Secretary Robert Gates cautioned that if Europe's declining defence capabilities went unaddressed, fu-

ture U.S. leaders might no longer see NATO as worth its cost. That warning proved farsighted: at the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO allies agreed to a target of spending 2% of GDP on defence within a decade, with 20% of that spending budgeted for equipment and Research and Development (R&D).

Progress has been slow but real. By 2024, 23 of NATO's 32 members had met that target, up from just three in 2014. And the debate is already moving past that baseline: officials increasingly describe 2% as *"a floor, not a ceiling,"* with figures as high as 3% (Poland) and calls for the United States to reach 5% (U.S. Senator Roger Wicker) now on the table. And this is not a new demand born of the Trump era: the U.S. Congress has required annual reporting on allied defence contributions since 1985, and a 2025 bill (S. 2152) sought to reinforce that requirement; evidence that burden-sharing has long been a structural, bipartisan expectation.

Europe's new approach to rearmament

So what did Europe actually do when it decided to respond? Between 2021 and 2025, EU member states' defence spending grew by more than 31%, reaching €326 billion (1.9% of the EU's combined GDP) in 2024, with defence investment alone nearly doubling to €102 billion over the same period. Europe's answer has gone beyond simply spending more. The European Commission's ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030, presented in March 2025, proposes to leverage over €800 billion in defence investment through national fiscal flexibility, a new €150 billion loan instrument (SAFE) for joint procurement, potential redirection of cohesion funds, and expanded European Investment Bank support, alongside efforts to mobilise private capital through the Savings and Investments Union.

At the centre of this plan is SAFE, whose eligibility rules reveal Europe's underlying priority. The instrument covers two categories of defence products: simpler, urgent capabilities such as ammunition, artillery and military mobility (Category I), and more complex, high-technology systems such as air defence, AI and cyber (Category II), this second group subject to stricter conditions given their strategic sensitivity. Crucially, the cost of components originating outside the EU, the EEA/EFTA states, or Ukraine cannot exceed 35% of the estimated cost of the final product, and companies must be established and based within the EU, EEA/EFTA states, or Ukraine, free from third-country control. This "European preference" is framed as a way to strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) and avoid the fragmentation that has long weakened European procurement.

Experts remain divided on whether this translates into genuine industrial integration. Daniel Fiott (CSDS) questions whether this spending will produce a more integrated EDTIB or simply reinforce national fragmentation, warning that wealthier member states may not need SAFE's loans at all, which would reduce the program's collective impact. For him, the real test is whether Europe ends up spending "better and together". Bertrand De Cordoue (Jacques Delors Institute) goes further, calling for the €150 billion instrument to follow a Next Generation EU-style model, with strict conditions limiting joint purchases to a predefined list of capabilities. Janssens et al. (Freshfields), meanwhile, warn that the push

for "Buy European" carries the risk of damaging international alliances by limiting third-country participation in joint buying; a tension that, as the next section shows, is already playing out in Washington. It is also worth noting that member states continue to disagree on defence priorities and procurement preferences, and whether SAFE will translate into a genuinely integrated European defence market (rather than 27 parallel national efforts) remains an open question.

A changing transatlantic bargain?

Washington's demand for greater European burden-sharing has rarely been purely altruistic, and its response to Europe's shift toward strategic autonomy has unfolded across three fronts: rhetorical, regulatory, and industrial. The 2025 National Security Strategy makes this explicit: the U.S. envisions a "burden-sharing network" in which allies who take on more regional responsibility are rewarded with more favourable treatment on trade, technology-sharing, and defence procurement, a framework that ties European rearmament to continued American commercial advantage.

That expectation has collided with Europe's actual trajectory. As early as December 2025, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau privately criticised European NATO allies, in a closed-door meeting, for prioritising their own defence industry over American arms suppliers. Months later, Trump made the frustration public, posting a chart comparing U.S. defence spending ($999 billion) with the UK's ($90.5 billion), France's ($66.5 billion), Italy's ($48.8 billion) and Poland's ($44.3 billion), calling the relationship "one sided" and complaining allies *"were not there for us."* The timing was not incidental: it came as the EU's revised defence procurement directive, expected to introduce binding "European preference" rules, neared adoption.

Washington's response to that directive has been far more concrete than private remarks or a social media post. In an official submission to the European Commission's public consultation, the U.S. Departments of State and War warned that if EU member states adopted European-preference measures in national procurement law, Washington would review the general exemptions currently given under the Reciprocal Defence Procurement Agreements: bilateral deals signed by 19 of the EU's 27 member states that currently give European firms access to the U.S. defence market. Washington described European preference as "protectionist and exclusionary" and warned it would trigger a "reciprocal response."

Markets are already reacting to this change. Over the past five years, shares in Rheinmetall have risen 1,316%, Leonardo 412%, and Rolls-Royce's defence arm 290%, compared with gains of just 30-60% for major U.S. defence firms over the same period, a divergence which, while shaped by many factors, is consistent with investors increasingly framing European rearmament as an European industrial story. Beneath these official statements, European industry is moving in the same direction: because ITAR's (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) "see-through rule" allows Washington to block the resale of any weapon with American parts, European companies now advertise their products "ITAR-free," so governments don't have to depend on U.S. permission for their arms sales. Achieving that independence remains "a huge challenge", as defense companies admit, because American

components are inside almost all dual-use systems.

Taken together, these responses suggest that Europe is redefining the terms on which it answers: channeling that spending into its own industrial base, technological sovereignty, and strategic autonomy, even at the acknowledged cost of transatlantic friction.

Conclusion

Europe has learned that if it wants genuine security, it cannot simply outsource the thinking to Washington. What is emerging is a delicate balancing act where Europe must invest in its own industrial and technological autonomy without eroding the trust that still holds back NATO's collective defence, and that will require care on both sides. Brussels will need to prove that "spending better and together" strengthens the alliance instead of fragmenting it; and Washington, for its part, will have to accept that the responsibility it long demanded of Europe can't come with American strings attached forever. A United States committed to burden-sharing cannot simultaneously insist on burden-shaping. If the transatlantic relationship is to remain a partnership rather than a hierarchy, both sides will have to renegotiate who ultimately decides what that spending is for.

> *"A United States committed to burden-sharing cannot simultaneously insist on burden-shaping."*

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