

Europe's Nuclear Deterrent: The Here and Now

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During the Russo-Ukrainian war, nuclear escalation has been considered an ever-present possibility, though it has thus far been avoided. The war has demonstrated the ease with which nuclear threats can be made and the speed with which anxieties can be generated. In an article for this journal published in late 2023, I argued that the result had been 'pre-emptive panic' in the West. Policymakers and commentators assumed that Russian President Vladimir Putin could well employ nuclear weapons if backed into a corner. This led to unnecessary caution when it came to supporting Ukraine. Little account was taken of the many reasons why Putin would be unlikely to be the first to break the nuclear taboo. The consequences would be hard to gauge in advance, victory could not be guaranteed, vigorous responses by others, including the United States, could not be precluded, and countries friendly to Russia, such as China, would be alienated.¹

Putin certainly looked for ways to exude nuclear menace, including tampering with nuclear doctrine. Should the war take an adverse turn, he might become even more reckless. But up to now practice has been far more restrained than rhetoric might suggest, and supposed red lines have been passed with non-nuclear means being sought to signal Moscow's displeasure and satisfy any urge to retribution. It is reasonable to suppose that in

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Putin's mind, nuclear use is best kept for the most extreme contingencies when the state faces an existential threat.

In this article I address another nuclear issue that the war has raised to make a similar point. In early 2025, the role of British and French nuclear forces was pushed to the fore in discussions about how to ensure Ukrainian security following a US-brokered peace deal. This issue became bound up with more general concerns about the status of the US nuclear umbrella.² The first question was whether the US would provide a 'backstop' should a force led by the United Kingdom and France seek to provide a form of security guarantee to Ukraine. This led to a second question: if the US would not provide a backstop, what might that indicate about the readiness of the US to live up to its Article 5 obligations in the event of a Russian push against NATO countries in a future war? This in turn led to a third question: with growing doubts about the US commitment to European security, could the British and French provide a substitute nuclear shield?

These questions lack answers, or at least the answers have been deliberately kept vague. It suits all actors to avoid being too explicit about what they might do in circumstances that might never arise. Short of a definitive American statement to the effect that it is abandoning NATO, neither London nor Paris will push for a more prominent role for their forces. They want the US to continue to be part of European security and will not do anything to encourage the Trump administration to believe that it could safely abandon its allies. That does not mean, however, that these forces have no role to play, especially in the context of their backing for Ukraine.

Discussions of nuclear strategy tend to move quickly to extreme contingencies. Once the issue of a possible role for British and French nuclear forces is raised, analysts soon test them against the most dire scenarios, when they will inevitably be found wanting. Yet nuclear strategy is all about providing a deterrent effect sufficient to avoid the most dire scenarios, and that can be achieved without significant changes to either declaratory policy or force structures.

Circumstances may change drastically, as we have seen with the gamble taken by Putin in launching a full-scale invasion of Russia's neighbour and the volatility of the Trump administration. This issue looked to be much

more challenging in early March 2025, when the United States' outright abandonment of Ukraine seemed to be on the cards, than it did in early May, as the Trump administration tentatively began to put less pressure on Ukraine and more on Russia in its efforts to end the war. (Obviously, there is no guarantee that this pattern will continue.)

Nuclear strategy, like any other strategy, should be in the first instance geared to the problem at hand to avoid getting bogged down in speculation about potential problems to come, which may never arise and, if they do, will take a different form to how they are currently envisaged. To put it bluntly: if Ukraine loses the war, the problems the West will face will be enormous and demanding; if Russia continues to fail to subjugate Ukraine, the deterrence challenge in the future will be easier. My argument in this article, therefore, is that because of Ukraine, more weight is being placed on the deterrent role of the British and French forces, but in this specific context it is weight they can bear.

The problem

Under the Trump administration, the US footprint in Europe will shrink significantly over the coming years.³ The question is by how much. President Donald Trump is known to have contemplated abandoning NATO altogether during his first term.⁴ Despite denials that this is his current intention, it has shaken confidence in the dependability of the US as an ally in an emergency.⁵ At a February 2025 press conference with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, he said he supported NATO's Article 5 provision, adding, 'I don't think we're going to have any reason for it'.⁶ European countries have chosen to take such statements literally even though they can take no real comfort, as the statements provide little guidance as to what Trump would do should he face a moment of truth. Europeans do not want a complete break with the US and wish to sustain NATO as a going concern.

However reassured they claim to be, however, they know that Trump lacks enthusiasm for the Alliance and expects them to take more responsibility for their own security. Some progress has been made in raising budgets, and there is no reason in principle why, over time, European countries cannot match and exceed Russian conventional capabilities, especially given the

losses experienced by Russia since February 2022 and with its war with Ukraine yet to conclude. The challenges, both financial and organisational, that must be met to get to this position are well known and substantial, but they are not insuperable.⁷ The one area where replacing the US is most difficult is the provision of a nuclear guarantee. This puts the spotlight on France and the UK as Europe's two nuclear powers. Neither has embraced the idea of substituting for the US, but they must accept that their assets may now be more important than assumed in the past.

The Russo-Ukrainian war has brought the issue to the fore. In February 2025, it seemed as if President Trump was prepared to do a quick deal with Putin to resolve the war, and that, as part of this deal, Ukraine would be denied future access to NATO. In that case, Ukraine would potentially be left unsupported should Russia renew its aggression. Ukraine's experience with security guarantees, from the Budapest Memorandum to the Minsk agreements, has not been encouraging. Aware of this, the UK and France sought to devise an alternative arrangement involving a 'coalition of the willing' that would commit to supporting Ukraine with deployed forces. To give this more credibility, they sought a 'backstop' from the Trump administration. The nature of this mechanism was never specified, but the term was assumed to refer to a nuclear guarantee. Trump deflected the issue. In the end, the lack of progress on a deal meant that the matter was left unclarified.⁸

Doubts about whether the US would seek to enforce compliance with an agreement that it had brokered were combined with the wider doubts about whether the US would honour its Article 5 obligations in the event of Russian aggression directed against NATO countries. As German Chancellor Friedrich Merz put it, there was a need to talk about nuclear sharing with European partners even while hoping that the US would not withdraw: 'We should talk with both countries [France and Britain] always, and in addition, from the perspective of supplementing the American nuclear shield, which we of course want to see maintained.'⁹

Over time, the Trump administration's position on Ukraine mellowed and it appeared more inclined to blame Moscow for the failure of its peace diplomacy. The twists and turns of its Ukraine policy explain why Paris and

London have reasons to think about hedging against the United States giving up on NATO while avoiding self-fulfilling prophecies. The question of the role of French and British nuclear forces is therefore not about a future possibility, or a new policy goal which will take time to achieve. It is not about making a point on European autonomy. It is about current strategy.

History

The normal explanation for the differences in nuclear doctrine between the UK and France, and their attitudes to the US, lies in their distinctive reactions to the humiliation of the Suez Crisis of 1956, when the Eisenhower administration refused to back their combined operation to retake the Suez Canal after Egypt had nationalised it. The British concluded that they had to stay close to the Americans, while the French sought to reduce their dependence.¹⁰

Arguably, for the UK, this effort was a triumph of hope over experience. Having worked together to develop the first atomic bombs, the UK's partnership with the US was terminated abruptly in 1946 with the US Congress's passage of the Atomic Energy Act. This led the UK to develop its own nuclear capabilities. In 1958, these developments were sufficient for the US to agree to renew its partnership with a treaty on nuclear cooperation.¹¹ The UK then decided to opt for a US delivery system – the *Skybolt* air-to-surface missile – for its nuclear bombs. But in late 1962, US secretary of defense Robert McNamara cancelled *Skybolt*. This followed a major speech in which McNamara had dismissed 'limited nuclear capabilities, operating independently' as being 'dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence and lacking in credibility as a deterrent'.¹² While he claimed to be referring to France rather than the UK, the cancellation of *Skybolt* looked like an effort to push the UK out of the nuclear business.

UK prime minister Harold Macmillan arranged an emergency summit with US president John F. Kennedy in December 1962. This established a lasting framework for UK nuclear forces. It would be based on American submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), originally *Polaris* and now *Trident*, with British warheads and British nuclear-powered submarines (SSBNs). In return, as the summit communiqué stated, these British forces would be used 'for the purposes of international defence of the Western

Alliance in all circumstances'. Macmillan added a crucial qualifier: 'except where Her Majesty's Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake'.¹³ It was hard to think of circumstances in which nuclear use could be considered in which supreme national interests would not be at stake.

The 1962 agreement secured the long-term future of a UK national nuclear force, but only in close relationship with the US. This interdependence with the United States was not seen as a flaw but as a valuable feature. It was always going to be difficult to identify any circumstances in which the UK might wish to act independently in war, or to explain what difference the

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addition of this force would make to deterring Soviet aggression. What the deal achieved was to sustain the UK as a major player in great-power diplomacy and all the big strategic debates. A 'seat at the top table' was assumed to be the right of those with national nuclear capa-

bilities. The close relationship with the US meant that the two governments could talk together on all nuclear matters, from arms control to possible use.

In other words, the rationale was largely political. Even the supposed added value to Alliance deterrence depended on complicating Soviet choices.¹⁴ In assessing the risks of aggression, Moscow would need to consider decision-making centres other than Washington DC, just supposing it mistakenly believed the US would not honour its Alliance obligations.

Of course, an undercurrent in the British debate was that Soviet doubts might not be mistaken and that insurance against the US abandoning Europe was necessary. This view was given little official encouragement. In 1980, for example, Francis Pym – here reflecting the views of Michael Quinlan, the most influential UK civil servant on all matters relating to deterrence – noted, only to dismiss them, alternative justifications for the nuclear force: 'Political prestige, our status in the Alliance or a comparison with France. One hears sometimes an argument made out for the concept of a "Fortress Britain" – some kind of insurance policy concept, should the United States go isolationist or the Alliance collapse.'¹⁵

By contrast, the politics behind the French rationale involved explicit doubts about the US commitment. The starting assumption was that alliances were inherently untenable in the nuclear age. It was unrealistic to expect one state to risk national suicide on behalf of another. While French president Charles de Gaulle did not follow this logic through to removing France from the Atlantic alliance, he did take it out of NATO's integrated military command in 1966. No other European countries followed suit, less because they were confident that should the moment come the Americans would employ nuclear weapons on their behalf, and more because they doubted that the situation would ever arise, and because the cost of acquiring their own nuclear capabilities was prohibitive. While the US and UK found ways to engage allies in NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, France stuck with its independence. Even when it returned to the integrated command, it did not join the Nuclear Planning Group.

In 1974, France did acknowledge that allies could benefit from the existence of the *force de frappe* without going so far as to make a commitment. That year's Ottawa Declaration referred to the contributions made by European members of the Alliance, 'two of whom possess nuclear forces capable of playing a deterrent role of their own contributing to the overall strengthening of the deterrence of the Alliance'.¹⁶

In Germany, which has eschewed its own nuclear option, there have been regular suggestions that it could benefit from a closer association with the French force. Thus, Christoph Heusgen, former security-policy adviser to chancellor Angela Merkel, suggested that Germany could engage in discussions with France to explore the possibility of joint contributions to nuclear deterrence.¹⁷ French President Emmanuel Macron has experimented with language that hints at such a wider responsibility without quite spelling it out. For example, in a 2020 speech on deterrence, he used the Ottawa language, then added: 'France does not take part in the Alliance's nuclear planning mechanisms and will not do so in the future. But it will continue to contribute to political-level discussions aiming to strengthen the Alliance's nuclear culture.'¹⁸

As the issue of the wider contribution France's nuclear force might make gained more attention, in March 2025 Macron stated in a televised address that he had decided 'to open the strategic debate on the protection of our

allies on the European continent by our (nuclear) deterrent'. Nonetheless, the use of France's nuclear weapons would remain only in the hands of the French president.¹⁹ (It is not clear why this principle need be compromised by French participation in NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, as this would convey a readiness to discuss how the French force might work for the Alliance without any binding commitment.)

Thus, UK policy is to commit its forces to collective defence with the qualification that any action must still be in the national interest, while French policy is to keep its forces to promote its national interest, though acknowledging that this might include collective defence. From different starting points they end up in similar positions.

The question of whether the UK and France could work together to provide a deterrent for Europe has been raised whenever there has been uncertainty about the long-term US commitment. In 1971, it was discussed in a well-regarded IISS *Adelphi Paper*.²⁰ Edward Heath mentioned it when he was opposition leader in 1967. He spoke of a 'nuclear force based on the existing British and French forces which could be held in trusteeship for Europe as a whole'.²¹ This required, however, a united political authority for Western Europe. When Heath became prime minister in 1970, exploratory talks with the French were limited by the restrictive terms of the 1958 agreement with the US when it came to sharing any sensitive information. The imperative behind Heath's approach, present in other discussions of European defence at this time and since, is that the completion of the 'European political project' requires a full set of military capabilities appropriate to a proper state. Without going this far, after the end of the Cold War there were deeper conversations between the UK and France as a modest precaution against major geopolitical change. The Chequers Declaration of 1995 recognised the interconnectedness of the two countries' vital interests, and the Lancaster House treaties on defence and security reinforced it in 2010.

Available forces

While existing doctrine allows both the UK and France to claim some deterrent effect on behalf of all their European allies, do they have forces to match? Because this is a here-and-now issue rather than one for the distant future,

the answer has to be based on the forces currently available. There has been some discussion about other countries joining the nuclear club. Poland, for instance, has raised the issue.²² A condition of Germany joining NATO in the mid-1950s was that it agreed not to acquire nuclear weapons, and this commitment was reiterated at the time of unification, though Germany has been a party to the Alliance's weapons-sharing agreements and, as noted, has at times been interested in sharing with France.

A combination of the legal constraints provided by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the demanding nature of any nuclear programme means that for now, there are not going to be any more European nuclear powers. Germany has access to about 20 US nuclear warheads at the Büchel Air Base under a nuclear-sharing arrangement which allows it (with three other European countries) to use them with its own aircraft and pilots, though subject to an American veto.²³ Berlin plans to replace its ageing *Tornado* fleet with US-made F-35s. If the US did decide to abandon the Alliance and ended this arrangement, there could be even less access to nuclear capabilities than before.

The UK and French forces are operationally independent of the US. They are also much smaller and less flexible than the United States' forces. Russia is believed to have almost 4,400 warheads available, while the US has some 3,700. Against this, the UK and France have a combined stockpile of around 515 warheads. Yet numbers can mislead. Separately, and certainly in combination, the UK and French forces could survive a first strike and cause massive damage to targets in Russia.

Because of the prevalent focus on the size of the inventories, it is easy to forget the explosive power of a single warhead. UK Defence Minister John Healey has referred to the power to do 'untold damage' to adversaries such as Russia, and has insisted that the UK should not 'fight shy' of the fact it has such weapons.²⁴ After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, France engaged in a form of signalling by dispatching three out of the four French nuclear-armed submarines on patrol. Noted a French analyst: 'Paris also maintained all planned nuclear exercises and missile tests, while a more risk-averse United States postponed two tests of its *Minuteman III* missile.'²⁵

Both France and the UK can deliver their warheads using SLBMs. France has in addition nuclear-capable air-launched cruise missiles carried

by ground- and carrier-based *Rafale* aircraft. The UK is currently building four new *Dreadnought*-class SSBNs, each with 12 missile tubes, to replace the current *Vanguard* class, which has 16 tubes. They will carry US *Trident* missiles with up to eight warheads each. There has been discussion about whether the UK should order a fifth SSBN, but it would not be operational until the 2030s. Another technical possibility would be to purchase nuclear-capable F-35As from the US and enter into a nuclear-sharing arrangement, but that would add to, rather than reduce, the dependence on the US.

The UK relies on missiles that are maintained in the United States, and its warhead and submarine programmes are integrated with America's. Should the US break with the UK, the latter would face difficulties after about six months – essentially, as SSBNs end patrols for their long refits. It would be possible to get around the end of US support only with time and considerable expense. At any rate, that, again, is not the issue of the moment, which is whether the UK's and France's nuclear forces are sufficient to influence Russia's risk calculus in the contingencies likely to be faced in the coming months and years.²⁶

What role?

There are two objections to an enhanced role for British and French nuclear forces. They have been set out by Pranay Vaddi and Vipin Narang.

The first is that only the US has an arsenal of sufficient size to offer extended deterrence. They claim that 'the United States built a larger nuclear arsenal than it needed to protect the U.S. homeland, because it chose to protect allies, too'.²⁷ Fabian Hoffmann makes a similar point, noting that the American nuclear deterrent, 'since at least the 1960s, has evolved with an additional key objective in mind: making extended deterrence on the European continent a credible undertaking'.²⁸

Neither statement is wholly true. The size of the US arsenal was not a function of a commitment to extended deterrence. It reflected the imperatives of an arms race with the Soviet Union and a desire by the US Strategic Air Command to be able to cover every possible target.

The problems of extended deterrence stem from the early days of NATO, when the 'nuclear guarantee' was first put in place even as the Soviet

Union was starting to develop means of nuclear retaliation. As it became apparent that the US could not attain a first-strike capability, it was recognised that extended deterrence was compromised. The deployment of short-range systems in Europe, which also began in the 1950s, was seen as a form of reassurance to allies, but the numbers were capped in the 1960s. Intermediate nuclear forces were introduced in the 1980s to give more credibility to extended deterrence, but were then removed as a result of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Most US short-range forces were withdrawn after the end of the Cold War.

There was no capabilities fix to the problem of extended deterrence so long as the Soviets had a second-strike capability. The best answer was to build up conventional forces to make deterrence by denial possible, but this was considered too expensive. Instead, there was, in Thomas Schelling's terminology, the 'threat that leaves something to chance' – there could be no certainty of a US nuclear riposte to Soviet aggression, but so long as there was a possibility, deterrence was in play. The allies had reason to doubt that the US would use nuclear weapons on their behalf, but the Soviets had sufficient fear that they might to encourage caution. This has been the approach since the end of the Cold War, with the added reassurance that NATO enjoyed conventional superiority over Russia. This reassurance has weakened as Russia has built up its conventional forces, and scenarios could be envisaged in which it enjoyed local superiority – for example, in attacking one of the Baltic states.²⁹

In the 1970s, claims arose, which like so many in this area were impossible to falsify, that how asymmetries in forces were perceived might influence risk-taking propensities. All this exaggerated the importance of size.³⁰ The basic point remained that small nuclear forces could cause an enemy catastrophic damage. British and French nuclear threats would have evident problems of credibility, but so too do American, and for that matter Russian, threats. All discussions of nuclear strategy in terms of future operational choices in the most desperate circumstances tend to the conclusion there will be only poor choices, each with their own horrific consequences. This is true for all nuclear powers, large or small, in circumstances where they might be confronting another nuclear power.

That is why discussions of nuclear strategy are framed in terms of deterring nuclear wars rather than winning them. The issue therefore becomes: what can small nuclear powers deter? This leads to Vaddi and Narang's second argument.

London and France cannot discount they may need to threaten first nuclear use to deter a future war, an exceedingly difficult option to make credible against Russia. Furthermore, U.K. and French strategic forces are ill-equipped to threaten retaliation against Russian limited nuclear use on allied territory, as they invite an overwhelming Russian attack against their territory against which they cannot limit through offensive or defensive capabilities. Therefore, there are strong incentives for the United Kingdom and France to 'sit out' a brewing nuclear conflict with Russia to protect their own populations from strategic attacks. Russia knows this hesitation exists in a war and may then feel comfortable using nuclear weapons early in a conflict.³¹

Mark S. Bell and Fabian Hoffmann make a similar argument: 'To deter a Russian attack on frontline states in eastern Europe ... France and the United Kingdom would need to expand their low-yield, tactical-level nuclear options, and indicate a willingness to use them, including by employing them first.'³²

If this were the case, it would preclude a role for British and French forces because they lack both the capacity and the inclination to start developing and manufacturing substantial numbers of 'tactical' systems, and while they might stick with a 'nothing can be ruled out' line on first use, in practice it would be surprising if they considered their systems to be for anything other than last resort.

There are a number of problems with presenting the lack of this specific capability as an indicator of their present disutility. It assumes that either the US will continue to be part of the Alliance, in which case the European forces would be of marginal value, or that it has withdrawn, in which case the European forces would have to perform all the tasks once expected of US forces. At the moment, there are more doubts about the US commitment

than before, but in principle it remains in place and still has a residual deterrent effect. For now, though this could change, the challenge is to add deterrent value rather than provide value equivalent to that of the US.

Hoffmann has written elsewhere that, if the situation changes:

The key question then is if France can offer a better or at least equally good extended nuclear deterrent 'product' to its European allies. Most likely, this is not the case – at least unless the French nuclear arsenal and doctrine undergo major changes, and as long as the perceived scope of the nuclear umbrella remains unchanged.³³

The discussion becomes easier once it is accepted that the 'perceived scope' of the nuclear umbrella could be changed.

Otherwise, we have to make assumptions about a future scenario that only become valid if there has been an earlier failure in deterrence. This scenario looks forward to some future when Russia has recovered sufficiently from its war with Ukraine to be in a position to mount a large-scale attack. For this to be the case, not only would Ukraine have succumbed to its aggression, but Europeans also would have done little to improve their conventional capabilities. The next assumption is that in the event of war, Europeans would have no options other than to try to hold the line at the point of Russian attack rather than mounting counter-thrusts elsewhere or launching long-range conventional strikes deep into Russian territory. The final assumption is that 'tactical-level options' are low-risk for Russia – as if any nuclear use could ever be truly 'tactical' in its impact – and that the only response to comparatively low-level use would have to be in kind.

If we do not leap forward to a moment when Russia is sufficiently emboldened to test NATO resolve (with or without the US) by attacking bordering NATO countries, and has a political purpose in doing so, but stay with the current state of affairs, then the problem becomes more manageable.

What does this mean? Firstly, the most immediate and urgent task is to prevent the worst case from arising by ensuring that Russian aggression against Ukraine fails. If Moscow succeeds, the crisis for Europe will certainly be more worrisome and drastic.

Secondly, if Russia continues to fail in its effort to subjugate Ukraine, the present stage of the war is likely to end through a ceasefire of some sort, possibly close to that proposed by the Trump administration. This will allow for Ukrainian rearmament and a more substantial and forward European commitment to Ukraine's defence. Both will be vital to deterring Moscow from restarting hostilities, even if the US wishes to stay clear.³⁴

Thirdly, the UK and France will expect to play a prominent role in such a force as part of a 'coalition of the willing'. This is the setting in which the UK and French nuclear forces first become relevant, in reminding Moscow if it starts making nuclear threats against these countries that they are both capable of substantial retaliation. Here it is worth noting that European countries have a much more direct stake in the security of their continent than does the United States. As Bruno Tertrais has observed, 'a smaller arsenal *can* deter a major power provided it has the ability to inflict damage seen as unacceptable by the other party ... Most importantly ... deterrence exercised by a European power might be seen as more credible than when it is exercised by a distant protector.'³⁵

Fourthly, the European aim should be to strengthen all its conventional options so that the question of first use does not arise. Although many analysts were sure that Moscow was incentivised to use its low-yield weapons in desperate moments during its war with non-nuclear Ukraine, Putin held back. There were practical questions about military value and potential international responses. Even for someone such as Putin, it would be an extraordinary decision to be the first to use nuclear weapons after 80 years of restraint without confidence that he could contain the consequences.

* * *

The most credible strategy for Europe is to ensure that any decision on nuclear use is for Russia. The British and French nuclear forces may provide limited deterrence against conventional aggression, if only because the possibilities for unexpected escalation are inherent in any major war, but they provide more potent deterrence against nuclear use. They offer a degree of cover for their own forces in the event that Russia decides to re-invade

Ukraine, or if efforts to sustain Ukraine have to be stepped up because of increased Russian military pressure.³⁶

None of these benefits require major changes to nuclear-force posture or declaratory policy. The most important policy conclusion is that far more must be done in the conventional sphere. Nuclear capabilities should not be considered in isolation, but as part of a wider effort by all European countries to strengthen conventional defences and pose a range of non-nuclear threats to Russia, including from long-range conventional precision-strike systems.³⁷

The UK and French nuclear forces cannot be a full substitute for those of the US, and hopefully they will not need to be. They can still pose a serious risk factor that a Russian leader could not ignore.

Notes

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- 2 See Steven Erlanger, 'As Trump Stirs Doubt, Europeans Debate Their Own Nuclear Deterrent', *New York Times*, 15 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/15/world/europe/nuclear-deterrent-trump.html>.
- 3 See John Deni, 'A Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Europe Is All but Certain', *Foreign Policy*, 14 April 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/04/14/us-troops-europe-nato-drawdown-pentagon-trump-hegseth-posture-review/>.
- 4 See Julian E. Barnes and Helene Cooper, 'Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. from NATO, Aides Say amid New Concerns over Russia', *New York Times*, 14 January 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html>. A member of the European Commission recounted that, in a meeting with the commission President Ursula von der Leyen in 2020, Trump said: 'You need to understand that if Europe is under attack we will never come to help you and to support you.' He added, 'by the way, NATO is dead, and we will leave, we will quit NATO'. Eddy Wax, 'Trump Vowed He'd "Never" Help Europe if It's Attacked, Top EU Official Says', *Politico*, 10 January 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-vow-never-help-europe-attack-thierry-breton/>.
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 - 8 See, for example, Ania Nussbaum, Ellen Milligan and Andrea Palasciano, 'Elusive US Guarantees Hamper Ukraine "Coalition of Willing"', *Bloomberg*, 10 April 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-04-09/elusive-us-guarantees-hamper-ukraine-coalition-of-willing>.
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 - 10 See Beatrice Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949–2000* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).
 - 11 See 'Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes', 3 July 1958, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20326/volume-326-I-4707-English.pdf>.
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