



PROGRAMME
**EUROPE,
STRATEGY &
SECURITY**

EUROPEAN DEFENCE: COUNTING DOLLARS OR DEFENDING VALUES?

Frédéric Mauro / Associate Research Fellow at IRIS

February 2025



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Frédéric Mauro / Associate Research Fellow at IRIS

Frédéric Mauro is an Associate research fellow at IRIS, lawyer at the Brussels Bar, specialist in European defense issues. He is the author of several reports for the European Commission and the European Parliament, including the future of European defense research, the European Defense White Paper and defense planning.



PROGRAMME
**EUROPE,
STRATEGY &
SECURITY**

The Europe, Strategy, Security programme focuses on analysing the transformations of Europe and its regional environment from political and strategic perspectives.

Recognised for its expertise at both national and international levels, IRIS is a partner and coordinator of international projects with leading research centres across Europe, enabling the Institute to forge strong connections with decision-makers.

This programme covers a wide range of activities: fostering strategic debate; conducting studies, reports, and consultancy briefs; organising conferences, symposia, and seminars; and providing tailored training.

iris-france.org



@InstitutIRIS



@InstitutIRIS



institut_iris



IRIS



IRIS - Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques

My centre is yielding, my right is retreating, situation excellent, I am attacking.

General Foch

Today, not only Russia is stepping up its hybrid attacks against European states, but the American ally also considers the EU's trade surplus and digital regulations to be intolerable. Moreover, it has vowed to make the EU pay for its military protection far beyond what it already does. As if that were not enough, Donald Trump is now negotiating a ceasefire in Ukraine over the heads of the Ukrainians and the Europeans. It would seem that there is a conjunction of struggles against the very existence of the European Union, which is under attack both from the right, by Russia, and from the centre, by the United States.

What can we do? Attack in our turn, as General Foch advocated in a completely different situation? But who and how? Or continue to suffer as we have always done, with “self-control” and “pragmatism”, in other words, give in?

In this feverish vigil, three questions are stirring up discussions in the European capital: do we really need to spend much more on our national defences? Should we buy even more military equipment from the United States? Finally, should we prepare to abandon Ukraine?

DO WE REALLY NEED TO SPEND MORE ON DEFENCE?

At the 2014 Newport summit, NATO member states individually committed to reaching a defence effort of 2 % of GDP by 2024, including a 20 % effort in military investment, an aggregate that encompasses not only military equipment itself, but also defence research. It must be admitted that at that time, that is to say during the Russian invasion of Crimea and Donbass, only three Member States met the 2 % target (Greece 2.4 %, Estonia 2 % and the United Kingdom 2.1 %).

Contrary to popular belief, this goal was generally achieved, since ten years later, out of the 29 countries that make up what is known as “NATO Europe”, 22 reached or exceeded this objective (see tables at the end of this document).

More interestingly, if we look not at individual countries but at geopolitical blocs, the whole of NATO Europe far exceeded the targets, with members spending 2.25 % of their GDP on defence, which represents a total of 476 billion dollars, or 441.6 billion euros.

All of them, Belgium excepted, spent at least 20 % of their defence expenditure on military investments, and most of them spent much more. NATO Europe's investment effort thus

represented 146.7 billion dollars, or 136 billion euros, which is half of the investment effort of the United States: 289 billion dollars, or 273.4 billion euros.

If we consider the bloc made up of the states that are both members of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the Atlantic Alliance, that is, almost all the members of the European Union, with the exception of the Member States that are not part of NATO¹, the bloc's defence effort amounted to 359.5 billion dollars, or 333.5 billion euros, representing 2.02 % of the area's GDP. They spent only 184.5 billion in 2014. The states in this bloc also spent 105.7 billion dollars, or 98 billion euros, representing almost 30 % of the area's GDP, compared with only 31.2 billion euros in 2014 (in current euros).

One would therefore be tempted to say that the objective has been met, as it is to be assessed globally and not individually. In fact, if the Baltic countries were to increase their defence spending by 10 % each, this would only represent an additional 10.7 billion euros, or 3.2 % of the total bloc of 333.5 billion. Obviously, it would be different if Germany increased its effort to 10 %, as this would bring its expenditure to 289 billion euros, which is more than the entire bloc spends (333.5 billion minus 90.5 billion currently spent by Germany). It is therefore the geographical bloc as a whole that makes military sense.

The commitments made in 2014 were collectively honoured by the Europeans

However, today, in the wake of Donald Trump's statements, many people, out of fear, conformism or compromise, defend the idea that it would be necessary to reach at least 4 %, or even 5 %, of defence effort for NATO Europe.

This effort seems unrealistic for most countries. If NATO Europe were to increase its effort to 3 % of GDP, this would represent an expenditure of 639 billion euros, that is an additional 207 billion compared to the current situation. With a 5 % effort, expenditure would reach 1.065 billion, which is more than what the United States currently spends (897 billion euros).

It is difficult to imagine that major eurozone countries such as Italy, Spain and Belgium, which are already far from meeting the 2 % target, could make a 5 % effort. As for France, given the state of its public finances, it will have a hard time meeting the 2 % target in the years to come.

All things being equal, such an effort would be pointless because, without the integration of their defence systems, European countries will remain, like the Gallic tribes, at the mercy of any Jules César with nuclear weapons.

¹ Austria, Cyprus, Ireland and Malta are part of the European Union but not of NATO.

It makes no sense to compare European defence spending with that of the United States

Firstly because, until now, nobody in Europe has considered going to war against the United States.

Secondly, because not all US expenditure is used to protect the European Union, far from it, and because the European Union does not have the ambition on its strategic agenda to exercise global military domination or to be able to fight two major conflicts at the same time, in Europe and in Asia.

Nevertheless, it is often wrongly assumed that there is a “common pot” for NATO expenditure and that in this common pot the United States would contribute 65 % and the Europeans and Canada 35 %.

However, this is a completely mistaken view of the situation, because although NATO does have a common budget, it is used to run the organisation and its military commands, and to provide them with a few paltry common capabilities. For 2025, this budget was only 4.6 billion euros and the share allocated to the United States was 15.8 %, or ... 730.5 million euros.

The fact is that the United States is a global superpower that serves its own interests by spending on forces and capabilities that meet many other strategic objectives and are also designed for other missions and other regions of the world.

This issue was the subject of numerous studies during Donald Trump's first term in office². In particular, a 2018 IISS study³ estimated that the United States actually devoted only 5 % of its defence spending, including its contribution to the common budget, to NATO defence, mainly through the soldiers, capabilities and bases it maintains there.

Even if we consider that this contribution has increased considerably since 2018 and arbitrarily estimate it at 10 % of their total expenditure, this would represent 10 % of 897 billion euros, or nearly 90 billion euros, which would shed a whole new light on the famous “burden sharing”.

² Anthony H. Cordesman, “NATO and the Claim the U.S. Bears 70% of the Burden: A False and Dysfunctional Approach to Burdensharing”, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, July 25th, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-claim-us-bears-70-burden-false-and-dysfunctional-approach-burdensharing> ; Anthony H. Cordesman, “NATO’s Pointless Burden Sharing Debates: The Need to Replace a Mathematically Ridiculous 2% of GDP Goal with Real Force Planning”, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, February 21st, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/natos-pointless-burden-sharing-debates-need-replace-mathematically-ridiculous-2-gdp-goal>

³ Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, Nick Childs, “The US and its NATO allies: costs and value”, IISS, July 9th, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2018/07/us-and-nato-allies-costs-and-value>

It is fair to say that the military power of the United States contributes greatly to the military deterrence of political Europe, but the fact remains that the financial effort of Europeans must be measured in relation to the military capabilities they have in relation to the threats they face, which today is Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The military capabilities of European states must be considered in light of the Russian threat

If we consider the figures alone, compared with the 476 billion euros of NATO Europe, or the 333 billion euros of the member states of the EDA and NATO, Russia would have spent 74 billion dollars (69 billion euros) in 2023 according to the IISS⁴. However, in its latest estimates⁵, the IISS predicts that Russia's defence expenditure in 2024 amounted to 145.9 billion dollars (135 billion euros), which would be equivalent in purchasing power parity to 462 billion dollars, or 428 billion euros! This phenomenal increase of 100 % from one year to the next, which would bring the Russian effort to 6.7 % of its GDP, raises questions, given both the opacity of Russian public accounts and the knowledge that we may have of real inflation in Russia.

But this last figure should not obscure the essential point: if Europeans are so afraid of a state that until last year spent half as much on defence as they did, it is because the problem does not lie in the volume of spending, but in its structure. In other words, it is not a question of counting dollars, but of measuring military capabilities and the means of implementing them (training, doctrine, personnel, infrastructure, ammunition, support, etc.).

The structure of the armed forces of the Member States of the European Union can be summarised simply: it is fragmented between 27 more or less substantial Pentagons, themselves dependent on 27 heads of state and government with dissimilar strategies, interests and political deadlines. This plurality of strategies leads European states to experience capacity gaps for all the most important strategic catalysts, as these are provided by the United States, and to duplicate among themselves (and not with the United States) the few forces they consider necessary for their status, such as fighter planes.

Militarily speaking, the war in Ukraine has revealed the lack of depth of European forces, that is to say their inability to sustain a war effort over time. This is not about drawing up the order of battle of European forces. Let us simply remember that these forces are on the whole well

⁴ IISS, "The Military Balance 2024" (February 2024) : 543

⁵ Fenella McGerty, Karl Dewey, "Global defence spending soars to new high", IISS, February 12th, 2025, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/02/global-defence-spending-soars-to-new-high/>

equipped, but sorely lacking in ammunition and consumable equipment. Furthermore, they are unable to project themselves en masse and for long periods outside their territory.

The same fragmentation can be seen in the European defence industry. Only a handful of countries are considered to have a truly versatile industry capable of producing capabilities in the three areas of conflict: sea, land and air. No European country has access to space on its own, and only a few are capable of producing military satellites.

In view of this, the war in Ukraine has provided very important lessons in characterising the Russian threat.

The Russian threat is not what we think it is

In three years of war, the Russian armed forces have shown surprising weaknesses.

If we look at the result, it is clear that they have not even conquered 20 % of Ukrainian territory (only 12 % more than since the occupation of Crimea in 2014), even though the initial war aim was to cause a rout of the Ukrainian forces, seize the capital and bring about a change of regime by replacing President Volodymyr Zelinsky with a vassal under the orders of the Kremlin.

The resistance of the Ukrainian infantry came as a strategic surprise to everyone, including American intelligence. The Russian navy is now confined to the Black Sea, while Ukraine has no navy and the Russian air force has never been able to gain control of the Ukrainian skies. Overall, the Russian army has proved to be mediocre in a way that is matched only by its brutality. Its forces, poorly led and poorly equipped, paid a terrible price for their territorial conquests. They had to resort to mercenaries, ex-convicts and forces from friendly countries, as well as equipment from Iran (drones) and North Korea (missiles, shells) that they were no longer able to produce.

In these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine Russia invading NATO countries at this time in their strategic depth – Poland in any case. On the other hand, it is not impossible that in the near future, after having rebuilt its forces and stabilised the situation in Ukraine, Russia will test NATO's credibility by attacking, for example, the city of Narva.

Nevertheless, Russia has significant assets that make it a definite and current threat.

First and foremost, the Russian army has shown itself capable of absorbing losses that no European army, or more precisely no European leader subject to universal suffrage, could tolerate. Its general mobilisation reserve remains virtually intact, and its air forces have been little exposed.

Secondly, its arms industry is operating at full capacity. It should probably continue to do so after the ceasefire, provided, however, that the Russian economy does not collapse, and thus be able to better make up for the losses suffered on the Ukrainian front within a few years. How long, is difficult to say? Some intelligence services talk about less than five years⁶.

Finally, the importance of Russia's partnerships with China, North Korea and Iran should not be overlooked. In particular, China and Russia have been conducting joint military exercises for several years, the frequency, quality and complexity of which have only increased.

Nonetheless, what is most worrying in characterising the Russian threat is not the conventional aspect, but Vladimir Putin's definition of a new nuclear grammar: aggressive sanctuarisation.

Until 2022, nuclear deterrence was used, as its name suggests, to dissuade the enemies of a country with nuclear forces from attacking it, under threat of massive reprisals that would nullify any territorial gain envisaged by the total or partial destruction of its territory.

Putin's new use of his nuclear arsenal has allowed him not only to defend himself, but also to attack a country that does not have nuclear weapons and, not only that, but also to dissuade its real or potential allies from coming to its direct aid. In short, we have gone from "if you attack me, I'll obliterate you" to "I'm attacking you, but you can't retaliate on my soil, otherwise I'll obliterate you". This offensive deterrence has worked well, as it has deterred the American leadership from intervening militarily in Ukraine, unlike what they did in Kuwait during the invasion of Iraq, and greatly slowed down the supply of high-strategic-value weapons, which were delivered only in dribs and drabs, or not at all in the case of fighter planes, the few examples of which were supplied by the Europeans.

So why wouldn't what worked in Ukraine work in the same way if Russia decided to invade the Baltic countries? Who can really believe that the current president of the United States would risk a nuclear war with Russia to save Narva, Tallinn or even Warsaw? What would be important in this case for Russia would be less the seizure of territory than the destruction of NATO's credibility and with it the European Union's one. What Putin has to lose in this scenario (new sanctions?) is much less than what he can gain.

Finally, let's not forget that Russia has been waging a hybrid war against European Member States since the cyberattack against Estonia in 2003. Then, it can always be argued that "we

⁶ Danish intelligence services, "Intelligence Outlook 2024 – an intelligence based assessment of the external conditions for Danish national security and interests", February 12th, 2025, [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.fe-ddis.dk/globalassets/fe/dokumenter/2024/intelligenceoutlook.pdf](https://www.fe-ddis.dk/globalassets/fe/dokumenter/2024/intelligenceoutlook.pdf)

are not at war with Russia”, because, for the moment, no European army is fighting the Russian army and no blood has been shed between us. But it is not peace either. It is a semi-darkness which, since Gramsci, we know is conducive to the appearance of monsters.

Since 2003, Russia has stepped up its underhand attacks on European interests. The list of these attacks would be too long to set out here. Let us simply recall the interference in the European elections, particularly in the French presidential election in 2017, and very recently in the Romanian elections, the recent attacks on the undersea cables in the Baltic Sea, the subversive activities against France in Africa, which resulted in the withdrawal of its troops from the Sahelo-Saharan strip, or the multiple cyberattacks against certain vital European infrastructures such as hospitals or transport networks.

But the hybrid attacks to be feared most are those aimed at electing European leaders who are opposed to the European Union. The all-round support given to political parties openly opposed to the European Union and favourable to Russia has been crowned with a certain success, since the unbeatable Victor Orbán has been joined by the Slovak Robert Fico, and perhaps even the next Romanian Prime Minister or the next Austrian Chancellor. What is the point of invading a country if you can run it through a puppet?

More than the physical invasion under a nuclear umbrella of the Union's margins, the establishment of European regimes capable of blocking the functioning of the Union, of destroying it from within by all sorts of vetoes, seems to us to be the most important and most immediate threat hanging over us, all the more so as this threat from the East is now combined with the threat from the West.

Buying conventional weapons will do nothing to ward off this threat. That does not mean, though, that nothing should be done.

IF WE HAVE TO BUY MORE MILITARY EQUIPMENT, WHAT SHOULD WE BUY, HOW SHOULD WE BUY IT AND FROM WHOM?

In view of the above, it seems likely that the European armed forces, without the support of American forces, would have great difficulty in countering a Russian offensive, even of limited scope in the Baltic States, given the current state of the battle order.

In these circumstances, it is necessary to act in an orderly fashion and not give in to the tyranny of the short term. This is what the European Member States have endeavoured to do since the Versailles summit in March 2022, by adopting instruments for the joint acquisition of

ammunition (ASAP - *Act in Support of Ammunition Production*) or military equipment (EDIRPA - *European defence industry reinforcement through common procurement act*).

However, these programmes were not large enough (commitment appropriations of 500 and 300 million euros respectively). Above all, the adoption of the successor programme (EDIP – *European Defence Industry Programme*), which should provide funding of 1.5 billion euros between 2025 and 2027, is the subject of an incredible behind-the-scenes battle over whether or not to include American equipment among the armaments financed by the Union.

This battle is all the more ridiculous when one considers the amounts involved, which do not exceed, for the moment, one billion euros per year, or less than 1 % of what the Member States spend each year... So why such a fierce battle by certain Member States, spurred on by American lobbyists, to allow European money to finance American industries that have no need of it?

We cannot invoke the need to arm ourselves quickly, because the US armament industry is not a vast Walmart where we could buy sophisticated missiles or latest-generation fighter planes at will. Like European industry, it also has its own bottlenecks and will always prioritise its armed forces.

Nor is it a question of preventing Member States from buying American military equipment, which they do without any restrictions⁷. It is simply a question of ensuring that European taxpayers' money benefits the European defence industries, not only for industrial purposes and industrial return, but also to make our strategic autonomy effective.

In fact, the lobbying battle currently taking place is due to the fact that the EDIP's current reduced budget could grow exponentially. During his hearing before the European Parliament in November 2023, the European Commissioner for Defence, Andrius Kubilius of Lithuania, mentioned a necessary investment of 500 billion euros over seven years (namely 71.4 billion euros per year) to be launched within the framework of the next multiannual programming of the Union (2028-2034).

If the fund were excessively open to non-European countries, the whole mechanism would be flawed, and Europeans would never be guaranteed to use the weapons they produce as they see fit, wherever and whenever they wish. Hence the battle being fought by France to ensure that the “*design authority*” remains European, which means that the weapons must be able

⁷ Jean-Pierre Maulny, “The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the European Defense Market”, *IRIS*, September 4th, 2023, <https://www.iris-france.org/177754-the-impact-of-the-war-in-ukraine-on-the-european-defence-market/>

to be maintained, modified, used and exported by European client armies without authorisation or restriction from the United States or other third countries.

Yet if there is one thing that the war in Ukraine has demonstrated, and irrefutably so, it is the need, at the most critical moment of the war, to be able to dispose of one's weapons without any restrictions from a third country. In other words, it is vital, in the literal sense of the word, to be able to enjoy "freedom of action". What would the European states that bought Patriot anti-aircraft defence missiles do, for example, if the President of the United States forbade them to use them when Russia invades Estonia, for fear of a nuclear threat from the Russian President?

Strategic autonomy is not just a vague concept promoted by French leaders. It is an absolute necessity in times of war. And it is not our American allies who would accept their armies being in a position of depending on anyone in times of war. So, reciprocally, would it be wise for the European armed forces to depend on the United States if the worst were to happen?

WHAT POSITION SHOULD BE ADOPTED REGARDING UKRAINE?

European public opinion seems to be tired of the twists and turns of the war in Ukraine and would like the war to end for the sake of their moral comfort. But while wanting to put an end to the "death of hundreds of thousands of young people" is a praiseworthy moral scruple, we in Europe are well aware that bad peace leads to new wars.

To accept, without any form of protest other than verbal, the capitulation of Ukraine, for that is what it amounts to, would be to betray all the commitments made by European leaders to assure Ukraine of our support "for as long as necessary and as much as necessary". It would be a betrayal of Ukraine and all the Ukrainians who have been attacked and tortured and who are fighting and dying every day. That would be immoral.

But it would also mean giving up any desire for the European Union to play a "geopolitical" role. Let us not forget that, contrary to what is often said, the European Union and its Member States have provided more financial aid than the United States (120 billion euros compared to 50 billion) and even military aid (71 billion in commitments compared to 65.5 billion euros)⁸. Under these circumstances, can we accept that peace talks are starting without the Europeans, or even the Ukrainians, as if the only parties to the conflict were the United States and Russia?

⁸ Christoph Trebesch, Giuseppe Irto, Taro Nishikawa, "Ukraine support tracker", *IFW Kiel Institute*, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/> (accessed on February 14th, 2025)

Finally, to accept Ukraine's capitulation would be to sanction the end of international law, recognising the law of the strongest and throwing overboard all the treaties, principles and values inspired by the United States at the end of the Second World War and which have guided international relations ever since, even if this has been imperfect and often hypocritical.

To claim, as Donald Trump proposes, to negotiate, without the Ukrainians and without the Europeans, with Vladimir Putin, who has violated every agreement signed by his country since he became president and who has lied without interruption, is a bad joke.

Today, it is the leaders of the European Member States – and not “Europe” and even less “the European Union” – who have their backs to the wall. If these leaders are incapable of taking action and have to be content with being spectators of their own history, it is because their predecessors have, for decades, forcefully and consistently rejected any real prospect of a “common defence”, any sincere integration of their armed forces and any attempt to defragment their defence industrial base.

Let's be clear: the “Europe of the defence” is a sterile concept. Its promoters have failed to produce a significant “operational capability” that would have been the beginning of a common defence. On the strength of this failure, the diplomatic, military and industrial apparatuses in both France and Germany are instead promoting greater nationalisation of their forces and their industrial base. But isn't it a complete madness to think that, with the whims of the American president and the machinations of the Russian rogue state, the European Member States can cope on their own without uniting?

Since the United States is refusing to send its forces into Ukraine and is inviting the Europeans to pay the bill by providing the security guarantees that Ukraine needs on their own, it is necessary for the European states to take up the challenge and guarantee a ceasefire on the ground if and when it is agreed.

As Sven Biscop suggests⁹, it is not a question of mounting a peacekeeping operation, but of providing security guarantees. The volume of European ground forces required would not be 200,000 personnel, as is often mentioned and demanded by the Ukrainian President. The European forces would not replace the Ukrainian forces, but would be in addition to them. They would not be on the front line as an interposed force, but in support in a second line. Above all, they would have to be supported by air forces, ensuring a *no-fly zone* over Ukraine,

⁹ Sven Biscop, “Ukraine Now Needs a European Security Guarantee – Not a Peace Operation”, *Egmont*, February 13th, 2025, <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/ukraine-now-needs-a-european-security-guarantee-not-a-peace-operation/>

in which many European countries could participate, particularly those with F-35s, which are reputed to be stealth aircraft. In these circumstances, a contingent of 30 to 40,000 men organised around the protection of two or three air bases and anti-aircraft defence could suffice.

CONCLUSION

It must be recognised that the European Member States have failed to establish a “Europe of the defence” in an intergovernmental framework. The promises of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, those of the Saint-Malo Summit in 1998, of the Helsinki Summit in 1999 and again those of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007, all these promises of the progressive realisation of a “common defence” enabling the Union to “play its full role on the international stage” have remained a dead letter. The European Union is like the cicada in the fable. After crowing about sovereignty for a long time, it finds itself very much lacking.

Today, the American leaders have sounded the death knell of the long parenthesis which, since the end of the Cold War, might have led them to withdraw from the European continent. On first analysis, a somewhat simplistic one, this seems perfectly legitimate from the point of view of the American taxpayer, who has no reason to pay for European defence. But if all American leaders have not done so until now, it is certainly because they have benefited from it. The American defence industry has profited from this situation as never before, if only by preventing the emergence of a powerful and integrated European defence industry that could have competed with it. It is to American industrialists that Donald Trump should ask to “give back the money”, not to the European Member States. And wanting to ensure “world military domination” comes at a price. So let us not be fooled by the reproaches made to us.

In the face of this, the advocates of purely national European defences, whether German, French, British or Italian, are in reality the useful idiots of vassalisation. No European Member State is in a position to play a major international role, and European sovereignty, let alone sovereignty in general, will not be achieved by taking refuge behind symbolic totems such as the oh-so-useless membership of the United Nations Security Council in a situation where law gives way to force.

European defence will never see the light of day in an intergovernmental framework. We have been trying for more than thirty years without success. Is it “realistic” to want to continue something that does not work? For genuine defence of Europe, by Europe for Europe, to happen, a quantum political leap is needed towards an ability to decide together.

Nonetheless, this cannot be the promise of a vague and illusory “European pillar of NATO” that the United States will never accept, because this would require European states to have their own “supreme commander” at the head of the Alliance, their own defence capability planning and their own operational planning. We are a long way from that, and the words “European pillar of NATO” are just attractive but empty words.

If the European states do not want to admit it, then they deserve nothing more than their current sad fate. RIP *European defence*. But if they take the trouble to set up not an intervention force, but a guarantee force, under European command and without the NATO shield, then they will have collectively started to achieve some sort of a strategic autonomy and it will be the best gift Donald Trump could give them. To this it is now high time to add the protection of the entire European territory by French and British nuclear forces in an explicit manner, without beating about the bush, because otherwise the same Russian blackmail that dissuaded the Biden administration will dissuade European forces. The time for Kairos has come.

APPENDIX

Tables: Military expenditure and investment by NATO countries

2024	Defence expenditure (including pension costs)					Investments (Equipment and related R&D costs)						
	M USD	MEUR	In % of GDP	Amount of spending in €M if 2% standard observed **	Effort necessary to meet 2% objective in M EUR	M USD	MEUR	In % of defence spending	Investment expected if the 20 % standard is respected (M EUR) ***	Effort necessary to meet the 20% objective (M EUR)	Investment expected if the 2 % and the 20 % standards are met (M EUR) ***	Effort necessary in investment to meet both commitments in M EUR***
	In current prices											
Belgium	8 519	7 900	1,30	12 162	+ 4 262	1 291	1 197	15,16	1 580	+ 383	2 432	+ 1 235
Bulgaria	2 325	2 156	2,18	2 156	+ 0	742	688	31,89	688	+ 0	688	+ 0
Croatia	1 624	1 506	1,81	1 667	+ 161	393	365	24,20	365	+ 0	333	+ 0
Czechia *	6 834	6 338	2,10	6 338	+ 0	2 587	2 399	37,86	2 399	+ 0	2 399	+ 0
Denmark	9 940	9 217	2,37	9 217	+ 0	2 962	2 747	29,80	2 747	+ 0	2 747	+ 0
Estonia *	1 437	1 333	3,43	1 333	+ 0	485	450	33,74	450	+ 0	450	+ 0
Finland	7 308	6 777	2,41	6 777	+ 0	3 343	3 100	45,75	3 100	+ 0	3 100	+ 0
France	64 271	59 600	2,06	59 600	+ 0	18 225	16 900	28,36	16 900	+ 0	16 900	+ 0
Germany	97 686	90 586	2,12	90 586	+ 0	28 082	26 041	28,75	26 041	+ 0	26 041	+ 0
Greece	7 684	7 126	3,08	7 126	+ 0	2 771	2 570	36,07	2 570	+ 0	2 570	+ 0
Hungary	4 889	4 533	2,11	4 533	+ 0	2 337	2 167	47,81	2 167	+ 0	2 167	+ 0
Italy	34 462	31 957	1,49	42 864	+ 10 907	7 610	7 057	22,08	7 057	+ 0	8 573	+ 1 516
Latvia*	1 421	1 318	3,15	1 318	+ 0	525	487	36,92	487	+ 0	487	+ 0
Lithuania*	2 300	2 133	2,85	2 133	+ 0	487	451	21,17	451	+ 0	451	+ 0
Luxembourg	785	728	1,29	1 126	+ 398	343	318	43,68	318	+ 0	225	+ 0
The Netherlands	21 460	19 900	2,05	19 900	+ 0	7 768	7 204	36,20	7 204	+ 0	7 204	+ 0
Poland *	34 975	32 433	4,12	32 433	+ 0	10 489	9 726	29,99	9 726	+ 0	9 726	+ 0
Portugal	4 627	4 291	1,55	5 545	+ 1 254	2 366	2 194	51,13	2 194	+ 0	1 109	+ 0
Romania*	8 644	8 016	2,25	8 016	+ 0	1 891	1 754	21,88	1 754	+ 0	1 754	+ 0
Slovakia	2 841	2 634	2,00	2 634	+ 0	876	813	30,85	813	+ 0	813	+ 0
Slovenia	949	880	1,29	1 363	+ 483	259	240	27,24	240	+ 0	273	+ 33
Spain	21 269	19 723	1,28	30 757	+ 11 033	5 801	5 380	27,27	5 380	+ 0	6 151	+ 772
Sweden	13 428	12 452	2,14	12 452	+ 0	4 069	3 773	30,30	3 773	+ 0	3 773	+ 0
Members of both NATO and EDA ****	359 678	333 536	2,02	362 035	+ 28 498	105 701	98 019	29,39	98 402	+ 383	100 366	+ 3 556
Albania	516	479	2,03	479	+ 0	246	229	47,74	229	+ 0	229	+ 0
Montenegro	162	150	2,02	150	+ 0	58	54	35,76	54	+ 0	54	+ 0
North Macedonia	353	327	2,22	327	+ 0	103	96	29,33	96	+ 0	96	+ 0
Norway	10 606	9 835	2,20	9 835	+ 0	3 180	2 949	29,99	2 949	+ 0	2 949	+ 0
Türkiye	22 776	21 121	2,09	21 121	+ 0	7 784	7 218	34,18	7 218	+ 0	7 218	+ 0
United Kingdom	82 107	76 140	2,33	76 140	+ 0	29 635	27 481	36,09	27 481	+ 0	27 481	+ 0
Members of NATO Europe but not EDA	116 520	108 051	2,25	108 051	0	41 007	38 027	35,19	38 027	+ 0	38 027	+ 0
NATO Europe	476 197	441 587	2,07	470 086	28 498	146 708	136 046	30,81	136 428	+ 0	138 393	+ 3 556
Canada	30 495	28 279	1,37	41 430	+ 13 151	5 671	5 259	18,60	5 656	+ 397	8 286	+ 3 027
United States	967 707	897 375	3,38	897 375	+ 0	289 169	268 152	29,88	268 152	+ 0	268 152	+ 0
North America	998 202	925 653	3,22	938 804	+ 13 151	294 840	273 411	29,54	273 808	+ 0	276 438	+ 3 027
Total NATO	1 474 399	1 367 241	2,73	1 408 890	+ 41 649	441 549	409 457	29,95	410 236	+ 779	414 831	+ 6 582
Share of NATO Europe in %	32,3	32,3		33,4		33,2	33,2		33,3		33,4	
Share of North America in %	67,7	67,7		66,6		66,8	66,8		66,7		66,6	
Share of U.S. in %	65,6	65,6		63,7		65,5	65,5		65,4		64,6	

Source : figures taken from data available on the NATO website consulted on 25/01/2025

* According to NATO, these countries have either legislation or political agreements by virtue of this they are required to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence each year

** When the reported spending is above the 2% standard, we have shown the reported spending

*** In this case, the rate of 20% was applied to the defence spending necessary to reach 2% of GDP and not to the reported amount that can be higher than 2 %

**** The European Agency also includes Austria, Cyprus, Ireland and Malta

2024	Defence expenditure (including pension costs)										Investments (Equipment and related R&D costs)						
	M USD	M EUR	In % of GDP	Effort necessary to meet 2% objective in M EUR country by country ***	Amount of spending in M EUR if 3% objective is strictly observed	Effort necessary to meet 3% objective in M EUR country by country	Amount of spending in M EUR if 4% objective is strictly observed	Effort necessary to meet 4% objective in M EUR country by country	Amount of spending in M EUR if 5% objective is strictly observed	Effort necessary to meet 5% objective in M EUR country by country	M EUR	In % of defence spending	Effort necessary to meet 20% investment on 3 % expenditure country by country	Effort necessary to meet 20% investment on 3 % expenditure country by country	Effort necessary to meet 20% investment on 4 % expenditure country by country	Effort necessary to meet 20% investment on 5 % expenditure country by country	
In current prices																	
Belgium	8 519	7 900	1,30	+ 4 262	18 243	+ 10 343	24 323	+ 16 423	30 404	+ 22 504	1 197	15,16	+ 1 235	+ 2 451	+ 3 667	+ 4 884	
Bulgaria	2 325	2 156	2,18	+ 0	2 969	+ 813	3 959	+ 1 802	4 948	+ 2 792	688	31,89	+ 0	+ 0	+ 104	+ 302	
Croatia	1 624	1 506	1,81	+ 161	2 501	+ 995	3 334	+ 1 828	4 168	+ 2 662	365	24,20	+ 0	+ 136	+ 302	+ 469	
Czechia*	6 834	6 338	2,10	+ 0	9 073	+ 2 735	12 097	+ 5 759	15 121	+ 8 784	2 399	37,86	+ 0	+ 0	+ 20	+ 625	
Denmark	9 940	9 217	2,37	+ 0	11 645	+ 2 428	15 526	+ 6 309	19 408	+ 10 191	2 747	29,80	+ 0	+ 0	+ 359	+ 1 135	
Estonia*	1 437	1 333	3,43	+ 0	1 165	+ 0	1 554	+ 221	1 942	+ 609	450	33,74	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
Finland	7 308	6 777	2,41	+ 0	8 422	+ 1 645	11 229	+ 4 452	14 036	+ 7 259	3 100	45,75	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
France	64 271	59 600	2,06	+ 0	86 807	+ 27 207	115 742	+ 56 142	144 678	+ 85 078	16 900	28,36	+ 0	+ 461	+ 6 248	+ 12 036	
Germany	97 686	90 586	2,12	+ 0	128 249	+ 37 664	170 999	+ 80 413	213 749	+ 123 163	26 041	28,75	+ 0	+ 0	+ 8 159	+ 16 709	
Greece	7 684	7 126	3,08	+ 0	6 950	+ 0	9 266	+ 2 141	11 583	+ 4 457	2 570	36,07	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
Hungary	4 889	4 533	2,11	+ 0	6 443	+ 1 910	8 591	+ 4 058	10 739	+ 6 205	2 167	47,81	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
Italy	34 462	31 957	1,49	+ 10 907	64 296	+ 32 339	85 728	+ 53 771	107 160	+ 75 203	7 057	22,08	+ 1 516	+ 5 802	+ 10 089	+ 14 375	
Latvia*	1 421	1 318	3,15	+ 0	1 256	+ 0	1 675	+ 357	2 094	+ 775	487	36,92	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
Lithuania*	2 300	2 133	2,85	+ 0	2 246	+ 113	2 994	+ 861	3 743	+ 1 610	451	21,17	+ 0	+ 0	+ 147	+ 297	
Luxembourg	785	728	1,29	+ 398	1 688	+ 960	2 251	+ 1 523	2 814	+ 2 086	318	43,68	+ 0	+ 20	+ 132	+ 245	
The Netherlands	21 460	19 900	2,05	+ 0	32 351	+ 12 451	43 135	+ 23 235	53 918	+ 34 018	7 204	36,20	+ 0	+ 0	+ 1 423	+ 3 580	
Poland *	34 975	32 433	4,12	+ 0	23 615	+ 0	31 486	+ 0	39 358	+ 6 926	9 726	29,99	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
Portugal	4 627	4 291	1,55	+ 1 254	8 317	+ 4 027	11 090	+ 6 799	13 862	+ 9 572	2 194	51,13	+ 0	+ 0	+ 24	+ 579	
Romania*	8 644	8 016	2,25	+ 0	10 681	+ 2 664	14 241	+ 6 225	17 801	+ 9 785	1 754	21,88	+ 0	+ 383	+ 1 095	+ 1 807	
Slovakia	2 841	2 634	2,00	+ 15	3 973	+ 1 339	5 297	+ 2 663	6 622	+ 3 987	813	30,85	+ 0	+ 0	+ 247	+ 512	
Slovenia	949	880	1,29	+ 483	2 045	+ 1 165	2 727	+ 1 847	3 409	+ 2 529	240	27,24	+ 33	+ 169	+ 306	+ 442	
Spain	21 269	19 723	1,28	+ 11 033	46 135	+ 26 411	61 513	+ 41 790	76 892	+ 57 168	5 380	27,27	+ 772	+ 3 847	+ 6 923	+ 9 999	
Sweden	13 428	12 452	2,14	+ 0	17 430	+ 4 978	23 240	+ 10 788	29 050	+ 16 598	3 773	30,30	+ 0	+ 875	+ 2 037		
Members of both NATO and EDA	359 678	333 536	2,02	+ 28 513	496 499	+ 172 186	661 998	+ 329 408	827 498	+ 493 961	98 019	29,39	+ 3 556	+ 13 270	+ 40 121	+ 70 031	
Albania	516	479	2,03	+ 0	707	+ 229	943	+ 465	1 179	+ 701	229	47,74	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 7	
Montenegro	162	150	2,02	+ 0	223	+ 73	298	+ 147	372	+ 222	54	35,76	+ 0	+ 0	+ 6	+ 21	
North Macedonia	353	327	2,22	+ 0	442	+ 115	589	+ 262	736	+ 409	96	29,33	+ 0	+ 0	+ 22	+ 51	
Norway	10 606	9 835	2,20	+ 0	13 425	+ 3 591	17 900	+ 8 066	22 375	+ 12 541	2 949	29,99	+ 0	+ 0	+ 631	+ 1 526	
Türkiye	22 776	21 121	2,09	+ 0	30 331	+ 9 210	40 442	+ 19 321	50 552	+ 29 431	7 218	34,18	+ 0	+ 0	+ 870	+ 2 892	
United Kingdom	82 107	76 140	2,33	+ 0	97 939	+ 21 799	130 585	+ 54 446	163 231	+ 87 092	27 481	36,09	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 5 165	
Members of NATO Europe but not EDA	116 520	108 051	2,25	+ 0	143 068	+ 35 017	190 757	+ 82 706	238 446	+ 130 395	38 027	35,19	+ 0	+ 0	+ 1 528	+ 9 662	
NATO Europe	476 197	441 587	2,07	+ 28 513	639 567	+ 207 202	852 755	+ 412 114	1 065 944	+ 624 357	136 046	30,81	+ 3 556	+ 13 270	+ 41 649	+ 79 693	
Canada	30 495	28 279	1,37	+ 13 151	62 144	+ 33 865	82 859	+ 54 580	103 574	+ 75 295	5 259	18,60	+ 3 027	+ 7 170	+ 11 313	+ 15 456	
United States	967 707	897 375	3,38	+ 0	798 978	+ 0	1 065 304	+ 167 929	1 331 629	+ 434 255	268 152	29,88	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	+ 0	
North America	998 202	925 653	3,22	+ 13 151	861 122	+ 33 865	1 148 163	+ 222 509	1 435 203	+ 509 550	273 411	29,54	+ 3 027	+ 7 170	+ 11 313	+ 15 456	
Total NATO	1 474 399	1 367 241	2,73	+ 41 663	1 500 689	+ 241 068	2 000 918	+ 634 623	2 501 148	+ 1 133 907	409 457	29,95	+ 6 582	+ 20 439	+ 52 962	+ 95 149	
Share of NATO Europe in %	32,3	32,3			42,6		42,6		42,6		33,2						
Share of North America in %	67,7	67,7			57,4		57,4		57,4		66,8						
Share of U.S. in %	65,6	65,6			53,2		53,2		53,2		65,5						

Source : figures taken from data available on the NATO website consulted on 25/01/2025

* According to NATO, these countries have either legislation or political agreements by virtue of this they are required to spend at least 2% of GDP

** The results in this column differ from those in the same column in the '2024' sheet because we have considered what would happen if strict compliance with the standard of 2% GDP, whereas the MS do much more

*** There might be a discrepancy between the sum of the efforts country by country and the % applied to a zone ; e.g., if all Europeans countries part of EDA would respect the 2% standard, the sum of their efforts would be 28 498 ME.

But taken as whole as the zone is above 2 %, the effort would be null

Strategic expertise in complete independance



PROGRAMME
**EUROPE,
STRATEGY &
SECURITY**



2 bis, rue Mercœur - 75011 PARIS / France

+ 33 (0) 1 53 27 60 60

contact@iris-france.org

iris-france.org

IRIS is one of the main French think tanks specialising in geopolitical and strategic issues. It is the only one to have the singularity of combining a research centre and a teaching centre delivering diplomas, via its IRIS Sup' school, a model that contributes to its national and international attractiveness. IRIS is organised around four areas of activity: research, publication, training and event organisation.

