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**U.S. INTEGRATED DETERRENCE AND  
EUROPE'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY:  
ISSUES FOR DETERRING RUSSIA**

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## Introduction

The Ukraine war has had a myriad of geopolitics outputs in Europe, from grain commerce, energy supply, and to defence architecture of the continent. For the latter concept, it is well known that the United States plays a significant role in the deterrence equation through NATO (NATO, 2022). Nevertheless, the situation before Russian aggression is likely to change, and the burden of forward posture efforts from the different allies will be realigned.

The 2022 National Defence Strategy (NDS) deposited in Congress by President Biden has some concepts that suggest changes in the medium term for Europe's defence with regard to less American engagement in the continent, which implies greater self-reliance (Martini, et al., 2023). The NDS seeks to rely less on hard power and enduring other pressure measures delving into the broad alliances that the US has in comparison to autocracies, such as China and Russia (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022a).

In the realm of alliances for the US, the one with Europe is long-lasting and one of the closest, which does not entail a status quo. The novel strategy suggests a reduction of US resources, not only in terms of budget, but also in a less forward posture in Europe (Martini et al., 2023), which might suppose the increase of Russia's boldness to adopt aggressive postures (Cozad et al, 2023), unless it is countered with different deterrence strategies. For that, building strong capabilities to sustain the deterrence effort is critical for Europe.

The concept of strategic autonomy of the European Union (EU) seeks to address these challenges and to be capable of self-providing the right number of resources and capabilities to assess the proximate threats. This Infolash aims to tackle the intermingle between the Integrated Deterrence and the Strategic Autonomy.

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## Delving in Integrated Deterrence

The NDS presents the concept of Integrated Deterrence, which it will apply to various theatres of operations in the US. This concept should be analysed with special focus on Europe since it is the oldest ally of the US (Bergmann et al., 2022), which anticipates a deeper responsibility for engaging in this new strategy. The United States has declared that its main priority for the mid-term is the Indo-Pacific (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022a), a statement that helps to understand the spirit of the new strategy.

The language of the NDS implicitly states that there will be no deeper engagement from the current effort for Europe. The Ukraine war started just a few months before the document came to the public, showing no mistake in the raise of responsibility that the US expects from Europe. This situation finds a counterpart in the Strategic Autonomy concept that Germany and France pushed forward a few years ago, but today has a deeper relevance for Europe.

In the same perspective is the NATO Strategic Concept (NATO, 2022), which insists on the need for equity in responsibilities to ensure the long-term success of the organisation. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the defence budgets of Europe had a constant decrease aligned with demobilisation (Barry et al., 2023). Therefore, to uphold the objectives traced by the US and Europe, more spending is essential, especially in deterrence.

The US has played a significant role in the deterrence equation of Europe since the Cold War. Large investments in deterrence in Europe by the US are focused on the forward presence (Martini et al., 2023). However, the NDS suggested a shift of the long-term efforts from the US, implying that there may be a decline in the capabilities deployed in Europe. The Economy of Force concept may apply to the US' plans in Europe to decrease the amount of force used for reaching the deterrence objectives (Martini et al., 2023).

In this context, the situation in Europe demands a strong collaborative response to be capable of tackling the eventual gap that may arise. Nevertheless, the current situation in regard to countering Russia is based on '[...] the presence of U.S. capabilities as particularly important for deterrence and saw European capabilities, on their own, as a weaker deterrent signal to Russia' (Martini et al., 2023, p. 59). Constructing an ecosystem of major European deterrence capabilities is critical to have a stronger and more capable Europe (Bergmann et al., 2022).

Finally, the U.S. Nuclear Extended Deterrence Strategy of 2022 gives another hint of future deterrence. In that document, the US states that it will support the modernisation of NATO nuclear deterrence and that it will prevent their allies from acquiring their own nuclear capabilities (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022b). This may be translated into a broader nuclear deterrence burden beyond the capabilities of France and the UK.

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Deterring Russia requires multifaceted capabilities for Europe. The threats of Russia, in terms of military capabilities, might be neglected in the following years due to the Russian-Ukrainian war (Barry et al., 2023). However, this could well result an increase in Russia's grey zone activities, and thus, Europe's ability to attribute these activities to Russia is key to an effective and quick response. Therefore, going from this apparent harmful situation is a window of opportunity to address the multifaceted tools that Europe needs to be strategically autonomous, as well as shedding light on the matter analysing this plan or project.

### **Strategic Autonomy Challenges facing Russia**

Emmanuel Macron invigorated that pairing with the previous integrated deterrence concept should be the notion of strategic autonomy of Europe, however, it is embraced by EU institutions (Clement, 2023). Building a credible and more autonomous deterrence for Europe involves developing resilient and innovative ecosystems of defence with the proper funding to endure the long term. The defence dimension of strategic autonomy states the idea that Europe needs to assume a greater burden in its own security and defence architecture (Clement, 2023)

The end of the Cold War, the decrease in investment in defence (Bergmann et al., 2022), and the enlargement of NATO have created a major burden for specific members (Barry et al., 2023) in terms of capabilities, spending, and men's force. Due to the Russian-Ukrainian War, the status quo needs to be overthrown (Martini et al., 2023) creating an environment of common burden in the deterrence effort. The fetish of sovereignty is a great hindrance in this realm and major efforts and roles should be assumed by the European countries (Bento, 2022)

In terms of industrial and weapons systems, air forces, joint precision strike capabilities, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and electronic warfare will be the main focus of the US for strengthening NATO (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022a), which suggests that Europe will have to develop strong capabilities with its own resources coordinated with the US to reach the level of readiness that the Russian threat demands (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022) (European Defence Agency, 2022).

Capable and large ground forces are essential for deterring great opponents (Martini et al., 2023). Thus, developing this capability as a source of credible deterrence should be part of the planning, which can imply the discussion of broader conscription in Europe (Barry et al., 2023). Evidence of signals and rapid ground deployment for deterrence suggests that these forces need to be highly interoperable to be credible (Martini et al., 2023).

The role of Germany will be vital to construct the will of Europe to assume deterrence objectives (Cafarella, 2023). The nuclear deterrence posture of Germany stated in its National Security Strategy (Germany Federal Government, 2023) and the favourable change of public opinion regarding these capabilities (Horovitz & Onderco, 2023) may suggest a future change in the arrangement with the US over nuclear bombs deployed in the country.

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However, being more autonomous is more than just creating an environment of self-procuring capabilities and technologies. It is also about assuming a bolder position against the threats posed by Russia and faced by Europe, in a broader sense, beyond NATO or the EU. In this regard, there are imminent threats to EU Member States, such as a potential seizure of the Suwalki Gap, which could affect Poland and Lithuania (Martini et al., 2023).

The deterrence equation employed by NATO with respect to Ukraine ultimately proved ineffective, as it underestimated the challenges of preventing a Russian invasion in the face of potential NATO intervention (Cozad et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the European aid for offensive purposes in the war in Ukraine portrayed the will to defend the continent and a broader avenue of engagement for the future (Bertamini, 2023)

To assume a new deterrence attitude, Europe needs to assess the possibility of a new situation in Ukraine. The Russian threat in the Caucasus gives more problems in terms of logistics than in Ukraine due to the distance and the Black Sea (Martini et al., 2023). Thus, the credibility and reach of European deterrence may involve assuming more political, economic, and human costs, but may be synergistic for achieving a strategic autonomy long pursued by the political leadership.

## **Conclusion**

The Ukraine war has ushered in a complex array of geopolitical changes in Europe, encompassing trade dynamics, energy security, and the region's defence architecture. Central to this evolving landscape is the role of the United States within NATO, which has historically been a linchpin on European security (NATO, 2022). However, the US may be in the process of shifting priorities toward the Indo-Pacific, with a potential reduction in their engagement in Europe (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022a). This evolving landscape places greater responsibility on European nations to enhance their self-reliance and assume a more significant role in their own defence (Clement, 2023).

The concept of Strategic Autonomy within the European Union becomes increasingly pertinent, emphasising the need for Europe to develop robust and self-sustaining defence capabilities (Clement, 2023). This includes a focus on investment in defence and collaborative efforts among European nations (European Defence Agency, 2022). Although challenges persist, such as concerns over sovereignty and the need for greater harmonisation, the goal of achieving strategic autonomy is essential for Europe's long-term security and stability.

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