CONCEPT NOTE

The second Trump administration has urged Europeans to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defence. During his first visit to Europe in February 2025, the United States' (US) Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth affirmed that as the US prioritises 'deterring war with China in the Indo-Pacific', European allies would need to 'lead from the front' in Europe. But what does European leadership entail? Adding further ambiguity and uncertainty to this debate, an April 2025 Pentagon memo stipulated that the United States would continue to support Europe with nuclear deterrence but 'is unlikely to provide any substantial, if any, support in the case of Russian military advances'.

Is Europe ready to lead from the front in this way? What kind of adjustments would be needed in key areas like Command and Control or conventional warfare? What would it mean for US extended nuclear deterrence and US force posture and defence strategy in Europe more broadly? Critically, how would such a fundamental rebalancing in transatlantic relations impinge on deterrence, especially in a context of Russian revisionism?

To address these questions, the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS) has launched an initiative on the "Future of European Deterrence". This initiative will lead to the organisation of a series of public events, expert and track 1.5 workshops and the publication of various policy briefs, podcasts and longer studies.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

"Imagining a Post-American Europe: The Future of Europe's Deterrence Architecture", *CSDS event* (Lotje Boswinkel, Gideon Rose, Luis Simón and Tomasz Szatkowski).

"Indispensable Lynchpin or Irrelevant Symbolism? Polish-US Defence Relations and the Second Trump Presidency", *CSDS Policy Brief* (Tomasz Szatkowski).

"Escalation Management: Europe's Conventional and Nuclear Deterrence", *Strategy Speaks podcast*, (Lotje Boswinkel, Elie Perot and Daniel Fiott).

"Europe, Deterrence and Long-Range Strike", *War on the Rocks*, (Lotje Boswinkel).