



How to Defend Europe



Volt

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE



Titouan Vervack
Co-lead East- &
West-Flanders



How to Defend Europe

Volt



Teun Janssen



Wannes Verstraete



Jean Marsia



Teun Janssen

Shaping Europe's defence: Volt's actions in the European Parliament



Europe cannot defend itself

Or how I learned to stop worrying and
love the European Army

15/10/2025

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What does “European Army” mean to you?

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- What is the problem?
- Why is a “European Army” the solution to it?
- How is Volt working on that in the European Parliament?



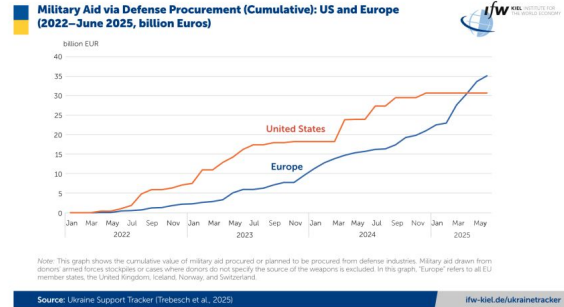
What is the problem?

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Why are we even talking about this?

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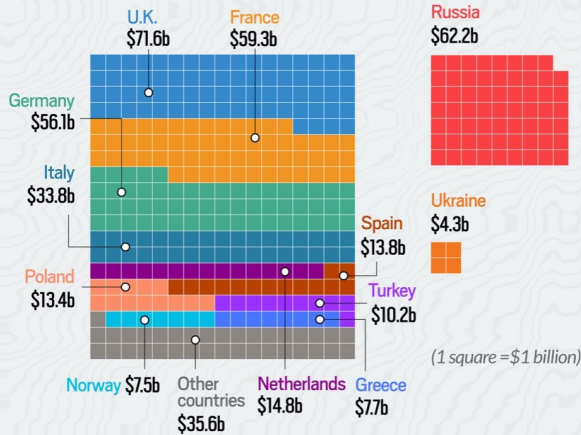
Okay, but aren't we perfectly fine as is?

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RUSSIA VS NATO's EUROPEAN MEMBERS IN TERMS OF MILITARY SPENDING

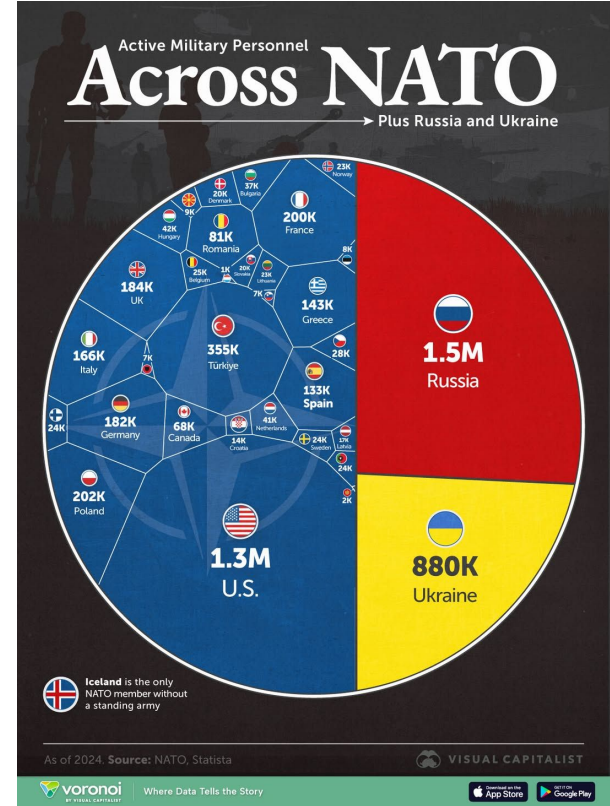
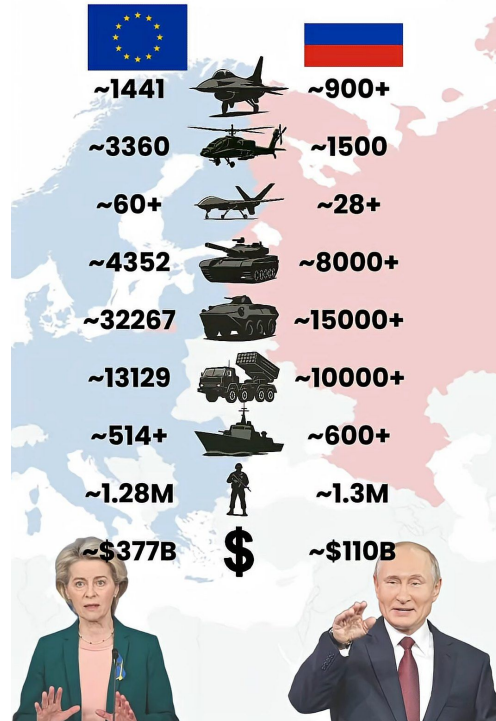
Russia's military expenditure about 16% that of NATO's European members in 2021

NATO's European Members



Note: Chart based on rounded figures; totals may not be precise due to that
Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies—The Military Balance 2022
Chart: Dipu Rai, Sarfaraz

EU VS RUSSIA MILITARY POWER COMPARISON 2025



Problem 1: unreliable command and control

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Problem 2: lack of essential capabilities

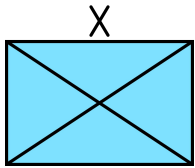
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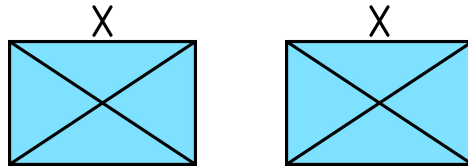
Problem 3: force posture asymmetry



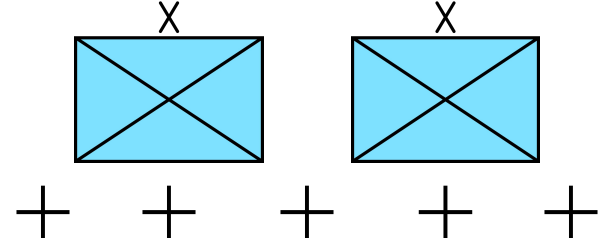
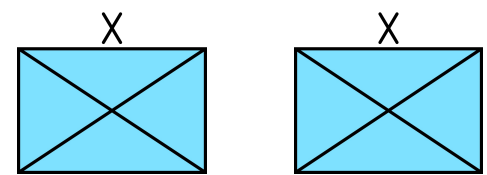
50 brigades



100 brigades



200 brigades



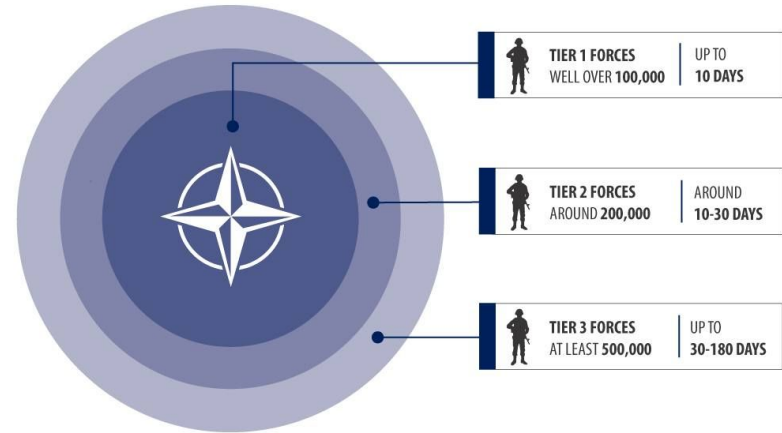
So: NATO doesn't work without the US ...

NATO's defence plan

- 300,000 ready first 30 days
- 200,000 of those should be EU
- EU, at best, at 50% readiness
- 100,000 are US (unreliable)
- + major withdrawals expected
- So ... gap of +/- 250,000

... so beyond the 3 problems,
we can't even deliver the basics!

NATO's New Force Model



Doomsday scenario: high stakes poker

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Why a European Army?

15/10/2025

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So this is what we need to do by 2030:



- Establish an autonomous command and control structure
 - Europeanise NATO as soon as possible; staff, assets, processes
 - Operationalise article 42.7, EU HQ, training, exercises, culture
- Jointly procure and operate essential capabilities
 - Centralised purchases of all equipment needs by EU Commission
 - Pool strategic enablers which single Member States can't operate
- Generate forces together
 - Multinationally fulfil 250,000 EU contribution to NATO NFM
 - Move towards a "28th regime" for the military

Towards a “European Army” beyond that

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- “28th regime” for defence
 - > On top of national defence forces
 - > High readiness reaction force
 - > Kind of “frontex” model
- Will require governance changes
 - > Full treaty change
 - > Reimagining PESCO
 - > Coalition of the willing
- From private to general
 - > Common education, culture
 - > Integration at platoon level?
 - > Loyalty and democratic control?

AN INTEGRATED EU DEFENSE FORCE

FUTURE MADE IN EUROPE

The quickest and most effective way to put the EU in a position to defend against the “most extreme military contingencies” by 2030, standardise its defense industry, and deliver on its responsibilities in NATO, is to **create a joint, standing EU defense force** with common equipment, command and control and strategic enablers.

What would this look like?

2030

- The current “Eurocorps” becomes a permanent corps-level command with EU officers, command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, logistics and the necessary strategic enablers;
- The equipment (e.g. armored vehicles, planes) and strategic enablers (e.g. long range strike and air defense) of this corps are jointly procured and owned by the European Commission;
- National brigades are attached to this corps and together this force is pre-deployed to a fixed part of NATO territory where it trains regularly for deterrence and defense tasks, comparable to the NATO Multinational Corps;
- The total size of the force should be around 10 brigades, with EU personnel at corps level and Member State personnel at brigade level. It has the land, air, naval, space and cyber assets to form a full spectrum force package;



We generate the necessary forces to meet the new NATO capability targets of 49 additional brigades, which many Member States cannot provide individually. **This makes the EU better able to defend itself while strengthening NATO.**



We create aggregate demand for the defense industry, which can set bigger orders and create economies of scale to produce standardised equipment. **This ensures our forces can fight more effectively while saving costs to EU taxpayers and creating globally competitive industries.**



We create a standing force for deterrence and defense, which could deploy as a peacekeeping mission to provide a credible security guarantee to Ukraine once the conditions for a sustainable peace are reached. **This ensures our ability to protect our core security interests in the European neighborhood.**

Think about it like 3 kinds of hospitals

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A European Army: naïve to be against!

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"I really believe that the time has come that the armed forces of Europe must be created.

Let's be honest, now we can't rule out that America might say 'no' to Europe on issues that might threaten it.

Europe has everything it takes.

We need to stop reacting to what the US is doing, and start believing in Europe's own strength."



Or from the guy who pays for my rent:

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How is Volt working on it?

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The battle of the narratives

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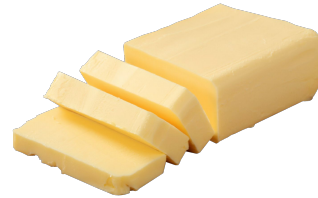
**THIS IS
WAR**



VS

VS

VS



A snapshot of our efforts

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ROADMAP TOWARDS A COMMON DEFENCE FOR EUROPE



ANALYSING EIGHT GOVERNANCE MODELS
A study by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)
commissioned by Charge Research Platform Volt

Charge //

www.charge-volt.org



FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

- > Legislation
- > Communication
- > Events
- > Working visits
- > Petitions
- > Research



Volt: 'Europese opperbevelhebber van NAVO; moeten Amerika niet nodig hebben'

Columns & Optie • 06/01 • Aangepast om 06:01

ijdens de NAVO-top moet het niet alleen gaan over een ogere NAVO-norm, maar vooral over hoe Europa zichzelf aat verdedigen, stelt Volt-leider Laurens Dassen. Een uropese opperbevelhebber van de NAVO, een Europees rger dat het Amerikaanse leger niet meer nodig heeft, en lle uitgaven bovenop de oude 2 procentnorm moeten uropes gedaan worden.

It is een opinie van Tweede Kamerlid Laurens Dassen (VOLT).

AN INTEGRATED EU DEFENSE FORCE

FUTURE  MADE IN EUROPE

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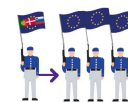
Strategic level (existing military and political control)



Operational level (staff officers, command and control, logistics, ISR, strategic enablers)



Tactical level (national units with standardised equipment procured and owned by the EU commission)



We create the necessary forces to meet the new NATO capability targets of 49 additional brigades, which many Member States cannot provide individually. This makes the EU better able to defend itself while strengthening NATO.



We create aggregate demand for the defense industry, which can set bigger orders and create economies of scale to produce standardised equipment. This ensures our forces can fight more effectively while saving costs to EU taxpayers and creating globally competitive industries.



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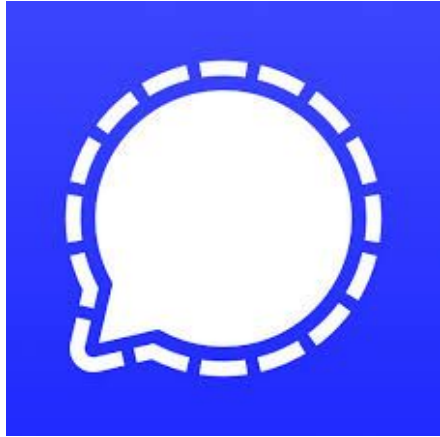
What has Volt been doing?



- **Position Paper for our overall vision (december 2024)**
- **Legislation/resolutions**
 - White Paper on the Future of European Defence
 - Readiness 2030 and SAFE instrument
 - European Defence Industrial Programme
 - Institutional implications for common European Defence
 - Defence Readiness Omnibus
 - Permitting
 - Intra-EU transfers
 - Procurement
- **Shaping the position on defence in the Green group**
- **Pushing for a European plan for Ukrainian victory**

How do we operate?

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- **"Common Defence?"**
 - Europeans (81%)
 - Ireland (+27 %)
 - Finland (+24%)
 - Denmark (+17%)
- **Preference for European Army, national, or NATO?**
 - Germany (69%, 13%, 12%)
 - Poland (37%, 24%, 29%)
- **Core "sovereign" topic inspires bottom up pro-EU sentiment**
- **Centrist political leaders are behind the curve**
- **Challenge: no "guns or butter" trap (top voter concern)**



Wannes Verstraete

European nuclear deterrence in the Trump-Putin era

A photograph of Emmanuel Macron, President of France, holding a black umbrella. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He is smiling slightly. The background is a light blue map of Europe. There are two other umbrellas visible: a blue one on the left and a red one on the right. A large orange triangle is on the right side of the image.

VOLT LECTURE: HOW TO DEFEND EUROPE?

European nuclear deterrence in the Trump-Putin era



THE 'WHAT, WHO, AND WHY' OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

NUCLEAR WEAPONS 101

• What is a nuclear weapon?

- Enriched uranium – Reprocessed plutonium
- Atomic bomb – hydrogen bomb
- Tactical/ theatre/ substrategic – strategic
- Differences in delivery vehicle and platform, range, yield

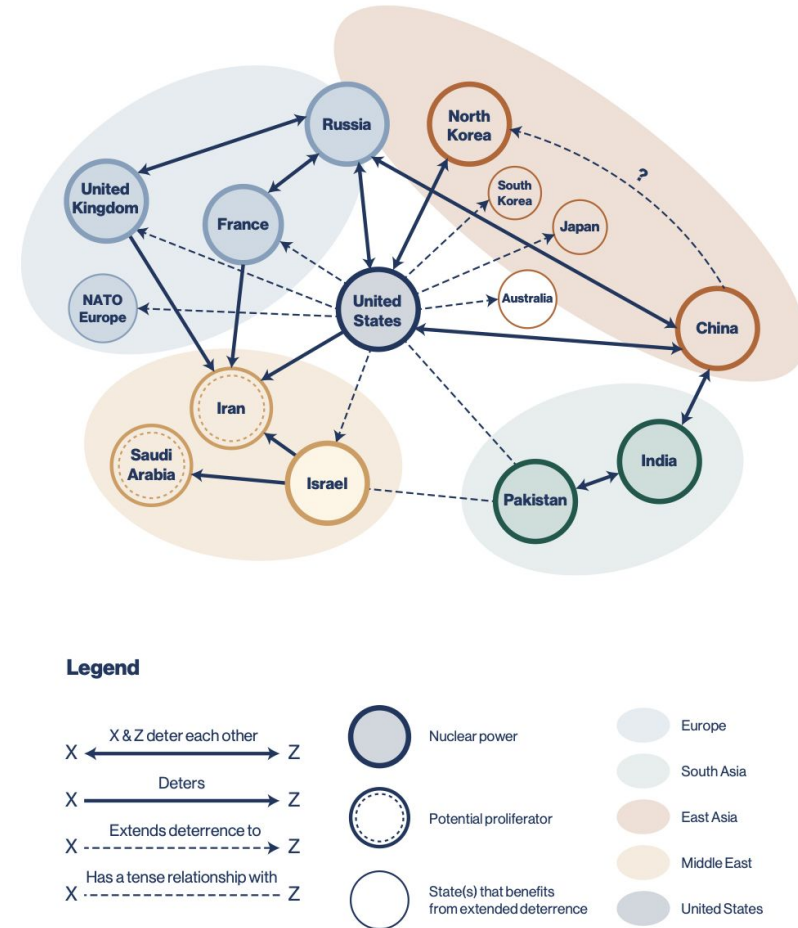
• Who has nuclear weapons?

- US (1945): #5044/ Russia (1949): #5580/ UK (1952): #225/ France (1960): #290/ China (1964): #500/ Israel (1960s): #90/ India (1974): #172/ Pakistan (1998): #170/ North Korea (2006): #50

• Why do states want nuclear weapons?

- Sagan (1997): security, domestic politics, and norms

Figure 1. Interacting nuclear dyads and strategic relationships





THE THIRD NUCLEAR AGE

THE NUCLEAR AGES

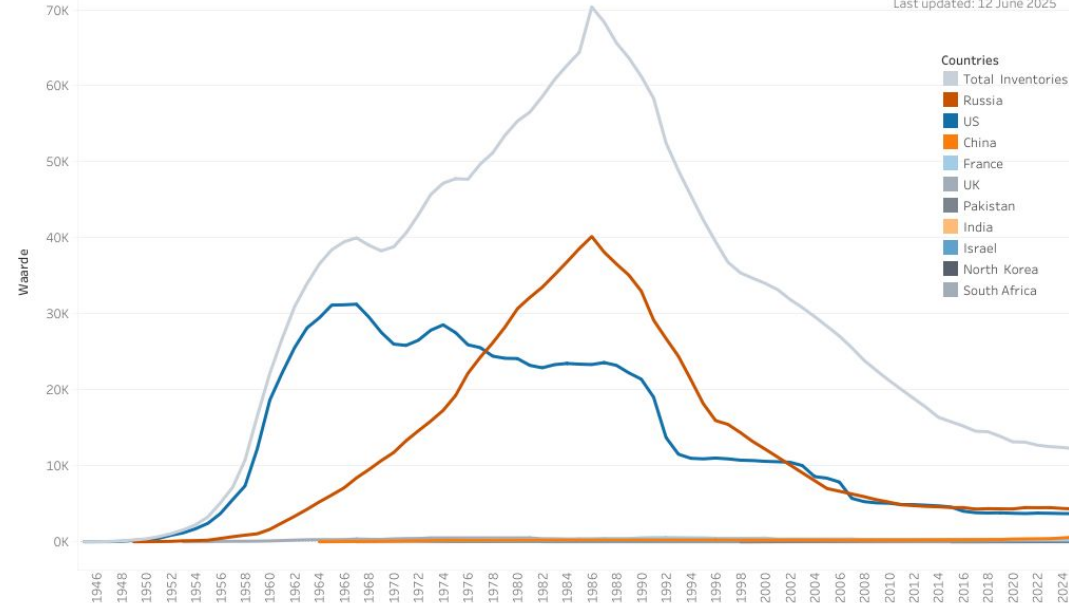
- **First nuclear age (1945-1991)**
 - Small number of nuclear states, two of which (the superpowers) built enormous arsenals
- **Second nuclear age (1991-2010s)**
 - Increasing numbers of states possessing nuclear weapons
 - But at the same time, absolute numbers of weapons are decreasing
 - Fear of proliferation to 'rogue states', 'nuclear terrorism' (dirty bomb)
- **Third nuclear age (2010s-...)**
 - Vertical proliferation
 - Return of major power competition
 - Risk of horizontal proliferation
 - Emerging & disruptive technologies
 - Erosion of arms control & radicalization of disarmament

Estimated Global Nuclear Warhead Stockpiles 1945 - 2025

Hans M. Kristensen, Matt Korda, Robert S. Norris, Eliana Johns, and Mackenzie Knight

FAS FEDERATION OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS

Last updated: 12 June 2025





THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN EUROPE

EUROPE'S NUCLEAR FUTURES

- **Scenario 1:** Maintaining the Current State of Affairs
- **Scenario 2:** Nuclear Disarmament
- **Scenario 3:** US Abandonment
- **Scenario 4:** European Nuclear Autonomy
- **Scenario 5:** Nuclear Proliferation
- **Scenario 6:** A New Division of Labor



Image by France24 (2025)

Macron (7 February 2020)

“Let’s be clear: France’s vital interests now have a **European dimension**.

In this spirit, I would like **strategic dialogue** to develop with our European partners, which are ready for it, on the role played by France’s nuclear deterrence in our collective security.”

Mertz (21 February 2025):

“We need to have **discussions** with both the British and the French — the two European nuclear powers — about whether nuclear sharing, or at least **nuclear security** from the U.K. and France, could also apply to us”.

Northwood Declaration (10 July 2025)

“we do not see situations arising in which the **vital interests** of either France or the United Kingdom could be threatened without the vital interest of the other also being threatened. France and the United Kingdom agree that there is **no extreme threat to Europe** that would not prompt a response by our two nations.

SHOULD EUROPE CREATE A NUCLEAR DETERRENT?

- **Uncertainty** regarding the US extended nuclear deterrence commitment & Russian nuclear threat
- **Possible alternatives** to a US-only umbrella:
 - French nuclear umbrella; an Anglo-French nuclear umbrella; an Independent German nuclear force; a Franco-German nuclear force, an EU nuclear umbrella; and a mixed NATO and French nuclear umbrella.
- **Obstacles:**
 - (1) size and flexibility; (2) NPT; (3) primacy of national interests; (4) fear of weakening the transatlantic link; (5) potential shifts in the intra-European (or intra-EU) balance of power; (6) strategic culture; (7) historical experiences; (8) domestic politics; and (9) geography



Illustration by Thomas Gaulkin; Photo (modified) by Dominique Jacovides / Abaca / Alamy

A photograph of Emmanuel Macron, President of France, holding a black umbrella. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie. The background is a stylized map of Europe in shades of blue and grey. A large orange triangle is on the right side of the image. A dark blue banner with white text is at the top left.

VOLT LECTURE: HOW TO DEFEND EUROPE?

Questions?



Jean Marsia

European defence at
last?

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Volt Belgium

European defence at last?



COLONEL MILITARY ADMINISTRATOR (RET.)

JEAN MARSIA, DR

PRESIDENT

EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR DEFENCE INPA (S€D)

15/10/2025

A necessity ⁽¹⁾



A necessity (2)



Colonel-General Mordvitchev, head of the Russian army since 15 May 2025, said on the state television channel Russia 1 in September 2024 that **the invasion of Ukraine is merely a ‘stepping stone’ towards a future war against Eastern Europe.**

It was under his leadership that Russian troops took Mariupol at the cost of heavy losses.

A necessity ⁽³⁾

Since 1949, NATO is unable to make efficient use of the defence budgets of its European member States and has failed to eliminate internal borders for European armed forces.

Like the EU, NATO is handicapped by the need for unanimous decision-making. Sweden's membership of the Alliance, requested on 18 May 2022, was not granted until 7 March 2024.



What are NATO's main contributions?

The link with American deterrence and a chain of command.

The Federation of American Scientists

believes the USA nuclear arsenal is 5,244 warheads, including 1,700 deployed and Russia has 6,255 nuclear weapons.

B61-12 360-kiloton nuclear gravity bomb are stationed across Belgium, Kleine Brogel, Germany, Büchel, Italy, Aviano & Ghedi, the Netherlands, Volkel and Turkey, İnçirlik under the NATO nuclear sharing mission and in WS3 bunkers.

In 2021, the UK decided to maintain 260 warheads in Faslane on submarines. In 2025, the UK buys F-35A to carry the B61-12.

France has 290 warheads on submarines in l'Île Longue, and tactical weapons on 50 Rafale aircrafts.



KLEINE-BROGEL
≡AIR BASE≡➔

O.L.Vrouwlaan 99
3990 Peer (BE)

A necessity (4)

The European Union is not a State,
but an **association of States**.



It operates:

- a Political and Security Committee,
- an External Action Service,
- a Military Committee.
- a Strategic Staff, **without Operational Headquarter**,
- a Defence Agency,
- a Satellite Centre,
- an Institute for Security Studies and
- a Security and Defence College.

As the EU does not have **military capabilities**, as its "strategic compass" **is only a declaration of intent**, it has no weight on the geopolitical scene.



INVEST

360 (6 pMS)



20+ (2 pMS)



200 (1 pMS)



380 Attack Helicopters (5 types)



180 (3 pMS)



1700 Fighter A/C (16 types)



140 (2 pMS)



114 (3 pMS)



60 (2 pMS)



480 (4 pMS)



130 (3 pMS)



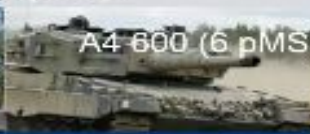
120 (2 pMS)



70 (3 pMS)



6 (3 pMS)



A4 600 (6 pMS)

120 Surface Combatants (33 types)



18 (2 pMS)



530 (6 pMS)

Fragmented Landscape

- 4.200 MBTs, 21.200 IFV/APC
- 3.600 fixed-wing, 2.500 rotary-wing Aircraft
- 2100 naval vessels

4200 Main Battle Tanks (12 types, 16 variants)



A5/6/7 1000 (7 pMS)

Invest

The EU is an economic heavyweight, weakened by insufficient investment in research and development: it has never reached 3% of GDP, the target set by the Lisbon Strategy in 2000.

We need to reindustrialise, especially in the defence industrial and technological base.

Western militaries need to feel the same sense of urgency that is driving Russia and Ukraine if they are not to be technologically outflanked and bring weapons systems to a war where they have already been rendered ineffective.

A necessity ⁽⁵⁾

A **single defence staff and MoD** should express the needs for re-equipment of the USE armies, included those of the USE member States,

because Armed forces need a strong **industrial and technological defence base**.

The EU **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence** and the **NATO Defence Planning** are not sufficient.

A necessity ⁽⁶⁾

How can Europe protect itself in the event of an attack, if the NATO fails to act due to a decision by Trump or the Congress not to intervene?

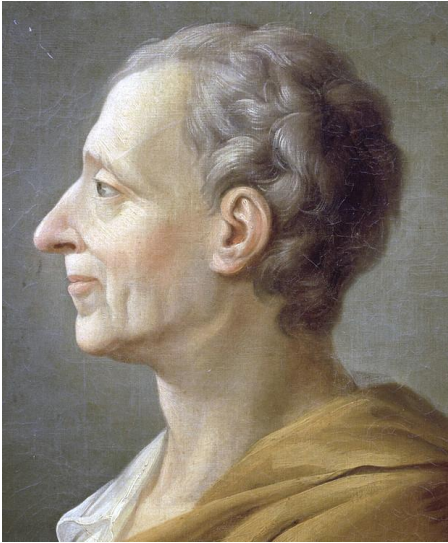
By stopping going along the wrong path set out on 9 May 1950 by Robert Schuman, who started uniting Europe by means of a first treaty.

A necessity ⁽⁷⁾

Political science: there are 4 paths to a more united Europe, 3 are unable to create a European State and a European defence:

- 1. **cooperation** = common standards cf. NATO;
- 2. **integration** = common law cf. EU;
- 3. **confederation** = USA (1776-1787), Switzerland (until 1848), Germany (until 1949), Russia (1990, Confederation of Independent States) ;
- 4. **federation is the only valid solution.**

A utopia (1)



In Book XI, Chapter 4 of *The Spirit of Laws*, **Montesquieu** argued that, in order to prevent the abuse of power in republics and democracies, power must be checked by power.

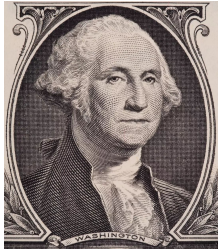
He **advocated the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers.** **This is not the case in the EU.**

Lessons from the past (1)

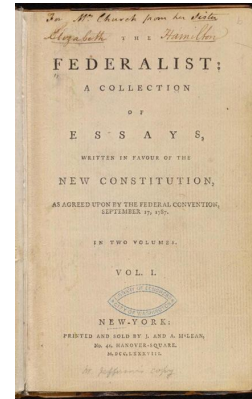


Benjamin Franklin published this in the Pennsylvania Gazette on 9 May 1754

Lessons from the past ⁽¹⁾



George Washington proposed in 1787 a federal constitution which he helped to draft. In 1788, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay published 85 articles, **The Federalist Papers**.



Lessons from the past ⁽³⁾

Dwight D. Eisenhower said in London, on 3/7/1951:



“With unity achieved, Europe could build adequate security. (...)

A solid, healthy, confident Europe would be the greatest possible boon to the functioning of the Atlantic Pact. (...)

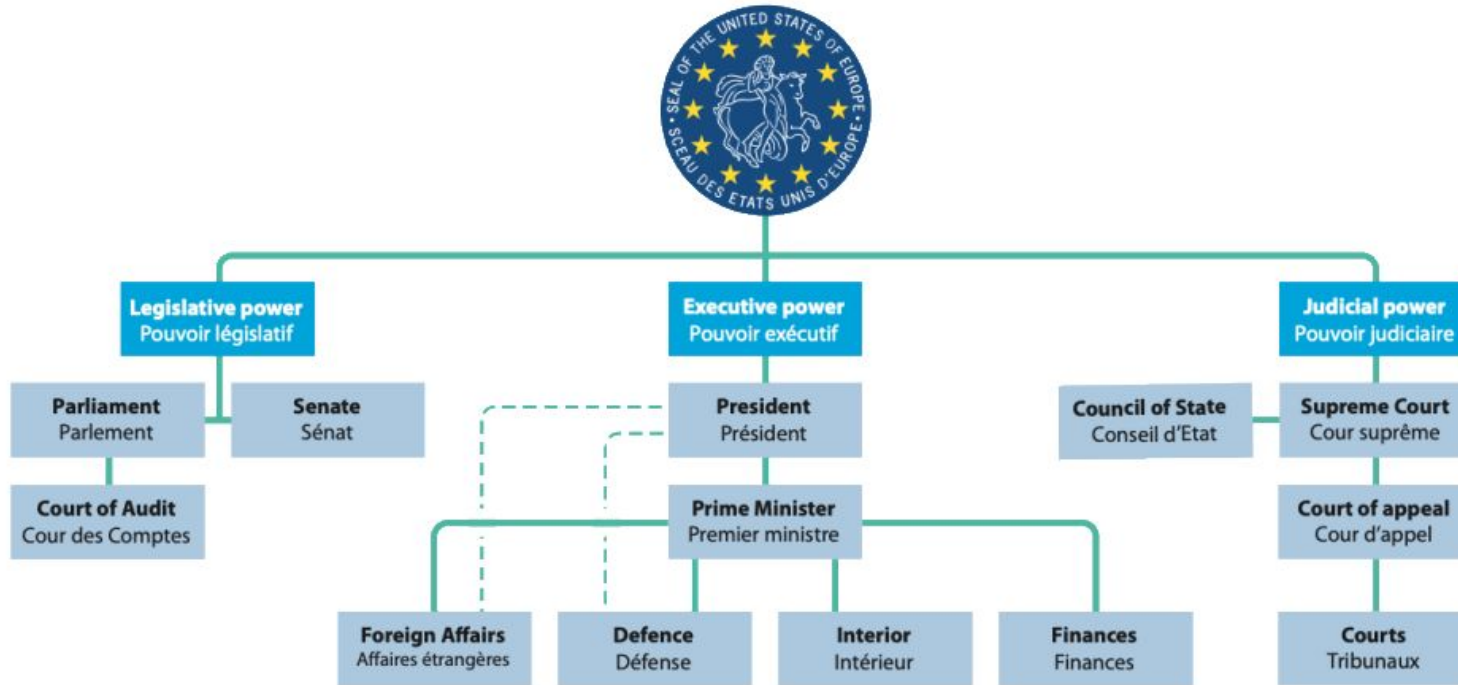
We can not reach maximum security without a united Europe.”.

Lessons from the past ⁽⁴⁾



Charles de Gaulle was right in 1953 to oppose the **European Defense Community**, and to demand a **political Europe**, capable of defining a **European security policy** as a **prerequisite** for a **European army**.

The United States of Europe? ⁽¹⁾

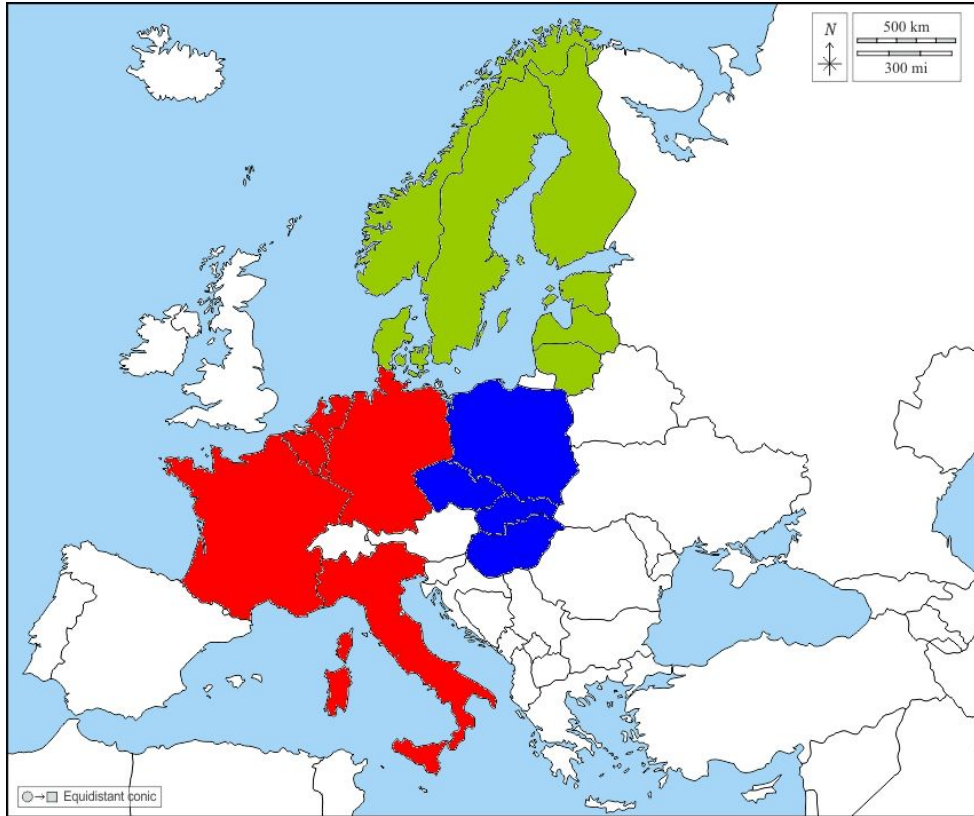


The United States of Europe? ⁽²⁾



The Bucharest
Nine

The United States of Europe? ⁽³⁾



The constitution of the United States of Europe (1)



Jean Marsia A federal constitution for the United States of Europe. Why and how ?



Jean Marsia

**A federal constitution
for the United States of Europe
Why and how?**

Preface by André Flahaut

The constitution of the United States of Europe (2)

A constitution contains a **social contract** and a **description of the executive, legislative and judicial powers**;

as well as **competences** by level of power

USE, Member State, Region :

Internal, Economic, Social and Environmental
Affairs, External Relations, Security and Defence,
Public Finance;

The constitution of the United States of Europe ⁽³⁾

The USA, where the US Army, US Navy,
US Marines, US Air Force, Coast Guards,
but also the National Guards coexist,
can inspire the distribution of competences
within the USE.

Conclusions ⁽¹⁾

Our governments should apply the **principle of subsidiarity** and deal only with the problems they are able to solve.

Issues affecting our **continent**, such as external relations, **security and defense**, coast and border guard,
or **the world**, like **climate change**,
should be entrusted
to **the USE**.

Conclusions ⁽²⁾



This is what the international non profit
association (INPA)
European Society for Defence (S€D) aims to
achieve.

<https://www.seurod.eu>

What's next?

Volt



01-11-2025

<https://volt.gent/agenda>



Bedrijvencentrum De Punt,
9050 Gentbrugge



Alberto Alemanno
Jean Monnet Professor
aan het HEC Paris



Tracey D'Afters
Gemeenteraadslid
Tervuren



Sophie in 't Veld
Voormalig Volt
Europarlementslid

10u–10u30	Inkom & opening
10u30-11u30	Vorbereiding Volt Europa motie voor de onafhankelijkheid van Europese rechtbanken
11u30-11u45	Q&A met gemeenteraadslid Tracey D'Afters
11u45-13u	Lunch met Sophie, Tracey, middenveld & burgers
13u-13u30	Online: Alberto Alemanno over de staat van de EU
13u30-15u	Themadebat: Democratische vernieuwing
15u	Afsluitende borrel