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UK and France Move Closer to Offering Europe a Joint Nuclear Shield

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The United Kingdom (UK) and France have signalled a willingness to offer extended nuclear deterrence to European allies, raising the prospect of a shared protective umbrella in light of mounting security threats and doubts over long-term US military commitments to the continent.

In a renewed show of military alignment, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron announced plans to deepen cooperation between their nuclear forces, hinting at a future framework in which both nations' atomic capabilities may serve as a strategic shield for wider Europe. Though details remain limited, the symbolic shift carries considerable weight, especially as Europe recalibrates its security stance following years of overreliance on the United States (US).

This initiative stems from renewed concerns within NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, over the reliability of the US security guarantee, especially amid political volatility in Washington. Some European leaders now consider it prudent to explore alternative forms of deterrence. In this context, the UK and France, the continent's only nuclear powers, are stepping up to fill a potential vacuum.

Under the evolving agreement, military officials have discussed joint patrol coordination, closer strategic planning, and the sharing of defense technologies. This update builds on the original Lancaster House Treaties, a series of bilateral defence pacts signed in 2010, and represents a significant step forward in Anglo-French defence ties. The new framework, informally dubbed Lancaster House 2.0, also includes collaboration on artificial intelligence for weapons systems and submarine technology.

While France traditionally keeps its nuclear policy strictly national, Macron's latest remarks suggest a shift towards a broader European focus. However, he was clear that any French launch decision remains solely with the president, maintaining full sovereign control over its nuclear arsenal. The UK, by contrast, operates its Trident nuclear deterrent in close partnership with the US, under the US-UK Mutual

Defence Agreement, which provides technical and logistical support for submarine-based missiles.

Though the announcement stops short of a formal treaty, it sends a clear message to Moscow and other adversaries: Europe is prepared to strengthen its nuclear posture if American commitment wavers. At the same time, this may prompt NATO members such as Germany and Poland to explore closer alignment with the UK and France in future deterrence strategies.

Conservative defence analysts have largely welcomed the proposal, viewing it as a pragmatic step toward European responsibility. Others, however, note that limited warhead stockpiles, high operating costs, and legal hurdles could slow implementation. For now, it remains a political signal, but one that may become crucial in the years ahead if transatlantic ties continue to fray.