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How to Deal Now With Europe

How President Trump's negotiators could take Europe, and President Zelensky, along with them. President Eisenhower experienced yet greater resistance to an Armistice from President Rhee of South Korea.

In 1953, newly elected Republican President Eisenhower wrestled with bringing a bloody three-year war to swift resolution. The leader of a medium-sized, far away country the U.S. sought to protect was hot to handle. President Syngman Rhee of South Korea ordered public demonstrations against an armistice, threatened to remove the Republic of Korea military forces from the United Nations Command, and pledged to attack Indian troops that might set foot on South Korean soil as peacekeepers. Rhee went so far as to [release](#) North Korean prisoners from POW camps unilaterally – an act which nearly derailed armistice talks completely. American officials considered Rhee “obsessed and irrational”. But clear with hindsight, had Rhee not made such provocative moves, South Korea would not have received a security guarantee.

The good news today for Ukraine: President Zelensky hasn't yet attempted *quite* such manoeuvres with President Trump (which mightn't work so well). And Ukraine needs to do all it can to ensure a **Europe-fronted** security guarantee. The U.S. is not going to provide a “backstop” for European (effectively NATO) troops in Ukraine – which ought now to be clear to British and French leaders. But if President Zelensky's conduct is reminiscent of President Rhee of South Korea (and I assert it is), Zelensky will likely remain intransigent towards any agreement until Ukraine receives a security guarantee. So how to convey credible, lasting deterrence – and bring Ukraine into an agreement following the summit in Alaska?

The Trump administration should suggest that European leaders use energy of the moment to forge something new: **FRUKUS** – an alliance of **F**rance, the **U**nited **K**ingdom, and (to begin) the **U**nited **S**tates. In the acronym, the U.S. expressly comes last, with the U.S. securing the guarantee for only seven years. After that, U.S. involvement sunsets, and Poland – which this year will spend a commendable 4.7% of GDP on defense – and Germany replace the U.S. to become “**F**riends of **U**kkraine and the **U.S.**”.

Germany and Poland should not be included at the outset. Minimize future perception of the U.S. “stepping out” and (with the U.S. sunset) a great diminishment of the guarantee. As the late Dr. Kissinger would surely have attested, an equilibrium needs to be *maintained*. Poland and, by 2032, a militarily [reconstructed](#) Germany stepping in would be the best means Europe has of achieving this, along with – following seven years of U.S.-ensured peace – Ukraine agreeing to lower its conscription age (presently at age 25) to 18, bolstering collective European deterrence.

The United States should not be the only country in the world capable of underwriting a credible security guarantee. The U.K. and France are both nuclear powers. Europe has a population five times that of Russia, a combined GDP ten times greater, and overall defense spending already three-and-a-half times higher. This alliance – France, the U.K., Poland, Germany, and Ukraine itself – given seven years to get its act together, ought to be able to deter Russia.

FRUKUS would not come with: Ukraine joining NATO's integrated military command, housing Western military bases in Ukraine, joint military exercises, Foreign Legion troops, or Western long-range missiles stationed on Ukraine's soil – all opposed by Russia. Ukraine, not having benefited from U.S./U.N. troops to hold off the aggressor, has a far more formidable defense-industrial base than the Republic of Korea in 1953 (which, post-armistice, required U.S. troops to steady the situation – stationed there to this day – which ought *not* to be emulated).

While the U.K. and France are commendably committed to Ukraine's defense, the two countries should drop rhetoric of their own troops being stationed in Ukraine. Instead, propose creation of a new French and U.K. military base in east Poland: "Fort FRUK."

The possibility of additional countries backing the security guarantee should be shut-down in the founding agreement, so there is no risk of FRUKUS becoming a backdoor to NATO 2.0. And establish a clear, ongoing mechanism for disputes between FRUKUS and Russia, managed by parties that maintain relations with both sides (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, Hungary, India, the Holy See) to curtail the potential for escalation. If Ukraine were to attack Russia, the security guarantee would be voided; FRUKUS would not support Ukraine. Any false flag attack from Ukraine would leave Ukraine without allies.

All countries involved would provide an Article 5-[strength](#) guarantee to the territory Ukraine maintains behind a U.S.-negotiated truce line (which Special Envoy Steve Witkoff earlier this year [welcomed](#)). FRUKUS would thus not be a replication of the Budapest Memorandum or Minsk agreements – neither of which were actual security guarantees (oft misstated, but [clear](#) to those who've studied the documents).

European leaders should ask for U.S. presidential generosity in providing security coverage for the initial years, to get FRUKUS off the ground credibly – stabilizer wheels to bring the European bicycle into motion. If the new U.S. administration is banking now on warmer relations with Russia, and thinks, at least for the next few years, it can keep President Putin in check, this early years protection ought not to be *too* great an ask.

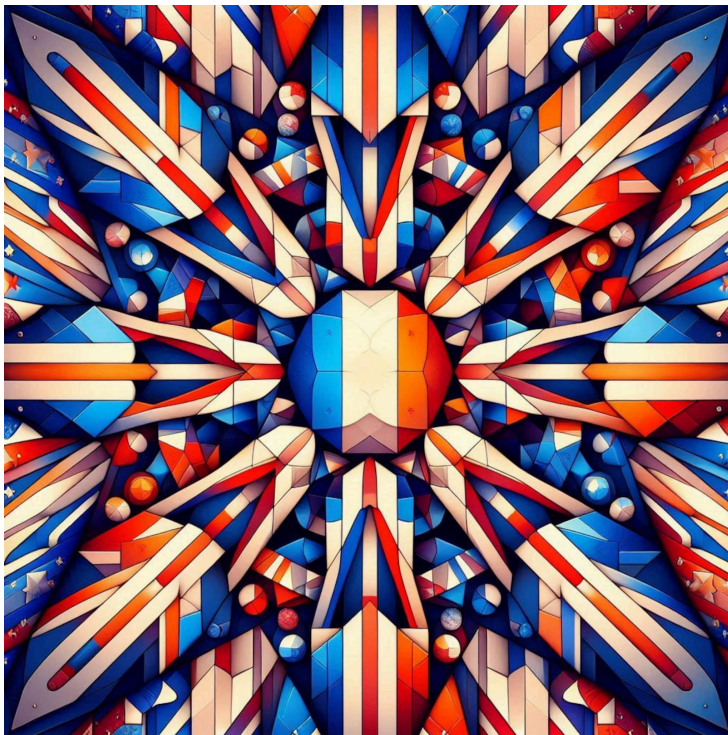
Establishing a Europe-fronted security guarantee, that both Ukraine and Russia *might* actually go along with, could allow the rest of the diplomatic jigsaw to fall into place. In sequencing, it was

agreement of a security guarantee [first](#) that enabled President Eisenhower to achieve an Armistice in Korea. It might yet be for President Trump.

The Korean Armistice, while imperfect, has stood the test of time – 72 years and counting. Eisenhower considered it his second greatest achievement (after D-Day). “Mr. President, FRUKUS would help us get your forthcoming peace agreement into the league of such company – enduring for decades to come.”

FRUKUS is to be pronounced like “ruckus”. It intentionally sounds like “don’t eff with us”. And were the U.S. President willing to grant an elapsing aegis, British, French, Polish and German leaders ought to build the alliance at speed, with Ukraine, to convey credible European deterrence.

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“The kaleidoscope has been shaken”