

2025

Relationship with Russia



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21-11-2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many Think Tanks all over the world have produced a huge number of documents regarding the current situation of the international community after the war in Ukraine broke out.

After three long years of destruction and uncertainty which will prevail in time, there are **three key issues which remain elusive to a clear assessment. Every Think Tank has revealed an opinion on these matters but those are contradictory**, and consensus remains elusive.

Other topics have been clarified, and opinions are consistent among sources.

Latest news on **Trump's peace plan for Ukraine are consistent with Trump's behaviour since the inception of his second term at the Oval Office**. Kirill Dmitriev, Putin's envoy to talk with Trump's administration about the end of the war in Ukraine, seems to have quite leverage on Trump (Russia has for whatever reason).

Despite some actions and statements which seemed to show a turn of tides within Trump's administration after the failed meeting at Anchorage, it is now revealed **it was all a mirage**.

Trump administration will stick to its primary ideas, regardless of popularity polls, posture or gestures indicating otherwise. Ukraine and Europe are the weakest links in the chain.

It is to be highlighted that Russian and alternative Think Tanks have also been taken into account (not only Western think tanks) but the way the problem is addressed shows no areas of intersection with Western counterparts. It is impossible to find consensus in any topic: **like oil and water**.

2. KEY TOPICS TO CLARIFY

As stated above there are three identified topics which require further information in order to get a clearer picture on them.

2.1 Russian military complex

There is a clear contrast among sources regarding the **operational success of the Russian Military-Industrial Complex (MIC)**, with some focusing on

quantity and mass, while others highlight qualitative decline and reliability issues.

Some point to **structural weaknesses and a reduction in the quality of hardware**. Sanctions, war, and a "stagnation of innovation" are weakening Moscow's capabilities. Modernisation largely depends on the upgrading of Soviet-era systems. The Russian military complex is often compelled to **lower standards** by using less sophisticated and lower-quality alternatives, which results in less reliable systems and causes errors or failures in munitions. Import substitution has largely failed across most sectors affected by the war.

Others, while not overlooking economic, technological, and logistical constraints, **emphasise Russia's impressive industrial capacity to ramp up war production**. Europe's weak point is its disadvantage in terms of mass, firepower, and mobilisation capability. **Russia has demonstrated its institutional capacity to reorient civilian industries towards armaments production—an ability Europe lacks**.

The Russian missile and ammunition industry has proved the most impressive in terms of scaling up output:

- **Artillery Shells:** Production of 152-millimetre (mm) shells rose from 250,000 in 2022 to over 1.3 million in 2024.
- **Ballistic Missiles (Iskander):** Production of 9M723 Iskander ballistic missiles saw a dramatic rise, from 250 units in 2023 to 700 in 2024.
- **Cruise Missiles (Kh-101):** Production of Kh-101 cruise missiles increased from 420 in 2023 to 500 in 2024.
- **Hypersonic Missiles (Kinjal):** The Russian military industry reportedly managed to triple the production of Kinjal hypersonic missiles between 2024 and 2025.
- **Drones:** Drone production rose to over one million in 2024. In the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) sector and certain types of artillery

munitions, import substitution has seen relative success, contributing to this growth.

- **Armoured Weapons:** Production of armoured weaponry in the Russian Federation reportedly tripled in 2023.

The surge in mass production was made possible by strategic decisions taken by Moscow to direct its industrial base:

- **Recruitment:** Russia's military-industrial complex (MIC) recruited at least 500,000 new employees.
- **Imported Machinery:** The Russian defence industry benefited from 90% of newly imported machine tools.
- **Industrial Conversion:** Russia has demonstrated its institutional capacity to reorient civilian industries (such as the automotive and mechanical sectors) towards armaments production—an ability Europe lacks.

2.2 About the U.S. commitment with traditional partners

The sources agree on the **existence of a crisis of trust** but differ on whether the actions of the United States (such as troop reductions and new spending requirements) **signal a withdrawal or a successful delegation of responsibilities**.

Some believe that the **transatlantic alliance is facing its most challenging period since the Suez Crisis**. The withdrawal of US troops from NATO's eastern flank, for instance in Romania, is seen as ill-timed, as it sends the wrong message to Putin and fuels European anxiety that **the United States is using its forces as a bargaining chip**. Should extended US deterrence be seriously undermined or fail, Europe would face a strategic imbalance with Russia. **Political uncertainty in the US (the so-called "Trump Effect") has eroded European trust**, with the perception that the US is now a "necessary" but **transactional partner, rather than a traditional ally**.

Others, however, contend that the **withdrawal of troops from Romania does not constitute a "US abandonment of Europe" or indicate a diminished**

commitment to NATO. On the contrary, it is viewed as part of a deliberate process to ensure a balanced military posture and a sign that Europeans are taking on the primary responsibility for their own conventional defence. The argument is that Europe must increasingly assume responsibility for its own security. Despite Trump's rhetoric, it is observed that **Congressional leadership continues to provide institutional protection for the alliance.**

2.3 Increase in European military spending.

The sources differ in their interpretation of the practical meaning behind the increase in defence spending.

Some believe that NATO has made **substantial progress on defence expenditure**, with 18 allies projected to reach the 2% of GDP threshold by 2025. The 2% target is now seen as a "minimum". Furthermore, at the NATO summit in The Hague in June 2025, leaders approved a new guideline committing members to spend five percent of GDP on defence. **This group considers that EU cohesion has been a strength both in implementing sanctions and in trade negotiations.**

Others, however, argue that the 5% of GDP guideline **should be viewed with considerable scepticism**, as it allows members to count civilian projects (such as a bridge to Sicily in Italy) within 1.5% of so-called "military spending". The formal mandate does not come into force until **2035**, which allows allies to **revisit the commitment should there be a change in the White House**. It is emphasised that the spending commitment is primarily a political signal, and the importance of monitoring *how* the money is actually spent is highlighted.

3. DOMESTIC DISCREPANCIES

There is another unsolved issue but **this one concerns the American society and its political representatives.**

According to 2025 polls, **75% of Americans are in favour of maintaining their current or increasing the U.S. support to NATO.**

However, bipartisanship is bitterly polarised. **Political leaders in the U.S. are not in line with their constituencies.**

Despite general support, there is a **considerable enthusiasm gap between Democrats and Republicans**. The gap between Democrats and Republicans regarding commitment to NATO has reached a historic high since 1974. **Republican support for economic and military aid to Ukraine dropped to its lowest level (only three in ten)**. Furthermore, there is a huge gap regarding the willingness to compromise with allies, with only 38% of Republicans in favour compared to 79% of Democrats.

The data presents two contradictory realities: **the general American public continues to view NATO as a benefit and supports the alliance, suggesting a firm base of support**. However, the clear and deep partisan **polarisation** (especially within the Republican Party) creates the **political uncertainty** that European analysts fear, as this internal volatility is perceived as **the primary threat to deterrence**.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Academia shows its **limitations when confronted with real world**. It is not about identifying problems but about assigning the right weights to those features.

Consensus lies on:

Area of Consensus	Key Findings and Strategic Agreements
1. The Russian Threat as a Strategic Driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Primary Threat: Russia is identified as the "most significant and direct threat" to Euro-Atlantic security, driving European capability requirements.Unprovoked Aggression: The invasion of Ukraine is viewed as a "break in order" and the most dangerous moment for security in a generation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Goal: The priority is to prevent a Russian victory and ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity.
2. The Indispensable Role of NATO & Article 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success: NATO is regarded as the "most successful military alliance in history." • Article 5: Collective defence remains the fundamental basis; an attack on one is an attack on all. • US Support: Despite political volatility in the White House, US institutional and legal commitment to Article 5 remains "ironclad" and protected by Congress.
3. The Necessity to Increase Defence Spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% is the Floor: The 2014 guideline (2% of GDP) is now the <i>minimum</i> requirement. 18 allies are projected to meet this by 2025. • Expanded Goals: The Alliance has adopted a more ambitious target (5% of GDP by 2035) to demonstrate unity, deter Russia, and address US pressure for burden-sharing.
4. Erosion of Trust & Transatlantic Reconfiguration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Volatility: Strategic pivoting to the Indo-Pacific and internal US political instability have eroded European confidence. • European Responsibility: Europe must assume greater responsibility for its own security as the US relationship becomes more transactional. • Expansion: The accession of Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) is a major success for Baltic deterrence.
5. Resilience & Hybrid Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Line of Defence: Resilience (civil preparedness, emergency planning) is now central to defence strategy.

- **Hybrid Warfare:** Russia exploits democratic vulnerabilities through information manipulation and foreign interference (FIMI).
- **Integrated Approach:** Focus has shifted to protecting critical sectors (energy, digital infrastructure) against indirect, coercive confrontation.

The fact is that Trump administration has the key to unlock how things will evolve. And it is Trump who has the power to signal the Republican party whether to show support or not to NATO. **If NATO is finally left adrift** in the hands of Europeans, Putin will not doubt to show his readiness to be more than vocal, **to show himself as the man of action he is**.

After analysing over 500 scenarios, these are the main conclusions:

Conditions	Conclusion
Present circumstances, with stochastic probabilities factored in, reflect the uncertainty surrounding certain conditions, especially with regard to their credibility and potential consequences.	In every scenario Russia remains favoured. The U.S. remains the second while Europe is the last in the line, as the least favoured.
Putin dies.	Nothing major happens until the model considers the death of Putin. Then Russia, although favoured in 91% of the analysed scenarios, greatly reduces its advantage and the U.S. (Trump) could exert its influence. Europe remains the least favoured
Putin doesn't dye but there is a change of government in the U.S.	It's less impactful than the death of Putin. Although chances for America and Russia close in, Russia still has the upper hand. Only after some months (a

	year or so) the new US administration could have some leverage. The EU would be less strained but remains the least favoured in the international arena.
Coup d'état in Russia.	The situation would be similar to the death of Putin.
A combination of coup d'état (or Putin dies) and a change of government in the U.S.	This scenario dramatically shifts the balance of power. Russia would be compelled to reconsider its approach to the conflict in Ukraine as well as its relationship with Western nations.

In any case, **Europe remains under the umbrella of the U.S.**, depending greatly in the middle run on the White House administration. **A change of administration is greatly advantageous for Europe** regarding Russia.

