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June 2025

The Future of NATO

*The United Kingdom:
Leading the Euro-centric turn in NATO*



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1

Introduction

As a founding member of NATO, the United Kingdom tends to see itself as the alliance's most important European member. This is reflected in the UK's vast presence across the treaty area, including as lead of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia and enhanced Air Policing (eAP) in Romania and Estonia. The United Kingdom is also firmly committed to reinforcing the shift towards integrated deterrence and defence, thus reaffirming that NATO is at the core of UK defence policy. Similarly, the UK's nuclear deterrent remains assigned to the defence of NATO. The previous Conservative government issued the so-called strategic defence paper *Delivering the UK's Nuclear Deterrent as a National Endeavour* in March 2024, in which the UK doubled down on its commitment to modernise its nuclear deterrent.¹ The defence paper also underscored that the United Kingdom is the only nuclear possessor state besides the United States that has assigned its nuclear deterrent to NATO. This clearly underlines the UK's unique role in the alliance's overall deterrence strategy.

The Labour Party has been in power in the United Kingdom since July 2024, but the new government has yet to produce a substantial strategy document outlining the UK position on key security issues, including its Russia strategy and wider understanding of threats to national security. It has, however, initiated the so-called *Strategic Defence Review 2024–2025* (SDR), which presumably will be published in mid-2025.

Previous Conservative governments, however, issued several Integrated Reviews, and the most recent *Integrated Review Refresh: Responding to a more contested and volatile world*, published in March 2023, appears more or less to be still in place until the Labour government finalises its SDR.

Notwithstanding the upcoming SDR, the United Kingdom has traditionally and consistently spent more than 2 per cent of GDP on defence. Nevertheless, in the 2023 Integrated Review the United Kingdom committed itself to increase defence spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP (as fiscal and economic circumstances allow) and to lead a 'new conversation in NATO on burden sharing and future defence spending commitments'.² This renewed focus on burden sharing in NATO is a direct result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Although the United Kingdom clearly recognises that other geographic areas are of growing interest, in the 2023 Integrated Review the Euro-Atlantic was the 'overriding priority' and essential to the defence of the homeland. The 2023 Integrated Review also highlights that the United States 'in particular' remains the UK's most important ally. Accordingly, the 'depth and quality of the relationship with the US is unmatched'.³ Whether the so-called 'special relationship' will endure the Trump administration is unclear, but we may know more about the UK vision with the forthcoming SDR. Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited Trump in the White House in February 2025 with a promise to increase UK defence spending to 2.5 per cent by April 2027 (and further to 3 per cent in the next parliament).

1 Defence and Nuclear Enterprise, 'Delivering the UK's Nuclear Deterrent as a National Endeavour', March 2024, www.gov.uk/official-documents.

2 Cabinet Office, 'Integrated Review Refresh 2023 Responding to a More Contested and Volatile World' (GOV.UK, March 2023).

3 Cabinet Office, see n 2, p. 40.

2

Threats and responses

Russia as seen by the UK government

The threat from Russia has increased and evolved in the UK government's narrative since 2014. In 2015 the United Kingdom condemned Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, although it still held the door open for continued collaboration with Russia on other threats, most notably from ISIL (Daesh). The 2015 Integrated Review, however, also marked the starting point of closer cooperation between the United Kingdom and Ukraine on training Ukrainian armed forces.⁴ In the 2021 Integrated Review, Russia was projected to 'remain the most acute direct threat to the UK' in the decade to come.⁵ The 2021 Integrated Review also launched a 'tilt' towards the Indo-Pacific, however.

The somewhat cautious approach to Russia the United Kingdom had taken since 2015 changed following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In the 2023 Integrated Review, a more extensive threat from Russia was outlined and UK security was linked explicitly to the outcome of the conflict in Ukraine (2023 Integrated Review). In effect, this position brought the United Kingdom closer to Europe despite Brexit. In this context, the UK government viewed NATO as 'the bedrock of our security' and noted that the alliance has increased in political importance and military strength. The government also declared that one positive outcome of amplified systemic competition is the renewed 'purpose' it conferred on relations with the UK's core allies and partners, of which the European NATO allies are most central.

The threat from Russia: NATO's role and UK leadership

UK think tankers in many ways share the government's assessments of the threat from Russia and the central role of NATO in the defence of the homeland. As such, there is an implicit understanding in most think tank analyses that Russia's war against Ukraine means that the United Kingdom must play a leading role in NATO and, more broadly, in Europe. This line of thinking was further reinforced after the election of Donald Trump for the second time. Many have pointed towards an opportu-

nity for more UK leadership in NATO (Dorman, German and Uttley 2022; Arnold and Jones 2021; Arnold and Jones 2023; Chalmers 2025). At the same time, this discourse also highlights that the UK's ability to take this opportunity is severely hampered by the lack of investment in UK military capabilities (Arnold 2024; Chalmers 2024; Messmer 2024; Willasey-Wilsey 2025, Tully 2024; Hakmeh and Cournoyer 2024).

In a very similar narrative, we also find research that addresses the Europeanisation of NATO and its future direction. In this line of thinking, the roles of the United Kingdom, the United States and other key NATO states are dependent not only on the degree of European autonomy, but also on the strategic direction NATO chooses – between defence against Russia or global security concerns, in particular, in the Indo-Pacific. With a stronger European pillar in NATO, the UK's role increases significantly and accordingly highlights its 'pivotal role' in the defence of Europe, especially as it is a nuclear weapon state (Hakmeh and Cournoyer 2024). This in turn implies that 'tilt' towards the Indo-Pacific announced by the previous government appears to have been written out of analyses after the Russian full-scale invasion.

The fact that Russia is a threat to the United Kingdom and the West more broadly is, unsurprisingly, the joint understanding of UK think tanks. The threat from Russia is viewed on a sliding scale, ranging from the war in Ukraine as an action against the West intended to undermine NATO with the ultimate intention of destroying Euro-Atlantic collective security and making NATO 'pointless' (Danylyuk 2025); to the establishment of a new Sino-Russian order in Europe (Ohryzko, Sohn and Gic 2024); or even a full-blown threat to future global security (Ash et al. 2023). Common to these analyses is that Putin's revisionist ambitions extend beyond subjugating Ukraine (which in turn makes Western material and political support for Ukraine a matter of European, if not global security) and thus mean that the real task is to uphold and defend the liberal rules-based order itself. Some, however, see a more limited Russian ambition, namely to destroy Ukraine as an independent, democratic state (Myerson, Mylovanov and Sonin 2024).

4 Cabinet Office, 'National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015. A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom' (GOV.UK, November 2015).

5 Cabinet Office, 'Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy' (GOV.UK, 2 July 2021), www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy#the-national-security-and-international-environment-to-2030.

In addition, there is a general assessment that Russia considers itself as already at war with the West (Danylyuk 2025). This is evidenced by the increase in hybrid warfare and grey zone activities that have become the 'new normal' (Chatham House 2024). The UK discourse on hybrid warfare spans most areas, from weaponising migration – which is seen mainly as targeting EU cohesion (for example, van Rij 2024) – to information and cyber warfare (for example, Giles 2023), and the activities of Russia's shadow fleet (Childs 2025). There is a consensus in the hybrid warfare narrative that Russia has had limited success so far, except when it comes to the subsurface activities of the Russian fleet, especially in the Baltic Sea (Messmer 2024a; Vickers 2024). Despite the various levels of success, the underlining lesson in this discourse on hybrid or grey activities is that the West is facing an urgent challenge to develop policies and capabilities to respond to Russian hybrid warfare (for example, Vickers 2024).

Putin's nuclear sabre-rattling has also received some attention in UK think tanks, and there appears to be a general consensus that this is to a large extent just 'bluff and bluster' (Paul 2024). Putin's occasional nuclear rhetoric is, on this account, seen mainly as an attempt at nuclear coercion. Some consider that to date Putin has little to show for this (Paul 2024), while others are less sanguine (Giles 2023). Regardless of whether it has been a success or not, some have emphasised that such attempts are not unusual for nuclear weapon states, not exclusively Russia. However, the war against Ukraine has put Putin's sabre-rattling beyond business as usual (Paul 2024; Giles 2023).

China in Europe: economic and systemic ambitions

The dominant trend, according to the 2023 Integrated Review, was an increased systemic competition in which China plays a central part. China's intentions have been seen mainly as undermining the international rules-based order to reshape it in a more China-centric direction, in what the 2023 Integrated Review characterised as an 'evolving and epoch-defining challenge' to the international order. The discourse across UK think tanks is in some ways similar to the UK government's characterisation of China's rise as an epoch-defining challenge. In another strand of thinking, however, there is a fundamental critique of UK governments, or more particularly of successive Tory prime ministers, for failing to develop a real or clearly defined China policy. There has therefore been a call for the incoming Labour government to develop a solid and clear China policy (Jie 2024a; O'Sullivan and Matthews 2025).

That being said, China's intentions in Europe are regarded as being driven mainly by economic interests and systemic ambitions. China's economic interests in European markets are vast and dependent on a Sino-European relationship based on principles that are amenable to them. Accordingly, analyses of Chinese interests in, and policies towards,

Europe come with a warning to ensure that Europe and/or the United Kingdom do not develop new dependencies or subject themselves to 'malign influence' (O'Sullivan and Matthews 2025; Bego 2025).

Because of Russia's war against Ukraine, this economically focussed discourse highlights that the Chinese leadership is in dire straits because, on one hand, they appear to want to secure Sino-Russia relations, while on the other, there are concerns that support for Putin jeopardises trade with Europe (for example, Kausal et al. 2024; Jie 2024b). These economic interests also explain why the Chinese political leadership has been showing some uncertainty concerning how to respond to the Russian war (Nouwens 2022; Jie 2024b).

Others have highlighted that the (re)election of Trump has provided an opportunity for China to assert its position, especially in the Global South, as a leader in the face of what, in China, is seen as the demise of the Western rules-based order, and therefore to challenge US dominance (Havrén 2025; Jie 2025).

With regard to Euro-Atlantic security, the narrative focuses on China's limited interest in having a regional military presence, except in the Arctic (Thomassen, Cervasio and McClafferty 2024). In the longer term, however, there is little doubt that China is seeking a more substantial role in the Euro-Atlantic, primarily to secure its trade (Kaushal et al. 2024; Jie 2024). At the same time, there is another strand of analysis that is concerned with China's increased military capabilities and their implications for international security (Mattelaer 2024; Black and Kaushal 2025; Kaushal et al. 2024). In this security focussed discourse, for example, think tankers are concerned with the implications of China's rise as a second nuclear peer to the United States (Mattelaer 2024). Specifically, the arrival of China as a nuclear peer can impact NATO in three ways. First, by raising questions of whether NATO's 'legacy posture' can handle the Chinese challenge; secondly, and closely related to the Cold War legacy, by fundamentally complicating decision-making on deterrence, which could spill over and erode confidence in extended deterrence. Finally, there is also a view that there will have to be renewed focus on theatre-level nuclear weapons. Trump's re-entry into international politics magnifies all three aspects. In much the same vein, others note that China seeks to destabilise the West to detract attention from its objectives in the Indo-Pacific (Fraser 2024). Other analysts focus on China's electronic warfare capabilities (Black and Kaushal 2025).

The Sino-Russia relationship: who has the upper hand?

The Sino-Russia relationship has been characterised, in UK think tank analysis, as intensifying following Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. There seems to be agreement that China and Russia are aligned in a quest to shift the geopolitical balance in their favour (des Garets Geddes 2023; Fraser 2024; Jie 2024; Ash et al. 2023). The key ques-

tion with regard to the relationship, however, concerns which is the stronger of the two and which state benefits more in the relationship. In one strand of thinking, Russia is considered the weaker party by far and, consequently, Russia has been 'subsumed' into the Chinese vision of a world order. At the same time, Russia is seen to need China more than the other way around, primarily for economic reasons, that is, mainly to secure a market for its oil exports, which in turn is closely linked to Russia's war fighting ability (Fraser 2024; see also Ferris 2025). Others see the Sino-Russian relationship differently, however, and argue that Russian energy exports are of critical importance to China as a country that has put energy security at the heart of its economy. At the same time, the Russian market for Chinese high-end manufacturing products is increasing in importance as Western markets are set to restrict Chinese access (Jie 2024; also des Garets Geddes 2023). In addition, China finds itself in a double bind, as isolation from the West via too close alignment with Russia is damaging. However, China is in no position to side with the West either (Jie 2024).

3

The war against Ukraine. Peace and Ukraine's future place in the European security architecture

The discourses surrounding the war against Ukraine, the eventual peace settlement and Ukraine's place in the European security architecture has, unsurprisingly, developed over time, reflecting developments on the ground and in international politics, most notably the election of Trump.

According to one view, at the start of the invasion the war was fundamentally about the survival of the rules-based order. In this line of thinking, the war must end in total defeat for Russia, with Russian troops expelled from all Ukrainian territory. Moving the war into a frozen conflict, or granting Russia certain territories, will not only be a defeat of the rules underpinning the liberal order, but also a clear signal to revisionist Russia that it can continue its quest to subjugate other territories, and, crucially, it would confer legitimacy on future expansions (Ash et al. 2023; Smith 2023). A decisive defeat will also, on this view, pave the way for a fundamental change of political outlook and leadership in Russia, leading them to embrace the principles of a rules-based order. It is argued that Ukraine's place in the European security architecture is therefore solidly in both NATO and the EU – the two key institutions underpinning the order – and membership will be a result of Ukraine exercising its sovereign rights to choose alliances.

Approximately two years into the war the discourse further developed, and analyses underscored how NATO has failed Ukraine – to some extent – by giving only 'vague' commitments to future NATO membership. In this discourse, Putin's aim is to fully destroy the Ukrainian state, and accordingly, there is little doubt that without any firm commitment to Ukrainian NATO membership, and thus security guarantees, any peace agreement will have little effect on revisionist Russia, which will continue to invade Ukraine as and when it suits the Kremlin (Myerson, et al. 2024; Lutsevych 2025). In addition, as Russia's aim is the total obliteration of Ukraine in this discourse, there is no sense in striking a peace agreement that concedes territory to Russia. Indeed, 'if your adversary's goal is your total destruction, territorial concessions will not buy an end to the war; they will merely weaken your position' (Myerson et al. 2024). Rather, in this narrative, peace should start with Ukraine militarily stabilising the frontline before beginning any peace negotiations and only based on the understanding that an agreement

will be backed by NATO guarantees. It is further highlighted that NATO has previously admitted a new member (Federal Republic of Germany) to NATO despite unresolved border issues, and it is further speculated that NATO could grant Ukraine de facto membership (Myerson et al. 2024). In this discourse, NATO's role in both devising and more importantly making any agreement credible is considered decisive for Ukraine's long-term independence.

The idea of land for peace as the basis for a peace settlement or a pause to the war in Ukraine was mentioned mainly in the very early days of Trump's presidency. This discourse is associated with the historical analogy of Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938. Like then, the discourse highlights that a land deal with Putin would at best only bring about a temporary halt to revisionist Russia and would be utterly futile as a peace solution. In this analytical framework there is also speculation that Putin's main motive for agreeing to a land for peace deal is not to recuperate his losses and an opportunity to rebuild, but rather to accommodate Trump and give him something to 'trumpet at home as a success' (Willasey-Wilsey 2025). Similarly, it is speculated that Trump in all probability would be even more reluctant to engage with the war once it starts again following the pause (Willasey-Wilsey 2025; Ash et al. 2023).

Other early debates following Trump's re-entry into international politics were concerned with 'stabilis[ing] a ceasefire or a more comprehensive peace' once the ceasefire has happened and suggest bringing in the OSCE (Jones 2024; also Jones 2022). In this discourse, maintaining the peace is as monumental a task as negotiating it, and utilising the OSCE is seen as being in the interests of both Russia and the United States. Indeed, it is a 'low-cost way of giving the US a voice' and Russia will understand the value of risk reduction measures as a matter of *realpolitik* (Jones 2024). Similarly, as Trump was about to enter the White House, a cautionary discourse emerged concerned with ensuring that the Ukrainian people are heard in any Putin-Trump agreement. This line of thinking is specifically concerned that Ukrainian people's safety, security and fundamental rights could be sacrificed, as happened to the Afghan people's rights (and lives) following Trump's decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan during his first tenure as President (Hartley and Mills 2024).

The latest developments, such as American reluctance to involve Ukraine and Europe in any peace agreement, the Trump administration's refusal to allow Ukraine NATO membership, Trump's reportedly friendly telephone calls with Putin, and meetings in Riyadh unsurprisingly sparked a new round of analysis across think tanks in the United Kingdom. The emerging narrative is focussed on how European leaders can manage Trump and thereby get a place at the table. However, the discourse has also quickly come to be about European unity and ability to ensure European security in a new era of transatlantic security in which the US plays a significantly lesser role. This is essentially seen as a systemic challenge.

4

Systemic challenges in Europe

Trump's re-entry into international politics

There are at least three discourses concerned with Trump's re-entry into international politics, and transatlantic relations more specifically, including the war against Ukraine. First, and prior to Trump taking office, a somewhat instructive discourse emerged aimed fundamentally at keeping the United States committed to Europe (Melvin and Reiss 2024; Gould-Davies 2025). Success in this endeavour is predicated on Europe's ability to step up in terms of providing for its own security and aid to Ukraine, as well as rebalancing its trade with the United States. The thrust was that this would increase the chances that Trump's government would remain committed to Europe.

In contrast to this instructional discourse, which reflects decades-old fears of US abandonment, a second and increasingly prevalent Euro-centric discourse is emerging which highlights that Europe needs to deal with its own essentially European problems and not rely on the United States. The argument is that 'European capitals should realise ... that the decision of war and peace in Europe still not only belongs to Europe, but that any solution cannot be found without a profound role for Europe' (Thomassen 2022a; see also Thomassen 2022b; Sabatino 2025; Arnold 2024; Vinjamuri 2025).

Related to this is a third discourse that has emerged following the Trump administration's political attack on Europe at the 2025 Munich Security Conference and its preference for sidelining both Europe and Ukraine in the negotiations with Russia on ending the Russian war against Ukraine. In this narrative, somewhat in contrast to the Euro-centric narrative, the focus is on the ability of European leaders to manage Trump based on the assumption that a US presence in Europe remains paramount, at least for the time being. The basic idea is that '[no] other continent stands to lose so much from US disengagement, so quickly' (Vinjamuri and Kanodia 2025). Part and parcel of this discourse are efforts to bring European states together to ensure a joint approach that transitions European security into potentially a new transatlantic era. Others claim that, in the reordering of transatlantic security, Europe can take its place in a US-China-Europe triangle and utilise this to bring the US closer to Europe again (Bego 2025).

Accordingly, the string of US government meetings with European leaders in Washington in the last weeks

of February 2025 are assessed mainly as a positive development that diminish the 'noise' from the hostility towards Europe expressed by Vice President J.D. Vance at the Munich conference (Vinjamuri and Kanodia 2025). These meetings are taken to show that as much as the United States under Trump would like to base transatlantic relations on transactions rather than principles, the US still has an interest in European security in some form or another (Vinjamuri and Kanodia 2025). The main issue remains, however, whether Europe will be able to pull together and establish a viable strategy for European security, which, in this discourse, has been underprioritised for decades (Vinjamuri and Kanodia 2025; Savill 2025; von Ondarza 2025; Melvin 2025).

In a similar vein, others argue that Europe must play a key role in aligning US and Ukrainian interests to ensure a durable peace settlement, which should be backed by European NATO forces on the ground (Lutsevych 2025). European boots on the ground in Ukraine following a peace agreement, however, does not enjoy unanimous support across the spectrum of analysis. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to commit ground forces because the actual number of troops needed are beyond what Europe can deliver, which means that European troops would be nothing more than a 'tripwire'. In turn, this means that Europe must be prepared to escalate to a full-scale conflict with Russia if the so-called 'tripwire' forces were attacked. In this line of thinking this is not out of the question, on the assumption that Russia remains committed to its original expansionist aim (Melvin 2025).

Redefining Europe's role in Europe

Following the meeting between Presidents Zelenskyy and Trump in the Oval Office in February 2025 a new analysis has emerged that reinforces the Eurocentric narrative and appears to move away from any stress on the need to 'manage' Trump (for example, Griegrich and Schreer 2025). Furthermore, since the ceasefire was tabled by Trump and Ukraine felt compelled to voice its assent (Puri 2025; Zagorodnyuk et al. 2025), the role of Europe has increasingly been seen as supporting Ukraine in defiance of the United States, which means that Europe must carefully balance the competing pressures from the US and Russia (Puri 2025; van Rij

2025).⁶ Some analyses argue that Russia will simply use any ceasefire to rebuild its forces, ultimately enabling it to become an existential threat to its neighbours. This in turn would require a significant European deterrence posture. However, this cannot be built on the basis of existing NATO structures, and would require a coalition of the willing ‘committed to ensuring that Russia is permanently denied the ability to wage expansionist war’ (Zagorodnyuk et al. 2025).

The ceasefire proposal is thus regarded among UK think tanks as evidence of Trump’s ill intentions towards Ukraine, and apparently favourable disposition towards Putin’s Russia. Putin is generally viewed as having the upper hand in relations between the White House and the Kremlin. In this line of thinking Trump is under a certain time pressure of his own making because he declared that he would end the war ‘in 24 hours’. If anything, time is on Putin’s side as he continues his operations on the battlefield in an effort to secure an even more favourable position when it comes to negotiating an eventual peace settlement. There is also general agreement that Trump at best has very limited diplomatic skills (Lough 2025; Zagorodnyuk et al. 2025).⁷

The most recent developments naturally dominate current thinking in UK think tanks. But even before the Trump administration revealed its (current) intentions for Ukraine and Europe, the fundamental question of the international or global order – the so-called ‘rules-based order’ – and its survival has emerged as a fourth discourse, developing against the backdrop of Trump’s many executive orders, burgeoning authoritarianism and complete disregard of the present order. In this discourse, Trump’s full-blown attack on the fundamental institutions that carry the rules-based order is seen as an irreversible break and raises the question of the possible emergence of a new ‘Trumpian’ order (Hurlburt 2025; Vinjamuri 2025).

⁶ Samir Puri, ‘Ukraine Enters a Perilous Phase of Fighting and Talking with No Assured End in Sight’, *Chatham House Commentary* (blog), 13 March 2025, www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/ukraine-enters-perilous-phase-fighting-and-talking-no-assured-end-sight; Armida van Rij, ‘Europe Needs to Make Its Own Plan for Peace in Ukraine – and Rouse Its People to the Threat from Russia’, *Chatham House Commentary* (blog), 7 March 2025, www.chathamhouse.org/2025/02/europe-needs-make-its-own-plan-peace-ukraine-and-rouse-its-people-threat-russia.

⁷ John Lough, ‘Approximately two years into the war other discourses emerged, which underscores how NATO has failed Ukraine - to some extent - by giving only “vague” commitments to a future NATO membership’, *Chatham House Commentary* (blog), 19 March 2025, www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/putins-negotiation-strategy-predictable-move-slowly-keep-trump-interested-and-reset; Andriy Zagorodnyuk, Alina Frolova and Oleksandr Khara, ‘Consolidating Europe’s Eastern Frontiers: The Options for Ukraine and the Continent’, *RUSI Commentary* (blog), 24 March 2024, www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/consolidating-europes-eastern-frontiers-options-ukraine-and-continent.

5

Conclusions

The analysis among key UK think tanks is characterised by four major trends. First, a significant amount of work has been devoted to UK assessments and arguments for UK leadership in NATO and, more broadly, in Europe. Second, UK analysis has demonstrated a clear consensus on the threat from Russia and Russia's intentions in Ukraine. UK think tanks are in no doubt that Russia is a revisionist power and will remain so. This in turn has led to several warnings that Russia should not be allowed any time or space to recuperate from its military and other losses so far, which would serve only to enable it to pursue its expansionist and revisionist ambitions. Third, Donald Trump's return to international politics is seen as a fundamental threat to the rules-based order, and more specifically as a direct challenge to European stability, NATO and Ukraine. Finally, UK analyses have undergone a Euro-centric turn and there is now widespread consensus that Europe's role has fundamentally altered and it must now become its own main security provider.

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Dr Gry Thomassen is Research Director at BASIC (British American Security Information Council) and Programme Director of BASIC's programme on Risk Reduction. She is an expert in NATO, including NATO-Russia relations, nuclear non-proliferation and the Arctic and she leads BASIC's work in these areas.

The Future of NATO – Country Report United Kingdom

NATO has been a key security pillar of German and European defence policy from the very outset. Since the end of the Cold War, however, it has undergone a series of international transformations and realignments, driven by developments in the global security environment and pressure from its own member states.

While the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has strengthened NATO's self-perception as a key guarantor of collective security, the change in US administration at the beginning of 2025 raises fundamental questions once again. What role will the US play in Europe's future security, and how might European nations respond to the situation?

This publication is part of a Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung study entitled "The Future of NATO", which summarises and analyses the ongoing debates on the Alliance and current security challenges in 11 member and 4 non-member states. These country studies form the basis of an overarching publication which seeks to provide possible answers to the unresolved questions and propose potential scenarios for the future of NATO.

Further information on the topic can be found here:

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