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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2025: development trends and new challenges¹

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Annotation. The article analyzes the key factors that can have a significant impact on the dynamics of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the near future. The year 2025 was marked by a noticeable transformation of the international configuration that has developed over the past few years. D. Trump's repeated victory in the US elections in November 2024 and the beginning in February 2025. The Russian-American dialogue on the normalization of bilateral relations, which culminated in the August meeting of the two heads of state in Anchorage, has raised serious concerns among Western elites about the preservation of transatlantic unity.

The possible prospects for a change in the nature of Russian-American relations have cast some doubt on the implementation of NATO's priority areas of activity, formulated within the framework of the new strategic concept in 2022, as well as in the decisions of the alliance's summits in recent years.

The methodology of this study is based on a systematic approach that allows us to consider in a complex the main factors determining the development trends of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as key challenges to intra-bloc unity. As part of the study of the processes currently taking place within the framework of the alliance, both general scientific and special methods of scientific research were used. Among them, the comparative method should be highlighted, which was used to compare the strategies of key members of the block, as well as the structural and functional method, which made it possible to identify certain changes in the nature of intra-block relations. The analysis, based on the application of a set of interdisciplinary methods of humanitarian research, seems to be fundamentally significant both in the context of assessing the possible prospects for the further evolution of modern international architecture, and in terms of predicting the prospects for the development of relations between the North Atlantic Bloc and the Russian Federation and other key international actors.

Based on the results of the study, conclusions are drawn about the emergence in 2025 of certain challenges to maintaining intra-bloc unity and further effective implementation of the strategic priorities of NATO's activities outlined in recent years. The noticeable skepticism shown by D. Trump's position on the current system of American obligations to ensure European security,

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complemented by disagreements between the new US administration and a number of European allies over a possible settlement of the conflict in Ukraine, can become a factor in a significant change in the nature of relations within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Keywords: NATO, international security, militarisation, global strategy, intra-bloc disagreements.

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Introduction

The modern world system is undergoing a complex transformation, the strategic vector of which being the gradual emergence of a new polycentric configuration of world order. The confrontation between the Russian Federation and the collective West, which has intensified over the past decade and culminated with the launch of the Special Military Operation, is a key component in the erosion of the international order elements that emerged after 1991, reflecting the desire of the United States and its Western allies to achieve unilateral dominance.

Despite the extensive research into various aspects of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's current functioning, such aspects as NATO development and its role in international processes in recent years continue to be an important subject of research. The relevance of this study stems from the major qualitative changes of the Alliance's activities in the first half of the 2020s. Maintaining the established NATO policy direction of recent years, as well as expanding the organization's focus area to new regions, including the Arctic, will inevitably contribute to a further aggravation of its confrontation with the Russian Federation and the degradation of the global and regional international security system.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in an attempt to identify possible future trends in NATO development, taking into account the changes in the existing architecture of international relations outlined in 2025. A key issue in these circumstances is assessing the potential impact of the Donald Trump administration's policies and their approaches to resolving the conflict in Ukraine on the implementation of the Alliance's strategic directions. These policies could potentially pose one of the most serious challenges to Euro-Atlantic unity in recent decades.

The purpose of this paper is to identify factors that could significantly influence NATO's development and the nature of intra-alliance relations in the near future.

The processes occurring within the military and political alliance were analyzed based on documentary sources, as well as current assessments by domestic and foreign experts. The theoretical background of the study is based on academic papers by A.A. Aleshin, O.P. Ivanov, V.G. Roshchupkin, P.S. Seleznev, E.S. Simanov, and F.O. Trunov, which analyze various aspects of NATO's functioning in recent years. The paper also pays special attention to the analysis of relevant publications by Western authors.

Russian scholars, with their own distinct research approaches, are attempting to identify key aspects of the impact of NATO's systemic transformation on Russia's national security. Numerous studies by foreign, and primarily American, authors focus primarily on the impact of international processes and challenges of recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, countering the "Russian threat," the prospect of a clash with China, growing instability in a

number of regions, and the uncertainty surrounding the second Trump administration's strategy for maintaining the alliance's internal unity.

The trend towards further NATO militarization and its potential impact on the European security architecture

By the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, the nature of international processes is largely determined by the growing imbalance of international security mechanisms. This situation is due to the attempts of the countries of the collective West to ensure the formation of an international order that best suits their unilateral interests, as well as to weaken the positions of potential competitors, primarily the Russian Federation and China [Ivanov, 2022: 5]. Against the backdrop of the instability of the existing world order and the growing threats to the international security architecture that has emerged in recent years, the role of NATO, as the most important military and political mechanism for realizing the interests of the United States and its Western allies, is of particular importance [Ikenberry, 2020: 131].

As Russian researcher A.A. Aleshin rightly notes, NATO's unique position in the modern system of international relations lies in the fact that "it is not only an international organization, but also a transnational political alliance. The North Atlantic Alliance has its own identity, which affects the identities of its member states" [Aleshin, 2022: 137-138]. The essence of this identity is the perception of NATO in the Western intellectual community as an association of "democratic countries having global ambitions and being responsible for maintaining international security and promoting Western values" [Aleshin, 2022: 151].

The Russian Federation's special military operation in Ukraine initiated a large-scale restructuring of the alliance's military planning system, and prioritizing the deployment of armed forces and military infrastructure in close proximity to Russia's borders [Jashlavskij, 2023]. At the present stage, a set of decisions adopted at the summits in Madrid (2022), Vilnius (2023), and Washington (2024) serve as the conceptual framework for the alliance's future strategy.

At the present stage, the functioning of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has acquired a complex and multifaceted dimension, including military-political, political, economic, and informational-ideological components [Roshchupkin, Simanov, 2023: 101-102]. The main vector of the military-political alliance's transition is its transformation into a tool for projecting the military-political power of the collective West in global terms [Antyukhova, 2024: 37].

Efforts undertaken in recent years are characterized as key steps in the history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and aimed at strengthening the alliance's collective military potential. The bulk of the activities related to the buildup of military presence and the development of military infrastructure over the past decade have fallen upon NATO's "eastern flank," which directly borders the territory of the Russian Federation and includes, among other things, the alliance's new members, Finland and Sweden [Wertheim, 2024].

At the Alliance's anniversary summit in Washington, held July 9–11, 2024, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's short-term action program was clarified and specified. It includes, in particular, "conducting more frequent and large-scale training and exercises in accordance with our plans to demonstrate... our ability to defend and rapidly reinforce any Ally that comes under threat..." ["Steadfast Defender 24," 2024]. In furtherance of the decisions taken at the Madrid and Vilnius summits, provision has been made to continue the formation of a highly mobile Rapid Reaction Force contingent of up to 300,000 servicemen, capable of full-scale deployment in the event of military action no later than within 30 days [Trunov, 2024: 185].

The NATO Secretary General's Annual Report (2024) emphasizes that the alliance continued to augment efforts to expand military infrastructure along its "eastern flank" in order to "enhance member states' alertness," provide "continued support to Ukraine," and promote "a stronger transatlantic defense industrial base" [The Secretary General's Annual Report 2024, 2025].

In addition, it is prescribed to continue implementing a set of measures in accordance with the decisions of the Madrid summit to increase the number of troops of the alliance's forward echelon, stationed on the border with the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine to 750 thousand people, with a total number of armed forces of the alliance's member states being 4 million people. [Strengthening the eastern flank of NATO, 2025] Thus, the number of the military group stationed along NATO's "eastern flank" is expected to almost double as compared to the 2022 figure. At the same time, there is a trend towards a significant increase in military spending by a large number of the alliance's member states. By 2024, 24 of the 32 states belonging to the alliance have achieved the military spending indicator of 2% of GDP planned by the decisions of the Wales summit. Six members of the military-political alliance have boosted their defense budgets beyond this 2 percent GDP guideline. Poland has become the NATO leader in terms of the rate of militarization in recent years, with military spending exceeding 4% of GDP in 2024. [Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank, 2025].

Despite the uncertainty about the future development of Russian-American relations, NATO authorities continued to implement a series of measures in the first months of 2025 aimed at exerting military and political pressure on Russia ahead of potential negotiations to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. The most notable event in this set of measures was NATO's most extensive military exercise Steadfast Dart (STDT25) held from January 13 to February 26, 2025, which practiced the large-scale deployment of NATO's Allied Reaction Force (ARF) in Eastern Europe [Kutyrev, 2025].

The Alliance's system of priority measures involves intense preparation for a potential direct military clash with the Russian Federation. The implementation of these measures is expected, among other things, by "taking full advantage of the accession of Finland and Sweden, and the capabilities they bring to the Alliance by fully integrating them into our plans, forces, and command structures, including by developing a NATO presence in Finland" [Steadfast Defender 24, 2024]. One of the key activities is the deployment of the Forward Land Forces' Multinational Staff Element under Swedish leadership in northern Finland and a regional Multi-Corps Land Component Command in Mikkeli in the east of the country. However, there is currently no discussion of establishing foreign military bases in Finland with the permanent deployment of large military contingents or the deployment of heavy offensive weapons [Posol Rossii..., 2025].

NATO's new priority is also to expand its military presence and develop its military infrastructure in the Arctic region, which has become increasingly important in recent years due to the region's geopolitical and geoeconomic significance [Seleznev, 2024: 493]. The key objective of the alliance's leaders in this area is to adapt its regional strategy to "counter Russia's and China's Arctic ambitions... and establish new positions where the United States and its NATO partners are not afraid to set the rules and laws governing the North" [Murkins, 2024].

Another important line of action for the North Atlantic Alliance is the expansion of its military presence in the Baltic Sea region. Following the Baltic Sea Alliance Summit held on January 14, 2025, the Secretary General Mark Rutte announced the launch of a special operation called "Baltic Sentry," with the primary goal of "protecting critical undersea infrastructure." The operation aims to "strengthen NATO's military presence in the Baltic Sea and enhance the Allies' ability to respond to destabilizing activities" [NATO launches 'Baltic Sentry'..., 2025].

NATO's comprehensive efforts to enhance its military capabilities, with a focus on increasing its military presence along the Alliance's eastern flank, pose a clear threat to the long-term national security interests of the Russian Federation. The ongoing territorial expansion of NATO is of utmost importance in ensuring Russia's national security interests. The accession of Sweden and Finland to the alliance poses a potential threat to Russia's borders in the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic.

Assessing NATO's expanding role in the Indo-Pacific

A fundamentally important area of the Alliance's activities, which received its doctrinal formalization within the framework of NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, is to contain the further strengthening of China's geopolitical influence in the Indo-Pacific. In this context, the mechanism for strengthening NATO's bilateral ties with its military and political partners in Asia and the Pacific, including Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand, plays a crucial role. The Alliance's documents emphasize as follows: "the Indo-Pacific is important for the Alliance, given that developments in that region can directly affect Euro-Atlantic security. Moreover, NATO and its partners in the region share common values and a goal of working together to uphold the rules-based international order". [Relations with partners..., 2025]. The Alliance's increased activity is linked to its strategic goal of containing China's influence, which is outlined in the Strategic Concept of 2022 as a priority threat to the alliance's collective interests [Strategičeskaja koncepcija NATO, 2022].

Each of the four partners in the Indo-Pacific maintains bilateral relations with NATO, guided by an individually tailored Partnership Program, which is a Joint Framework document on military cooperation that identifies areas of mutual interest, taking into account the development of contacts in a number of areas over the past two decades, as well as the experience of cooperation during NATO's operation in Afghanistan [Relations with partners..., 2025].

Given the geographic scope of NATO's activities, it is expected that the Alliance and its regional allies will develop coordination mechanisms to distribute responsibilities in the event of emergencies. One of the scenarios under consideration is a situation in which Japan, the United States, and South Korea can coordinate their actions in the event of the exacerbation of Taiwan crisis, which could coincide with an escalation on the Korean Peninsula. NATO is also preparing for potential conflicts in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait [Nagy, 2025].

It is expected to make the system of interaction between NATO and its allies in the Indo-Pacific as flexible and adaptable as possible to the rapid changes in the international situation. In this context, the United States is supposed to play a leading role in the collective West's response to crises on the Korean Peninsula and in Taiwan, relying on the Australia-South Korea-Japan trilateral, which is supported by NATO. This mechanism of multilateral cooperation is intended to perform not only a reactive but also a preventive function, thwarting possible crisis situations in the region and complementing other formats, including AUKUS partnership established in 2021 [Panda, 2025: 5].

Currently, there is no consensus within NATO regarding the extent to which the alliance should be involved in international political processes in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, there are significant disagreements among allies regarding the potential threats to European security posed by China's growing influence. Many European members of the alliance are reluctant to commit to additional military and political commitments in regions far from Europe.

Taking into account potential changes in the planning system, it is expected that individual cooperation between NATO members and IP4 partners in the Indo-Pacific will continue to develop, with a particular focus on cooperation in the defense industry, the exchange of military technologies, the improvement of interoperability, and the development of air and missile defense systems. Greater military and technological compatibility is intended to enable NATO members to assist the United States and its allies in the Indo-Pacific in the event of escalating regional conflicts, and it will also allow IP4 countries to contribute to strengthening the military capabilities of European NATO members.

How D.Trump's coming to power will affect the course of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

D. Trump's re-election as President of the United States is seen by a significant part of the Western elites as a serious challenge to Euro-Atlantic unity. Notably, during his inaugural term, Trump maintained a contentious stance towards the alliance [Caballero, 2025]. His primary

criticism focused on the uneven distribution of military spending within the alliance. According to D. Trump, this system allowed European allies to "benefit from the excessive generosity of the United States" [Prihod'ko, 2020]. Insisting on a fundamental change in the existing military spending ratio, he was the first American leader to announce a possible revision of the United States' commitments within NATO. Trump's active pressure was one of the key factors urging the alliance's member nations to significantly increase their military spending.

Contrary to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's grand rhetoric, who in July 2024 called NATO "the most successful alliance in history" [Secretary General Jens..., 2024], the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency gave additional impetus to discussions on the development of a "European defense identity", which intensified earlier after the failure of the NATO mission in Afghanistan in August 2021 [McConnell, 2025]. The EU Global Strategy developed in 2016 is considered as a possible basis for the implementation of the concept of "European strategic autonomy". D.Trump's outlined approaches to solving key international problems, including his declared readiness to seek agreements with the Russian Federation to end the military conflict in Ukraine, as well as his desire to focus U.S. efforts on confronting China, have reignited the debate about a possible crisis in the North Atlantic Alliance and prompted some European elites to resume discussions about expanding the EU military capabilities [Marrone, 2024]. An important aspect of the alliance's functioning in the near future will likely be the strategic dilemma associated with the European allies' attempts to expand their influence while maintaining their strategic dependence on US military and political support and the American military presence in Europe [Gonzalez Laya, 2025].

However, despite the efforts of the EU leaders, including the establishment of the European Union's Commissioner for Defence and Space for the first time in the history of the European Union, the ability of European states to be independent security actors remains extremely challenging.

According to E. Allessandri, an expert at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, in the context of the "international liberal legal order" crisis there is a major challenge whether NATO could possibly remain an alliance if the strategic interests of the West are no longer identified with the protection of the transatlantic community based on principles and values, but rather with the narrow interests of governments that prioritize their own country [Allessandri, 2025: 4].

The prospects for maintaining Euro-Atlantic unity are largely due to the limited resources of the United States, which is forced to focus more on its own geopolitical interests in the Indo-Pacific and reorient itself towards containing China's growing influence.

The issue of boosting military spending is one of the most contentious topics of discussion among European allies. Poland and the Baltic states are among the staunch supporters of increasing military spending. However, Italy and Spain have expressed significant concerns about the potential negative impact of this decision on the economic situation in European countries. According to some expert assessments, the implementation of Donald Trump's plans, which require European members of the bloc to further increase their defense spending to 5% of GDP, could cause significant financial difficulties even for the EU's economic leaders, Germany and France [Hood, 2025].

Discussions on the prospects for maintaining the unity of the United States and its European allies received an additional impetus after U.S. Vice President J. D. Vance made a speech at the 61st Munich Security Conference on February 14, 2025, in which he criticized several aspects of EU policy. This event, which gained widespread attention in European political circles and the media, further highlighted the significant divergence in international strategy between the new Trump administration in the United States and the European elites, who generally adhere to neoliberal ideologies. This discrepancy is generally in line with D. Trump's previous rhetoric, in which D. Trump expressed doubts about the effectiveness of NATO and demanded that European members boost their defense spending and become more independent in regional security matters.

In early March 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron proposed a discussion on the possible deployment of French nuclear weapons on allied European soil, virtually challenging the prospects of maintaining the American "nuclear umbrella" over the European segment of the alliance [Makron: Franciya otkry'ta k diskussii..., 2025]. This initiative was in effect an attempt to revive the idea of European independence in the development of nuclear capabilities, which had been periodically revived since the 1950s and 1960s. In the following months, Macron's initiative received some support from several European leaders, including British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

However, by the end of 2025, this proposal had not been implemented in any practical way and remained purely at a theoretical level. According to well-founded expert assessments, it will be extremely difficult for France to effectively replace the US guarantees in the field of nuclear deterrence of potential NATO adversaries. The key challenge in this regard is related to the quantitative limitations of the French nuclear arsenal, as well as the specific nature of France's traditional military doctrine, which reserves nuclear weapons solely for the defense of France to prevent any attack on the vital interests of the country. At the same time, it is possible to further foster long-term cooperation between the European members of the North Atlantic Alliance aimed at implementing programs for modernizing certain components of nuclear capabilities. The basis for implementing these projects will be the Anglo-French defense cooperation, which was an important topic of discussion during Emmanuel Macron's state visit to the United Kingdom in July 2025.

In terms of its international political component, the ideology of Donald Trump and his administration does not imply a return to an isolationist foreign policy, nor does it aim to completely abandon its commitments within NATO. However, the new American administration's policy involves a certain "reformatting" of the North Atlantic Alliance in the context of the United States' national interests. In practical terms, this goal primarily involves changes in the resource allocation within the alliance and urging European allies to shoulder a greater share of responsibility for implementing the alliance's strategy in Europe.

Conflict in Ukraine: Impact on intra-alliance situation in 2025

The military conflict in Ukraine has been one of the most serious challenges in the alliance's history. Over the past three years since the start of the Special Military Operation, NATO has transformed into the primary mechanism for providing military assistance to the Kiev regime. However, according to the alliance's leaders, this conflict serves as an important testing ground for modern warfare. One of the promising areas of military planning in this context is the introduction of unmanned technologies, which are highly promising in terms of their combination of efficiency and cost-effectiveness [V NATO nazvali..., 2025].

By the fall of 2025, the total amount of military aid provided to Ukraine by NATO members exceeded \$191 billion. The United States accounted for 54% of the total financial assistance provided by the North Atlantic Alliance to the Kyiv regime. Germany was the second-largest contributor in terms of military aid. Other NATO member countries that provided significant amounts of military assistance to Ukraine included the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Poland, and Norway [A Database of Military, Financial & Humanitarian Aid, 2025].

Based on the decisions of the NATO summit in Washington, as recorded in the "Long-Term Security Commitment to Ukraine" [Deklaracija Vashingtonskogo sammita, 2024], the alliance's initiative to assist the Kiev regime by coordinating the supply of weapons and military equipment, providing military training, and offering logistical support is currently ongoing. The goal of NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) is to provide "security assistance" by ensuring "enhanced, predictable, and coherent support" [Deklaracija Vashingtonskogo sammita, 2024].

At the same time, the advent of the second Trump administration has revived discussions about NATO's strategy implemented in Ukraine, raising questions about the continued functioning of the military-technical assistance mechanisms established in previous years for the Kyiv regime. The key factor that has raised serious concerns among the alliance's key European members is the new American administration's refusal to supply weapons to Ukraine on a non-repayable basis. Essentially, this approach implies a complete shift of responsibility for financing military supplies to the European allies.

Against this backdrop, a number of European member states, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Poland, the Nordic countries, and the Baltic States, attempted to form an opposition to Donald Trump's proposed course of action to resolve the Ukrainian crisis in early 2025. These disagreements posed a potential threat to the bloc's internal cohesion. Affected by the new American administration's policies, a number of European members of the North Atlantic Alliance have attempted to form an informal coalition aimed at continuing the hybrid war against the Russian Federation [Evropa ne zhelaet prekrashhat', 2025]. The main initiators of this process have been the United Kingdom and France.

The Trump administration's efforts made in the first months of 2025 to initiate a peace dialogue to resolve the conflict in Ukraine became a factor that caused the most significant disagreements within NATO in recent years. Zelensky's failed visit to Washington on February 28, 2025, as well as the European summit on Ukraine held in London on March 2, 2025, demonstrated the further erosion of the collective West's position, which used to be unified until recently. According to the former Commander-in-Chief of NATO's Armed Forces in Europe James Stavridis, the recent disagreements between the United States and its European allies could "drive a wedge deep into the very heart of the alliance" and have a negative impact on it [Jeks-glavkom predupredil..., 2025].

Concerns about the effectiveness of U.S. guarantees have been an important factor in intensifying discussions among European members of the alliance about strengthening their own security identities. As the United Kingdom seeks to increase its geopolitical role in the wake of Brexit, it is pursuing a leadership position within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This challenge to the leadership is based on the nation's special relationship with the United States that has been in place since the mid-20th century. One of the important elements of the British strategy, which has been pursued by government cabinets in recent years, regardless of their party composition, is the reorganization of the armed forces, the expansion of the military-industrial complex, and the resulting significant increase in military spending. According to the 2025 Defence Strategic Review formulated by the British government, the ultimate goal of the military-political planning system is to prepare the UK for a "high-intensity military conflict" [The forthcoming strategic review, 2025]. An important aspect of achieving this strategic goal is the development of bilateral military-political ties between the UK and such EU member states as France, Germany, and Poland.

France, the EU's sole nuclear power since Britain's exit from the bloc, is seeking a special role within the alliance as one of the key pillars of its European segment. Unlike the British strategy, which traditionally prioritized U.S. guarantees for collective security within NATO, France's policy towards the military-political bloc has been characterized by a certain ambivalence. The recent decade has seen a heightened tension between the collective West and Russia, which has been exploited by the French political elite to strengthen relations with its closest allies within the alliance. At the same time, the French administration seeks to demonstrate its special importance for the implementation of NATO's collective strategy both on the European continent and in other regions of the world. The "National Strategic Review" (RNS-2025), published in early July 2025, outlines key defense objectives of consolidating the efforts of the alliance members in their confrontation with Russia, while maintaining a certain degree of autonomy for the French military and political leaders in making strategic decisions [National Strategic Review, 2025].

The current German government is one of the key supporters of maintaining a strict intra-alliance unity aimed primarily at confronting Russia. As the leading economic entity in the EU, Germany has traditionally been more dependent on American military support and the US military presence than France. However, since the start of the military conflict in Ukraine, Germany has emerged as the leading European sponsor of the Kyiv regime. As of September 2025, Germany has provided approximately 40 billion euros in military aid to Ukraine. [Germany adds 150 mln. euros...,2025]. The coalition government formed by F. Merz, which came to power following the elections held on February 23, 2025, continued its policy of active militarization, expansion of the military-industrial complex, and participation in the implementation of NATO's comprehensive strategy through the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) program along the alliance's "eastern flank." At the same time, the German government expressed its readiness to support initiatives aimed at strengthening European defense identity [Integrated Security for Germany, 2025].

Poland remains one of the most US-oriented members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In recent years, the Polish government has been implementing a consistent strategy aimed at consolidating NATO and EU efforts to counter Russia's "neo-imperial aspirations" [Pol'sha postavila cel' ..., 2025]. By 2025, Poland had become the leading member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in terms of military spending and military force growth. The peculiarity of Poland's strategy within the alliance is its aspiration to become the leader of NATO "eastern flank," which largely determines the collective policy in the Eastern European region. Since the start of the Russian Federation's Special Military Operation in Ukraine, the Polish leadership has been actively working to transform its territory into a key logistics and service center for providing military assistance to the Kyiv regime.

Against the backdrop of vigorous discussions about the impact of the second Trump administration's strategy on the intra-alliance situation, the next NATO summit was held in The Hague on June 24-25, 2025. In accordance with the decisions made following the discussions, allies agreed that this 5% commitment would comprise two essential categories of defence investment. Allies will allocate at least 3.5% of GDP annually based on the agreed definition of NATO defence expenditure by 2035 "... to resource core defence requirements, and to meet the NATO Capability Targets" [The Hague Summit Declaration issued by the NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in The Hague on 25 June 2025].

Unlike the alliance summits held in 2022-2024, the decisions made following the meeting in The Hague did not devote much attention to issues related to supporting the Kiev regime. The final document included a general statement that "Allies reaffirm their enduring sovereign commitment to provide support to Ukraine, whose security contributes to ours, and to this end, will include direct contributions towards Ukraine's defense and its defence industry when calculating Allies' defence spending" [The Hague Summit Declaration issued by the NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in The Hague on 25 June 2025].

At the same time, the bloc's allies identified their shared commitment "to rapidly expand transatlantic defence industrial cooperation and to harness emerging technology ... to advance our collective security", which clearly indicates the continuation of the comprehensive strategy to enhance the bloc's military capabilities, as outlined in the decisions of previous summits and reflected in the 2022 Strategic Concept. [The Hague Summit Declaration issued by the NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in The Hague on 25 June 2025].

The development of the situation within NATO in the near future will largely depend on the nature of the relationship between the Trump administration and the informal coalition of European allies led by the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, which is focused on continuing the military conflict in Ukraine and confronting the Russian Federation. If the transatlantic disagreements continue to deepen, it is possible that the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization will undergo a transformation, potentially leading to the formation of a separate military and political alliance within its European segment [Groves, Nicol, 2025].

The uncertainty surrounding the future of the collective strategy, which remains unresolved by the end of 2025, has raised concerns among the leaders of the alliance's member countries. In an interview to the well-known Polish socio-political daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* on November 10, 2025, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk expressed hope that the Trump administration would continue to implement the guarantees previously given by the United States. However, he also acknowledged the possibility of a "split within the West" which could result in European countries having to ensure their own security [Tusk: NATO perezhiwaet period nestabil'nosti..., 2025].

Conclusions

In the context of the complex transition nature of the modern international system, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization plays the role of one of the key mechanisms for implementing the interests of the collective West. Against the backdrop of the ongoing globalization processes, NATO is becoming an increasingly prominent independent actor in international relations. The strengthening of the alliance's international political role is also related to its expanding functions beyond a purely regional military alliance and the increasing importance of its political and ideological component. Within the framework of modern theoretical concepts, NATO is perceived not only as a strategic alliance, but also as a kind of "elite club" that unites countries based on common ideology and the similarity of their political systems. In addition, the alliance is also considered an important tool for institutionalizing the unity of Western states in order to address their shared strategic challenges.

Currently, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is going through one of the most crucial moments in its history, with the prospect of further implementing the key functions that fit into the context of the alliance's "global dimension" and involve the use of its institutional capabilities to mobilize the collective West's resources to counter a wide range of threats, primarily posed by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

The trend towards increasing intra-alliance contradictions is long-term in nature and reflects, on the one hand, objective differences in the foreign policy interests of Western countries, and, on the other hand, the general weakening of their influence against the backdrop of the gradual formation of a polycentric international order. At the same time, the phenomenon of Trumpism in the United States has served as an additional catalyst for deepening the existing contradictions within the alliance.

One of the key factors determining NATO's future scenarios will be the ability of European elites to find common ground with the Trump administration, whose strategy aims to reduce the United States' financial commitments to ensure the security of its European allies and find ways to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. The likelihood of maintaining an intra-bloc consensus, which determines the future direction of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is largely due to the deepening instability of the existing international political balance and the growing contradiction between the collective West's model of a "liberal" globalist world order and the objective trend towards a new polycentric international architecture.

The deepening of military cooperation between the leading European members of the alliance, as well as more intensive discussions within the EU regarding the further development of a "European defense identity" in the context of a possibility of shifting the U.S. military and political focus to the Asia-Pacific region, are indicative of the expansion of the European segment of NATO's military and political autonomy. However, these changes are only possible in the long term. In the near future, the efforts of key European NATO members will obviously be aimed at preserving the system of transatlantic military and political cooperation within the framework of the long-established mechanisms of the North Atlantic Alliance, with the introduction of specific adjustments. Regardless of the possible scenarios for internal

transformation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will continue to be a major factor in the asymmetry and instability of the security system on the European continent and a primary source of military and political threats to the Russian Federation and its allies in the post-Soviet space.

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