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**ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ACO</b>	Allied Command Operations
<b>ACT</b>	Allied Command Transformation
<b>ANP</b>	Annual National Programme
<b>AWACS</b>	Airborne Warning and Control System
<b>CAP</b>	Comprehensive Assistance Package
<b>DCB</b>	Defence Capacity Building
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force
<b>MAP</b>	Membership Action Plan
<b>MC</b>	Military Committee
<b>NAC</b>	North Atlantic Council
<b>NACC</b>	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
<b>NAT</b>	North Atlantic Treaty
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>NPG</b>	Nuclear Planning Group
<b>NRC</b>	NATO-Russia Council
<b>NRF</b>	NATO Response Force
<b>PfP</b>	Partnership for Peace
<b>PJC</b>	NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council
<b>RAP</b>	Readiness Action Plan
<b>RSM</b>	Resolute Support Mission
<b>SACEUR</b>	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
<b>SACT</b>	Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
<b>VJTF</b>	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

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## INTRODUCTION

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has deep historical roots and can be traced back to the twelfth century. In the modern history of independent Ukraine, it is evident during the major dispute of 1992 over the fate of the Black Sea Fleet, which resulted in the continuing presence of Russian ships and servicemen in Sevastopol until no later than 2017 (Plokyh, 2023).

Since then, the Russian aggression against Ukraine led to numerous violations of international law and officially manifested itself in the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and 2024, respectively. The latter has become what many global leaders consider to be the largest armed conflict on the European continent since the Second World War, leading to a surge in support for Ukraine to levels never seen before.

Today, the actions of the Russian Federation are widely recognised as a significant threat to the security and stability of many nations across the world, particularly major powers such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This view is reflected in their strategic policy directives, alongside the highlighted importance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in protecting allies against these dangers.

NATO was created after the Second World War in the context of broader efforts to counter the threat posed by the Soviet Union. As Lord Ismay, a British politician and a future first Secretary General of NATO, allegedly put it, the alliance's initial intentions were to "keep the Russians out, Americans in, and the Germans down." Contrary to what some realists predicted, over three decades have passed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany, yet NATO continues to exist. More so, it has solidified its status as the preeminent and most resilient military alliance of today.

The **goal** of this research is to identify the changes to NATO's defence and deterrence policy in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The research **object** is NATO's strategic doctrines and policies, military posture and force structure, defence spending and capability development, operational activities and exercises, cyber and hybrid defence, partnerships and cooperative initiatives.

The research **subject** is the relationship between the Russian aggression against Ukraine and NATO's defence and deterrence policy.

The **objectives** of this study are to:

- Establish key definitions related to this study.
- Determine the historical background and context of NATO's evolution until the formal beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014.
- Identify NATO's response mechanisms to the Russian aggression against Ukraine.
- Define the evolution of changes to NATO's defence and deterrence policy since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The research encompasses the **period** of ten years between the beginning of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in February 2014 until March 2024.

The main research **question** is:

What are the specific changes that have occurred in NATO's defence and deterrence policy in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine?

## **CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH ON NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POLICY**

### **1.1. Theoretical framework of research on NATO's defence and deterrence policy**

Most of the theories of international relations can be applied in our study and supplement it with important insights into the topic. However, in our research, we will rely on three dominant theories of international relations, which will assist us in better understanding NATO, its establishment, and its evolution in the face of different threats and challenges. These theories are realism, institutionalism, and social constructivism. None of these theories are able to explain the notions related to our research fully. Instead, they complement each other and altogether provide a valuable contribution to our work.

#### ***Realism***

Realism has been a cornerstone theory in the field of international relations, particularly since the establishment of NATO in 1949 and throughout the Cold War era, which heavily influenced academic research and provided an important framework for the understanding of the alliance. The realist approach to international relations is rooted in the works of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes.

Both traditional and structural realists put conflict at the centre of international politics and build their arguments around the significance of national interest, security, and state survival as the most important aspects of foreign policy. They are seen as rational responses of states to the conditions of international anarchy where the state is the sole guarantor of its own security.

Hans Morgenthau (1948), a key figure in realism, introduced the balance of power theory, viewing it as a vital mechanism influencing state behaviour within the international system, which is seen as a condition of stability. This theory posits that an equilibrium among nations prevents any single state or coalition from overpowering others in ways that could compromise their core interests and sovereignty.

Stephen M. Walt (1987), another prominent realist, expanded upon Morgenthau's theory with his balance of threat concept. His argument suggests that states form alliances not just to balance against common enemies and ensure the distribution of power, as claimed by the classical balance of power theory, but instead in response to the perceived threat that other states pose. Therefore, he believes that the level of threat perceived by states is a more accurate predictor of alliance behaviour than the distribution of power alone.

According to this perspective, NATO is viewed as both a pursuit of the member states' national interests and a collective defence strategy to counter the Soviet threat, reflecting power imbalances during the East-West divide (Ratti, 2023).

Two branches of thought are distinguished within the realist theory of international relations: classical realism and neorealism (structural realism).

Classical realists, with key contributors like Morgenthau (1948) and George Liska (1968), emphasised the importance of both structural and unit-level factors in alliance formation. According to them, alliances often emerge from shared interests and ideological affinities, which help them to bond over a substantial period of time. This can be seen in the case of NATO, where political similarities between foundational members like the United Kingdom and the United States played a role (Ratti, 2023).

Neorealists, including Kenneth Waltz (1979), Stephen M. Walt (1987), and Glenn H. Snyder (1991), focus exclusively on systematic factors in explaining alliance behaviours, exemplified by Portugal's NATO membership despite its nondemocratic regime at the time.

Realists generally view alliances as a temporary phenomenon, predicting their dissolution when member interests diverge significantly (classical realism) or when the external threat diminishes (neorealism). Historical instances, such as the internal disputes within NATO during the Suez Crisis have somewhat validated this theory. However, contrary to many expectations following the Soviet Union's collapse, NATO has not only persisted but has also evolved to address post-Cold War security dynamics, demonstrating its adaptability and sustained relevance in the changing global landscape. Arguably, with the resurgence of the Russian threat, the alliance has experienced a renewal of its strength and cohesion, reminiscent of its unity during the Cold War era (Ratti, 2023).

### *Institutionalism*

Institutionalism emerged as a school of thought in academic circles in the late twentieth century, gaining particular prominence in the field of international relations and political science. It represents a departure from traditional realist perspectives by underlining the role of institutions as persistent and interconnected sets of rules capable of influencing state behaviour and fostering long-term cooperation among states through the provision of constraints and incentives.

Institutionalism has various strands, including historical, sociological, and rational institutionalism. Historical institutionalism focuses on how institutions develop over time, and sociological – explores how culture and people impact different policy outcomes of institutions. Rational institutionalism presents a particular interest for the purposes of this work.

It rose to prominence in the 1970s and started to play a significant role in NATO-related studies by the early 1990s. Similar to realists, proponents of rational institutionalism perceive states as rational actors operating in an anarchical international system driven by self-interest and the pursuit of utility. This approach is linked to the insights of scholars such as Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, and Lisa L. Martin. In the latter part of the twentieth century, Keohane and Nye (1977) introduced the “complex

interdependence” theory, arguing that multiple channels of interaction play a role in shaping international politics, including international and non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations. Mayer (2023a) suggests that to navigate such an interdependence, states establish institutions (or regimes) that are practical, address specific issues, and possess the capacity to operate autonomously.

Two additional influential theories are at play here. The Rational Design of International Institutions theory suggests that states create institutions to serve their interests, shaping these institutions to align with their specific goals (Koremenos et al., 2001). On the other hand, the Principal/Agent theory describes a scenario where a principle (state) delegates authority to an agent (the secretariat of an international organisation) to perform duties on its behalf. Given the principal’s limited oversight and comprehensive understanding, agents are granted a measure of autonomy, allowing them to evolve independently of the principal’s direct involvement (Hawkins et al., 2006). Institutions, according to this perspective, aim to minimise the transaction costs among states and aid in forging consensus (Mayer, 2023a).

In the case of NATO, the principal-agent dynamic is exemplified by member states (principals) and NATO’s civilian bureaucracy (agents), specifically its International Staff led by the Secretary General. Historically, the Secretary General of NATO has been pivotal in driving dialogue among member countries and, to some extent, shaping policy decisions, even though member states’ consensus remains the cornerstone of decision-making.

In contrast to realists, rational institutionalists believe that NATO’s mission transcends solely military objectives such as countering external threats. They argue that NATO also serves a political purpose by promoting democracy and transparency among states. This approach offers a rationale for NATO’s endurance, as it anticipates the alliance’s capability to adapt to new situations following the end of the Cold War.

### *Social constructivism*

Social constructivist research emerged as a relatively late addition in the realm of international security studies, making its debut in the 1990s.

Central to this approach is the concept of a security community, as Karl Deutsch and his colleagues developed in the late 1950s. Such a community is characterised by a collective of states that, through shared norms, values, and understanding, have forged a dependable expectation of resolving conflicts peacefully among themselves (Deutsch et al., 1957). From the constructivist viewpoint, a common identity plays a crucial role in the dynamics of international politics, profoundly shaping actors' preferences (Bunde, 2023).

In contrast to realists and institutionalists, constructivists perceive NATO not merely as a military alliance or an international institution but as a transatlantic security community deeply rooted in common values and the collective identity of liberal democracies. Risse (2016) argues that the formation of NATO was influenced not just by the material threat posed by the Soviet Union but also by the dissemination of norms and values contrary to those of the NATO founding states. While constructivists acknowledge the relevance of strategic interests in forming alliances, they regard such interests more as the exception than the norm.

This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of NATO's mission of spreading its democratic and liberal ideas abroad and its expansion, contingent upon the democratic improvements of potential members (Gheciu, 2005). It helps to explain the alliance's remarkable culture of consultation and consensus in decision-making. Additionally, it provides a rationale for NATO's out-of-area operations, such as in the Balkans and Afghanistan (see more in Chapter II), where the alliance has committed to extensive state-building endeavours.

Although social constructivist theory clarifies NATO's persistence beyond 1991, scholars within this domain generally harbour a pessimistic outlook regarding the future of the alliance. They point to the rise of illiberalism and highlight that the most significant diplomatic rifts within the alliance are associated with illiberal leaders among NATO's

member states, such as the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, or the former President of the United States, Donald Trump.

## **1.2. Conceptualization of definitions: aggression, military alliance, NATO, deterrence, defence, collective defence, NATO's defence and deterrence policy**

### ***Aggression***

In the contemporary framework of international relations, the concept of aggression became significantly prominent during the interwar years of the twentieth century, influenced by advancements in liberal thinking.

This actualization was largely a response to the profound impact of First World War, with scholars and policymakers striving to establish a collective security mechanism aimed at countering aggression and preventing future conflicts. President Woodrow Wilson of the United States has often been considered an instrumental pioneer of this idea, which often was deemed by realists as sceptical (McShane, 2010).

The notion of aggression was subject to extensive debate within the League of Nations, which assumed the responsibility to confront aggression as a strategy for ensuring peace. During this period, a clear consensus on the definition of aggression was lacking, highlighting the complexities and challenges in international efforts to address such concerns (Garnett and Wright, 1970).

The debate re-emerged following the Second World War within the United Nations and became more pronounced throughout the Cold War. Similar to its predecessor, the League of Nations, it regarded aggression as one of the ways to bolster international security. These efforts were hindered by divergent views between the United States and the Soviet Union on the very nature of aggression.

A formal definition was ultimately adopted in the 1970s, specifying that aggression is “the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or

political independence of another State.” It marked a significant milestone in international relations, providing a clear framework for identifying acts of aggression. We will rely on this definition to discuss the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

### *Military alliance*

Throughout history, alliances have consistently played a crucial role in the geopolitical landscape. Initially, alliance studies were predominantly historical and descriptive. Scholars such as George Liska (1968) attempted to outline the strategic meaning behind alliances and their broader implications for international relations. Liska’s perception of the alliance was of an official coalition of states that consolidated their efforts against a third state perceived as a threat.

The Cold War era marked a shift towards more systematic and theoretical analysis, as scholarly interest was drawn to the bipolar dynamics of the world and a continuing rivalry between the two prominent alliances of the time, namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

By the late twentieth century, scholars began to incorporate quantitative research methods in the study of alliances. In this vein, the work of Melvin Small and David Singer (1966) serves as an essential tool for categorizing alliances. Having collected data on formal alliances, they distinguished three types based on function and member state obligations: 1) defence pacts, 2) neutrality pacts, and 3) ententes. Under this classification, NATO serves as a defence pact, with members pledged to collective defence, a commitment enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT).

Kenneth Waltz (1979) integrated alliances into the broader framework of structural realism, developing the balance of power theory and arguing that alliances are formed to balance against the perceived threats, which could either be balancing against the accumulation of power by other states (external balancing) or through the strengthening of one’s own capabilities (internal balancing).

Stephen Walt (1987) further conceptualised alliances as either formal or informal partnerships for security cooperation between states, aimed at deterring or defending against military threats. For him, alliances are formed not only to fulfil power imbalances but also based on the perceived threat. Later, Glen Snyder (1991) refined this understanding, focusing on the element of military support articulated within alliances.

In our work, we adopt a definition proposed by Stephan Bergsmann (2001), who considers an alliance as a clear agreement among states within the domain of national security in which the partners commit to providing mutual assistance, contributing significant resources in response to a potential and uncertain contingency.

### *NATO*

From its inception, NATO was envisioned as more than merely a military alliance, a concept its founders believed to be too fragile a foundation. Instead, it aimed to serve as a vehicle for political and economic integration. However, the latter gradually lost momentum due to the emergence of other regional organizations, such as the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which took on a more prominent role in this domain (Mayer, 2023b).

Therefore, NATO is a political and military alliance, established on 4 April 1949, with the signing of the NAT. Founding members included Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Over the years, the alliance has expanded to include 32 members, responding to changes in the geopolitical landscape. These include Greece and Turkey (joined in 1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), Czechia, Hungary, and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), North Macedonia (2020), Finland (2023), and most recently Sweden in 2024.

Defined by the SAGE Encyclopaedia of Political Behaviour as an “intergovernmental organization” where “each member has an equal say,” NATO prides

itself on the principle of consensus decision-making. This method ensures that every decision taken by the alliance must receive the unanimous approval of all its member countries, reflecting the collective commitment of the members to work together on common problems.

Based on the description above, NATO is characterised by an integrated administrative structure that encompasses both civilian governance and military command elements to help the alliance to exercise its functions effectively.

### Civilian structure

The Agreement on the status of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, National Representatives, and International Staff, commonly referred to as the Ottawa Agreement of 1951, is a pivotal document that formally defines the privileges, immunities, and the legal status of NATO's civilian structure. The most supreme decision-making authority within the alliance is the North Atlantic Council (NAC), for it is the only body the foundation of which is laid out by Article 9 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT). NAC's main functions are to supervise the NAT's execution along with overseeing the alliance's political and military processes concerning security issues. The NAC includes representatives from all member states, spanning three levels of representation: ambassadors, foreign and defence ministers, and heads of state or government.

The Secretary General, who is the alliance's chief civil servant, presides over the civilian structure, facilitating policy-making and strategic planning. The position of the Secretary General was created in 1952. They are supported by an International Staff, which is organised into divisions dealing with political affairs, defence policy and planning, public diplomacy, and other key administrative and policy areas.

Source: Sebastian Mayer (2023b)



Figure 1.1. NATO's political decision-making.

### Military structure

NATO's military structure is closely connected to its civilian counterpart, ensuring that military strategy and operations are aligned with the political and strategic directives of the alliance's member countries. The military decision-making occurs at both the collective alliance level, which involves intergovernmental deliberation and consensus, and at the national level, where individual member countries determine their own defence policies and contributions to the alliance (Ivanov, 2023).

Central to NATO's military structure is the Military Committee (MC), which serves as the second-highest authority after the NAC. The MC is composed of the Chiefs of Defence from each member state, and it usually meets at the Chief of Defence level a few times a year. In its daily work, the MC is represented by permanent military representatives who meet at least once a week in Brussels, Belgium.

The primary role of the MC is to advise the NAC and the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) on military policy and strategy, offer strategic advice, recommend appropriate military action, and shape the overarching military policy and strategic concepts that underpin the alliance's defence and deterrence posture (Ivanov, 2011).

The MC functions under the leadership of the Chair, a senior military officer who holds one of the highest positions within NATO. Elected by the Chiefs of Defence of the member nations, the Chair acts as the principal military advisor to the Secretary General and is the spokesperson for the MC on all military matters.

Supporting the Chair is the International Military Staff (IMS), a body comprised of both military officers and civilian experts from various member states. The IMS assists the MC by offering strategic planning, intelligence, and advice. It is organised into several divisions dealing with intelligence, operations, logistics, plans, policy, and capabilities, among others. The staff works on preparing assessments, studies, and other documents on military matters that inform the decisions of the MC and NAC.

NATO's military command structure is composed of two distinct levels of command, each with a different focus and set of responsibilities. The first tier consists of the Allied Command Operations (ACO) and the Allied Command Transformation (ACT). These commands are respectively led by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT). The second tier includes the Joint Forces Command, NATO Space Centre, Cyber Operations Centre and others.

Source: Ivan Ivanov (2023)

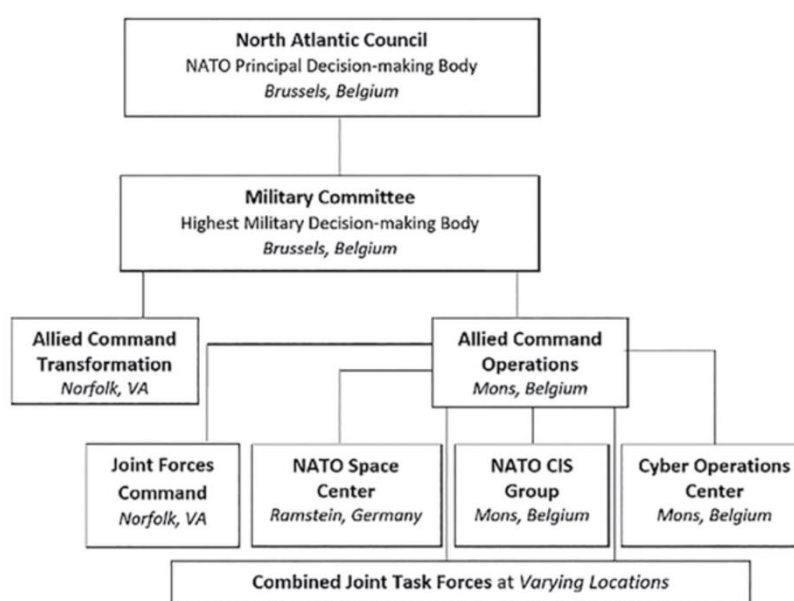


Figure 1.2. NATO's military decision-making.

Furthermore, NATO operates several agencies and organizations specializing in areas like logistics, communication and information systems, and standardization, operating under the NAC's direction to bolster the alliance's operational capabilities.

### *Deterrence*

Over the decades, the study of deterrence has captured the attention of many scholars, seeking to understand and explain the mechanisms of massive retaliation by which nations may prevent undesirable actions from their adversaries.

The concept of deterrence can be traced in classical political philosophy. However, it gained widespread traction in the study of international relations only in the twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Second World War and the onset of the nuclear age. At that time, scholars were predominantly occupied with the role of deterrence in avoiding the use of nuclear weapons. Among these scholars, Bernard Brodie, an American military strategist, often referred to as the father of the nuclear deterrence strategy, posited in his 1946 book that the military's primary objective should transition from winning wars to averting them.

In the ensuing decades – spanning the 1940s to the 1960s – Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, and Herman Kahn, among others, crafted the dual pillars of deterrence strategy: punishment and denial. Although both strategies aim to discourage an opponent from undertaking hostile actions, their fundamental logics differ.

Deterrence by punishment operates on the principle of threatening severe consequences in response to an adversary's potential act of aggression. It relies on the threat of retaliation, constructing a cost-benefit scenario where the price of aggression eclipses any potential benefits, thus deterring the adversary from initiating the aggressive act.

In contrast, deterrence by denial seeks to prevent an adversary's attack in the first place by convincing them that their objectives will not be achieved. Nations fortify their

own defence systems, seeking to cast doubt on the adversary's chances of a successful assault.

The post-Cold War era and the rise of asymmetric threats have prompted a review of deterrence theory. Modern deterrence discourse has broadened its scope to include non-nuclear threats, cyber warfare, and terrorism, recognizing the complexity of contemporary geopolitical challenges (Morgan, 2003).

Historically, rational choice and game theory have been considered pivotal to classical deterrence studies. Contemporary academics, however, emphasise that rationality is not a universal notion among all decision-making actors, while their choices may be swayed by deliberate or inadvertent misunderstanding or misconception.

### *Defence*

Much like the notion of alliances, the idea of defence stands as one of the most ancient concepts within the realm of political theory, traceable back to at least the fifth century BC. Initially, defence studies were predominantly occupied with the strategic dimensions of military power and warfare. For a long time, Sun Tzu's "Art of War" has served as a foundational text, emphasising the importance of military strategy and psychological and environmental factors in warfare.

In the nineteenth century, another prominent theorist, Carl von Clausewitz provided an essential contribution to the field with his work "On War," shifting scholarly attention from merely technical and tactical aspects of the war to moral and political. His famous argument was that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means."

The dire consequences of two world wars, the beginning of the Cold War, the emergence of nuclear weapons and the subsequent need to deter the nuclear powers have made its impact on defence studies, highlighting the need for a broader examination of defence. The concept of collective defence comes into play, alongside the balance of power theory. Scholars such as Leeds (2003) argue that collective defence arrangements between states discourage their potential adversaries from attacking them. Therefore, to

be part of such an agreement is considered a logical choice of the state in balancing against external threats.

The end of the Cold War and the demise of the bipolar world caused by the fall of the Soviet Union marked a significant shift in defence studies, with a growing focus on non-state actors and other challenges, such as terrorism, cyber warfare, and asymmetrical threats. At the time, Joseph Nye (1990) reintroduced the concept of “soft power,” arguing that defence goes far beyond military capabilities, and non-military means, such as diplomacy, and economic and cultural influence, play a crucial role in influencing international politics.

### *Collective security VS collective defence*

In discussions about NATO, there is often a focus on its key founding principle of collective defence, which is seen as essential to its creation. However, several scholars contend that the alliance incorporates aspects of a collective security system as well (Duffield, 1994). To clarify these concepts, Orakhelashvili (2011) describes collective security as a unified response to a threat recognised by the community. This notion stems from the realist perspective that maintaining peace is a universal concern, thus making its preservation a collective duty of the global community. This framework is notably broader and encompasses a wider participation.

A quintessential instance of a collective security system is the Concert of Europe, or the Congress/Vienna System, which set the precedent for international diplomacy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It introduced a novel approach to international relations, highlighting cooperation and collective efforts among leading powers such as Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom. These nations pledged mutual support to curb the ascendancy of any single nation or coalition, effectively preventing the onset of widespread conflict in Europe for about a century. Presently, the United Nations is regarded as the principal actor in collective security (Tzagourias and White, 2013).

The perception of NATO as a security community stems from its aim to transcend national defence frameworks, thereby diminishing rivalries among European nations, for instance, between Germany and France, or Germany and Poland. Furthermore, NATO's missions beyond its borders are often interpreted as actions within a collective security framework.

Conversely, a collective defence arrangement is more targeted and structured, encompassing a definite group of nations and established guidelines. Such commitments are exclusively binding within the alliance, aimed at dissuading adversaries through the assurance of a robust, collective military counteraction. While collective security aspires for global peace, collective defence concentrates on safeguarding allied countries from external dangers. John R. Deni (2023) posits that NATO's role in collective security is an extension of its collective defence capabilities, rather than the other way around.

### ***NATO's Defence and Deterrence Policy***

NATO's defence and deterrence policy, foundational to the alliance's strategy, aims to prevent threats and ensure member security through a combination of measures, including nuclear capabilities of the United States, United Kingdom, and France, rapid-deployment conventional forces, and advancements in space and cyber domains.

In response to the ever-changing landscape of security threats and to further its political and military evolution, NATO has consistently produced Strategic Concepts, the "highest-level agreement" that set forth the strategic orientation of the alliance (Becker et al., 2022).

Since its establishment until 1991, NATO has released eight Strategic Concepts, with the initial four emerging during the Cold War: the first in 1950; the second after the beginning of the Korean War in 1952 (MC 14/1), incorporating plans for offensive operations in case of war; the third in 1957 (MC 14/2), which introduced the strategy of "massive retaliation"; and the fourth in 1968, emphasizing adaptability and escalation management.

Over three decades elapsed before the issuance of the fifth Strategic Concept. Four additional Concepts have been developed in the following years, with the 1991 edition marking the first publicly available strategic document post-Cold War, focusing on demilitarization and collaborative efforts.

NATO's defence and deterrence policy has historically relied on the principle of collective defence as enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which posits that "an armed attack against one or more of [NATO member states] (...) shall be considered an attack against them all." In case of such an attack, each member state pledges to assist the attacked party or parties with "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."

Throughout almost a century of its existence, the alliance has sanctioned the invocation of collective defence only once, in reaction to the 2001 Al Qaeda attacks on the United States. The Allies agreed on a set of eight actions requested by the United States to be taken executed both individually and collectively.

Following the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, the 1999 Strategic Concept introduced new tenets of crisis management and cooperative security to the Organisation's agenda, augmenting its traditional defence and deterrence framework. These concepts will receive further exploration in Chapter II of this paper.

At the Lisbon Summit in 2010, NATO's leaders ratified the third post-Cold War Strategic Concept, identifying three primary objectives: crisis management, collective security, and collective defence.

Beyond the Strategic Concepts, the Chicago Summit in 2012 saw NATO's leadership approve the Defence and deterrence Posture Review, aiming to delineate defence and deterrence mechanisms suited for the threats of the twenty-first century.

After the 2001 terrorist attacks, NATO expanded its scope to combat terrorism, prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, address hybrid warfare, and confront emerging disruptive technologies.

The latest Strategic Concept, unveiled in 2022 in reaction to Russia's comprehensive invasion of Ukraine, alongside the issuance of NATO's Concept for the Defence and deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area the same year, signifies the latest evolution in NATO's strategic approach. An in-depth examination of these documents will be presented in Chapter III of this document.

### **1.3. Research methodology**

Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies will be applied in this work to gain valuable insights into the complex dynamics of the relationship between the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the changes to NATO's defence and deterrence policy.

Quantitative methods will involve the screening of statistical data about specific tools of NATO's defence and deterrence policy used in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, in particular, troops deployment, battlegroup presence, procurement and defence spending, as well as practical assistance to Ukraine to enhance the country's ability to provide for its own security.

Qualitative methods will include content analysis of academic literature on the Russian aggression against Ukraine and NATO's defence and deterrence policy, NATO's declarations, agreements, communiqués, speeches of NATO officials and leaders, as well as press releases and think tank reports. Additionally, an event analysis will be carried out to establish the connection between the key incidents related to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the response of NATO to them.

All data will be gathered from open sources. The work will focus on the official data sources to ensure transparency and credibility and prevent biased interpretations from influencing the results of the research.

## CHAPTER II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POLICY

### **2.1. Navigating post-world war bipolarity: the establishment and formative years of NATO**

#### *Origins of NATO*

The establishment of NATO on 4 April 1949 represented a crucial strategic endeavour by Western nations to curtail the Soviet Union's territorial ambitions, deter the resurgence of militant nationalism in Europe, and fortify the transatlantic partnership (Olsen, 2020).

The threat posed by the Soviet Union was not solely military but also psychological, as noted by American diplomat and former Ambassador to the Soviet Union, George F. Kennan. Intensified concerns among British and American leaders were triggered by several critical events, among which were the Berlin Blockade of 1948, the Communist Party's ascension to power in Czechoslovakia the same year, the Helsinki-Moscow security agreement, and the potential alignment of Norway with the Soviet bloc (Sayle, 2019).

To preserve the achievements of the US Marshall Plan and counteract Soviet influence in Europe, Ernest Bevin, then British Foreign Secretary, proposed a defence pact between France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. This proposal materialised as the Brussels Treaty in 1948, which led to the formation of the Western Union. Shortly after, the United Kingdom began the conversation towards a broader security framework with the United States and Canada.

These negotiations resulted in the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) in 1949, an event that marked a crucial moment in the architecture of post-war international security.

### *First steps*

The NAT has provided the general framework for the alliance, while the specific plans were supposed to be negotiated separately.

By October, NATO's Military Committee (MC) was established, tasked with devising coordinated defence plans for the European continent. The first strategic doctrine, the Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Area (DC 6/1), was adopted a year later. Its chief aim was to synergise military and civilian national efforts more effectively. The document was the first attempt to articulate guiding principles, objectives, and the measures to implement them, stressing on the importance of defence and deterrence as the foundational principles of the alliance's operations (Schneider, 2000).

Two months after, the NATO's Medium-Term Plan was endorsed, which articulated as its goal the undermining both the capacity and the resolve of the Soviet Union to engage in hostilities with Western European nations.

### *The Korean War*

The beginning of the Korean War in June 1950, precipitated by the invasion of South Korea by the Northern Korean People's Party under Soviet auspices. Although it is argued that the War did not have a significant impact on the alliance, per se, it encouraged NATO to review its structure and strategic thinking with the view of strengthening the alliance. As a result, NATO's integrated military structure was developed.

Next year, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) position was inaugurated, with American General Dwight D. Eisenhower assuming the role, and the establishment of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) occurred. The first US troop divisions were deployed in Europe.

In 1952, a pivotal year for NATO, the organizational framework was refined to include regular sessions of permanent representatives and the inception of the Secretary

General role, with Lord Ismay appointed to this inaugural position. Notably, Greece and Turkey expanded the alliance's geographical breadth by joining NATO. The Lisbon Summit was held the same year, where Allies reached an agreement to revise their Strategic Concept.

The adoption of the MC 14/1 – Strategic Guidance in December 1952 marked a doctrinal shift from the primary aim of defending Western Europe against Soviet aggression towards a deterrence-focused paradigm designed to elevate the costs of potential aggression above any conceivable gains. This shift laid the groundwork for what Sayle (2019) terms the “nuclearization of NATO,” a strategy that involved a recalibration of defence expenditure and conventional forces to incorporate nuclear capabilities as a central element of deterrence.

The reformation of defence planning began to take shape, led by the major economies within NATO – namely, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France – who collectively recognised the strategic import of Germany in European defence. In alignment with this strategy, NATO commenced cooperation with Konrad Adenauer, the Chancellor of West Germany, whose policies were geared towards integrating West Germany into the Western bloc. West Germany acquiesced to restrictions on its armaments, notably forsaking the development of weapons of mass destruction.

The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1954, heralded West Germany's accession to NATO, under the provision that its armed forces would operate under the supervision and command of SACEUR, solidifying its commitment to the collective security framework of the alliance.

## **2.2. The Cold War era: shaping approaches to disagreements and escalations – from massive retaliation to flexible response and political dialogue**

### ***The Suez Crisis and the growing Soviet threat***

The post-Stalin era and the incorporation of West Germany into NATO marked a period of strategic reorientation for the Soviet Union, which shifted its geopolitical focus from potential confrontation in Europe to forging new alliances across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. This pivot by the Soviet Union coincided with a diminution of support for NATO among its member states, catalysing an existential crisis within an alliance itself.

NATO's member states were divided into two camps: on one side, the Nordic countries and Canada advocated for European security, while on the other, nations such as the Netherlands, Portugal, and France lobbied for the expansion of NATO's strategic purview to a global scale.

The Suez Crisis in 1956 exacerbated the tensions within NATO. The canal was a critical supply route for oil, and its nationalization by Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser posed a threat in the form of further independence movements in North Africa, which did not seem much appealing to France. The British and French foreign ministers initiated discussions on potential military interventions as an alternative to faltering diplomatic efforts. Subsequently, the United Kingdom and France, in concert with Israel and without the consent or knowledge of NATO officials, undertook a military operation against Egypt. This unilateral action strained relations between the two NATO members and the United States, and the discord persisted until a renewed Soviet threat emerged.

This new threat materialised when Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary in 1956 to crush Hungarian Revolution. The intervention in Hungary served as a stark reminder of the Soviet Union's willingness to use military force to protect its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. This once again highlighted the importance of NATO.

### ***The counterbalancing Warsaw Pact***

In response to West Germany's inclusion in NATO in 1955, the Soviet Union established its own military alliance formally known as the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, commonly referred to as the Warsaw Pact. The

initial members of the Warsaw Pact included Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, in addition to the Soviet Union.

At first, the Warsaw Pact held a largely ceremonial role, with little emphasis placed on developing a common command structure or conducting joint military exercises. However, the Soviet approach to the Warsaw Pact began to shift by the late 1950s, as the Soviets embarked on a series of strategic moves with the goal to destabilise NATO. The first joint Warsaw Pact exercises were held in 1961. Concurrently, the Pact began implementing a programme for the reequipping of East European forces and the standardization of their arms. This integration of East European forces aimed to demonstrate the military might of the Eastern Bloc in the face of NATO (Wolfe, 1966).

### ***The end of massive retaliation***

The Directive to the NATO Military Authorities, issued two months after the Soviet Union's intervention in Hungary, served to underscore the prevailing trends in Soviet foreign policy and the associated risks. It mandated a comprehensive reassessment of NATO's defence strategies to effectively counteract both nuclear and conventional threats, regardless of the adversary's numerical superiority.

In May 1957, the Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Area (MC/14/2) enshrined nuclear retaliation as a fundamental component of the alliance's defence and deterrence postures. While the centrality of nuclear capabilities was emphasised, the deterrent value of conventional forces was reaffirmed. Furthermore, the document contemplated the potential deployment of NATO forces beyond the traditional area of operations.

The successful launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in October 1957 signalled a profound technological leap in the arms race, highlighting Soviet capabilities in missile technology that could pose a direct threat to the United States.

During the Berlin Crisis of 1958-1959, the Soviet Union tested the resolve of NATO, an ordeal that eventually led to the construction of the Berlin Wall. The crisis reiterated the strategic importance of Germany within the alliance.

In response to the Berlin Crisis, in 1959, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France established the LIVE OAK group, engaging in secret tripartite emergency planning, independent of NATO's broader framework.

The election of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States in 1960 precipitated a security policy reassessment, advocating for a shift from a doctrine of massive retaliation to one of flexible response. This new approach emphasised the unpredictability of the response, also urging NATO allies to bolster their conventional forces and increase defence expenditures. European members, wary of the economic burden of conventional forces, maintained that the deterrent effect of nuclear capabilities was paramount in preventing Soviet aggression.

Meanwhile, French President Charles de Gaulle, since his election in 1959, was vocally critical of what he perceived as NATO's strategic incapability and the inadequate commitment of the United States to European security. His withdrawal of the French Mediterranean Fleet from NATO command in 1959 and France's subsequent nuclear tests in 1960 were indicative of his pursuit of an independent defence capability. During the Second Berlin Crisis, de Gaulle's resistance to align with NATO on nuclear matters intensified, culminating in France's withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command in 1966.

In an effort to coordinate the alliance's nuclear policy and allay concerns regarding the United States' nuclear umbrella, the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) was established in 1967. Its purpose was to foster cooperation on nuclear strategy among NATO members and reassure them of the United States' commitment to collective defence.

### *Reinventing the alliance*

Prompted by these circumstances, NATO introduced two pivotal documents: the Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Area (MC 14/3) and the Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area (MC 48/3), adopted in January 1968 and December 1969, respectively.

These documents were a response to the escalating geopolitical strife, marked by the Soviet Union's expansion of its global influence through economic and political strategies, propaganda, subversion, and military might. The Strategic Concept introduced the notion of a "flexible response," granting NATO a spectrum of options to counteract aggression in a manner deemed unpredictable and intolerable by any aggressor. The subsequent document delved deeper, outlining specific actions to actualise this strategic vision.

These developments coincided with the Harmel Report of 1967, a significant milestone in NATO's history. Named after Belgian Prime Minister Pierre Harmel, the report, formally titled "The Future Tasks of the Alliance," named after the Belgian Prime Minister, articulated two primary objectives for NATO: sustaining military prowess to deter and defend against aggression, and fostering constructive dialogue with Warsaw Pact nations to alleviate tensions and address political disagreements. Both MC 14/3 and the Harmel Report laid the groundwork for NATO's strategic direction for the ensuing decades, taking into account the alliance members' concerns over conventional and nuclear defence capabilities while advocating for political engagement.

As a result of the Harmel Report, the new stage in the East-West relations began. In the early 1970s, German Chancellor Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, aimed at fostering closer ties with Eastern European states, culminated in treaties between West Germany, the Soviet Union, and Poland, alongside a détente with East Germany. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 represented a major effort to improve East-West détente. This document is still referenced whenever the Russian Federation violates international law. The document was based on four key pillars: political and military issues, including principles of territorial integrity; economic issues; human rights; and follow-up meetings and implementation procedures. The Helsinki Process fostered greater cooperation between

Eastern and Western Europe and resulted in the establishment of the US Helsinki Commission.

The United States, recognizing the Soviet Union's superpower status, engaged in various economic and commercial agreements, alongside arms control treaties in the early 1970s. However, the Soviet Union's support for liberation movements in the Third World, its involvement in the Arab Israeli War of 1973, and its backing of Cuban military actions in Angola in 1975 underscored its complex international stance. In 1977, the deployment of SS-20 missiles by the Soviet Union, even amidst détente efforts with the United States signalled preparations for limited nuclear warfare in Europe. NATO responded by deploying 572 Pershing II and Cruise Missiles in Europe in December 1979, shortly before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States, committed to bolstering the country's military strength and deterrence, led to a significant increase in defence spending to contain the Soviet Union two years later. This militaristic stance faced opposition from strong peace movements within Europe.

At that time, Europe was steeped in neutralist moods, with its citizens advocating for an end to the arms race. Demonstrations took place across European capitals, protesting against nuclear policies. For more than thirty years, NATO's strategic approach had been grounded in the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against potential Soviet aggression. However, the landscape of the late twentieth century had shifted. In an effort to align with these global sentiments and demonstrate a commitment to arms control, the Reagan administration proposed halting the deployment of the Long-Range Theatre Nuclear Forces (LRTNF) should the Soviets reciprocate. An agreement was not achieved.

### **2.3. The post-Cold War environment: rethinking threats**

#### *Adaptation to the new geopolitical context*

In 1985, with Mikhail Gorbachev's ascension to leadership, the Soviet Union entered a transformative era known as "Perestroika," aimed at restructuring the Soviet political and economic landscape. Gorbachev, seeking to halt the arms race, proposed initiatives to freeze nuclear arsenals and halt the development of new missile systems. In a move to de-escalate superpower tensions, the Soviets also withdrew their forces from Afghanistan. Gorbachev's policies emphasised the principle of freedom of choice for nations, signalling a shift from the rigid constraints of Cold War geopolitics.

The push towards denuclearization further continued during the George H. W. Bush's Administration. Germany was considering the prohibition to store nuclear weapons on its territory. It was expected that other European countries would follow suit. For the first time, the threat to alliance stemmed not from the Soviet Union, not from the disagreements between NATO members, but from the NATO's population.

The period of 1989-91 was marked by transformative events that reshaped the global political landscape. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, leading to German reunification, prompted NATO allies to reassess their collective purpose and strategic direction. The need for reassessment was articulated during the London Summit of 1990, during which the alliance agreed to start the cooperation with its former adversaries. However, the development of a new strategic document faced delays due to difficulties in achieving consensus among allies and the rapid pace of change in Europe, where evolving threats were challenging to foresee.

The Warsaw Pact officially dissolved in July 1991. Four months later, a new 1991 Strategic Concept was introduced at the Rome Summit. This document acknowledged a shifted strategic environment, recognizing that the likelihood of a "full-scale attack" on NATO territory had significantly diminished and was no longer the central focus of NATO's strategy. Instead, NATO pivoted towards addressing security concerns more comprehensively, acknowledging that political, social, and economic challenges arising from global changes could undermine alliance security.

Following the London Summit, the document articulates NATO's commitment to pursue a cooperation and dialogue with the Eastern Europe through diplomatic and military contacts.

Additionally, the updated strategy underscored NATO's commitment to cultivating harmonious and collaborative ties with countries in the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East, recognizing the international dimensions of security concerns. The redefined security policy expanded beyond military defence to the safeguarding of mutual norms and standards. This adjustment spotlighted the alliance's unified endeavours to secure stability and peace following the Cold War, stressing the significance of common values and global collaboration.

At the proposal of the United States, cooperation activities started with the creation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1991. The NACC became a crucial platform for dialogue and collaborative engagement between NATO and non-member states.

### ***First global outreach***

Amid the turmoil related to the beginning of Yugoslavia's dissolution in mid-1991, NATO was compelled to make a pivotal decision to extend its mantle of peace and stability beyond the borders of its member nations. It was not until three years after the conflict began that NATO initiated its first operations outside its traditional area of responsibility, initially serving in a supporting role to primary organizations like the UN and the European Union (EU).

By 1994, in the aftermath of the Markale massacres, where civilians were slain by Bosnian Serb forces at a marketplace in the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital, NATO adopted a proactive stance and engaged militarily.

The zenith of NATO's military involvement came with Operation Deliberate Force in 1995. This significant air offensive aimed to cripple the military capacities of the Bosnian Serbs. The effective completion of NATO's missions in Bosnia, culminating in

the Dayton Peace Accords, which brought the war to a close in 1995, justified the alliance's emergent role in peacekeeping. This success not only bolstered NATO's reputation but also cemented its collaborative ties with other European security organizations, reinforcing its relationships with the UN and the EU.

### *Budling partnerships*

The NACC established the same year the Soviet Union disintegrated, at that time was already perceived as inadequate for managing the unique dynamics of engagement with the newly independent former Soviet Republics.

Recognizing this, in 1994, NATO launched the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative, facilitating tailored bilateral cooperation with individual nations across the Euro-Atlantic region. Concurrently, the Mediterranean Dialogue was inaugurated to address security concerns on NATO's southern perimeter (Flockhart, 2014).

Tensions with Russia surfaced prior to the 1994 Brussels Summit, with Russian officials articulating apprehensions about the PfP, fearing it would edge NATO influence closer to Russia's frontiers. At the summit, NATO representatives acknowledged the likelihood of the alliance's expansion and indicated that the PfP would be instrumental in readying nations for membership.

Following extended discussions, Russia joined the PfP, endorsing a distinctive relationship with NATO. By 1995, an enhanced NATO-Russia dialogue had been established. The NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed at the Paris Summit in 1997, giving birth to the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (16+1) (PJC), created to advance cooperation in peacekeeping, arms control, and increased openness via improved information sharing. Simultaneously, NATO penned a Charter with Ukraine in 1997, laying the groundwork for mutual cooperation.

These activities set the stage for the Madrid Summit in July 1997, where national leaders and government heads directed NATO to update its Strategic Concept to mirror the evolving security landscape and the fresh set of challenges emerging in Europe.

### *The Kosovo crisis*

In 1998, Kosovo's escalating crisis was evident in UN Security Council Resolutions 1160 and 1199, which urged the consideration of further measures but stopped short of authorizing direct military force.

The following year saw the commencement of Operation Allied Force, a NATO-led air campaign against Serbian forces conducted without prior UN sanction. NATO's initial conditions aimed at the Serbs called for a withdrawal from Kosovo, a halt to all military operations, the safe repatriation of refugees, and the establishment of an international military presence.

Russia sharply criticised the NATO airstrikes, accusing the alliance of bias against the Serbs, and in response, withdrew its mission from NATO and suspended its involvement in the PJC. Mark Smith characterised the crisis as pivotal in shaping Russia's perception of the West, suggesting that it significantly entrenched Russia's anti-NATO sentiment more than the campaign against its enlargement.

Nevertheless, Russia maintained diplomatic channels open and expressed a readiness to aid in peace negotiations, with President Yeltsin taking an active role as a mediator between Western and Yugoslav leaders.

In the same year, as NATO celebrated its 50th anniversary, a new Strategic Concept was unveiled at the Washington Summit. This document cited NATO's key accomplishment in preventing war in Europe throughout the Cold War and highlighted the role of dialogue in peacefully resolving confrontation. The alliance reaffirmed its dedication to collective defence, the transatlantic bond, and the promotion of democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law, while also stressing the importance of partnerships beyond its membership.

Crisis management and partnership were emphasised as tools to bolster the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. While not explicitly naming Russia, the Concept discussed the issue of nuclear armaments, noting the progress in their reduction but

maintaining the necessary presence of the United States' nuclear forces in Europe at a minimal level, alongside a balanced mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities.

The Strategic Concept acknowledged additional risks stemming from various factors, including the proliferation of technology, terrorism, sabotage, organised crime, and the mass displacements often accompanying armed conflicts.

A month after the Summit, in June 1999, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic acceded to the proposals developed by the G8 nations, marking a successful NATO-EU-Russia diplomatic endeavour. A peacekeeping mission comprising NATO and Russian forces was greenlit by UN Resolution 1244 to enter Serbia.

The following month, the NATO-Russia PJC resumed operations, and Russia reinstated its military envoy to NATO. As the year closed, President Yeltsin stepped down, and early in the new millennium, Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency. From the onset, Putin actively sought dialogue with NATO, signalling openness to Russia's potential inclusion in the alliance.

#### **2.4. A day that changed everything: 11 September 2001**

On 11 September 2001, the extremist group Al-Qaeda perpetrated the most lethal terrorist attack in history against the United States, claiming nearly 3 thousand lives. The subsequent day, NATO convened an emergency session, invoking Article 5 for the first time in its existence, signalling collective defence. All 18 NATO allies consented to back the United States in its response. The United States viewed this act as a gesture of solidarity, deeming direct NATO operational involvement unnecessary at that juncture.

In October, the President of the United States George W. Bush initiated military action in Afghanistan, commencing what was termed the global war on terror (Berdal, 2016). By the end of the year, the Taliban government had fallen, and a provisional government took its place. NATO's initial engagement was limited, focusing on country stabilization through support in reconstruction and development.

The Prague Summit in November 2002 revisited the solemn events of the previous year, endorsed a military defence concept against terrorism, and underscored the escalating threat of terrorism to NATO. It confirmed the future inclusion of seven new members at the forthcoming Summit in May 2004 and expressed a commitment to further expansion. The Summit also recognised Russia's contributions to peacekeeping and reforms, and Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic ambitions.

In August 2003, the UN Security Council established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) through Resolution 1386, with NATO assuming command. ISAF's mandate was to enable the Afghan government to assert its authority and build the Afghan national security forces to sustain their country's security and counterterrorism efforts. Originating in Kabul, ISAF's jurisdiction eventually spanned the entire nation, featuring an extensive network of regional commands and both civilian and military components.

ISAF maintained its operations until 2014, after which the Afghan forces took over national security duties. The Resolute Support Mission (RSM) followed in 2015, concluding in September 2021, aiming to provide advisory and assistance roles. Currently, NATO has ceased all support to Afghanistan. This intervention underscored NATO's global capacity, and as stated by former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, traditional concepts of geographic operational areas are outdated.

Post-9/11, Western allies collectively felt that these events had transformed the geopolitical dynamics with Russia. The 2002 Rome Summit saw the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), anticipated to bolster relations between NATO and Russia. A joint declaration affirmed the commitment to forge peace in the Euro-Atlantic zone grounded in democratic and collaborative security principles.

At the 2002 Prague Summit, Russian delegates participated in the NRC meeting. During the Iraq crisis, NRC dialogues persisted, with President Putin in 2003 even suggesting potential support for United States' military operations against Saddam Hussein's regime. Russia appeared more constructive and engaged during 2002 and 2003.

Ever since NATO's "enlargement summits" began with Madrid in 1997 and Washington in 1999, Russia has consistently voiced its opposition to NATO's expansion, with the 2004 Istanbul Summit being no exception. In early 2004, as NATO commenced air patrols over Baltic airspace and along Russia's border, Russia deemed these actions hostile and conducted reciprocal flights near Baltic frontiers (Pouliot, 2010). The incursion of the United States into Iraq further stoked Russia's apprehensions, a sentiment initially kindled by the Kosovo crisis. Democratic movements in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) strained NATO-Russia relations further, with Moscow decrying what it saw as the West's political encroachment into the post-Soviet sphere. In March 2004, memorandums with NATO granted rapid access rights to Ukraine and Georgia. In response, Russia reverted to a strategy of "soft balancing".

At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, the alliance announced its plans to welcome Albania and Croatia into its membership. By that time, NATO's various missions and operations were actively engaging around 60 thousand personnel. Prior to the Summit, it was reported by the United States Congressional Research Service that NATO was poised to contemplate extending a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine, signalling a potential pathway to their imminent integration into the alliance. However, the Summit's Declaration acknowledged the Euro-Atlantic ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia and wrote positively about their potential membership in the future.

Two years subsequent to the Lisbon Summit, the most recent gathering of NATO Heads of State and Government convened in Chicago in 2012. The Summit's Declaration underscored the alliance's dedication to continue its collaborative endeavours with Afghanistan, Central Asian nations, Russia, and key international organizations such as the UN, the OSCE, and the EU.

While the Declaration acknowledged the tenth anniversary of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) and the progress achieved through this forum, it also conveyed the alliance's apprehensions regarding Russia's announced plans to station military forces in proximity to NATO's borders, reflecting the concerns of its member countries.

## **2.5. Russia's invasion of Georgia**

The August 2008 events precipitated an international crisis, described as a “return of history” due to its scale, which had not been witnessed in Europe since the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s (Larsen, 2016). For the first time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia deployed its military into a former Soviet republic. The offensive in the pro-Russian separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia marked a clear breach of international law and effectively brought these territories under Russian influence (Sagramoso, 2020).

NATO's then Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop expressed solidarity with Georgia and voiced grave concerns about Russia's use of force, which was considered excessive and disproportionate. In the aftermath, NATO promptly suspended its collaborative efforts with Russia within the framework of the NRC (Herd and Flesch, 2008).

At the 2009 Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, NATO leaders urged Russia to retract its military presence from Georgia and denounced the declaration of independence of Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. Despite this, it was evident that the alliance's leadership had no plans to discontinue engagement with Russia, acknowledging the mutual security interests that remained. Cooperation in pivotal areas was still pursued, encompassing efforts to stabilise Afghanistan, arms control, crisis management, counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, and anti-piracy initiatives.

The Lisbon Summit of 2010 was a critical juncture for NATO, where it articulated a new Strategic Concept projected to guide the alliance through the forthcoming decade. This document underscored an escalated degree of global unpredictability, emphasizing three fundamental tasks: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security. It confirmed the continuation of an “appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities” as the cornerstone of its defence and deterrence policy, while noting that the circumstances under which nuclear weapons might be used are “extremely remote.” The Concept advocated for bolstered collaboration with both the United Nations and the European Union. It further acknowledged Russia as a key partner, aiming to foster

enhanced dialogue and joint efforts with the nation. Concurrently, the Summit's Declaration emphasised the strategic importance of such collaborations but also called on Russia to rescind its recognition of Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent entities.

## **2.6. NATO-Ukraine relationship prior to the Russian aggression against Ukraine**

Post-Soviet Ukraine's engagement with NATO began evolving shortly after the Soviet Union's dissolution. Ukraine became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1992, initiating a partnership characterised by collaborative efforts to frame a partnership context, which upheld the territorial integrity of Ukraine's borders and supported its democratic progression.

By 1994, Ukraine had inked the Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework, signalling its willingness to contribute to military and civilian initiatives. Concurrently, Ukraine was also active in the 16+1 consultation process.

Ukraine's involvement with NATO deepened as it contributed to NATO-led peacekeeping missions. The 1997 NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, which led to the formation of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, provided a significant consultative platform for security discussions (Aleksiievets, 2020). Ukraine's quest for a special partner status is thought to have been propelled by ongoing disputes with Russia regarding the Black Sea fleet and was precipitated by Russia's contentious claims over the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol (Curtis, 1998).

The establishment of the NATO Liaison Office in Kyiv in 1999 further cemented the relationship. The NATO-Ukraine Action Plan and the Annual Target Plan were agreed upon in 2003. The ties between NATO and Ukraine continued to grow until the latter part of 2004, following the Istanbul Summit, after which Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic ambitions were omitted from its Military Doctrine.

This dynamic was rekindled under the Ukrainian President Viktor Iushchenko, with the alliance repeatedly affirming its receptivity to Ukraine's prospective membership. In January 2008, Ukrainian authorities submitted a request for a Membership Action Plan (MAP). The following year saw the introduction of the Annual National Programme to foster reforms and democratic development in anticipation of Ukraine's eventual admission to the alliance.

A new phase of cooperation emerged in 2010 with the election of the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, a politician seen as pro-Russia. He articulated a stance against NATO membership, emphasizing Ukraine's non-aligned status. While the NATO-Ukraine partnership experienced a cooling period, cooperation persisted, notably in peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo and the continued training and engagement of Ukrainian forces.

## **CHAPTER III. THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE AND THE CHANGES TO NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POLICY**

### **3.1. The immediate aftermath of the Russian aggression against Ukraine: increasing defence and deterrence while searching for political solution**

After Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, which decisively oriented the country towards European integration, on 27 February 2014, the Russian Federation initiated a military operation to annex the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Ukraine. This began when an armed group stormed the Crimean Parliament building and took control of it. Under duress, the Crimean lawmakers called for a referendum, and on 16 March, under contrived justifications, the Crimean Peninsula was declared to be part of the Russian Federation. This move was concurrent with a de-facto Russian military incursion into Ukraine's Donbas region (Plokyh, 2023).

NATO's response to the crisis was swift and decisive. On 27 February, immediately following the onset of hostilities, the NATO-Ukraine Commission convened to address the situation in Ukraine. NATO's Secretary General at the time, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, consistently expressed the alliance's backing for Ukraine, recognizing its status as a valued partner, and called on Russia to desist from further escalating tensions in the region (NATO, 2014a). In the month that followed, the North Atlantic Council met on at least three occasions, providing a platform for member states to deliberate on the crisis. The consensus among the allies was clear: Russia was to halt its military operations and threats against Ukraine. The allies unequivocally condemned the military aggression and reaffirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as well as the Ukrainian people's right to self-determination.

The allies resolved to maintain open channels of communication with both Russia and Ukraine via the appropriate forums – the NATO-Russia Council and the NATO-Ukraine Commission. During the NATO-Russia Council meeting, NATO denounced Russia's actions for compromising the foundational principles of the Council and the

Partnership for Peace programme, highlighting the necessity to reassess the cooperation framework between NATO and Russia (NATO, 2014b).

In the initial stages of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the allies were taken aback by the rapid escalation. The immediate NATO response was predominantly political, emphasizing the significance of dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Within six months following the onset of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO allies formulated their first tangible responses to the crisis. The Secretary General outlined the alliance's strategy as focusing on deterrence, defence, and de-escalation (NATO, 2014c). The first major step was the unanimous decision to bolster Ukraine's self-defence capabilities through immediate and long-range support measures. Secondly, the allies recognised the importance of fortifying their own defence mechanisms by enhancing their military capabilities, updating defence plans, and committing to increased defence spending. Immediate actions included bolstered air patrols over the Baltic States, the deployment of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircrafts to Poland and Romania, and an augmented naval presence in the Black Sea.

Furthermore, the NATO member states concurred on the importance of expanding cooperation with other Eastern European partners of NATO. They also reached a consensus that Russia had breached the foundational principles of their partnership as well as international law, highlighting the necessity of isolating Russia internationally and repeatedly urging it to cease its hostilities against Ukraine (NATO, 2014d).

On 7 April, in a decisive move, all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia was halted. Access to NATO Headquarters was denied to all representatives of the Russian Mission in Brussels. Nevertheless, the allies opted to keep open channels of communication at the Ambassadorial level and above, aiming to sustain dialogue and efforts towards de-escalating the crisis. This balanced approach reflected NATO's commitment to upholding its defence and deterrence posture while still seeking avenues for diplomatic resolution (NATO, 2014e).

Diplomatic endeavours to resolve the crisis began in earnest in April 2014 with the Geneva talks, and subsequently expanded to include the Minsk negotiations in September of the same year. Throughout this period, NATO leaders have persistently underscored the significance of adhering to these agreements as a pathway to peace in the region. They have also repeatedly condemned Russia's breaches of these accords, emphasizing the critical role that full compliance plays in the quest for a lasting resolution.

The Wales Summit on 5 September 2014 marked a pivotal moment in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, serving as a critical juncture for NATO. At this summit, NATO leaders explicitly identified Russia as a renewed threat, citing its actions against Ukraine as a crucial wake-up call for the global community (NATO, 2014f).

The commitment of NATO member states was reaffirmed, with a focus on the alliance's core tasks: collective defence, deterrence, crisis management, and cooperative security. Deterrence was emphasised as requiring a balanced mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities, underscoring NATO's stance as a nuclear alliance, a status it would maintain indefinitely.

In response to the altered geopolitical landscape resulting from Russian aggression, the allies agreed on several practical measures. The Readiness Action Plan (RAP) was among the most significant, aimed at ensuring continuous military presence and activity in NATO's eastern regions. This included expanding the NATO Response Force (NRF) threefold, establishing the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) for rapid deployment, and enhancing naval forces. A reversal of declining defence budgets was pledged, with targets set for defence spending at a minimum of 2% of GDP and 20% of those budgets allocated to new equipment and research and development.

The Wales Summit also introduced the Defence Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative to bolster NATO's ties with partners and promote stability through support to nations like Georgia, Moldova, and Jordan, with openness to extending this assistance further. Enhanced coordination with organizations like the EU and OSCE was another agreed-upon goal (NATO, 2014f).

For the first time, NATO acknowledged the risks of hybrid warfare and the importance of cyber defence within collective defence strategies. This acknowledgment came with a commitment to boost education, training, and exercises in this domain.

The NUC meeting, convened during the summit, saw allies reaffirming their support for Ukraine. They backed ongoing diplomatic efforts and committed to assisting Ukraine with democratic and defence reforms via the Annual National Programme (ANP) and within the framework of a Distinctive Partnership. Furthermore, NATO set up four trust funds aimed at supporting Ukraine, focusing on areas such as rehabilitation for injured troops, cyber defence, logistics, and command and control communications. These steps at the Wales Summit underscored NATO's strategic recalibration and strengthened support for Ukraine amid the crisis.

In 2015, the situation continued to escalate, prompting NATO allies to intensify their efforts to implement the decisions made at the Wales Summit. Collaboration with Ukraine was furthered through the ANP and within the context of the Distinctive Partnership, demonstrating NATO's ongoing commitment to supporting Ukraine's security and reforms.

That year marked a significant increase in NATO's military readiness activities, with over 270 exercises conducted under the alliance's auspices. Remarkably, half of these exercises took place in the eastern part of the alliance, reflecting a focused effort to enhance defence and deterrence capabilities in response to the evolving security environment. The bolstering of forces along NATO's eastern flank, both in terms of numbers and readiness, underscored the alliance's commitment to collective defence.

General Philip Breedlove, the SACEUR at the time, observed a notable level of unity within the alliance, describing it as "as unified as I have ever seen." This unity was a clear indication of NATO's resolved stance in the face of security challenges, demonstrating a cohesive and determined effort to ensure the security and stability of its member states and partners (NATO, 2015).

### **3.2. The Warsaw Summit: adopting a 360-degree approach to security**

At the outset of 2015, efforts to diplomatically resolve the conflict saw a significant development with the signing of a new set of peace measures, commonly referred to as Minsk II. Despite this diplomatic initiative, the conflict, often described as an undeclared war, persisted across the demarcation line with ongoing artillery and missile exchanges for seven years, as detailed by Ploky (2023). The international community, including NATO's leaders, frequently lauded these diplomatic efforts towards peace. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation's actions repeatedly showed a disregard for the commitments made under these agreements. This stance by Russia prompted regular statements from NATO leaders, who urged compliance with the Minsk agreements, highlighting the alliance's continued emphasis on a diplomatic resolution.

In preparation for the NATO summit scheduled for the summer of 2016 in Warsaw, the alliance's Chiefs of Defence, during their Military Committee Meeting in January of the same year, agreed on the necessity for NATO to continue its adaptation focusing on readiness and responsiveness (NATO, 2016a).

Four months later, at the MC Meeting in May, the Chiefs of Defence, stressing the diverse nature of threats posed by both state and non-state actors across various continents, resolved to adopt the 360-degree approach to the alliance's security (NATO, 2016b). This comprehensive strategy, which was officially finalised during the Warsaw Summit by the Heads of State and Government of NATO countries, aimed to bolster NATO's security posture by enhancing the presence of its forces along the alliance's various frontiers.

Throughout this meeting, the importance of nurturing relationships with NATO's partners was a focal point. The allies unanimously endorsed the concept of Individually Tailored Roadmaps as a preliminary move towards a more personalised partnership strategy with key countries such as Finland, Georgia, and Jordan. This approach marked a significant step in strengthening and customizing NATO's collaborative efforts with its global partners.

In July 2016, the Warsaw Summit emerged as a pivotal event, marking a significant moment in NATO's ongoing adaptation to evolving threats, particularly in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (NATO, 2016c). At the Summit, the Heads of State and Government from NATO member countries acknowledged the increasing unpredictability of threats, placing a significant focus on transnational security challenges. They specifically referred to the evolving situations in the Middle East and North Africa, highlighting the need for the alliance to address the complexities of security threats emanating from beyond its traditional geographic focus.

The threats discussed also significantly originated from actions undertaken by the Russian Federation, notably due to its illegal invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, Russia's efforts to extend its influence in Syria, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were recognised. The latter was perceived as potentially the next regional frontier for Russian expansion, further complicating the security landscape faced by NATO and its member states.

The theme of the Summit centred on a renewed focus on defence and deterrence, which are fundamental to the alliance's mission and *raison d'être* (NATO, 2016c). It was noted that, following the commitments made at the Wales Summit, there had been notable progress regarding the defence expenditures of the allies. For the first time since 2009, there was an increase in defence spending in 2016, signalling a tangible response to the strategic directives established previously by the alliance.

The declaration from the Summit emphasised the importance of extending stability beyond the alliance's borders, a sentiment later echoed by General Petr Pavel, the Chairman of the Military Committee, in a September meeting (NATO, 2016d). Secretary General Jen Stoltenberg described the developments as "the largest reinforcement of NATO's collective defence since the end of the Cold War," a direct response to Russia's aggressive posture towards its neighbours (NATO, 2016e). To bolster defence and deterrence on the eastern flank, NATO resolved to establish four multinational battalions stationed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, comprising troops from Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Additionally, eight new

headquarters were established in the eastern part of the alliance, aimed at enhancing training and facilitating reinforcements. These measures, according to Stoltenberg, were proportionate responses to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

In response to the outcomes of the Summit and acknowledging the critical need for enhanced situational awareness, the Heads of State and Government concurred on the formation of a new Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD). Following an appointment by the Secretary General of NATO, the division was led by Arndt Freytag von Loringhoven, a seasoned German diplomat.

Regarding Ukraine, NATO made significant announcements, including the establishment of its Representation to Ukraine and the introduction of its first Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for the country. This package featured 40 targeted support measures across 13 key areas, with notable additions like explosive ordnance disposal and counter-improvised explosive device activities earmarked for future cooperation efforts in Ukraine. According to the joint statement from the NUC, this degree of NATO's engagement with Ukraine was described as unprecedented, reflecting a deepened commitment to supporting Ukraine's security and reform efforts amidst ongoing aggression.

### **3.3. The Brussels Summit: delivering on the increased defence and Command Structure reinforcements**

Three years into the Russian aggression against Ukraine, in 2017, NATO initiated a comprehensive review of its Command Structure to ensure its alignment with the contemporary security landscape, aiming for effectiveness in both the immediate and longer-term scenarios (NATO, 2017a). The NATO MC members clarified that this decision was primarily motivated by the escalating security concerns stemming from Russia's actions against Ukraine and its involvement in Syria and the broader Mediterranean region. The process of revising the Command Structure unfolded throughout the year, culminating in the decisions made at the Defence Ministers' meeting

in February 2018 and subsequently at the Brussels Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2018.

Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg highlighted the contrast in NATO's Command Structure over the years in a press conference. At the Cold War's conclusion, NATO operated with 22 thousand staff across 33 commands, which, by the time of Russia's intervention in Ukraine, had been scaled down to fewer than 7 thousand staff within seven commands. By June 2018, it was decided that the revamped Command Structure would be augmented by an additional 1,200 personnel to bolster the alliance's operational capacity (NATO, 2018a).

Under the leadership of the SACEUR and SACT, the modifications to the Command Structure focused on several key enhancements. Notably, a new Joint Force Command dedicated to the Atlantic was to be established in Norfolk, Virginia, USA, aimed at securing the transatlantic communication and trade routes between North America and Europe. Additionally, a new Joint Force Command focusing on logistics, reinforcement, and military mobility was slated for establishment in Ulm, Germany, addressing the need for improved logistical efficiency across Europe – a concern that had been deprioritised post-Cold War. This revamped command structure intends to facilitate better military mobility, with a set goal by 2024 to enhance infrastructure and expedite the transfer of military equipment across the continent.

In recent years, NATO has increasingly focused on the burgeoning threat posed by cyber warfare. A significant step in addressing these concerns was the decision to establish a Cyber Operations Centre in Mons, Belgium, as an integral part of the updated Command Structure. In 2016, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg reported an average of 500 cyber incidents each month, with a portion attributed to Russia (NATO, 2018b). These incidents were part of broader attempts to disrupt democratic electoral processes and other forms of assertive behaviour. Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller highlighted the profound evolution of hybrid threats since the 2016 Summit, noting an expansion to include not just cyber-attacks but also disinformation campaigns proliferated via social media.

At the MC meeting in May 2018, NATO's SACEUR Curtis Scaparrotti and SACT Denis Mercier discussed the critical role of advanced technologies in strengthening the alliance's military posture (NATO, 2018c).

The 2016 Warsaw Summit was a pivotal moment for intelligence reform within NATO. The Heads of State and Government agreed to create the new position of Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security, overseeing the newly established NATO Intelligence Division. Dr Arndt Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven was appointed to this pivotal role. This division aimed to enhance cooperation, provide early warnings, and bolster general resilience against threats, including those in the cyber domain (NATO, 2016c).

By the time of the Brussels Summit a year later, the introduction of Counter Hybrid Support Teams marked another stride towards safeguarding member states. These teams offer customised assistance for capability-building endeavours aimed at countering hybrid threats, further enhancing the alliance's collective defence mechanisms (NATO, 2018).

Since 2014, burden-sharing has remained a critical issue within NATO, with the alliance advocating for members to adhere to the Defence Pledge. This issue gained particular prominence following the election of President Trump in the United States, who frequently voiced concern over the disparities in burden-sharing among NATO allies. In response, during a NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in March, a decision was made to develop annual individual national plans for member countries, aimed at ensuring they meet their commitments. This strategy was ratified by NATO Heads of State and Government at their Brussels meeting in May 2017, with a particular emphasis on three key areas: financial contributions, capabilities, and contributions to NATO missions and operations.

From 2014 onwards, NATO witnessed four successive years of increased defence spending among its members. All allies reversed previous cuts and boosted their defence budgets, contributing an additional total of at least 87 billion dollars to defence. As highlighted in the Brussels Summit Declaration of 2018, two-thirds of the allies had

implemented national plans to allocate 2% of their GDP to defence and 20% of their defence budgets to major equipment purchases by 2024. Additionally, during the Trump Administration, there was a notable 40% increase in the US funding for the alliance, reflecting a substantial commitment to enhancing NATO's collective defence capabilities (2018d).

Source: NATO (2018a).

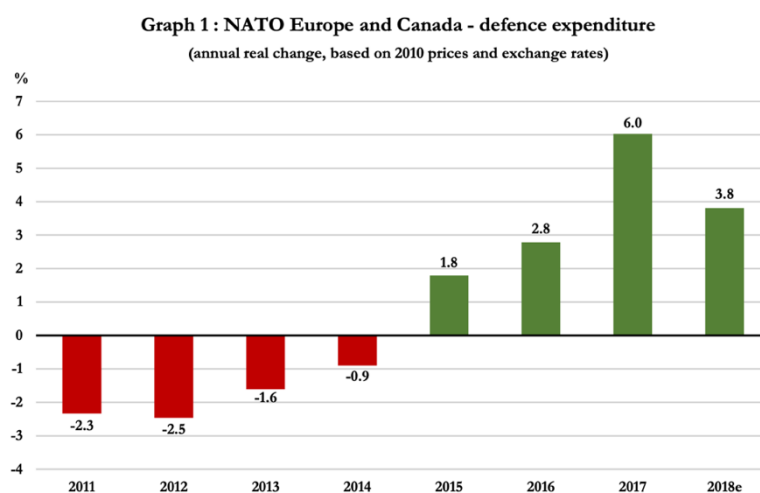


Figure 3.1. Europe's and Canada's NATO defence expenditures.

The Brussels Summit in July 2018 was convened with a central theme of unity, despite Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledging the existence of significant disagreements among allies on critical issues such as trade, climate change, burden-sharing, and the Iranian Nuclear Deal. Stoltenberg pointed out that such differences were not novel and had been a part of NATO's landscape for much of its history, as highlighted in an earlier chapter of this paper (NATO, 2018d).

A key outcome of the 2018 Brussels Summit was the introduction of the NATO Readiness Initiative, known as the "Four Thirties." Under this initiative, allies committed to having, by 2020, 30 mechanised battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 combat vessels ready for deployment within 30 days or less. This commitment marked a significant stride towards enhancing NATO's defence and deterrence capabilities. Additionally, the Summit's Communique shed light on the ongoing efforts to bolster maritime and air

capabilities, underscoring the alliance's comprehensive approach to strengthening its collective defence posture across multiple domains.

NATO Secretary General highlighted that, following its agreement during the Wales Summit in 2014, the NRF had grown to encompass around 40 thousand troops, including a 5-thousand-strong VJTF. By December 2017, the establishment of four multinational battlegroups in the eastern part of the alliance was completed, collectively fielding 4 thousand troops. This expansion was undertaken as a direct countermeasure to the significant military presence of tens of thousands of Russian troops stationed across the border. The bolstering of NATO's forces continued to be a priority.

The Trident Juncture 2018 exercise underscored this ongoing commitment to reinforcement, emerging as the largest NATO drill to date. It featured over 40 thousand participants from more than 30 countries, serving not only as a demonstration of the formidable capabilities of the alliance but also as a potent symbol of unity among NATO members and their partners. This exercise was a clear manifestation of the alliance's readiness and collective resolve in the face of evolving security challenges (NATO, 2018c).

NATO continued stressing the importance of its dual-track approach with Russia, emphasizing the need for strong defence and deterrence in dialogue with Russia. NATO officials have numerous times named Russia an important ally and strategic partner. Meetings have been held between NATO and Russia officials at the level of Chiefs of Defence, Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The NRC had seven meetings since 2016. When tensions run high, suggested Jan Stoltenberg, it's even more important to talk to Russia to try to reduce them.

NATO's stance on Russia remained largely consistent during the 2018 Brussels Summit. The alliance unequivocally condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea, the continuous destabilization efforts in eastern Ukraine, military provocations such as the deployment of modern dual-capable missiles in Kaliningrad, violations of NATO allied airspace, the lack of transparency regarding its military exercises, and aggressive nuclear rhetoric. During the ministerial meeting in April 2018, the Secretary General noted that

the NATO-Russia relationship was going through its most challenging period in recent history (NATO, 2018e).

The strategy adopted by NATO continued to follow the dual-track approach, emphasizing robust defence and deterrence measures while advocating for political dialogue grounded in international law, notably the Vienna Document and the Helsinki Final Act. This approach reflects NATO's commitment to upholding security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, balancing firmness in defence with the pursuit of diplomatic solutions. It is important to note that NATO's leadership has consistently emphasised that the alliance's defence and deterrence policy is not specifically targeted at Russia but is rather a precautionary strategy against any potential threats.

NATO has consistently advocated for its Open-Door policy, which was exemplified by Montenegro's accession in June 2017. This policy underscores the alliance's readiness to welcome new members that share its values and meet its standards, further illustrated by the invitation extended to North Macedonia in 2018.

The alliance has also increasingly acknowledged its role in combating international terrorism within the scope of its defence and deterrence strategies, part of its comprehensive 360-degree approach. In 2017, American diplomat Rose Gottemoeller was appointed as Deputy Secretary General, with a focus on anti-terrorism efforts. That same year, NATO joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and maintained its engagement with training missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the former being the largest in NATO's history.

Relations between NATO and Ukraine have continued to develop, despite challenges such as Hungary's objections to Ukraine's education policy in 2018, which led to a temporary blockade of the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the ministerial level. Nevertheless, NATO has emphasised the need for ongoing dialogue between the parties to resolve such issues in the interest of regional security.

The partnership between NATO and the European Union has notably strengthened, as highlighted by another joint declaration signed in 2018, with collaboration extending

across 74 specific areas, including hybrid and cyber threats, maritime security, joint exercises, and military mobility. NATO's collaborations with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the African Union have also been highlighted.

The geographic reach of NATO's initiatives has expanded considerably, with the alliance explicitly aiming to project stability and bolster security beyond its borders, ultimately enhancing its own collective security. Special attention has been given to deepening cooperation with Finland and Sweden, and undertaking cooperative activities with nations like Tunisia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and in regions such as the Western Balkans, Kosovo, and Serbia.

### **3.4. Navigating the build-up: NATO ahead of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine**

In 2019, the allies have progressed with what NATO's SACEUR, Tod D. Wolters, described as "the biggest adaptation" of NATO since the Cold War (NATO, 2019e). This was the year when NATO marked its seventieth anniversary, celebrating its status as the longest-lasting and most successful alliance in history. This sentiment was echoed by Jen Stoltenberg at a ministerial meeting in the United States in April 2019.

According to the NATO Foreign Ministerial Statement, the defence budgets of the allies continued to grow for the seventh consecutive year in 2021, with an additional \$190 billion contributed to NATO's budget as a result of this increase.

Throughout these years, the challenge posed by both state and non-state actors has continued to be a concern for NATO allies. Russia, in particular, has been perceived as a threat to NATO due to its aggressive actions and rhetoric. In 2019, the INF Treaty was effectively declared defunct, a casualty of what Jens Stoltenberg, the NATO Secretary General, termed Russia's "irresponsible and dangerous behaviour" (NATO 2019b). This declaration followed the United States' withdrawal from the treaty, a move that received unanimous support from all NATO allies. Throughout various press conferences,

Stoltenberg consistently emphasised that NATO was not seeking a new arms race with Russia. He highlighted the alliance's dual approach: responding robustly to Russian actions while also striving for dialogue.

Despite the escalated tensions, Stoltenberg made it clear on multiple occasions that NATO had no plans to deploy new nuclear-capable ground-launched systems in Europe. The alliance's commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation was reiterated repeatedly, underscoring its strategic vision.

In response to Russia's actions, NATO's measures were not only political but also involved strengthening its exercising and intelligence capabilities, as well as enhancing its conventional military assets. This included the acquisition of new air and missile defence systems like the Patriot and SAMP/T batteries, and continued investment in fifth-generation fighter jets.

Stoltenberg has described Russia's development of nuclear-capable missiles as a "serious and growing challenge," escalating in scale and complexity, which necessitates a vigilant and coordinated response from the alliance (NATO, 2019c).

As a result, NATO has further bolstered its presence in the Black Sea region. During the same meeting in Washington D.C., ministers consented to a suite of initiatives aimed at enhancing NATO's situational awareness there. These measures included training maritime forces and coast guards, as well as coordinating port visits, conducting exercises, and improving information sharing. In April 2019, vessels from the Standing NATO Maritime Group Two visited Ukraine and Georgia. By 2021, NATO had deployed the new alliance Ground Surveillance system, which utilises drones along the borders to significantly improve the alliance's situational awareness.

As part of its deterrence strategy and to reinforce its presence in the Black Sea, NATO continued its engagement in Georgia. In 2020, the allies approved an updated Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, which included the implementation of a secure communications project, an enhanced partnership on maritime issues, and a joint exercise scheduled for 2022.

In April 2019, the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission was frequently deployed to intercept Russian aircraft. By 2023, NATO air forces had been scrambled over 300 times in response to Russian military aircraft nearing the alliance's airspace.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has entered an active phase, challenging many institutions around the world, including NATO. Throughout this period, the Secretary General often emphasised the rise in disinformation campaigns, notably including false claims from Russia that NATO had created and spread the virus. To address these accusations, NATO's strategy focused on debunking disinformation by consistently presenting factual information. Despite the health crisis, operations among the allies, especially in the eastern regions, remained steady and were not interrupted.

At the December 2019 Heads of State and Government meeting in London, UK, NATO recognised for the first time the rise of China and its implications for the security of the allies. However, the Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, emphasised that China should not be considered an adversary to NATO (NATO, 2019d).

Amid rapid technological advancements in Russia and China, NATO allies have intensified their focus on embracing new and disruptive technologies, including artificial intelligence and quantum computing. These technologies have the potential to significantly alter the nature of conflict and impact the alliance's operational strategies. It was agreed that NATO must adopt a proactive stance in leveraging these technologies for its benefit.

In 2019, the allies agreed to the Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs) Roadmap. During the 2021 ministerial meeting, Jens Stoltenberg outlined NATO's technology strategy, emphasizing three priority areas: investing in technology, ensuring the interoperability of allied technologies, and addressing the ethical implications of using these technologies in military applications (NATO, 2021a).

To further achieve these objectives and promote technological collaboration among NATO member countries, the 2021 Brussels Summit saw the launch of the civil-military Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA). This initiative, along

with the NATO Innovation Fund, aims to support start-ups, industry, and academia engaged in technology and security sectors.

In recent years, energy security has become a pivotal area of focus for NATO. During the ministerial meeting in March 2021, the Secretary General emphasised to the media that the alliance is actively pursuing the diversification of its energy supplies to bolster the security of its energy supply chain (NATO, 2021b). This initiative has gained particular importance as it coincides with the final stages of construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline – a Russia-financed gas conduit to Germany – and the concurrent Russian military build-up along the Ukrainian border. These developments underscore the strategic necessity of enhancing energy independence within the alliance.

Climate change, often described as a “threat multiplier,” has become a significant focus within NATO in recent years. At the 2021 Brussels Summit, the allies set an ambitious goal for NATO to lead international efforts in adapting to climate change. They committed to significantly reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the alliance’s military operations, aiming to achieve this without compromising their defence and deterrence capabilities (NATO, 2021c).

The Secretary General was tasked with proposing realistic targets for these initiatives, including assessing the feasibility of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Additionally, the allies agreed to establish a regular high-level dialogue focused on climate and security, underlining the strategic importance of environmental considerations in maintaining global peace and stability.

At the December 2019 Heads of State and Government meeting, NATO designated space as its fifth operational domain, joining land, air, sea, and cyber. Jen Stoltenberg, in his press conference, emphasised that space is now a crucial aspect of NATO’s defence and deterrence capabilities, facilitating navigation, troop monitoring, missile detection, and satellite communications (NATO, 2019a). In October 2020, NATO established a Space Centre at the Allied Air Command in Ramstein, Germany, to enhance coordination of space activities and bolster the alliance’s strength.

In 2019, NATO launched the development of two pivotal strategic concepts that would shape its operational future. The Warfighting Capstone Concept aimed to project into the next two decades to identify gaps and provide recommendations, ensuring NATO continues to harness innovation to sustain its military edge. Meanwhile, the Concept for Defence and deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area established the framework for NATO's role in securing the Euro-Atlantic region against emergent threats. Both documents, which were approved in 2021, represent NATO's proactive adaptation to global challenges.

Simultaneously, the Secretary General initiated a reflection process in 2019 to enhance NATO's political dimensions, which included comprehensive consultations. In early 2020, Jens Stoltenberg appointed a group of experts led by Thomas de Maizière, former German Defence Minister, and Wess Mitchell, former US Assistant Secretary of State, to draft the "NATO 2030: United for a New Era" report. This initiative aimed to adopt a more global stance in response to evolving security dynamics and included recommendations to bolster NATO's relevance and fortify its strength against future threats.

The 2021 Brussels Summit was about the reenergizing the alliance, focusing on its future. The NATO 2030 Agenda, adopted during the 2021 Summit, features a series of specific proposals designed to enhance the alliance's role in global security. This comprehensive agenda includes critical areas such as addressing climate change as a security threat, enhancing political consultations among member states, and strengthening defence and deterrence mechanisms. These initiatives collectively aim to adapt NATO's strategic framework to contemporary global challenges, ensuring it remains a pivotal force in maintaining international peace and stability.

The need to update NATO's Strategic Concept was further underscored during the December 2020 ministerial meeting, prompted by evolving Russian behaviours and the deteriorating NATO-Russia relationship, transitioning from a "strategic partnership" to minimal contact by 2021. The urgency for this revision was amplified following the full-

scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, compelling NATO to reassess and strengthen its strategic directives in light of new geopolitical realities.

As threats to the transatlantic community intensify, partnerships continue to be a pivotal focus for NATO. Recognizing the contrasting regimes represented by Russia and China, the allies have committed to deepening relationships with Asia-Pacific partners, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. This emphasis on partnerships is consistently highlighted by NATO's senior leadership. For instance, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach has stated that the complexity of the challenges NATO faces cannot be addressed by any single nation alone. This underscores the strategic shift towards collective defence and comprehensive security cooperation across the globe.

### **3.5. The new normal: NATO's response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and the new Strategic Concept**

In 2021, NATO allies reported the largest Russian military build-up on Ukraine's border since 2014 and the biggest concentration of combat force since the end of the Cold War. Serhii Plohii (2023) notes that at the time of the full-scale invasion, the Kremlin had amassed between 150 thousand and 190 thousand troops at the border. In the 2021 Brussels Summit Communique, NATO leaders praised Ukraine for its restrained response and diplomatic efforts amid Russia's aggression. They urged Russia to cease all military activities and withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory (NATO, 2021a).

NATO's engagement intensified in January 2022 when the Ministers of Foreign Affairs convened for an extraordinary meeting in Brussels. At this meeting, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed his disappointment with Russia's unwillingness to de-escalate tensions, labelling the risk of a larger-scale conflict as "real." The NATO ministers emphasised that any further aggression by Russia would result in "significant" consequences, including economic, financial, and political sanctions, while still advocating for constructive dialogue (NATO, 2022a).

From 2019 to 2022, there were no meetings of the NATO-Russia Council, highlighting the strained relations. This stance was officially reiterated in a statement by NATO Defence Ministers on 16 February 2022. In a press conference following the meeting, the Secretary General stated that NATO would not compromise on its core principles and characterised the situation in Ukraine as indicative of a crisis in European security, where force and conflict have become the “new normal” (NATO, 2022b).

Consequently, the ministers resolved to further enhance the alliance’s defence and deterrence capabilities by planning the establishment of new battlegroups in central and eastern Europe. Additionally, NATO and its allies committed to continuing the enhancement of Ukraine’s defence capabilities, ensuring it has the necessary support to protect itself.

On 21 February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin formally renounced the 2015 Minsk agreements and recognised the independence of the self-proclaimed “Donetsk” and “Luhansk” People’s Republics within Ukraine’s official borders.

On 24 February 2022 marking eight years since the annexation of Crimea began, Russian media broadcasted Putin’s speech declaring a “special military operation” against Ukraine. The full-scale invasion commenced around 4 a.m. on the same day, with hundreds of ballistic missiles targeting Ukrainian cities.

On the same day as the NATO Defence Ministers’ meeting, an emergency session of the NAC was convened under Article 4 of the NATO Treaty in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This session activated NATO’s defence plans to safeguard its allies and issued a strong condemnation of Russia’s actions, describing the invasion in the harshest terms.

Following this, an Extraordinary virtual summit of NATO Heads of State and Government was held the next day. The summit culminated in a declaration that squarely placed the blame for the “senseless” war on Russia, accusing it of rejecting diplomacy and dialogue (NATO, 2022c). The NATO leaders reiterated the significant impact of Russia’s aggression on the alliance’s defence and deterrence posture. In response, NATO

had already augmented its defensive deployments significantly to the eastern regions of the alliance, a clear signal meant to eliminate any “misunderstandings” about its readiness. This included maintaining over 100 jets on high alert across more than 30 locations and positioning over 120 naval vessels from the High North down to the Mediterranean.

Moreover, the NATO leaders affirmed their commitment to escalate support for Ukraine, encompassing military, financial, and humanitarian aid, ensuring comprehensive backing in response to the evolving crisis.

During the tumultuous month of March, NATO leaders convened on at least three extraordinary occasions, all focused on addressing the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine – described as the “worst military aggression” in Europe for decades (NATO, 2022e). In a historic move, the NATO Response Force was deployed for the first time. Overall, NATO deployed 40 thousand troops under its command in the eastern part of the alliance and 20 thousand additional US troops in Europe in the first month of the full-scale invasion. The alliance also ramped up its aerial and naval readiness, increasing the number of jets to 130 and ships to 200. This was seen as part of an immediate response. A long-term adaptation was expected to follow suit.

During these meetings, ministers and heads of state and government concurred that NATO’s relationship with Russia has irrevocably altered for the foreseeable future. Despite this fundamental shift, the alliance reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining dialogue. In a strategic response to the aggression, NATO decided to enhance its coordination and information sharing not only with the EU but also with special partners Finland and Sweden.

On numerous occasions, when questioned about the possibility of imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has consistently stated that NATO does not intend to become directly involved in a confrontation with Russia. He has expressed concerns that such an action could escalate into a larger-scale war, posing greater risks to global security.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg highlighted that a crucial lesson from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is the necessity of supporting vulnerable countries, including Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which face similar risks. This perspective underscores NATO's strategic emphasis on pre-emptive support to prevent further regional instability.

In the Statement by NATO Heads of State and Government following the 2022 Brussels Meeting, the leaders explicitly urged China to desist from backing Russia's military actions. This appeal is part of NATO's broader strategy to minimise international support for Russia, thereby isolating it diplomatically and economically (NATO, 2022f).

Additionally, during this meeting, NATO resolved to significantly bolster its military infrastructure by establishing four new multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. This decision complements the existing four battalions stationed in the Baltic states and Poland, enhancing NATO's defensive presence along its eastern flank.

The allies also agreed to elevate their preparedness against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats. This enhancement involves equipping both the new and existing battlegroups with necessary CBRN defences, reflecting a comprehensive approach to emerging security challenges.

Moreover, Jens Stoltenberg noted that since February 2022, NATO allies have supplied substantial amounts of critical military equipment to Ukraine. This support included not only conventional arms but also advanced defensive systems to bolster Ukraine's resilience against the invasion. During the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest, Romania, in November 2022, Jen Stoltenberg called the support to Ukraine "unprecedented" (NATO, 2022).

During the 2022 Madrid Summit, NATO leaders endorsed a new Strategic Concept that addresses the evolving security environment characterised by state competition for global influence. This document marks a significant update from the 2010 Strategic Concept, notably in its shift in perception of Russia from a "strategic partner" to a

“strategic competitor” and labelling it as the “most significant and direct” threat to the alliance’s security. Additionally, the concept emphasises the challenges posed by authoritarian regimes, including Russia and China, which possess considerable power resources and seek to reshape the international order in ways that contradict NATO’s liberal democratic values. Despite these tensions, the alliance remains open to cooperation with both countries, provided it aligns with the rule of law (NATO, 2022).

The new Strategic Concept reiterates NATO’s commitment to its three core tasks: defence and deterrence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security. It updates its defence policy to include a balanced mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities, now also incorporating space and cyber domains. The alliance pledges to enhance its capabilities across these five domains, with a particular emphasis on emerging technologies.

Furthermore, NATO aims to bolster its deterrence against hybrid threats, which encompass political, economic, energy, informational, and other forms of coercion. This includes an increased focus on CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) defences as a critical component of its strategic posture.

At the 2022 Madrid Summit, NATO reaffirmed its commitment to a comprehensive 360-degree approach to security, which addresses threats from all possible directions. Leaders announced the deployment of additional forces and the expansion of battlegroups along the eastern flank.

Key to this strategic update is the modernization of NATO’s force structure and the development of a new generation of military plans. Reflecting the intensified security challenges, NATO leaders decided to significantly increase the number of high readiness forces. The total number of these forces will be raised to well over 300 thousand enhancing the alliance’s rapid response capability.

Additionally, NATO plans to enhance its ability to quickly reinforce positions by pre-assigning forces and pre-positioning military equipment. This preparedness initiative ensures that NATO can mobilise and deploy its forces swiftly and efficiently in response

to threats, thereby strengthening its defence and deterrence capabilities across all member states.

In the Madrid Declaration, NATO leaders unequivocally reaffirmed the alliance's Open Door Policy, resulting in a formal invitation to Finland and Sweden to join NATO. This decision was influenced by their geographical proximity to Russia and the evolving security dynamics that have heightened threats in the region. Both nations, recognised as some of NATO's closest partners, were seen as pivotal in strengthening the northern flank of the alliance against potential Russian aggression.

Turkey, a key NATO member, initially expressed reservations about the accession of Finland and Sweden due to specific security concerns. However, these issues were effectively resolved through diplomatic efforts led by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and other allied negotiations. At the summit, a trilateral agreement was signed under the auspices of NATO, clearing the path for their membership. This rapid progression to membership, occurring just weeks after the countries applied, was labelled by Stoltenberg as the "quickest ever" accession process in NATO history.

Additionally, marking a significant first, the NAC convened a meeting with Indo-Pacific partners during the summit. This meeting underscored NATO's intent to broaden its strategic dialogues and collaborations beyond its traditional Euro-Atlantic borders, reflecting the need for the joint efforts against the spread of authoritarianism.

In Madrid, NATO leaders took a significant step forward in bolstering the alliance's technological edge by signing the innovation fund letter. This initiative establishes a substantial fund of one billion euros aimed at investing in early-stage start-ups and deep-tech ventures. Participation in this fund spans 22 member nations, demonstrating a broad commitment to enhancing NATO's technological capabilities.

During the Summit, NATO leaders committed to a robust enhancement of support for Ukraine and adopted a CAP worth of 500 million euros, which included critical supplies such as secure communications equipment, fuel, medical supplies, and body armour. The package also includes hundreds of portable anti-drone systems, addressing

the emerging threats posed by Iran- and Russia-made drones. Furthermore, a key aspect of NATO's support involves transitioning Ukraine's military capabilities from the Soviet-era equipment to modern NATO-standard gear. This transition is essential not only for enhancing Ukraine's defensive posture but also for ensuring interoperability with NATO forces, which could be crucial in joint operations or exercises.

During the NATO meeting in Bucharest in November, the discussion prominently featured the alliance's dependence on Russian gas, leading to a broader consensus on assessing vulnerabilities related to economic ties with other authoritarian regimes, including China.

Additionally, NATO leaders voiced their dissatisfaction with China's ambiguous stance regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They criticised the Chinese authorities for not only withholding condemnation of the aggression but also propagating misleading narratives about NATO and Western countries. This concern is underscored by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's observation that the relationship between China and Russia has grown closer than ever before, posing complex challenges for NATO in navigating the geopolitical landscape marked by heightened collaboration between these two major powers.

### **3.6. Embracing new vulnerabilities – forward defence**

After the Summit, NATO allies commenced a review of their capability targets for munition stockpiles and consented to several multinational projects, including the establishment of ammunition warehouses to facilitate ammunition pre-positioning and the enhancement of ground-based air defences.

In the wake of the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage, NATO convened an extraordinary Ministerial Meeting in February 2023 (NATO, 2023). During this meeting, the alliance established the Critical Undersea Infrastructure Coordination Cell, led by former German military officer Lieutenant General Hans-Werner Wiermann. This cell is

tasked with coordinating between military and civilian stakeholders to share best practices and strengthen defences against vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure, such as gas and oil pipelines and extensive internet cable networks. In June 2023, NATO leaders agreed to set up the NATO Maritime Centre for the Security of Critical Undersea Infrastructure to enhance the protection of these assets through more effective information collection and analysis.

In April, Finland celebrated its accession to NATO, officially becoming the thirty-first member of the alliance. By the summer of 2023, Sweden's NATO membership had been ratified by 28 member countries, with only Turkey and Hungary holding out. The primary concerns from Turkey related to counterterrorism measures, which were addressed by Sweden through stringent modifications to its national legislation. At the 2023 Vilnius Summit, the Turkish President, alongside his Swedish counterpart, expressed their readiness to move forward with ratification of Sweden's NATO membership in their respective parliaments.

From the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine to the NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in April, NATO allies have provided approximately 150 billion euros in support to Ukraine, including 65 billion euros in military aid. Concurrently, a multi-year support initiative was being developed to enhance Ukraine's defence and deterrence capabilities. Additionally, the NATO-Ukraine Commission was elevated to the new NATO-Ukraine Council, designed to function as an equal consultative forum with Ukraine. The inaugural session of this council took place under the auspices of the 2023 Vilnius Summit, attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi. In November, the NATO-Ukraine Council convened at the foreign ministerial level for the first time, during which Ukraine presented its updated ANP for 2024.

Regarding Ukraine's potential membership in NATO, the allies reaffirmed their commitment to Ukraine becoming a part of the alliance and made a ground-breaking decision during the Summit to waive the traditional MAP requirement. This adjustment simplifies the accession process, potentially allowing Ukraine to join NATO through a more streamlined, single-step approach rather than the conventional two-step process.

Following up on what has been mentioned earlier, several crucial decisions have been taken at the latest NATO Summit. The leaders tasked the NAC to reflect on the existing threats and challenges and engagement opportunities with NATO's partners.

Recognizing the escalating nature of global threats, NATO leaders adopted a new Defence Investment Pledge, setting a minimum spending target of 2 percent of GDP on defence. This commitment encourages member nations to exceed this threshold in order to maintain a technological advantage and modernise military forces for effective collective defence.

Significant focus was also placed on enhancing defence industrial capacity. In preparation for the Summit, NATO Defence Ministers evaluated a Defence Production Action Plan that aims to integrate alliance defence industrial capabilities more effectively with strategic defence planning. This plan also promotes joint procurement initiatives to help allies meet NATO's capability targets.

Additionally, the NATO Industry Forum took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in October 2023. This event was designed to fortify NATO's industry relations and provided a platform to discuss and shape NATO's future defence capabilities. The forum brought together industry executives, senior NATO civilian and military officials, and representatives from various international organizations, fostering a collaborative environment to address emerging defence challenges.

As a significant outcome of the Summit, the concept of "forward defence" has been reinforced. The allies resolved to implement new regional defence plans and develop domain-specific strategies to enhance responsiveness. A new multinational and multi-domain Allied Reaction Force was established, and commitments were made to bolster NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence. This enhancement includes upgrading surveillance, interceptors, and command and control systems, with a particular emphasis on the Eastern Flank. This strategy involves the rotational deployment of modern air defence systems across the eastern flank to improve readiness.

In November, ministers endorsed a major update to the AWACS fleet, planning the integration of next-generation command and control aircraft. This initiative, set to commence in the coming years and expected to be operational by 2030, represents one of NATO's largest-ever capability investments, significantly enhancing its integrated air and missile defence capabilities.

Additionally, the allies ratified the 2023 alliance Resilience Objectives and the Digital Transformation Implementation Strategy. These agreements are aimed at bolstering resilience and ensuring NATO's operational effectiveness across all domains.

The allies also reaffirmed their commitment to the Cyber Defence Pledge, which seeks to elevate national cyber defence goals. A new Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability was launched to aid national efforts in mitigating incidents arising from malicious cyber activities. In November 2023, NATO conducted its inaugural Cyber Defence Conference in Berlin, focusing on the escalating strategic competition in cyberspace and the critical role of enhanced collaboration with the private sector.

### **3.7. Current developments**

During the analysed period in 2024, NATO continued to reinforce its defence and deterrence system. NATO allies continued implementing defence plans that include Force Structure Requirements, which specify the number and types of equipment and organizations needed across all regions and domains. As Admiral Rob Bauer, Chair of the Military Committee, noted, “never before have NATO and national defence plans been so closely interlinked” (NATO, 2024a).

NATO leaders continued to emphasise that support to Ukraine remains crucial and is a “direct investment” in NATO's own security and that “the only way to achieve a lasting, negotiated solution is to strengthen Ukraine's position on the battlefield” (NATO, 2024b). In February, the Ministers of Defence agreed to establish a new NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training, and Education Centre in Bydgoszcz, Poland. This centre aims to further assist Ukrainian armed forces and ensure their training meets NATO standards.

In January 2024, NATO launched Steadfast Defender 2024, the largest NATO exercise in decades, involving approximately 90 thousand forces from all 31 allies and Sweden. The exercise aimed at further enhancing NATO's defence plans, improving their interoperability and contributing to the alliance's defence and deterrence in multiple domains, including land, air, sea, cyber and space.

Another significant event was Sweden's accession to NATO on 7 March 2024, following a prolonged ratification process due to concerns from Turkey and Hungary. Sweden, long considered a strong NATO partner, is expected to bolster the alliance's defence and deterrence capabilities, particularly on the northeastern flank, reducing the alliance's vulnerability.

Sweden's decision to apply for NATO membership marks a shift in the geopolitical landscape. Historically committed to a policy of non-alignment, Sweden sought to enhance its defence capabilities and align with NATO's collective defence principle in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Since the war began, Sweden has increased its defence spending, a move that has been met with concern from Russia.

Allies are also preparing for the Washington Summit in July, which will celebrate NATO's seventy-fifth anniversary. The Summit is expected to continue discussions on the interconnectedness of contemporary global security and the importance of partnerships in the Mediterranean, Gulf, and Indo-Pacific regions, especially in light of ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine.

### **3.8. Conclusions**

In this Chapter, we have seen that since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, NATO's defence and deterrence policy has undergone significant changes in response to the changing security environment. The following table illustrates main developments that have occurred within NATO's defence and deterrence strategy since 2014.

Source: Author.

Increased defence spending	<p>In 2014, only three NATO member states have spent more than 2 percent of their GDP on defence (United States, United Kingdom, and Greece). In 2023, eleven member states have spent more than 2 percent of their GDP on defence.</p>
Enhanced capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eight new multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.</li> <li>- Increased air patrol missions over the Baltic States and the deployment of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircrafts to Poland and Romania.</li> <li>- Expanded NATO Response Force (NRF) to 40 thousand troops and established the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) (5 thousand troops) for rapid deployment in 2014.</li> <li>- Command Structure Review: Increased the number of personnel by more than a thousand and introduced two new Joint Force Commands for Euro-Atlantic coordination and logistics (2018).</li> <li>- Introduced the Four Thirties initiative: 30 mechanised battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 combat vessels ready for deployment within 30 days or less by 2020.</li> <li>- NATO has carried out the biggest military exercises in decades: the Trident Juncture (2018) and Steadfast Defender (2024).</li> <li>- NATO Maritime Centre for the Security of Critical Undersea Infrastructure (2023).</li> </ul>
Improved technological development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acknowledged the importance of cyber defence (2014).</li> <li>- Established Cyber Operations Centre (2017).</li> <li>- Cyber and space became operational domains (2019).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adopted the Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs) Roadmap (2019).</li> <li>- Established NATO Space Centre (2020).</li> <li>- Established Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) (2021).</li> <li>- NATO Industry Forum (2023).</li> <li>- Cyber Defence Pledge (2023).</li> </ul>
Enhanced cooperation with partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defence Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative (2014).</li> <li>- Individually Tailored Roadmaps in 2014, leading to Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) in 2023.</li> <li>- Accepting four new member states: Montenegro (2017), North Macedonia (2020), Finland (2023), and Sweden (2024).</li> </ul>
Support for Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual National Programme (ANP) to support democratic and defence reforms in Ukraine (2014).</li> <li>- Four trust funds aimed at supporting Ukraine, focusing on areas such as rehabilitation for injured troops, cyber defence, logistics, and command and control communications.</li> <li>- Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP).</li> <li>- NATO-Ukraine Council (2023).</li> </ul>
Other changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adopted a comprehensive 360-degree approach to security responding to threats from all sides.</li> <li>- Recognised China as a threat to global security (2019).</li> <li>- Finally adopted the stability-beyond-the-borders doctrine in comparison to the lack of will for an out-of-area operations.</li> </ul>

Figure 3.2. Major changes to NATO's defence and deterrence policy since 2014.

During the Cold War, NATO's focus was on central Europe with massive conventional forces deployed in response to the Soviet threat. Today, the nature of these challenges has changed, requiring NATO to adopt a 360-degree approach. This approach involves pursuing partnerships with like-minded countries to counterbalance the ideological threats posed by nations such as the Russian Federation and its allies.

The means of addressing these threats have also evolved. In the modern era, the cyber and space domains have significant influence on warfare. However, the role of nuclear and conventional weapons has not diminished. The Russian aggression against Ukraine has prompted NATO to rethink its capabilities, leading to the largest reinforcement of military capabilities within the alliance since the Cold War. This strengthening process began in February 2014 and continues to this day.

## CONCLUSIONS

This master's paper has established the relationship between the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and the full-scale invasion in 2022 and the changes to NATO's defence and deterrence strategy, highlighting key changes and their implications for the alliance's future.

Chapter I of this research establishes the theoretical and methodological framework for examining NATO's defence and deterrence policy. This chapter selects key international relations theories through which NATO's strategies are analysed. It also conceptualises critical definitions such as aggression, military alliance, NATO, defence, and deterrence, forming the foundation of our research. Finally, it outlines the methodology used in this study.

Chapter II provides the historical background and context of NATO's evolution up to the onset of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. This chapter traces NATO's creation over seventy-five years ago following World War II, aimed at preventing another devastating conflict and establishing a robust security architecture. Much of NATO's history has been shaped by the dynamics of the Cold War. Throughout its existence, the alliance has faced numerous challenges, periods of tension, and critical moments where it was on the brink of conflict, navigating strategies from massive retaliation to flexible response to political partnership. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War led to a period of strategic reorientation, with NATO focusing more on crisis management, cooperative security, and out-of-area operations, such as those in the Balkans and Afghanistan.

Chapter III highlighted the changes in NATO's defence and deterrence policy since the Russian aggression against Ukraine. NATO's defence and deterrence posture has consistently been defined by an appropriate mix of conventional forces, missile defence capabilities, and nuclear weapons. This stance has been reaffirmed during every NATO Summit held since the onset of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Despite these changes, NATO remains a nuclear alliance, maintaining this status for as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine marked a return to traditional territorial defence for NATO that has significantly enhanced its defence and deterrence posture, particularly on its eastern flank. These changes have been described by many NATO leaders as unprecedented and historic, marking a significant shift that refocuses the alliance on its core defence functions.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to the largest NATO reinforcement, the greatest increase in NATO defence spending, and a significant presence of NATO troops on the eastern flank, bordering the Russian Federation. The nature of the threat has evolved, prompting NATO to expand its scope of activities and learn to operate in new domains such as space and cyber.

Furthermore, the alliance faced a broader threat to the international order from Russia, which, supported by China, has bolstered other authoritarian regimes posing greater dangers. Consequently, NATO adopted a 360-degree policy to ensure its ability to respond to all kinds of threats.

During this period, NATO maintained its Open-Door policy and strengthened cooperation with like-minded partners to protect the global order. Since 2014, NATO has significantly increased its cooperative activities with Ukraine and Georgia to unprecedented levels and reached out for partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries.

The alliance has adapted to the changed geopolitical environment and complex threats posed by the Russian Federation in connection to its aggression against Ukraine. Assessing the effectiveness of this adaptation is beyond the scope of this master's paper.

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## АНОТАЦІЯ

Магістерської роботи

Тема: «Російська агресія проти України та зміни до політики стримування та оборони НАТО»

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Захищена “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_ р.

Короткий зміст роботи: Магістерська робота має на меті встановити зміни до політики стримування та оборони НАТО у зв'язку з російською агресією проти України. Для реалізації мети нами було встановлено ключові поняття – агресія, стримування, оборона, колективна безпека та колективна оборона та НАТО, а також обрано методологію дослідження. У другій частині роботи ми з'ясували історичні передумови та контекст еволюції НАТО до початку російської агресії проти України. У третій частині ми ідентифікували конкретні зміни до політики стримування та оборони НАТО, пов'язані з російською агресією проти України.

Ключові слова: *НАТО, стримування, оборона, російська агресія проти України, військовий союз.*

Short summary: This master's thesis aims to identify the changes in NATO's defence and deterrence policy in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine. The first part of the research establishes key definitions, such as aggression, defence, deterrence, collective security, collective defence, and NATO. The second part provides a historical overview of NATO's evolution up to the onset of aggression in February 2014. The final section establishes the evolution of NATO's deterrence and defence policy since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Key words: *NATO, deterrence, defence, the Russian aggression against Ukraine, military alliance.*