



**Forum:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

**Issue:** The question of Ukraine and the NATO military presence in the East of the Alliance

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## Introduction

North Atlantic Treaties Organization (NATO) is both a political and military alliance of 32 countries, founded in April 4, 1949 with a central and concise mission: safeguarding all member countries' freedom and security against all threats. NATO has a collective defence strategy which is stated in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty as follows: "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against all of them" The NATO allies further agreed on taking collective action when necessary in order to maintain the peace in the North Atlantic region.

The security of Ukraine holds great significance to the North Atlantic Treaties Organization (NATO) alliance with the 32 member states. Especially throughout the last decade, NATO has bolstered its presences in its eastern flank, from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Black Sea in the south. The most important events that has altered the security atmosphere in Europe have been Russia's annexation of Crimea illegitimately in 2014 followed by Russia's hostile invasion of Ukraine beginning from February 2022 until today. Russian Federation's virulent actions not only to Ukraine, but also to member states of NATO have expanded noticeably in the past decade, including air space violations and cyberattacks. As a response, NATO has solidified its presence in the east of the alliance by further enhancing its military forces that will be protecting and defending all ally nations, in times of need.

Owing to Russia's hostile measures in the transatlantic region, NATO has deemed Russia as the main source of instability and threat to the ally's security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Thus, NATO has placed its Forward Land Forces that include eight distinct multinational battle groups which are located in member states along the eastern flank. These battlegroups have varying sizes regarding the military requirements that might be encountered in the region. The member allies in which these multinational battle groups are based are Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. NATO has fortified its necessary defence system and logistics on land, in air and at sea. Hence, the alliance have been procured with a comprehensive defence mechanism. Russia, on the other hand, has accused of NATO to be the cause of the conflict with its enlargement policy. This misleading cause-and-effect narrative of Russia has caused

the administration of the country to ignore NATO's main objective of implementing deterrent policies to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The NATO's legitimacy and attractiveness has also been enhanced since the breakout of the conflict, as the alliance has been striving to resolve the conflict by using diplomatic means and organizing summits by summoning both sides of the conflict.

## Definition of Key Terms

### NATO (North Atlantic Treaties Organization)

NATO is an essentially military alliance founded in April 1949 that aimed to counteract armies of USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) located in central and eastern Europe, especially after World War II and the Cold War. In today's status quo, NATO acts as a vital intergovernmental organization that seeks to establish peace particularly in the North Atlantic region as well as in the world, with its 32 ally countries. NATO's core strategy is principally expressed in North Atlantic Treaty also known as the Washington Treaty, signed in 1949, in Article 5. This article states that a war threat against a NATO ally corresponds to a threat to all ally nations, eventually causing these ally nations to take collaborative action against the threats posed outside the alliance.

### Eastern Flank

Eastern flank of NATO refers to NATO member countries that are located along the eastern edge of the alliance which are closest to Russian Federation and Belarus. These states form the front line of NATO's territory in Eastern Europe and the Baltics. The eastern flank countries can be categorized in 2 subtitles, Baltic states, and Central and Eastern European states. The Baltic states incorporate Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania while the Central and Eastern European states include Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. Additionally, Finland is sometimes included as it has a prolonged border with Russia.



### NATO's Eastern Flank and Troop Details

## Military Deterrence

Military deterrence is a military strategy that can be defined as the persuasion of potential aggressor that the consequences of the coercion or armed dispute would suppress the potential gains acquired by the aggressive actions. In order to implement “military deterrence” strategy, countries must maintain a credible military capability coherent with clear political will to take action if necessary. Military deterrence is categorized in 2 with deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial. The deterrence by punishment refers to the threatening of the aggressor with severe retaliation through economic sanctions and even military responses. Conversely, deterrence by denial refers to making the circumstance difficult for the adversaries to succeed through air defences, fortifications, and troop presence. In the context of Ukraine, NATO has already been expanding its troops in the region to force Russia to retract its illicit invasion of Ukraine. This counts mainly as deterrence by punishment with the purpose of warning Russia that a threat posed to Ukraine will impell all the members of the alliance to take immediate action as Article 5 concerns.

## Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare is a type of warfare where both conventional and unconventional ways of subversion are employed to harm the antagonist to the highest extend. These ways include any type of instruments or weapons. These weapons are generally utilized simultaneously with the purpose of aiming at the vulnerabilities of the adversaries. An impactful characteristic of hybrid warfare attacks is their ambiguity and vagueness. This handicap is created and further enhanced by hybrid actors, which eventually end up complicating the attribute as well as the response. As a result, the targeted country is either not able to detect a hybrid attack or not able to attribute it to a state that might be perpetrating it. Via the exploitation of the threshold of detection and attribution, the hybrid actor makes it difficult for the targeted state to develop policy and strategic responses.

## Expansionism

Expansionism refers to the policy or ideology that supports the territorial or economic growth of a nation through the acquisition of new territories. The expansionism policy is often equipped by nations in order to expand their influence in the global stage.

## Buffer Zone

In the context of the question of Ukraine, buffer zone refers to the area between two adversarial powers. This buffer zone is specifically established in order to physically separate these conflicting powers.

## Background Information

The Russian Federation's ongoing military assertiveness has posed significant threats to the allied countries of NATO. This caused member states to come together and take immediate actions that aim to prepare NATO's multinational defense and industrial base against these evolving security challenges from the Russian Federation by 2030. Despite Russia's everlasting conflicts with countries all over the world, Russia has utilized the greatest violence in Ukraine ever since. Initially, in 2014, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea unlawfully. Subsequently, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine started in

February 2022, leaving people all over the world flabbergasted as this military act is the greatest war since World War II ended. These incidents, as well as Russia's pattern of hybrid threats, conventional buildups, and airspace violations along NATO's eastern flank, augmented the severity of the threats that have been posed by Russia. After the Cold War, Russia sought to establish cooperative security frameworks with countries around the world, such as but not limited to the 1997 Founding Act, the 2002 NATO-Russia Council and major arms control treaties. While these agreements primarily provided transparency and predictability about Russia's actions, their collapse over the past two decades has eroded trust and created a near-total absence of binding constraints on force posture in Europe.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### NATO (North Atlantic Treaties Organization)

NATO is a military cooperation between countries located in North America and Europe that aims to create and maintain collective defense against countries, organizations, and groups that pose possible threats to one or more of the 32 member states. Russia has been a solid threat to plenty of countries since the founding of NATO up until today. NATO must adapt itself to the new threats that can be encountered by preparing a multinational defense and industrial base. These measures can be taken through the funding of member states, who should spend at least 2% of GDP on defense according to NATO's guidelines. Through these spendings, the member states are able to take the necessary steps collectively and ensure the country's individual security.

### Russia

NATO members have faced many conflicts with the Russian Federation in the past due to political, strategic, economic, cultural and military reasons, with NATO being established to take action against the military bases Russia had in Europe. Example conflicts were faced by countries such as, but not limited to, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Syria, Türkiye, Kazakhstan. Recently, due to the war in Ukraine since 2022, NATO has officially declared Russia's aggression as "the gravest threat to the Euro-Atlantic security for decades". Despite NATO's efforts to forge diplomatic relations with Russia by forming sub-organizations that specifically target negotiations, Russia maintains security concerns. Thus, NATO will be taking the necessary measures by enhancing industrial and defense bases to counter Russia's instability in diplomacy and tendency to declare war.

### Ukraine

Ukraine is one of the independent countries that emerged after the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. As soon as the independent nation of Ukraine was founded, the government officials sought ways to participate in multinational cooperation organizations, including NATO. Subsequently, Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994. Relations were strengthened with the signing of the 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, and further enhanced in 2009 with the Declaration to Complement the Charter, which reaffirmed the decision by NATO Leaders at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine will become a

member of NATO (NATO, Relations with Ukraine).,

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December, 26 <sup>th</sup> , 1991	After the end of the Cold War, the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) officially dissolved, which led to the generation of various sovereign countries, such as but not limited to Armenia, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Latvia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, and Moldova. From 1991, NATO strived to establish a strategic partnership with the newly born Russian Federation.
June, 1994	The PfP (Partnership for Peace) was organized by NATO in order to ease the participation and integration of non-member states. These states include Russia as well as the other countries that were dissolved from the USSR, including Ukraine.
May, 27 <sup>th</sup> , 1997	NATO leaders and the Russian Federation's president officially signed the NATO-Russian Founding Act. This cooperation ensured that NATO and Russia complied to base their diplomatic dialogue means and principles, especially on human rights and civil liberties. This encouraged the prevention of the use of force against each other as well as other states.
May, 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2002	NATO countries' leaders, as well as Vladimir Putin, the current president of the Russian Federation, agreed to sign a proclamation in Rome. It was called "NATO- Russia Relations: A New Quality". This declaration founded the NATO-Russia Council, where the sides practiced consensus-based cooperation. The areas of discussion and cooperation included counterterrorism, crisis management and arms control.
August , 2008	Russia's military actions in Georgia in August 2008 led to the suspension of formal NATO-Russia Council meetings and some areas of cooperation. Allies are still telling Russia to take back its recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent countries in Georgia. At the NATO Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl on April 4, 2009, NATO leaders talked about how they disagreed with Russia about Georgia, but they also agreed to work together politically and practically again.
November 2010 – 2014	The objectives and tenets of the NATO-Russian Founding Act and the NATO-Russia Rome Declaration served as the foundation for the November 2010 Lisbon Summit, where NATO leaders and President Dmitry Medvedev decided to start "a new stage of cooperation towards a true strategic partnership." In addition to agreeing to further reinforce cooperation in the fight against terrorism and counter-piracy initiatives, the Alliance invited Russia to discuss the possibility of increased cooperation on missile defense. In the ensuing years, Russia and NATO collaborated to support the Afghan army's fleet of helicopters, carried out joint exercises for submarine rescue and counter-piracy, and talked about a joint mission to assist in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

March, April 2014	At the beginning of March 2014, the Russian Federation unlawfully annexed Crimea, a region that originally belonged to Ukraine's sovereign territories. In order to reciprocate this illegal and illegitimate act, NATO decided to terminate all types of practical cooperation with Russia. NATO strived to deter Russia from carrying out such unlawful acts by taking measures like this. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation didn't give up on its aggressive acts in the region. The violence of Russia triggered NATO and allied countries to further strengthen their security and defense systems in case of any possible threats posed by Russia.
July, 2016	During the Warsaw Summit, NATO leaders agreed upon a noticeable and positive shift in Russia's behavior that reflects adherence to international law and Russia's promises will be necessary for the Alliance's relations with Russia to improve. Russia and NATO can not resume "business as usual" till then.
March, 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2018	The United Kingdom gave the Allies a briefing on the application of a nerve toxin in Salisbury. The NATO Allies denounced this violation of international standards and voiced their grave concerns. More than 25 countries expelled more than 150 Russian diplomats following lengthy talks with Allies and partner governments that were held in capitals and at NATO headquarters. The NATO Secretary General declared on March 27, 2018, that the Russian Mission's accreditation for seven of its employees would be revoked, that three pending accreditations would be denied, and that the mission's maximum size would be lowered to 20.
December, 2019	NATO leaders came together to discuss the threats posed by Russia to the ally countries in December 2019. They came to the conclusion that NATO is and ought to be remaining open to any constructive dialogue with Russia, when Russia's actions render it possible. NATO leaders reiterated the importance of a dual-track approach to Russia's aggression. This means that NATO will be both elevating deterrence and defense, while also being open to diplomatic means.
February, 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	In February 2022, the biggest European invasion since World War II began with 200.000 Russian soldiers entering Ukraine and particularly the capital, Kyiv. Vladimir Putin's intention in conducting this full-scale invasion was to overthrow the pro-Western government and transform Ukraine's government to be easily influenced by the Russian Federation. He also mentioned his multiple goals such as demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine, as he also referred to Ukraine also as a Nazi state in his previous speeches. He went on to include maintaining Ukraine's neutrality as an additional goal. He charged that NATO, a Western defensive alliance, was attempting to establish itself in Ukraine to move its forces closer to Russia's frontiers. The war is still ongoing, as it has been almost 4 years. Despite the efforts of mediator actors like Donald Trump, the president of the US, as well as Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the president of Turkiye (Kirby).

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

### 1. CFE (Conventional Armed Forces ) Treaty Collapse

The 2007 suspension of Russian participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in

Europe (CFE) and the 2015 formal withdrawal dismantled one of Europe's most important conventional arms control arrangements. The treaty initially limited across-the-continent deployments of tanks, artillery, and other heavy weapons, but in Russian perception, NATO expansion and U.S. deployments of missile defenses built unpredictable security threats that Russian leaders could not tolerate. To NATO Allies, however, Russian intractability in refusing to comply in Georgia and Moldova with withdrawal commitments made an Adapted CFE Treaty unsustainable to support ratification. Accordingly, the CFE's demise deprived Europe of a tool to verify or contain the accumulation of conventional forces, and it fueled mistrust across NATO and Russia.

## 2. INF Treaty Breakdown

The 2019 demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty saw one of the Cold War foundations of nuclear stability wiped away. The United States, in alliance with NATO, denounced after asserting that Russia had deployed SSC-8 (9M729) missiles in violation of treaty limitations. Russia categorically dismissed the accusation, but without realistic verification protocols and without clauses to cover new forms of missile technology, the treaty continued to decay. Without new infrastructure to keep these new threats in check, the INF fell apart, leaving Europe vulnerable to new intermediate-range deployments and fuelling NATO anxiety surrounding Russia's growing arsenal.

## 3. NATO-Russia Council Paralysis

The 1992 Open Skies Treaty, in which unarmed reconnaissance flights across states parties would boost transparency and promote trust, disintegrated in the early 2020s. The United States in 2020 cited numerous Russian closures of observation flights across sensitive sites, and Russia retaliated in 2021 with withdrawal. Hailed once as an unprecedented new tool of cooperative security, the treaty's legitimacy eroded as it became clouded by allegations of noncompliance and more broadly, as NATO and Russia relations became contentious. Its loss closed another transparency avenue, expanding still further potential for misperception and escalation in Europe.

## Possible Solutions

The future in a sustainable direction to bring back trust and transparency to Europe's security sector would be to conceptualize an updated framework of arms control in sync with today's world. Instead of relying solely on legacy means of unarmed reconnaissance flights, states could bring in new-age weapons in the form of satellite imagery, remote sensing systems, and digital information-sharing systems to provide accurate and verifiable tracking. Such technologies would not only reduce controversies over non-compliance but also expand the scope to include new threats in the form of drones and hypersonic systems. Institutionalizing such a regime in a multilateral structure such as the OSCE would strengthen its legitimacy, enable collective control, and reduce it from being vulnerable to bilateral political setbacks.

At the same time, reconstituting political rhetoric and the crisis-management framework is also

necessary. Confidence-building measures such as pre-notification of military exercises, reciprocal facility visits, and hotlines between military leaders could reduce the chance of misperceptions and escalation. Regular communication forums, even during periods of strained relations, would show commitment to respecting transparency and stability. Alongside new verification means and reinvigorated diplomatic dialogue, these could bring to Europe a more stable and forward-looking security regime, reducing strains and reintroducing an element of predictability to relations between NATO and Russia.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- [NATO Website](http://www.nato.int)
- [The North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\) - Council on Foreign Relations](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_f12014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/2003-NATO-Russia_en.pdf)

- [NL ARMS Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2020-Deterrence in the 21st Century—Insights from Theory and Practice-Chapter 3 Deterrence Rediscovered: NATO and Russia](#)
- [NATO and Russia after the Invasion of Ukraine-JSTOR](#)
- [Formal NATO-Russia Relations](#)
- [NATO Needs a Comprehensive Strategy for Russia](#)