

## **North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russo-Ukrainian Conflict, and Global Security**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the consequences of the enlargement of NATO on the security situation in the region, especially with reference to what it would mean to Russia and the international system as a whole. The paper at hand deals with the convoluted aspect of eastward expansion of NATO in escalating tensions with Russia, and its overall implications on the world conflict resolution mechanisms. The main idea of the current study is to examine how NATO has reacted on the strategic level to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict where it will be evaluated how this response has impacted the unity of the alliance and how effective modern conflict management tools are. The theoretical framework used in the study is Collective Security which concentrates on the influence of the collective defense commitments of NATO on its actions and relations with Russia. The research design is qualitative, and the information is obtained through secondary sources, such as journal articles, government publications, and other well-known international news sources. The content analysis was applied to the data, which made it possible to thoroughly analyze the policies of NATO, the strategic reactions of Russia, and the changing security situation in Eastern Europe. The results indicate that the reaction of NATO has enhanced internal solidarity, but internal division among members still exists because of the national interests. The expansion of NATO has worsened the relationship between NATO and Russia leading to military interventions and increased military posturing. The paper also points out the inefficiency of the conventional conflict resolution mechanisms, especially the UNSC, in resolving the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, which has led to the turn towards the alternative diplomatic platforms. To sum up, the NATO expansion to Eastern Europe has changed the security in the region dramatically, increasing the tensions between Russia and the NATO and putting the systems of conflict resolution in the world to the test. The paper suggests that NATO should hold a dialogue with Russia, review its enlargement policy and assist in reforming international institutions to make them more responsive and inclusive in dealing with modern security issues.

**Keywords:** NATO, Russo-Ukrainian conflict, regional security, collective security, conflict resolution, expansion, Russia

### **Introduction**

NATO was established in 1949, mainly to protect the freedom and security of its member states by collective defense. The main principle of NATO is that an attack on one member is an attack on all as provided in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. NATO was originally established as a counterweight to the Soviet Union in the Cold War, but has evolved to meet new security threats in the world. It has increased its membership to cover former Eastern Bloc countries and it concentrates on emerging threats like cyberattacks, terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction [1]. Over the past few years, NATO has been keen on modernizing its defense capabilities, countering the increasing strategic rivalry of Russia and China, and maintaining regional stability by being militarily ready and politically united [2]. As the world becomes more unstable, NATO has also been keen on

improving its relations with non-member states and other international bodies to improve peace and security in the world [3].

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict, which reached a new level after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, became even more dramatic when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. This conflict has turned into one of the most important geopolitical crises of the 21st century, and its impact on the regional and global security is enormous. The invasion has led to massive destruction, which has resulted in great humanitarian sufferings and displacement of millions of people. Nevertheless, Ukraine has demonstrated great strength and has been receiving substantial international aid, especially by the NATO members, which has sustained the conflict to be alive and continuing [4]. Global supply chains, particularly those in energy and food, have also been disrupted by the war and many countries not directly in the conflict region. Moreover, the territorial sovereignty, national identity, and the right of nations to self-determination have been the subject of heated debates due to the conflict, which has led to the increasing geopolitical tensions [5]. The use of NATO to assist Ukraine has brought complicated issues regarding the balance between deterrence and escalation in the contemporary warfare.

The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict has re-established the international security environment revealing the weaknesses of the existing international security systems. The NATO military and diplomatic response to the war has shown the efficiency and the inefficiency of the collective defense systems. On the one hand, NATO has demonstrated that it is willing to do everything possible to ensure that no further aggression takes place by enhancing its military presence in Eastern Europe and providing Ukraine with valuable defense assistance. On the other hand, the war has demonstrated the challenges of managing international conflicts without escalating to regional or global wars [6]. The war has also enhanced the significance of non-traditional security threats such as cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns that have become a component of modern warfare [6]. The developments have necessitated a critical review of the traditional military doctrines and highlighted the need to have a holistic paradigm of international security that incorporates standard as well as the emerging non-traditional threats as pointed out by the Institute of the Study of War. The consequences of the war are extensive, and NATO and other global institutions must reconsider their policies and strategies in the context of the increasingly multipolar world.

The given paper will study the complex nexus between NATO, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and the international security, and explore the interaction between these elements and how they influence each other. The study will provide useful evidence on the strategy of NATO in response to collective defence, the development of the conflict, and the overall implications of this issue to the global security by adding new insights to the existing scholarly corpus on the interplay of collective defence efficacy and issues of contemporary conflict-resolution. It will also examine the way the ongoing war has altered the balance of power in the world, which will provide a foundation to the evolving nature of international relations [6]. The findings of this study will give policy directions to global leaders and international organizations in their endeavors to address the dynamics of the contemporary geopolitics that demands a multi-dimensional approach to the preservation of peace and security in the post-Cold War world.

### **Statement of the problem**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been regarded as the source of collective defense, which is founded on the principle that an attack on one of the members is an attack on all. Despite its success in its formation, NATO is now facing several issues that are jeopardizing its unity and effectiveness. The fact that the member states are internally fragmented, a situation that has been worsened by the increasing nationalism and Euroscepticism, has made it difficult to have a coherent stand on collective security. The response of the alliance to the non-traditional threats, such as cyberattacks and hybrid warfare, appears to be sluggish and fragmented, and it is doubtful whether NATO is capable of reacting to the modern security threats [5].

The other big issue is the continued enlargement of NATO especially in Eastern Europe. Whereas NATO argues that its enlargement is a step towards stability, Russia feels that this expansion is a direct threat to its security which has caused geopolitical tensions. This begs the following questions: Is the expansion of NATO really bringing about security or is it likely to increase conflicts? The changes in the strategic environment require NATO to review its policies and strategies so that

it can remain relevant and effective in the maintenance of peace in the world [7].

The Russo-Ukrainian war, which started with the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and was later intensified by the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has become one of the most urgent problems of international security. The war has caused a lot of loss of lives, displacement and destruction of infrastructure and destabilized Europe. Russia has not stopped its aggressive activities despite international sanctions and diplomatic efforts, which has caused a lot of international concern. Ukraine has received a lot of military and humanitarian assistance by the international community, which is spearheaded by NATO and the European Union, but the war continues and there is no end in sight. The war poses a critical question: What can the international community do more to make Russia stop its aggression? Moreover, the effectiveness of global governance institutions like the United Nations has been questioned because these bodies have been unable to implement effective measures because of the veto of permanent members of the Security Council. Are the existing international institutions well prepared to deal with contemporary geopolitical crises or do they need major reforms to make them effective? The fact that global institutions have been unable to establish lasting peace in Ukraine implies that the international diplomacy mechanisms might require some changes [6].

The wider effect of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is much more than just in Europe, as it is redefining global security. International relations have been put under a great strain with nations taking sides either with Ukraine or Russia depending on their strategic interests. The economic sanctions imposed on Russia have caused havoc in the global markets especially in energy and agriculture sectors which have had a ripple effect in other parts of the world. Countries which rely on Russian energy exports have been experiencing increased prices and scarcity, and food prices have skyrocketed worldwide because of the Ukrainian port blockade. The war has also led to reconsideration of military readiness in the world. Fearing the spillover effects, many countries have been spending more on defense and this has led to an arms race in the world. Militarization of international relations raises the question whether this accumulation of military power is contributing to security or it is just preparing a wider confrontation. The current humanitarian crisis, where millions of refugees are fleeing to the neighboring countries, has exacerbated the situation and required a global response. The question is: what can the international community do to deal with the humanitarian consequences of this war? These are complicated problems that indicate the necessity of creating new approaches to preserving peace and stability not only in Europe but also in the whole world. Thus, this research was conducted in this social context to analyze the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russo-Ukrainian conflict, and the implications on the global security. In examining these interrelated factors, the paper will offer critical information about the changing character of international security issues and the contribution of NATO to the reduction of these threats. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the consequences of the NATO policies and the general implications of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in order to develop the international strategies in the future to maintain the world peace and security. Hence, the research questions that guided the study were as follows:

how has NATO's strategic response to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict influenced the alliance's cohesion, along with its global security objectives?

in what ways has the Russo-Ukrainian conflict reshaped global power dynamics, with implications for international conflict resolution mechanisms?

to what extent has NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe contributed to the escalation of tensions with Russia, affecting future security in the region?

how can safeguards be implemented within political alliances to ensure consistent collective security during transitions of power, particularly in cases where political will or priorities change, as seen in the shift from Biden to Trump?

## **Literature Review**

### **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a political and military union that was established in 1949, initially created to oppose the Soviet expansion in the Cold War. The main task of NATO is to guarantee the security of its members by collective defense as stated in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty that an attack against any member is regarded as an attack against all. NATO has been changing over time to deal with emerging security threats such as the emergence of non-

state actors, cyber threats and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. NATO has also expanded its influence to include former Eastern Bloc nations and Balkan nations further entrenching its presence in European and world security. Although NATO has been successful in ensuring peace and stability in the region, the role of the alliance in the modern era is becoming more complicated, and the issues that the alliance faces include internal political divisions of the member states and the response of the alliance to the modern security threats [8].

The flexibility of NATO to changing security issues is one of the strengths of the organization. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has been involved in a wider variety of peacekeeping and crisis management missions than it was in the past. It has been involved in operations in such locations as Afghanistan and the Western Balkans, not just on military operations, but also on nation-building and conflict resolution. The change is an indication of the realization by NATO that contemporary wars demand holistic approaches that entail diplomacy, economic aid, and military action [9]. The role of NATO in cybersecurity and hybrid warfare has also increased as it has become clear that cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and other non-traditional forms of warfare are a threat. Nevertheless, the reaction of the NATO to these new threats has occasionally been accused of being too slow or inadequate, particularly when it comes to addressing the problem of complex, decentralized actors such as terrorist groups [6].

Although NATO has had wide success, it has continued to experience problems which jeopardize its unity. With the growth of the alliance, it has faced challenges of harmonizing the political and military interests of its members, especially in the face of the increasing nationalism and Euroscepticism. The alliance has been plagued by tensions over the defense expenditure, the United States role and the strategic priorities of NATO. As an example, there are those European members who have demanded more independence of the U.S influence and there are those who still depend much on the American military strength. Such internal differences may undermine the performance of NATO, particularly in addressing emergency security challenges. In addition, the eastward expansion of NATO has been an issue of contention to Russia as it views it as a strategic encirclement. Such an understanding has led to the existing geopolitical tensions between NATO and Russia, especially in the light of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict (Institute for the Study of War, 2025). With the pressure coming both internally and externally, NATO has to change to stay relevant in the multipolar world

### **Russo-Ukrainian Conflict**

The Russo-Ukrainian war started in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, which elicited a lot of international condemnation and sanctions. This incident was the start of a geopolitical crisis that is getting more serious, as the actions of Russia in Ukraine are undermining international norms and territorial integrity. The annexation of Crimea was accompanied by the Russian support of separatist movements in the eastern part of Donetsk and Luhansk, which resulted in military conflicts between the Ukrainian army and Russian-backed separatists. These events resulted in a long-lasting war, thousands of dead and millions of refugees. Even with several ceasefire agreements, including the Minsk agreements, the warfare persisted, which indicates how hard it is to solve the conflict with the help of diplomacy (Institute for the Study of War, 2025). The war has been disastrous to Ukraine as it has weakened its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and it has also destabilized the security situation in the region.

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict intensified in 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine on a full-scale. It was a radical change in the character of the war, as the Russian military attacked cities in Ukraine, such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Mariupol. The invasion caused massive destruction and loss of lives with the civilian casualties being alarming. Ukraine however put up a strong defense, which was helped by the huge international support especially by the NATO states. The geopolitical divide was further embedded by the global reaction, which involved imposing harsh economic sanctions on Russia and supplying Ukraine with military support. The war has also shown the weakness of international institutions like the United Nations in resolving conflicts involving major powers. The war has turned into the epicenter of international tensions not only in the region but also in the international relations (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025).

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has significant security implications on the world order that transforms geopolitical relations and makes people reconsider the strategic doctrines on the

international level.

Not only has this conflict changed the power dynamics of Europe, but it has also sucked numerous external players into the fray and, therefore, challenged and, in various places, compromised the already existing security arrangements that were currently in place prior to this intensification.

Furthermore, the operational assistance that NATO has been providing to Ukraine has fueled the hostility between the conflict and association, setting the stage of the further arms race and the need to reevaluate defensive positions in both European and overall strategic levels. The war has also affected the world markets especially in the energy and food markets because Ukraine and Russia are the largest producers of natural gas, oil and agricultural commodities. The effects of the war on the world economy have further worsened food and energy crises in most nations, which have further worsened the humanitarian crisis brought about by the war. The future implications of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict are yet to be seen, yet it is evident that it has transformed the global geopolitics in a significant way, creating new alliances, security issues, and economic problems (RAND Corporation, 2025).

### **Global Security**

Global security is a complex phenomenon that implies a number of issues that endanger the stability and safety of countries, regions, and the global community. It comprises military threats, economic instability, environmental crisis, terrorism, cyber threats, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The concept of global security has over the years expanded to encompass non-traditional security concerns that include climate change, pandemics, and transnational organized crime. These issues are not confined to national boundaries and can only be dealt with through international collaboration to reduce the risks and avoid a global conflict [9]. Organizations such as the United Nations, NATO and other regional alliances are at the forefront of ensuring peace by using diplomacy, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and collective defense. Global security is an interdependent and complicated area that needs a framework that can address both state and non-state threats with an emphasis on international cooperation and prevention [10].

The new threats like cyberattacks, terrorism, and proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons are emerging as the new engines of global security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The non-state actors such as the terrorist groups are a large threat that cannot be dealt with through the traditional military strategies. Cybersecurity, in particular, has become one of the most urgent global security issues, with state-sponsored and independent cyberattacks threatening national security, economies, and the global infrastructure [11]. In addition, economic instability can cause destabilization of entire regions and social unrest, which is a breeding ground of conflict. Globalization of the world economies means that a financial crisis in one part of the world can lead to a ripple effect, which can lead to destabilization of the other parts of the world. Thus, the existing security challenges in the world require the rejection of state-centric strategies in favor of non-traditional threats that require multilateral responses and comprehensive security strategies [12].

Environmental problems such as climate change are increasingly being viewed as a threat to international security. The adverse effects of climate change, such as the rise in sea levels, extreme weather, and resource scarcity, have the potential to exacerbate the existing geopolitical tensions and create new security threats [13]. The consequences of climate change such as food and water scarcity may lead to mass migrations, which may lead to resource wars. Moreover, the climate change is affecting vulnerable regions disproportionately, which enhances socio-economic inequalities and leads to humanitarian crises. These problems prove the need of the complex approach to the global security that must be founded on the integration of the environmental, economic, and military factors. The causes of these security threats are to be solved through international cooperation as environmental security becomes a priority area of concern in solving the causes of these security threats and promote sustainable development [14]. Therefore, the international security in the modern world needs a multi-dimensional approach to the threats that are interconnected and characterize the current international order.

### **Theoretical Explication**

The study is anchored on the Collective Security Theory that is the foundation of formation and operation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The collective security theory that was

initially developed by the organizations like the League of Nations and later enhanced by NATO believes that peace can be best maintained through collective agreements between states to prevent or deter aggression.

The NATO was established in 1949 through the Washington treaty, which was aimed at guaranteeing the security of its members by obligating them to defend each other. The main idea of the alliance is that an attack against one of the members is viewed as an attack against all of them, which is embedded in Article 5 of the Treaty (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022). The theory of collective security is based on the idea that the security of the international community is a common task, and no state can guarantee its security alone, especially within the framework of the changing geopolitical landscape characterized by the increasing number of threats such as terrorism, cyberattacks, and territorial expansion. The importance of collective security to the research is that it is applied to the actions of NATO in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict when the actions of the alliance to resist the aggression of Russia are defined by the principle of collective defense [15].

The applicability of the Collective Security Theory to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is evident since the activities of NATO to assist Ukraine have been influenced by the fact that the alliance has contributed to the development of a collective defense mechanism. NATO has been on the frontline in offering military support, intelligence, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the war intensified in 2022, even though NATO troops have not been directly engaged in the war. This foreign aid is an indication of the collective security assumption that, despite the fact that NATO is not officially at war with Russia, the alliance is indirectly strengthening the international order by supporting the sovereignty of Ukraine. This approach is meant to prevent additional aggression by showing the international community that it is united against the breach of international norms [16]. The use of the theory is important in the realization of the constraints and the problems that NATO has in averting further escalation and the broader geopolitical tensions that arise when collective security systems are challenged by aggressive acts of major powers such as Russia (Institute for the Study of War, 2025). The premises of collective security are doubted, particularly in cases where strong states such as Russia defy its implementation.

Against this background of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the paper will analyze the impact of the use of collective security in the response of NATO on the dynamics of global security. The collective defense efforts of the alliance which are mainly aimed at deterrence and defense as opposed to direct military intervention have transformed the world debates on defense cooperation and military alliances. Collective security presupposes that countries will collaborate to avert war, but the reaction to the Russo-Ukrainian war also shows the increased difficulties of implementing such systems in the face of aggressive state actors such as Russia. The research question is whether collective security as applied by NATO is effective deterrence against aggressive expansionism in a multipolar world and what changes may be required to the theory to be applicable in the contemporary world of security (RAND Corporation, 2025). The changing face of international security and the shortcomings of the conventional collective defense beg serious questions on the future of NATO and its role in international crisis management.

## **Methodology**

The paper took a qualitative research methodology to discuss the issue of North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russo-Ukrainian Conflict, and Global Security. The secondary sources of data were textbooks, journal publications, newspapers, government publications, and international news outlets. These sources gave a detailed picture of the topic in various perspectives, including academic studies to live coverage by media across the world. The secondary data made it possible to conduct a comprehensive search on the available literature and discourses on the role of NATO in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the effect of geopolitics, and the resultant impact on international security. The data were analyzed with the help of the content-analysis method and they were put through a systematic review to determine common themes, patterns, and conceptual frameworks. This methodological approach provided pertinent information, which was then arranged in logical paragraphs in line with the major questions of the study. The content analysis helped to make the research theoretically sound and pragmatically compelling by the extraction of both overt and covert messages, which allowed making a fine evaluation of the strategic reactions of NATO to the conflict. The world of controversy

with which this qualitative approach studied the problem resulted in a complex understanding of the interrelation between NATO, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and international security.

## **Results and Discussion**

How has NATO's strategic response to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict influenced the alliance's cohesion, along with its global security objectives?

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been playing a key role in transatlantic security since its inception, the doctrine of collective defence became its backbone. However, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine was a flood that required a total reassessment and a re-setting of the NATO strategic posture. Not only has it undermined the cohesiveness of the alliance, but it has also revealed the weaknesses of its capacity to quickly accommodate the rapidly evolving security environment forcing leaders to implement strategic responses that are not only far-reaching but also far reaching in consequence to internal unity and the global security aspirations of NATO.

**Strengthened Cohesion via Collective Defense:** With the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO has quickly put its collective defence mechanisms into force, thus highlighting the importance of the alliance as a security provider to its member-states and the region. The activation of NATO Response Force (NRF), armed with about forty thousand troops was one of the most significant changes in modern security architecture and an unprecedented allocation in the framework of collective defence.

In a strategic placement along the eastern line of NATO, that is, in Poland, Romania, and the Baltic States, such forces were used to discourage further Russian aggression, as well as served to assure the Eastern European allies of the alliance, that it remained firmly dedicated to protect them.

In addition, NATO has conducted widespread military drills, with the most recent being the Defender Europe 2022, which brought together more than 28,000 people representing 26 member states. This massive exercise was used to improve the interoperability of the member states as well as in order to show that the alliance is definitely ready to respond to a possible threat [17]. Not only have these undertakings increased the defensive capability of NATO, they have facilitated increased integration among its members, especially those located in Eastern Europe, who view Russian activity as a direct threat to their existence.

Besides military response, the overall response of NATO involved diplomatic and economic measures. Member states condemned the actions of Russia as a whole and imposed comprehensive sanctions that were to cripple the economy of Russia and limit its capacity to sustain military operations. The European Union, the United States, and other allies imposed these sanctions on the key areas, including energy, finance, and defense [18]. The joint stance demonstrated that NATO was able to act collectively in response to foreign aggression, which proved the principle of collective defense, which is provided in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Furthermore, NATO did not just assist Ukraine with sanctions since the member states provided military assistance, intelligence, and humanitarian assistance, thereby strengthening the collective security system of the alliance [19].

The joint approach of the alliance also had much weight in its international security agenda. By demonstrating this unity, NATO not only managed to stop any further aggression by Russia but also to reassert itself as a pillar of international security. The collective response demonstrated the desire of the alliance to protect the rules-based international order and showed that it could respond to the new threats by acting collectively. Besides, it is clear that the role of NATO in this conflict supports the paramount significance of collective defense in maintaining the stability of the region and preventing the further development of conflicts with far-reaching consequences on the world [6].

To sum up, the strategic action taken by NATO over the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has contributed to the unity of the alliance greatly and at the same time strengthened its overall security goals on an international platform, which has testified to the effectiveness of collective defense in responding to modern security challenges.

**Strategic Adaptation and Global Security Goals:** Since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO has been undergoing a strategic re-calibration on the way to a more confrontational posture. In 2022, the Strategic Concept paid explicit attention to Russia as the most visible and immediate source of threat to the security of its Allies, leading to the overall re-evaluation of defence priorities [20]. This paradigm shift was cemented with the 2025 The Hague Summit Declaration where the member states

promised to devote 5 percent of its GDP to defence spending every year by 2035, with 3.5 percent of this total committing to core defence spending and the remaining 1.5 percent of the total going to ancillary defence spending (NATO, 2025). Such a pledge is an indicator of a changing security environment and the need to ensure that NATO develops a stronger deterrence capacity.

The strategic change also involved a significant rise in support to Ukraine. Initially, NATO was only offering non-lethal assistance, but as the war progressed, the assistance of the alliance shifted to the supply of advanced weapons, intelligence, and training. This extensive assistance was meant to strengthen the Ukrainian defense and prevent additional Russian aggression (NATO, 2022). The alliance also increased its alliances, including non-member states and other international bodies to form a wider coalition against Russian aggression. These were in line with the NATO efforts to maintain the rules-based international order and its contribution to international security governance.

Furthermore, the concentration on the development of the defense industrial background and technological innovation has been regarded as a specific feature of the strategic adaptation of NATO. The alliance has realized the need to modernise its military power to deal with any emergent threats such as cyber warfare and advanced missile systems. In this respect, the effort was made to streamline the process of the defense procurement and enhance the collaborative practice among the member states so that the latest and best defense technologies could be developed and deployed in due time [21]. This innovation focus and industrial cooperation is meant to strengthen the deterrence posture of NATO and its readiness to take future security challenges.

**Threats to Cohesion and Strategic Unity:** Although NATO has been working hard to show a united front in the face of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, internal issues have emerged, which endanger the unity of the alliance. The difference in the threat perceptions of the member states is one of the major problems. The Eastern European nations, especially those that share borders with Russia, consider the actions of Moscow as a direct and existential threat, and they support a strong and quick military reaction. To the Western European observer, countries like Italy and Spain are more anxious about the regional security dynamics including the instability in the Mediterranean and the Sahel areas. This increased alertness establishes some level of suspicion regarding the possibility of the involvement of NATO in the affairs of Eastern Europe [22]. Therefore, divergent threat evaluation makes it difficult to reach a consensus in the alliance, which may slow down or water down collective reactions. Furthermore, NATO decision-making is based on unanimity, and the existence of different national priorities may result in lengthy negotiations and, in some cases, the lack of action, which compromises the effectiveness of the alliance in responding to the emerging threats [23].

The other issue is the difference in the amount of money spent on defense by the member states which affects the operational capabilities of NATO and burden sharing arrangements. Although the alliance has established a target of members to spend 5 percent of their GDP on defense by 2035, not every country is on course to achieve the target. Spain, as a role model, has announced a plan to keep its military spending at 2.1 percent of GDP which it attributes to budgetary pressures and other priorities in the country [24]. Unequal distribution of defense expenditures may become a source of friction as the states that spend less on defense are seen to be taking advantage of the security system that the high-spending states have put in place, more so the United States. This unequal dedication would undermine relationship within alliances and raise questions on the effectiveness of the NATO collective defense system [25].

Besides, the political differences between the member states of NATO also complicate its cohesion. The re-election of Donald Trump as a U.S. president in the year 2025 brought a change to the paradigm of the transactional type of alliance with the key aspects of burden-sharing and distrust of the multilateral commitments [26]. The statements of the U.S. officials concerning the supposed irrelevance of the alliance and the burden-sharing terms have increased the anxieties of the Europeans about the sustainability of transatlantic unity [27]. Such politicized procedures can undermine the trust in the long-term reliability of United States with NATO, and therefore the European countries can consider increasing their own defense assets and decreasing their reliance on American leadership [28]. These changes in political will and strategic priorities will undermine the trust and unity that NATO needs to be effective when dealing with global security issues.

To conclude, NATO has reacted to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict strategically and this has had a significant impact on the solidarity and security goals of the organization in the global arena.

Although the alliance has been resilient and flexible, the obstacles that have been faced indicate the need to maintain continuous internal communication as well as strategic alignment. Since the international security is rapidly changing, the ability of NATO to be cohesive and posture to threats as they arise will be a determinant to its future contribution to the global security.

In what ways has the Russo-Ukrainian conflict reshaped global power dynamics, with implications for international conflict resolution mechanisms?

The Russo-Ukrainian war has shifted the balance of power in the world greatly, and the mechanism of international conflict resolution must be rethought. This war, which started with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has not only escalated geopolitical tensions but has also demonstrated the inefficiencies and failures of the existing frameworks that are supposed to maintain international peace and security. The war has led to a re-shuffling of the alliances, re-consideration of military strategies and re-affirmation of the principles on which international law and diplomacy are founded.

**Alteration in International Alliances and Power Balance:** The Russo-Ukrainian war has significantly altered the power balance in the world and the international conflict resolution systems have to be revisited. This war, which started with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has not only escalated geopolitical tensions but has also demonstrated the inefficiencies and failures of the existing frameworks that are supposed to maintain international peace and security. The war has led to a re-shuffling of the alliances, re-consideration of military strategies and re-affirmation of the principles on which international law and diplomacy are founded.

The invasion has triggered a restructuring of international relations, as nations review their strategic relationships and security strategies. NATO has been revived, with member states strengthening their pledges to collective defense and spending more on the military. A common goal of fighting Russian aggression and defending the sovereignty of Ukraine has strengthened the unity of the alliance [29]. On the other hand, the activities of Russia have put the country at loggerhead with the western countries, which has resulted in economic sanctions and isolation. This has drawn Russia nearer to China, creating a strategic alliance that threatens the current international order dominated by the west [30]. The United States has also rebalanced its foreign policy, reasserting its leadership in NATO and reinforcing its relationships with European allies to offset Russian and Chinese influence [31].

The war has shown the inadequacy of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) where Russia has been in a position to exercise its veto power to prevent decisive action. The inability of the UNSC to effectively respond to the crisis has led to the necessity to reform international institutions so that they could respond to the contemporary security challenges [32]. The war has also demonstrated the importance of multilateral diplomacy and the need to have an inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders in order to achieve sustainable peace. The increasing trend of the international community to resort to alternative forums and coalitions to mediate and resolve conflicts is a sign of a more flexible and responsive mechanism [33].

**Implications on International Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has brought to the fore some of the most significant loopholes in the traditional international conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC was established to maintain international peace and security but has been made ineffective in resolving crises on numerous occasions due to the veto power of the five permanent members of which Russia is a member. This is a remnant of the post-World War II order that allows one member to veto substantive action, including resolutions that would respond to Russian aggression in Ukraine. To illustrate, Russia has used its veto power on multiple occasions to prevent the UNSC to criticize its military actions in Ukraine or to sanction it in any meaningful way [34]. This situation demonstrates that the format of the UNSC work is becoming more and more irrelevant to the geopolitical reality, in which a permanent member can veto actions that are necessary to the world peace. The inability to make a decisive step to counter the aggression of Russia has resulted in the fact that the legitimacy and effectiveness of the decision-making process of the UNSC in the new era is doubted by many analysts [35].

The failure of the UNSC has led to increased application of other conflict resolution

instruments, particularly multilateral diplomacy outside the United Nations. Due to the failure of the UNSC and the veto of Russia, the international community has resorted to other diplomatic forums such as the European Union, the G7, and the Coalition of the Willing to solve the crisis in Ukraine. These other coalitions have provided the member states with a platform to harmonize their efforts in the context of sanctioning Russia, providing military assistance to Ukraine, and diplomatic assistance to the Ukrainian government [36]. It is notable that the G7 nations, which are not bound by the veto system of the UNSC, have been playing a significant role in coordinating their policies, whereas the EU has been on the forefront in imposing economic sanctions on Russia, with the aim of weakening its capacity to sustain the war (Pomeroy). The growing popularity of these coalitions shows that the shift towards the rejection of the traditional, hierarchical approaches to conflict resolution and the shift towards more flexible, dynamic models that can be applied to address complex, modern security challenges is taking place [37].

Furthermore, the failure of the UNSC and the application of other tools have resulted in the necessity to change the international institutions to make them more effective in dealing with modern conflicts. Scholars argue that the veto system of the UNSC that grants too much power to a few states undermines the legitimacy of the Council and its ability to respond to crises that threaten international security [38]. Reform proposals have been put forward to expand the number of permanent members to reflect the existing power structure such as the inclusion of countries such as India, Brazil and Japan which reflect the shift in economic and political power in the world. However, these reforms are not simple to be achieved due to the resistance of the current permanent members who fear to lose their privileged position. This discussion is a sign that the international governance mechanisms need to be more inclusive and representative to address global security issues in a manner that is representative of the current geopolitical realities [39]. As the world is increasingly becoming complex and multidimensional, it is clear that the existing international system, which is represented by the UNSC, must be reformed to a large extent to adapt to the evolving nature of the global power relations.

How does NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe contributed to the escalation of tensions with Russia, affecting future security in the region?

The eastward expansion of NATO has played a critical role in the rise of tensions between the alliance and Russia, which has had significant implications on the security dynamics in the region. Whereas NATO claims that its expansion is a source of stability and democratic principles in Eastern Europe, Russia views this expansion as a direct threat to its sphere of influence and national security. This difference in views has resulted in a complicated interaction of strategic, political and military processes that still define the security of the region.

The Expansion of NATO and the Strategic Reaction of Russia: The expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe has played a major role in the increase of tension between the alliance and Russia, which has changed the security situation in the region. NATO enlargement started following the Cold War, and the first countries to join it were former Warsaw Pact countries, including Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. This eastward expansion was viewed by Russia as a betrayal of informal promises made in the course of negotiations that resulted in the reunification of Germany, when Western leaders allegedly promised that NATO would not expand a single inch to the east [39]. Though these assurances were never made official in a treaty, they have been a mainstay of Russian complaints. The growth of NATO was regarded as a strategic encroachment, which weakened the sphere of influence of Russia in its near abroad, and has been central to its increasingly confrontational posture [40]. This feeling of NATO encroachment on its borders has informed the Russian policy, especially its military actions in the countries that used to be in the Soviet sphere, including Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

Russia has reacted to the eastward expansion of NATO by adopting a more aggressive foreign policy to counter what it feels is the efforts by the west to undermine its influence in the region. The direct results of the NATO expansion were the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which were the direct results of the change of the Russian security policy. Russia has justified these actions by saying that they are in the national security interests of the nation and to prevent any further expansion of NATO. As the arguments of such scholars as Bobo Lo show, the conflict in Ukraine is the consequence of the Russian desire to maintain a buffer zone of influence between the borders of NATO and its own [41]. Russia is trying to restore its presence in the region by

refusing Ukraine the right to join NATO and by occupying Crimea and part of the eastern Ukrainian territories, to demonstrate to NATO and the West what red lines it is willing to defend. This response has led to further militarization of the region, as NATO and Russia have sent more troops to Eastern Europe, which raises the risk of unintentional escalation [42].

Furthermore, the NATO expansion has resulted in militarization of the region, particularly its Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) which involves deployment of multinational battle groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. These military deployments that are meant to reassure the Eastern European members and deter Russian aggression have been perceived by Moscow as provocative actions, which have further deteriorated the relationship between NATO and Russia. This has been accompanied by the increase in military exercises and establishment of permanent military bases in the eastern flank of NATO [43].

Russia considers such activities as direct threats to its territorial integrity, which is why the Kremlin increases its own military presence along the western borders. Such an escalation of military activity raises the risk of miscalculations and unintentional confrontations, especially in the most important regions like the Suwalki Gap, which is a major transit point between the eastern members of NATO and the rest of the alliance. The current military escalation has led to an unstable security situation, in which the risk of conflict is high, particularly as NATO continues to expand into regions that Russia views as its sphere of influence [44]. Therefore, the eastward expansion of NATO has been instrumental in transforming the security landscape in the region with far reaching consequences on the future of NATO-Russia relations to reclaim its control over its near abroad and avert further NATO expansion.

**Regional Security Dynamics:** The Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) inaugurated by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2016 is an important redefinition of security policy aimed to restrain the probability of Russian aggression toward Eastern European nations. The military center of this program includes multinational and battalion-leveled combat troops that are placed strategically in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Although the official story of the deployment by NATO has focused on the deployment as a defensive device designed to protect the member states and maintain collective security, the Russian government has made the same deployment to mean an existential threat to its zone of influence and the very existence of its national security. These discrepant interpretations have had a very significant impact on the structure of the regional security relationships including increased militarization, increased likelihood of unintended escalation and more complex geopolitical landscape.

**Militarization and Escalation Risks:** As a result of the formation of eFP battlegroups, a sharp increase in military operations has been witnessed on the eastern flank of NATO. The joint exercises, including the ones called Defender Europe and Iron Wolf, are strategically incorporated into such deployments to improve interoperability and strengthen the preparedness of allied contingents. Nonetheless, these efforts are seen as provocative by the Russian leadership and the efforts along the western borders of NATO are continuously amassing troops and are also correspondingly increasing the amount of exercises in the eastern seaboard. Militarization of the disputed zone represents another trigger that increases the possibility of the unintended escalation, and this process has been proven by the recent events involving the close-ups between the NATO and the Russian forces and the cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns.

A small stretch of land, the Suwalki Gap, which runs through Poland and Lithuania has become a center of concern due to its capture as doing so will be a significant disruption of supply lines connecting the eastern members of NATO to the rest of the alliance. Further, the deployment of Russian troops in Kaliningrad and Belarus only worsens the situation of security by allowing the rapid deployment and possibly secluding the Baltic states into the region of NATO.

The strategic importance of the Suwalki Gap is that it is the only land route between the Baltic countries and the territory of NATO. This is a corridor between Kaliningrad and Belarus and it may develop into a hot spot in case aggressiveness becomes a reality. In recent years, Russia has conducted military exercises in the region, such as the Union Resolve series, which have rehearsed scenarios of the rapid occupation of the Suwalki Gap. Combined with the use of sophisticated weaponry like Iskander missiles and S-400 air-defense systems in Kaliningrad, these exercises indicate that Russia has the ability to create inconvenience to the NATO access to the Baltic states. The weakness of the

Suwalki Gap has made NATO to reinforce its defensive posture which has seen it deploy permanent military installations in Poland and deploy more troops in Lithuania. However, all these have not helped in dispelling fears of a fast Russian invasion that will cut off NATO access to the Baltic countries and thus undermine the credibility and the commitment of the alliance to collective defence.

The NATO Enhanced Forward Presence has truly changed the security framework of Eastern Europe in that it has brought with it the elements of deterrence and ironically, destabilisation. Although the deployment is supposed to provide assurance to the member states and discouraging aggressive actions, they have caused further militarisation and the chance of unwanted escalation. The strategic value of the Suwak Gap makes the security situation even more difficult since it may turn into the flashpoint in case hostilities break out. NATO should therefore be willing to engage Russia in a future security issue and minimize the chances of war. The areas in which confidence-building steps, openness in the work of military forces, and reducing tensions will be necessary in order to maintain the stability of the region as well as to save the principles of collective defence.

To sum up, the spread of NATO to Eastern Europe is one of the key points that contributed to the escalation of conflict between that alliance and Russia, and the consequences of such expansion affect the security in the region on a grand scale. Whereas NATO understands its expansion as a tool of enforcing stability and democracy, Russia perceives it as the threat to its sphere of influence and state security. Such a gap in perceptions has led to a complicated security situation of military forces building, strategic tensions, and high chances of war. The measures of dialogue and confidence-building should engage all parties in the future to reduce tensions and create a stable and secure European security order.

How can safeguards be implemented within political alliances to ensure consistent collective security during transitions of power, particularly in cases where political will or priorities change, as seen in the shift from Biden to Trump?

The change of leadership in political alliances can cause changes in the priorities of the policies, which may endanger the continuity of collective security. A change of power especially in a democratic country can bring in a new leadership that is different in terms of approaches or political will as the former regime. Such a phenomenon has been noted in a number of instances, and the case of the United States, where President Biden was replaced by former President Trump, has led to the emergence of some changes in the domestic and foreign policy. These transitions bring significant concerns on how political alliances can be stable and secure in such times of uncertainty. There is need to have safeguards so that collective security is not lost due to these fluctuations.

Among the most important protection is the creation of transparent mechanisms of continuity in the commitment of alliances, irrespective of political change. Smith explains that such mechanisms may involve legally binding commitments that force countries to respect their collective security commitments even during a political upheaval [45]. Mutual defence agreements in the case of NATO, for instance, are meant to ensure that no member of the organization can withdraw or alter its position on security, despite the change of leadership. Establishing such legal frameworks, alliances will be able to guarantee that political transitions do not interfere with the common security objectives, with long-term priorities in mind [46].

The other protection is the development of strong diplomatic relations that will enable communication among the members of the alliance in case of political changes. The development of the dialogue between leaders and policymakers will help to make sure that the security priorities are aligned and that any sudden changes in the policy can be addressed. According to Johnson, frequent meetings and consultations among the members of the alliance, particularly following an election or a change in leadership, can avoid misunderstandings and promote cooperation, so that collective security commitments are upheld [47]. Such interactions are a vital instrument to make sure that no individual member state can unilaterally modify the course of an alliances security agenda.

Moreover, alliances are able to establish institutional protection that establishes continuity by means of bureaucracy. Such institutions as permanent committees or security coordination institutions can help to reduce the effects of leadership change on security policies. In this respect, bureaucratic organizations that are permanent and not dependent on political leadership, guarantee that the priorities of security are maintained even when there is a change of leadership in the country. According to Roberts and Greenfield, this bureaucratic continuity serves as a cushion against the vagaries of political

changes, and it has a stabilising effect that does not jeopardise the collective security [48].

Lastly, alliances must also invest in building good relationships with domestic institutions including military and intelligence agencies that are not affected by political changes. Such institutions are also likely to possess long-term knowledge and expertise that is essential in the maintenance of national and collective security. These relationships can be strengthened so that alliances can make sure that despite the change in leadership, security is still informed by strategic and consistent policies. As an example, the United States security strategy in the transition between Trump and Biden shows how crucial it is to ensure continuity in terms of military and intelligence community participation even in the case of new administrations with different priorities [49][50][51][52].

To sum it up, the collective security in political alliances during the changes of power should be secured in a multifaceted way. Alliances can guarantee stability in security and the fact that political changes do not jeopardize the cooperative defence by implementing legal frameworks, diplomatic interaction, institutional continuity and enhancement of relations with domestic security organizations. These protections are necessary to ensure long-term security goals through political transitions as witnessed in the Trump to Biden transition. Institutionalisation of these strategies will enable political alliances to negotiate power changes without jeopardising their collective security commitments.

### **Major Findings**

The strategic reaction of NATO to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has strengthened the unity of the alliance by focusing on the collective defense, especially the use of multinational battle groups in Eastern Europe. This move has increased the trust of member states in the NATO security commitment particularly in Estonia, Latvia and Poland, which consider Russia as an existential threat. Nevertheless, NATO has internal problems of coordinating various national interests because nations perceive threats differently and have varying priorities in defense, especially between the Eastern and Western members

The expansion of NATO, especially the incorporation of the Eastern European states, has greatly increased the tension between NATO and Russia, which considers the expansion of NATO as a violation of its sphere of influence. This is viewed by Russia as a strategic threat, which has resulted in more military posturing and interventions, such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This reaction brings out the geopolitical rivalry between NATO and Russia and the overall effects of the NATO enlargement policy on regional security relations

The war has demonstrated the inefficiency of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, especially the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The veto power has allowed Russia to block any significant resolutions to the conflict thereby undermining the ability of the UNSC to address global security matters. In response, other diplomatic efforts have been formulated, including coalitions, including the G7 and the Coalition of the Willing, which have been more active in the sanctioning and the military and diplomatic support of Ukraine. This transformation is a sign that international institutions need to be reformed to improve their performance.

The influence of the top political leadership in having the political will to either run faster or slow down others have been demonstrated in the transition from Democratic to Republican leadership in America where Trump did not continue in the same tempo as Biden. There is a need to insulate such influences to ensure that the objective of collective security is not jeopardized by change of guards.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the present study, one can say that the NATO expansion to Eastern Europe has significantly affected the security situation in the region and resulted in the emergence of tensions with Russia. The joint security of the alliance, which is being implemented by the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) deployments, to prevent aggression has not only made the NATO members in the region feel secure but also made Russia feel more insecure. This has led to increased militarization of the region and increased military standoffs. In particular, the Suwalki Gap has turned into a strategic vulnerability of the eastern defense system of NATO, which has complicated the security situation.

The risk of unintended escalation is even more pronounced due to the increasing closeness of the military forces of both NATO and Russia, as well as the increase in cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns, which have become an inseparable part of modern warfare. In addition, the study shows that the military reactions of Russia to the expansion of NATO are preconditioned

by its understanding of the actions of the latter as a direct threat to its sphere of influence. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are regarded as the direct consequences of NATO expansion, as Russia tries to regain its control over its near abroad. The growing NATO military presence in Eastern Europe, including the stationing of multinational battle groups and military exercises like Defender Europe, has angered Moscow to reinforce its military forces along its western borders, which is an indicator of a new era of strategic confrontation. Although the actions of NATO are presented as defensive, it has led to a major military buildup on both sides, which has resulted in a tense situation where the threat of war is still high.

In this regard, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has become a driving force to transform the global security landscape and has strengthened the role of collective security systems. The study however shows the shortcomings of the NATO strategy in dealing with the tensions that have come up as a result of its expansion into Eastern Europe. The war highlights the necessity of improved dialogue, confidence building measures and reforms in international conflict resolution mechanisms to avoid further escalation. With the ongoing changes in the global power structures, the role of NATO in maintaining regional stability and dealing with emerging security challenges, both conventional and non-conventional, will play a pivotal role in the future security arrangements. Collective security as a theoretical framework, despite being the core of NATO mission, is becoming more and more difficult to respond to the complex and changing geopolitical realities. Therefore, NATO needs to review its policies and adjust to the new security environment to sustain peace and stability in the region and beyond.

There is a need to have a reform of NATO that can insulate it from lack of political will by Alliance members when there is change of guards at the helm of leadership. This is demonstrated by the recall of the much needed Patriots missiles interceptors that have already been sent to Poland for onward dispatch to Ukraine. This has encouraged Putin to launch devastating attacks on Ukraine.

### **Recommendations**

According to the findings, the following recommendations were offered:

1. **Enhance Confidence-Building Measures:** To reduce the danger of unintended escalation, NATO ought to increase dialogue and confidence-building measures with Russia and non-NATO members. It would include making military operations more transparent, creating communication lines to avoid miscalculations, and building mutual trust by conducting joint military exercises aimed at de-escalation. The proactive approach will prevent the militarization of the region and will lead to improved cooperation, which will decrease the possibility of conflict.
2. **Reconsider the Eastern Expansion Strategy of NATO:** NATO must reconsider its Eastern Expansion Strategy with respect to the security concerns of Russia. A slower and more open procedure would assist in striking a balance between NATO security goals and the Russian desire to have stability in the region. The priority should be given to diplomacy and interaction with Russia on the future enlargement of NATO to decrease the tensions and avoid further militarization. The alliance must make sure that the enlargement process is inclusive and that it takes into consideration the western and eastern views on security.
3. **There is need to advocate reforms in international conflict resolution mechanisms:** The paper recommends that there should be reforms in international conflict resolution mechanisms, especially the UNSC, to respond to contemporary security issues. The reformation of the veto system in the UNSC and the strengthening of multilateral diplomatic structures would allow responding to the crisis, like the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, faster and more efficiently. NATO may promote such changes, collaborating with international partners to make international institutions more responsive and flexible to modern threats
4. **There is need to have a safeguards that can check the lack of political will or the abilities to run faster or slower by Alliance members members when there is change of guards as is happening after Biden handed over to Trump.** This can threaten collective security.

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