

NATO's Role in Shaping International Peace for Smoother Readability

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Abstract

The transformation of the international security environment as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine has intensified the strategic competition between the major powers. It emphasises NATO's key role in reshaping the world order. The purpose of the study is to investigate NATO's role in shaping the emerging world order in the post Russia and Ukraine war period by examining the transformation of its strategic identity, response to geostrategic challenges, and institutionalisation of flexibility in the face of long-term competition. Historical and civilisational approaches were used to study the evolution of alliances, the method of analogies to compare non-NATO partners, content analysis and document analysis to assess their characteristics, and case studies. The transformation of NATO's strategic identity due to the war in Ukraine, the consolidation of its role as a security guarantor in the 2022 Concept, the strengthening of its eastern flank, and countering hybrid threats from Russia and China are analysed in depth. A

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pragmatic planning model combining short-term actions with long-term goals and institutionalising flexibility to support global leadership has been established. It is important to study the internal unity of the Alliance and its adaptation to technological and environmental challenges in the post-war world.

Keywords: Strategic Competition, International Security, NATO, Geopolitical Stability, New World Order.

Introduction

In the first decades of the 21st century, the international environment has undergone profound changes accompanied by the formation of a new polycentric world order. The internal contradictions and asymmetries in the development of key geopolitical directions are becoming more pronounced. These processes have become especially acute as a result of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. They not only pose an unprecedented challenge to the entire Euro-Atlantic security system, but also reestablish mechanisms of strategic planning among leading international actors. This development in the global security architecture is characterised by increased confrontation between centers of power, growing geopolitical tensions, and intensified struggle for influence in different regions of the world.¹

Under these conditions, the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are gaining special attention. It is not only a key guarantor of transatlantic security but also one of the leading actors in the formation of new global strategies for deterrence and adaptation to the challenges arising from strategic competition. In response to the escalation of confrontation between the collective West, on the one hand, and Russia and China, on the other, NATO is forced to reconsider both its identity and the foundations of its strategic presence in the world. The focus on maintaining unity among the allies, strengthening the eastern flank of the

¹ Kunertova, Dominika, and Olivier Schmitt, "Assessing NATO's cohesion: Methods and implications," *International Politics* (2024), DOI:10.1057/s41311-024-00641-1.

Alliance, and building up defense capabilities are all manifestations of a new policy of deterrence and proactive security that is being formed in response to the new reality after the outbreak of the war against Ukraine.² In this context, the study of NATO's role in shaping the post-war world order is of particular relevance. It will help substantiate NATO's strategic priorities and actions while identifying transformations in the Alliance's strategic identity in the post Russia-Ukraine war.

Contemporary scholarship

Contemporary scholarship increasingly draws attention to the transformation of NATO's strategic thinking, its ability to adapt to new security challenges, strengthen cooperation with partner countries, and play a key role in maintaining and shaping the international order after active conflicts. In scientific sources, strategic competition is increasingly interpreted not only as a direct military rivalry between major geopolitical players, but also as a multifaceted interaction that covers economic, technological, and ideological and information aspects. Authors like Azubalis (2024), Marrone and Muti (2020) have also strongly endorsed the concept. The realist rationales and models presented in Bou Serhal and Alkhaja,³ Valášek⁴ emphasise the inevitability of conflicts in a multipolar world where countries compete for dominance in strategically important regions, viewing NATO as a deterrent to states with revisionist ambitions such as Russia and China. Instead, constructivist approaches, as explored by

² Rynning, Sten, *NATO: From Cold War to Ukraine, a History of the World's Most Powerful Alliance*, (Yale University Press, 2024).

³ Bou Serhal, Gina, and Abdulla Alkhaja, *Navigating the new global order: US foreign policy in a multipolar era* (Trends Research & Advisory, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/navigating-the-new-global-order-u-s-foreign-policy-in-a-multipolar-era/>.

⁴ Valášek, Tomáš, *New perspectives on shared security: NATO's next 70 years* (Carnegie Europe, 2019), accessed July 4, 2025, https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/NATO_int_final1.pdf.

Blessing et al.⁵ and Grgić,⁶ emphasise the importance of identity, shared narratives and norms in shaping a collective security culture. This helps NATO adapt to modern threats through internal reforms and institutional changes.

The analysis of Chae,⁷ Samson et al.⁸ on the evolution of NATO's strategic doctrines trace how the organisation responded to the transformation of the international security environment: from a purely defensive alliance during the Cold War to a flexible structure with a wide range of functions. While the 2010 Strategic Concept still held out hope for a partnership with Russia, after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Alliance gradually returned to a policy of deterrence, as noted by Tardy et al.⁹ The Strategic Concept 2022 clearly identified Russia as the main security threat in the Euro-Atlantic region. It, however, for the first time pays attention to the systemic challenges posed by China, which emphasises the reorientation of geostrategic goals and the growing role of NATO as a global actor.¹⁰

⁵ Blessing, Jason, Katherine Kjellström Elgin and Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters, *NATO 2030: Towards a New Strategic Concept and Beyond* (Foreign Policy Institute/Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs, Johns Hopkins University SAIS, 2021), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://sais.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/NATO2030AndBeyondAccessibleVersion.pdf>.

⁶ Grgić, Gorana, "Redefining NATO's Indo-Pacific partnerships: cooperative security meets collective defence and deterrence", *Asian Security* 20, no. 1 (2024): 39–55. DOI:10.1080/14799855.2024.2339213.

⁷ Chae, Heeyoung, "Impact of NATO enlargement on Eastern Europe security: Case study of Ukraine war," *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection* (2024): 3763, accessed July 4, 2025, https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3763.

⁸ Samson, Paul, S. Yash Kalash, Nikolina Zivkovic, Tracey Forrest and Bessma Momani, *Scenarios of evolving global order* (Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.cigionline.org/publications/scenarios-of-evolving-global-order/>.

⁹ Tardy, Thierry, Heldi Hardt, Alice Pannier and Can Kasapoglu, *The nations of NATO: Shaping the alliance's relevance and cohesion* (Oxford University Press, 2022), DOI:10.1093/oso/9780192855534.001.0001.

¹⁰ Allied Command Transformation, *Alliances and Partnerships in a Complex and Challenging Security Environment* (NATO, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NATO-AC24-Compendium.pdf>.

Russia's war against Ukraine was a critical moment for the Alliance. The academic critiques on the events after February 2022, such as Gheciu and von Hlatky¹¹ and Lo,¹² emphasise the shift from a cautious policy to an active rethinking of tasks in the fight against regimes seeking to revise the existing order. Experts in the report by Mazurkiewicz¹³ note that this conflict accelerated the modernisation of weapons, reform of command structures, expansion of presence on the eastern flank and development of long-term support programmes for Ukraine, while the issue of interoperability, standardisation and integration of Ukraine into NATO defense planning has taken an important place.

Many authors such as Michalski et al.¹⁴ and Tardy et al.¹⁵ argue that since the war, NATO has become a global security coordinator, going beyond a purely Euro-Atlantic context. It is manifested not only in its military presence but also in the promotion of democratic values, the rule of law, and a transparent political culture. At the same time, it remains an open question how the Alliance will be able to balance the expansion of its global mission with the provision of the core function of collective defense. It is discussed in Brzezinski and Arick,¹⁶ and some researchers, in particular Brunk and Hakimi.¹⁷ They have warned that excessive geographical expansion may

¹¹ Gheciu, Alexandra, and Stéfanie von Hlatky, "Irreconcilable Differences? NATO's Response to Russian Aggression Against Ukraine," *International Journal* 79, no. 2 (2024): 275-296. DOI:10.1177/00207020241255999.

¹² Lo, Bobo, *The Ukraine effect: Demise or rebirth of the global order?* (Lowy Institute, 2023), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/ukraine-effect-demise-or-rebirth-global-order>.

¹³ Mazurkiewicz, Agata, *Broad and Narrow Visions of Security: Investigating the Strategic Discourse of Selected NATO Member States* (LSE Conflict and Civicness Research Group, Policy Brief, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://peaceprep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Broad-and-narrow-visions-of-security-Investigating-the-strategic-discourse-of-selected-NATO-member-stats-DIGITAL.pdf>.

¹⁴ Michalski, Anna, Douglas Brommesson and Ann-Marie Ekengren, "Small states and the dilemma of geopolitics: Role change in Finland and Sweden," *International Affairs* 100, no. 1 (2024): 139-157. DOI:10.1093/ia/iad244.

¹⁵ Tardy, Thierry, Heldi Hardt, Alice Pannier and Can Kasapoglu, (2022). *Id.*

¹⁶ Brzezinski, Ian, and Rayan Arick, *Issue brief: A NATO strategy for countering Russia* (Atlantic Council, 2025), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/issue-brief-a-nato-strategy-for-countering-russia/>.

weaken the resource base and internal cohesion of the organisation. A separate area of research is devoted to China's growing influence and NATO's response. The Strategic Concept 2022 for the first time identifies China as a systemic challenge, especially in areas such as technology, cybersecurity, information operations, and soft power.¹⁸

NATO's enlargement policy, which has been actively developing since 1999, has had a significant impact on the geopolitical space of Europe, as noted by Michta,¹⁹ Ratti,²⁰ and after the war in Ukraine, the issue of Ukraine's integration or at least interoperability with the Alliance is seen as an important factor in ensuring lasting peace. In this context, Michaels and Sus²¹ have explored cooperation with partners through new formats, such as NATO, and flexible models of security cooperation that allow supporting countries without full membership. At the same time, scholarship recognises the Alliance's internal challenges in the face of strategic competition, such as the uneven distribution of financial contributions, divergent priorities among members, and the impact of populist movements. German and Dorman²² and Mohammadi Monfared,²³ suggest that internal unity will be crucial to NATO's ability to shape a stable world order.

¹⁷ Brunk, Ingrid, and Monica Hakimi, "Russia, Ukraine, and the future world order," *American Journal of International Law* 116, no. 4 (2022): 687–697. DOI:10.1017/ajil.2022.69.

¹⁸ Subotic, Jelena, "Russia, NATO and the view from the East," *International Politics* 60, no. 2 (2023): 259–263. DOI:10.1057/s41311-022-00415-7.

¹⁹ Michta, Andrew A., *The real reason Russia invaded Ukraine* (Atlantic Council, 2025), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-real-reason-russia-invaded-ukraine-hint-its-not-nato-expansion/>.

²⁰ Ratti, Luca, "NATO and the CSDP after the Ukraine War: The End of European Strategic Autonomy?," *Canadian Journal of European and Russian Studies* 16, no. 2 (2023): 73–89. DOI:10.22215/cjers.v16i2.4150.

²¹ Michaels, Eva, and Monika Sus, "(Not) Coming of Age? Unpacking the European Union's quest for strategic autonomy in security and defence," *European Security* 33, no. 3 (2024): 383–405. DOI:10.1080/09662839.2024.2376603.

²² German, Tracey, and Andrew M. Dorman, "Introduction NATO at 75," *International Affairs* 100, no. 2 (2024): 467–470. DOI:10.1093/ia/iiae063.

²³ Mohammadi Monfared, Hassan, "The results of the war between Russia and Ukraine in the formation of the new world order," *Strategic Discourse Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2024): 109–135, accessed July 4, 2025, https://sdq.sndu.ac.ir/article_3101_a28b938aea2422d75ec92bec06e16086.pdf.

Transformation of NATO's Identity in the New Geopolitical Reality

In the global context of strategic competition, which has intensified against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, it is of particular importance to rethink the role of states in the global security system, as well as their interaction within interstate alliances and coalitions, such as NATO. The national strategic documents developed by each state form its foreign policy identity, as they determine the desired vision of the international order, the country's place and status in the world, its allies, competitors and opponents, as well as the resource capabilities for implementing foreign policy.²⁴

The scientific and expert community plays an extremely important role in this process. It provides the analytical and ideological basis for NATO's strategic concepts. For instance, the 2010 and 2022 documents have the key provisions. They had long been formed on the basis of intergovernmental decisions, in particular, to deter Russian aggression, expand the Alliance's focus on China and outer space. The participation of scientists and experts in the process of shaping NATO's strategic agenda is ensured both through official channels -- think tanks, specialised research support programmes, advisory structures to the Secretary General of the Alliance -- and through informal platforms, including international conferences, roundtables and discussion forums, among which the NATO 2030 initiative stands out.

Challenges of the Post-Conflict World Order

Ever since the start of Russia-Ukraine war, NATO is required to reassert its role as the main guarantor of security, stability and predictability of the Euro-Atlantic space. This is of particular importance due to emerging strategic competition and the formation of the international security

²⁴ Parakilas, Jacob, and Artur Honich (Eds.), *Strategic Commentaries: Essays about the UK, NATO, China, Russia, North Korea and Iran* (RAND Corporation, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PEA3600/PEA3655-1/RAND_PEA3655-1.pdf; and Rogozińska, Agnieszka, and also see "The role of NATO in shaping the global security system: Reflections on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the organization," *Belügyi Szemle* 68, no. (Special Issue 1) (2020): 35–45. DOI:10.38146/BSZ.SPEC.2020.1.3

environment. The Strategic Concept 2022 envisages a significant increase in the influence of this military-political bloc on ensuring a sustainable world order. It is achievable through deepening cooperation with the strategic partners, strengthening internal unity and political cohesion of member states, as well as adaptation to new challenges posed by shifting paradigms.²⁵

One of the central elements of the modernisation of NATO's strategic approaches is the improvement of the political mechanism of interaction between member states. This involves increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of collective decision-making in key areas of activity, such as crisis response, deterrence of aggression and maintenance of global stability. The strategic goal of the Alliance for the next decade is to "guarantee collective defense against all threats from all directions," as stated in NATO's official documents of 2022. It requires the implementation of a number of interrelated tasks: from improving mechanisms for political consultation and training to developing defense capabilities, increasing resilience to hybrid threats, maintaining the West's technological advantage over potential competitors such as Russia or China, and countering destabilising factors affecting the world. The Strategic Concept emphasises three main areas of activity, deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and conflict resolution, and the development of cooperative security through partnerships. It is especially important in the context of the need to respond to Russia's aggressive policies and its attempts to undermine international stability.²⁶

In strategic documents, significant attention was given to "asymmetric" threats to the security of the Euro-Atlantic region, among which terrorism occupies a special place: "Non-state armed groups, including transnational terrorist networks and state-sponsored actors, continue to exploit conflict

²⁵ Makedon, Vyacheslav, Olena Kholod and Liudmyla Yarmolenko, "Model for assessing the competitiveness of high-tech enterprises based on the formation of key competencies," *Academic Review* 2, no. 59 (2023): 75–89, DOI:10.32342/2074-5354-2023-2-59-5.

²⁶ Michaels, Eva, and Monika Sus, (2024). *Id.*

and weak governance to recruit and expand their influence.” The list of potential dangers also includes illegal migration, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, climate degradation, limited access to resources, international crime and piracy, as well as instability in the “global South,” particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. This has only been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and its geopolitical consequences. Similarly, countering non-military threats, such as cyberattacks, disinformation and propaganda, are actively used by Russia. This has become a new priority, reflecting the realities of the post-conflict world. The concept emphasises that “new technologies are changing the nature of conflicts and becoming key arenas of global competition.”²⁷

NATO's Response to Threats from Russia and China

One of the key directions of updating NATO's strategic vision in the new geopolitical reality was the realisation of radical changes in the international security sphere caused by the resumption of a large-scale confrontation between the Alliance and the Russian Federation, which after 2014, and especially after the beginning of full-scale war with Ukraine, became a determining factor in the transformation of the Euro-Atlantic security space.²⁸

A decisive catalyst for changes in NATO's strategic thinking also highlights to quickly review previous formats of cooperation with Russia. This resulted in the adoption of a set of measures to strengthen the Alliance's eastern flank. Military presence in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular through the deployment of additional rapid response contingents and the creation of new multinational units in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia is expanded. By the summer of 2022, the number of US troops in Europe reached 100,000, and the scale of the Alliance's exercises in the east exceeded the levels of the Cold War.²⁹

²⁷ NATO, *Washington Summit Declaration* (NATO, Brussels, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm.

²⁸ Grgić, Gorana, (2024). *Id.*

²⁹ Subotic, Jelena, (2023). *Id.*

NATO's new Strategic Concept 2022 clearly identifies the Russian Federation as a source of multidirectional threats, from traditional military expansion to the use of hybrid instruments of influence, including information destabilisation, cyberattacks, and undermining International Law. The termination of the partnership with Russia and its official positioning as an adversary reflects the depth of the evolution of the conceptual foundations of the Alliance, which is reorienting itself to a new model of collective defense adapted to the conditions of direct confrontation with authoritarian regimes.³⁰

Particularly noteworthy is the change in the strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific region. It has resulted in a gradual expansion of NATO's geopolitical focus beyond the traditional Euro-Atlantic area. For the first time at the level of official doctrine, in the Strategic Concept 2022, China was recognised as a factor that threatens the interests and values of the Alliance. Although these challenges are mainly non-military in nature and are related to information influence, technological dominance and economic pressure, the growing cooperation between China and Russia is a concern for NATO in the context of the risk of destroying the rules-based international order.³¹

NATO's Strategic Planning in a Long-Term Competition

The key advantage of NATO's new strategic model is its long-term and principled nature. It does not simply respond to short-term subjective features of political processes or military logic. It, however, aims to create a stable basis for the development of the Western coalition's policy and strategy for the transformation of the global order, caused significantly by Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine. The existing model of the West's foreign policy strategy, largely echoes previous approaches, but at

³⁰ Bou Serhal, Gina, and Abdulla Alkhaja, (2024). *Id.*; and Sytnyk, Hryhorii, Mariia Orel, Viktoriia Ivanova and Yevhenii Taran, "Conceptual understanding of the relationship between political and administrative processes in the context of social systems security," *Cuestiones Politicas* 40, no. 74 (2022): 631–647. DOI:10.46398/cuestpol.4074.34.

³¹ Mossalanejad, Abbas, "Ukraine Crisis and Iran's Balancing Regional Role in International Competitions," *Journal of Iran and Central Eurasia Studies* 7, no. 1 (2024): 81-94. DOI:10.22059/jices.2024.371423.1062.

the same time takes into account new realities, in particular the concept formulated by Anthony Cordesman, a respected expert from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (CSIS). He emphasised the “priorities” of strategic planning as a crucial element of American policy in the context of global competition.³² (Table 1)

Table 1 NATO's Strategic Planning in a Long-Term Competition:
Key Priorities, Goals and Challenges

Priority	Description	Objective	Limitations
Adapting to a real threat	Assessment of Russia's economic and military capabilities in view of the war	Creating a cost-effective counteraction structure	Reassessing Russia's potential
Strengthening the eastern flank	Expanding presence and interoperability with Ukraine	Deterring aggression and supporting partners	Limited resources of member states
Countering hybrid threats	Developing cyber defense and countering disinformation	Increasing resilience to unconventional challenges	Different national priorities
Balance of global and regional goals	Attention to competition with China alongside European stability	Maintaining leadership in a multipolar world	Allocation of resources between regions
Flexible short-term planning	Annual review of strategies to adapt to changes	Ensuring efficiency and realism in the face of unpredictability	Risk of underestimating long-term threats

Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of Australian Strategic Policy Institute³³

These priorities indicate the formation of a new concept of the use of military force in the US. It is pivotal to NATO's future strategy in the Ukrainian theater of operations, and its approach to deterrence and defense

³² The geopolitical implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2022), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/geopolitical-implications-russias-invasion-ukraine>.

³³ Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2022. *Id.*

although this concept has not yet been finalised in legislation. It is important to emphasise that these principles, as noted by E. Cordesman, are aimed at avoiding vague and overly ambitious interpretations of the US military strategy, especially given that the European Union countries are increasingly forming their own, relatively autonomous strategic positions. This, in fact, complicates coordination within the alliance after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.³⁴

Institutionalising NATO's Strategic Flexibility

A feature of modern strategic thinking within the Western military-political coalition led by NATO is a gradual shift away from an ideologised approach to assessing international threats. It is in favour of a more pragmatic, functional and economically balanced planning model. Its basis are not on rhetorical escalation or demonstration of force, but on a rational analysis of real capabilities, current resources and priorities within the existing security architecture. This analytical approach, developed by leading Western experts in the field of defense and international security, envisages the creation of a flexible model of short-term strategic planning. It focuses not only on the total solution of all problems, but on achieving realistic goals through the effective use of existing instruments of deterrence, rapid response and optimisation of military presence.³⁵

At the same time, there is an obvious contradiction between strategic documents and political rhetoric that dominated the information space in late 2023 and early 2024. Against the backdrop of temporary failures of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, particularly in the context of offensive actions, NATO countries stepped up their public support for Kyiv. They used the rhetoric of uncompromising solidarity, while more restrained and pragmatic decisions were made at the level of strategic centers. They were mostly

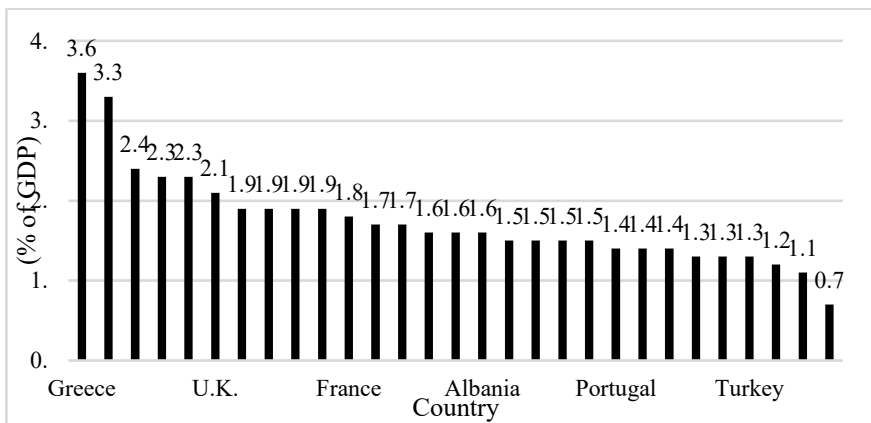
³⁴ Gheciu, Alexandra, and Stéfanie von Hlatky, (2024). *Id.*; and García-Berdoz and C. Samitier, *NATO's strategy after 75 years of adaptation* (LLYC, 2024), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://llyc.global/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NATOs-strategy-after-75-years-of-adaptation-1.pdf>.

³⁵ Hardt, Heidi, "NATO after the invasion of Ukraine: How the shock changed alliance cohesion," *International Politics* (2024). DOI:10.1057/s41311-024-00629-x.

based on an objective analysis of resource capabilities and constraints. From this point of view, the growth of public confrontation on the part of Western leaders can be seen as an element of political tactics aimed at preserving the internal unity of the Alliance and signaling resolve to the Russian leadership in order to encourage it to conclude a truce on terms favourable to the West.³⁶

The uneven distribution of power in NATO has allowed Europe to benefit from American protection while keeping its own defense spending significantly lower than the US as a percentage of GDP, making it easier to finance social programmes. While not all NATO allies have cut back on defense, many have done so despite the opportunity to spend more (Figure1).

Figure 1
Defense spending by NATO member states as a percentage of GDP at the end of 2022³⁷



³⁶ Mazurkiewicz, Agata, (2024). *Id.*; Makedon, Vyacheslav, Olena Kholod and Liudmyla Yarmolenko, (2023), *Id.*

³⁷ Menon, Rajan, *Reconfiguring NATO: The case for burden shifting* (Defense Priorities, (2022), accessed July 4, 2025, <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/reconfiguring-nato/>).

The overall effectiveness of the Western coalition's strategy in 2024 largely depends on the coherence of actions between these actors, as well as on NATO's ability to conduct adaptive strategic planning in the face of unpredictable combat dynamics.³⁸

The current stage of NATO's strategic evolution, which was clearly manifested during the anniversary summit in Washington, marks not just a continuation of the previously chosen course, but the actual institutionalisation of already established practices, policies and security strategies. This in turn, is intended to demonstrate the irreversibility and consistency of the Alliance's transformational trajectory in the face of dynamic international turbulence. The methodology of "strategic posturing" currently used by NATO is not only aimed at protecting the organisation from potential internal or external challenges, but also serves as a tool to strengthen its presence in key conflict zones that determine the global security configuration of the 21st century.³⁹

Given the priority of the European direction in the light of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, as well as the growing geostrategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region, the Alliance has significantly narrowed the list of thematic emphasis, leaving out a number of other pressing issues. This includes the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The limitation was partly due to the position of Turkey, whose President Recep Tayyip Erdogan openly opposed any form of rapprochement between NATO and Israel before a sustainable and just peace in Palestine. As a result, most delegations decided to move the discussion of relations with Israel to a bilateral format, and the mention of the Middle East in the final declaration of the summit was minimal, limited to one paragraph out of 38 and fitted into the framework of the general, value-neutral format of the Mediterranean

³⁸ Kinninmont, Jane, and Isabelle Werenfels, *Regaining NATO's southern neighbours: the alliance should seize the opportunity to jointly reshape southern partnerships*, (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, 2024). DOI:10.18449/2024C25.

³⁹ Chae, Heeyoung, (2024). *Id.*

Dialogue, which provides for only symbolic interaction with the countries of the region.⁴⁰

The final part of the summit was devoted to internal organisational issues, including the election of a new NATO secretary general. Former Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte was nominated for the post, whose political experience, authority and pragmatism are expected to help Brussels maintain the necessary balance between the Alliance's European vision and its Atlantic component in the next decade. Regardless of the challenges that the Alliance may face in the coming years, NATO is steadily approaching the conventional "fourth age" of its organisational history, as a symbolic limit of political maturity. This unlike biological aging, is not manifested in decline, but in the need to update its forms of activity and increase efficiency in response to new global threats.⁴¹

Discussion

The results of the study indicate a profound evolution of NATO's strategic identity in the new geopolitical reality shaped by Russia's war against Ukraine. This confirms the opinion of researchers such as Chae,⁴² Marrone and Muti,⁴³ Gheciu and von Hlatky,⁴⁴ who believe that the conflict in Ukraine has become a catalyst for not only political but also doctrinal changes in the Alliance. It finally cements its role as a key player in global

⁴⁰ *NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine*, (NATO, 2025), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_192648.htm.

⁴¹ Nadkarni, Vidya, Paul D'Anieri, Sydney Kerr, Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, Xiaoyu Pu, Deepa M Ollapally, Paulo Velasco Junior, Candice Moore and Abdolrasool Divsallar, "Forum: The Russia-Ukraine War and Reactions from the Global South", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 17, no. 4 (2024): 449-489. DOI:10.1093/cjip/poae021.; and NATO Defense College Foundation, *NATO 2024: Beyond the 75th anniversary* (NATO Defense College Foundation, 2025), accessed July 4, 2025, https://www.natofoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NDCF-NATO-2024_web.pdf.

⁴² Chae, Heeyoung, (2024). *Id*.

⁴³ Marron, Alessandro, and Karolina Muti, *NATO's Future: Euro-Atlantic Alliance in a Peacetime War* (Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2020), https://www.academia.edu/44362815/NATOs_Future_Euro_Atantic_Alliance_in_a_Peacetime_War?hb-sb-sw=45605567.

⁴⁴ Gheciu, Alexandra, and Stéfanic von Hlatky, (2024), *Id*.

security that goes beyond NATO's interests. Although our results partially overlap with the position of Tardy et al.,⁴⁵ Blessing et al.,⁴⁶ and Michalski et al.⁴⁷ on NATO as a security focal point, we offer a different interpretation: The Alliance acts not as a passive guarantor of security, but as an active architect of a new strategic order that shapes norms, models of interaction, and the future security architecture in a multipolar environment.

A key aspect of our study is the institutionalisation of NATO's strategic flexibility in response to challenges from Russia and China. This differs from the traditional approaches described by Brunk and Hakimi,⁴⁸ who warned of the risks of over-globalisation of the Alliance's mission. Instead, we argue that NATO's strategic flexibility is a tool for balancing global influence and internal cohesion. This can be identified in "strategic fixing" that describes institutional mechanisms for deterrence, adaptation, and leadership in confronting authoritarian regimes.

Unlike Subotic⁴⁹ and Michta,⁵⁰ who consider NATO's cooperation with the Global South as a secondary topic, we consider it a key challenge that requires a rethinking of the concept of collective security. The Alliance's global leadership is based not only on military power or technology, but also on a normative component – the spread of democratic values, legal standards and new formats of security cooperation, such as NATO-Plus, which is explored in more detail by Michaels and Sus.⁵¹ Regarding the update of the NATO Strategic Concept 2022, many researchers⁵² interpret it mainly as a reaction to Russian aggression. However, our analysis shows

⁴⁵ Tardy, Thierry, Heldi Hardt, Alice Pannier and Can Kasapoglu, (2022), *Id.*

⁴⁶ Blessing, Jason, Katherine Kjellström Elgin and Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters, (2021), *Id.*

⁴⁷ Michalski, Anna, Douglas Brommesson and Ann-Marie Ekengren, (2024), *Id.*

⁴⁸ Brunk, Ingrid, and Monica Hakimi, (2022), *Id.*

⁴⁹ Subotic, Jelena, (2023), *Id.*

⁵⁰ Michta, Andrew A., (2025), *Id.*

⁵¹ Michaels, Eva, and Monika Sus, (2024), *Id.*

⁵² Tardy, Thierry, Heldi Hardt, Alice Pannier and Can Kasapoglu, (2022), *Id.*; Allied Command Transformation, *Id.*; and Samson, Paul, S. Yash Kalash, Nikolina Zivkovic, Tracey Forrest and Bessma Momani, (2024), *Id.*

that the document is the result of a multi-level dialogue between governments, experts, and institutions that has shaped a new system of strategic planning. The planning is based on four principles: prioritisation of goals, adaptation to resource constraints, flexible planning, and a combination of short- and long-term approaches. These conclusions are complemented by the scholarly position of Gheciu and von Hlatky,⁵³ who point to a pragmatic turn in Western policy, but do not explain how the Alliance integrates these principles into internal processes.

Comparison with constructivist approaches⁵⁴ provides a framework for deepening the understanding of NATO's identity. Our study adds a dynamic element to this paradigm by showing that the Alliance's strategic identity is shaped by political interests, external challenges, and elite discourse. We emphasise strategic consensus as a mechanism for legitimising change, which does not just fix positions but actively constructs a new reality, including concepts such as "hybrid resilience," "institutionalised flexibility," and "predictable interaction."

The findings challenge overly optimistic assessments of NATO's internal cohesion,⁵⁵ as real-world decision-making processes reveal significant divisions due to financial and political factors. In this context, we propose pragmatism as a unifying principle that compensates for the lack of full agreement through clear functional tasks. The practical contribution of the study is the conceptualisation of "strategic capture of achievements" as a mechanism for stabilising transformational changes in NATO, which helps to better understand the logic of creating new institutional structures (Centers of Excellence, rapid response missions, regional coordination centers).

⁵³ Gheciu, Alexandra, and Stéfanie von Hlatky, (2024), *Id.*

⁵⁴ Blessing, Jason, Katherine Kjellström Elgin and Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters, (2021), *Id.*; and Grgić, Gorana, (2024), *Id.*

⁵⁵ Mazurkiewicz, Agata, (2024), *Id.*; and Nadkarni, Vidya, Paul D'Anieri, Sydney Kerr, Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, Xiaoyu Pu, Deepa M Ollapally, Paulo Velasco Junior, Candice Moore and Abdolrasool Divsallar, (2024), *Id.*

Conclusion

Research has shown that NATO's strategic identity is being shaped and changed by the security challenges posed by Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. This process is the result of multilevel cooperation between governments, think tanks and international organisations. Consequently, the Alliance does not only effectively adapt to changes in the security environment, but also participates in the formation of a new system of global order based on the principles of collective leadership and ideological unity.

This paper has outlined the factors of NATO's new Strategic Concept 2022, which emphasises a comprehensive approach to multidimensional threats and strategic continuity. Its main innovation is to rethink the Alliance's priorities in the light of hybrid warfare, technological change and the transformation of global security, integrating elements of strengthening internal cohesion, developing partnerships and increasing operational readiness for new challenges.

The study of NATO's new strategy on threats from Russia and China shows a shift to an active deterrence strategy. It includes an increased military presence on the eastern flank, modernisation of command and control systems and development of mechanisms to counter hybrid threats. The Alliance's doctrine is directed towards strengthening collective defense in the context of strategic confrontation with authoritarian regimes.

It is proved that NATO's strategic planning in the context of global competition is based on the rational use of resources. It adapts to real threats and balances military and civilian needs. The flexible model of action is systematically developed while taking into account the capabilities of the Allies. It ensures the stability of the Alliance in the face of continued global instability. ■