

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54418/ca-96.245>

BETWEEN DEFENCE AND EXPANSION: NATO'S INFLUENCE IN THE RUSSIA- UKRAINE WAR

Amna Mehmood* & Iqra**

Abstract

The Russia-Ukraine war represents a paradigmatic example of a high-intensity conflict in modern Europe, characterised by extreme violence, important humanitarian consequences, and far-reaching implications for international relations, regional security, and global governance. The ongoing conflict has generated a multifaceted crisis, with deleterious effects on international relations, global economic stability, and security architectures. It necessitates a nuanced understanding of its complex dynamics and far-reaching implications. The conflict's outcome will likely have a profound impact on the future of great power competition, as the strategic rivalry between East and West continues to unfold. The country's strategic location along the Black Sea renders it a critical site for NATO's interests. Ukraine has emerged as a key site of contestation between NATO, the West, and Russia, with significant implications for the future of international relations and global security. The events of 2014, marked by Russia's annexation of Crimea and NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe, have created a critical juncture, with Ukraine situated at the epicentre of this emergent spatiality. Overall, the territorial dispute between Russia and Ukraine, coupled with both Russia and NATO's involvement, highlights the complex interplay of historical grievances, geopolitical interests, and regional security dynamics in Eastern Europe. Since 2022 approximately 17-20 percent of Ukraine's land has been occupied by Russian forces. Qualitative Research methodology has been used to analyse the geopolitical objectives of NATO and its extension toward East Europe. The researcher has used

* Professor/ Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences Department of Politics & International Relations, Islamic International University Islamabad. Email: amna.mahmood@iiu.edu.pk

** PhD. Scholar, Department of Politics and International Relations International Islamic University Islamabad.

Secondary sources for data collection and the nature of this research is explanatory and predictive. This research seeks to employ Offensive Realism, a theory of International Relations as a theoretical framework to analyse the geopolitical objectives of NATO in the context of the Russia- Ukraine war.

Keywords: NATO Alliance, Expansion, Offensive, Defensive, Deterrence, Invasion, Security

Introduction

NATO's involvement in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is marked by a proactive and assertive approach aimed at countering Russian influence and altering the strategic balance in Eastern Europe. Beyond merely defending its member states, NATO seeks to actively constrain Russia's geopolitical ambitions by increasing its military presence and capabilities along Russia's borders.¹ This offensive posture is designed to protect Eastern European allies and weaken Russia's strategic positions in the region.

NATO's actions are not limited to deterrence they include substantial efforts to modernise and enhance Ukraine's military capabilities, effectively turning Ukraine into a bulwark against Russian expansionism. This approach serves to directly undermine Russia's influence in the region and disrupt its efforts to reassert control over former Soviet territories. By integrating Ukraine into its broader security framework, NATO aims to limit Russia's sphere of influence and shift the regional power dynamics in its favour.² Furthermore, NATO's strategy involves leveraging its military strength to impose major costs on Russia, both strategically and economically. The alliance's military build-up in Eastern Europe, coupled with its support for Ukraine's defence infrastructure, is intended to strain Russia's military resources and force Moscow into a prolonged and costly conflict, weakening Russia's global standing and ability to project power.³

In pursuing these objectives, NATO is not merely reacting to Russian aggression but is actively shaping the security landscape in Eastern Europe to

¹ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means For The West* (London: Yale University Press, 2014). Available at https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=NMK2BAAAQBAJ&printsec=copyright&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

² Andrew A. Michta and Joslyn Brodfuehrer, NATO-Russia dynamics: Prospects for Reconstitution of Russian Military Power, Atlantic Council, September 19, 2024. Available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/nato-russia-dynamics-prospects-for-reconstitution-of-russian-military-power/>

³ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Available at: <http://dickyricky.com/books/history/The%20Conflict%20in%20Ukraine%20-%20Serhy%20Yekelchuk.pdf>

its advantage.⁴By pushing the boundaries of its influence closer to Russia's doorstep, NATO is sending a clear message that it is prepared to confront and contain Russia's ambitions, using both military force and strategic alliances. This offensive strategy is central to NATO's broader goal of maintaining its dominance in the European security order and preventing any resurgence of Russian power in the region.⁵

Historical Context

The historical relationship between Russia and Ukraine is deeply intertwined and holds substantial importance in understanding the ongoing conflict. Ukraine was an integral part of the Soviet Union until its dissolution in 1991, and this shared history has left enduring cultural, linguistic, and religious ties between the two nations.⁶ Despite these connections, Ukraine's efforts to assert its independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union have led to persistent tensions with Russia. The roots of the current conflict are embedded in a complex historical context that spans several centuries, characterised by both cooperation and conflict.⁷

During the 20th century, Ukraine's status as a Soviet republic meant that its political, economic, and social structures were heavily influenced by Moscow. This relationship persisted even after Ukraine declared independence in 1991, as Russia continued to exert significant influence over Ukraine's political landscape and economic policies.⁸The post-Soviet era was marked by Ukraine's struggle to navigate its newfound independence while

⁴ Shammah Mahakwe Anyalebechi, "NATO's Expansionist Policy and Security Dilemma in Eastern Europe, 2009-2023," *International Journal of Diplomacy and Political Relations* 1, no.3 (2024). Available at:

<https://pubjournals.com/ijdp/article/view/63>

⁵ Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Available at : <https://press.princeton.edu/books/ebook/9781400866151/the-limits-of-partnership-pdf>

⁶ Solomon Lartey, "The Ukraine-Russia Conflict: Historical Roots and Current Implications," (2025). Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389697629_The_Ukraine-Russia_Conflict_Historical_Roots_and_Current_Implications/citation/download

⁷ Andreas Kappeler, "Ukraine and Russia :Legacies of the Imperial Past and Competing Memories", *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5,no:2(2014). Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1016/j.euras.2014.05.005>

⁸ Paul D Aniere, *Ukraine And Russia; From Civilied Divorce To Uncivil War*(Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,2019). Available at <https://archive.org/details/ukraine-and-russia-from-civilied-divorce-to-uncivil-war-2019-paul-d-anieri>

managing its historical ties to Russia. This struggle was exacerbated by the internal political divisions within Ukraine, particularly between the pro-European western regions and the pro-Russian eastern regions, which often aligned more closely with Moscow's interests.

The situation escalated dramatically in 2014, when a popular uprising led to the ousting of Ukraine's pro-Russian President, Viktor Yanukovich. This event, known as the Euromaidan protests, was a turning point in Ukraine's modern history. Yanukovich removal from power was perceived by Russia as a direct challenge to its influence in Ukraine, prompting Moscow to take aggressive measures to reassert its control.⁹ In response, Russia annexed Crimea, a region with a majority Russian-speaking population, and began providing support to separatist movements in eastern Ukraine. These actions were justified by Russia on the grounds of protecting the rights of Russian speakers, but they were widely condemned by the international community as violations of Ukraine's sovereignty.¹⁰

The conflict that began in 2014 gradually escalated into a full-scale war, culminating in the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.¹¹ This invasion marked a major intensification of the conflict and has been driven by a complex interplay of factors, including competing national identities, historical grievances, and geopolitical ambitions.¹² Ukraine's pursuit of closer ties with Western institutions, such as the European Union and NATO, has been perceived by Russia as a direct threat to its sphere of influence. Conversely, Ukraine views its alignment with the West as a crucial step toward securing its sovereignty and independence from Russian dominance.

The ongoing war has resulted in catastrophic human suffering, with thousands of lives lost and millions displaced. The conflict has also wrought

⁹ . Daniel P. Ritter, "A Spirit of Maidan? Contentious Escalation in Ukraine," in *Global Diffusion of Protest: Riding the Protest Wave in the Neoliberal Crisis*, ed. Donatella della Porta (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 191–214. Available at: https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/315/edited_volume/chapter/2320278

¹⁰ Emanuele Poli & Anna Rosa Candura, "Annexation of Crimea to Russia: An Analysis of Geopolitical Events for Didactic Use", *CoESPU Magazine -The Online Quarterly Journal of Stability Policing*, no. 3-4 (2023): 24. Available at <https://www.coespu.org/articles/annexation-crimea-russia-analysis-geopolitical-events-didactic-use>

¹¹ Popouet Stephan Yannick, "The Impact of the War between Ukraine and Russia on Relations between Russia and the West", *Open Journal of Political Science* 15,no.4(2025). Available at <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=145151>

¹² Tonubari Zigha Bornu, "The Russian-Ukrainian war; it's causes, background and effect", *The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology* 7,no.5(2025). Available at file:///C:/Users/IPTR/Downloads/20_189-200_TAJPSLC_The+Russian-Ukrainian+war.pdf

severe economic devastation, both in Ukraine and across the region, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.¹³ Moreover, the war has heightened global geopolitical tensions, as Western powers have imposed sanctions on Russia and provided support to Ukraine, while Russia has sought to expand its influence and challenge the existing international order. This conflict, deeply rooted in historical complexities, continues to shape the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe and poses substantial challenges to global stability.¹⁴

Theoretical Framework

This study challenges the geopolitical motives of NATO by examining them in the conceptual framework of offensive realism as would have been developed by John Mearsheimer. Offensive realism is an offshoot of the wider Realist paradigm and it emphasizes the paramount place of states as key players in international relations. The main causes of actions of states in the Realist theory are power, security and national interests along with the operation in the anarchic international system, i.e. in the situation when there is no central authority to regulate the inter-state relations. This anarchy is inevitably followed by conflicts because states are driven to act based on their interests and increase their security and power.¹⁵

In addressing international order and security, states often engage in treaties to prevent any one state from becoming excessively powerful and jeopardising global peace. NATO's role in this context can be analysed through the lens of offensive realism. Realists argue that international organisations and laws hold significance only when underpinned by coercive power or effective sanctions. Power, particularly military or physical force, is considered crucial for understanding global trends and national

¹³ Ramsha Asif and Proffessor Dr Irum Khalid, "Russia-Ukraine Conflict and its Implications for Global Food Insecurity and Immigrant Influx", *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (2024). Available at [Russia-Ukraine+Conflict+and+its+Implications+for+Global+Food+Insecurity+and+Immigrant+Influx.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385333303_Russia-Ukraine+Conflict+and+its+Implications+for+Global+Food+Insecurity+and+Immigrant+Influx.pdf)

¹⁴ Lei Tian, "The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on Global Economic Stability and Political Security", *Advances in Economics Management and Political Sciences* 120 (2024): 93-100. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385333303_The_Impact_of_the_Russia-Ukraine_Conflict_on_Global_Economic_Stability_and_Political_Security

¹⁵ Peter Toft, "John J. Mearsheimer: An offensive realist between geopolitics and power", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 8, no. 4 (2005): 381–408. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263323588_John_J_Mearsheimer_An_offensive_realist_between_geopolitics_and_power

interactions.

The primary focus of this study is to explore how power dynamics, competition, and security concerns influence the actions of Russia and NATO in Eastern Europe. Offensive Realism posits that the international system's anarchic nature compels states to rely on self-help and power-seeking behaviour to ensure their survival and security. Offensive realists assert that states are inherently inclined to maximise their power and may pursue expansionist strategies when the anticipated benefits exceed the associated costs.

In this framework, relative gains are paramount, with states not only concerned with their absolute power but also with how their power compares to that of potential adversaries. NATO's involvement in the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be partially attributed to concerns over Russia's relative gains and its attempts to expand its influence. From an Offensive Realist perspective, NATO's actions aim to counterbalance Russia's efforts to reassert regional dominance and achieve hegemony.

NATO's Objectives in the Russia-Ukraine War

NATO's objectives in the Russia-Ukraine war, when viewed through a critical and offensive realism lens, reveal an assertive strategy aimed at maximising the alliance's power and influence in Eastern Europe while strategically undermining Russia's regional and global position. Far from being purely defensive, NATO's actions appear to be driven by a calculated effort to reshape the geopolitical landscape in its favour by expanding its influence and military presence along Russia's borders.¹⁶

The alliance's solidarity with its member states, particularly those in Eastern Europe, underscores a commitment not just to collective defence, but to actively challenging Russia's

sphere of influence. By deploying military forces, conducting exercises, and increasing air and missile defence capabilities in the region, NATO is signalling its readiness to confront Russia directly, should the need arise. This assertive posture serves as both a deterrent and a provocation, aimed at curtailing Russia's capacity to project power while reinforcing NATO's dominance in the region. The invocation of Article 5, though not yet triggered by the conflict, serves as a powerful reminder to Russia of the alliance's collective might and the severe consequences of any further aggression.

¹⁶ Christopher McCallion, "Assessing Realist and Liberal Explanations for the Russo-Ukrainian War." Defence Priorities, 2024. Available at: <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/assessing-realist-and-liberal-explanations-for-the-russo-ukrainian-war/>

In providing military assistance to Ukraine, NATO is not merely supporting a beleaguered ally but is actively working to weaken Russia's strategic depth. The indirect support, ranging from weapons supplies to training Ukrainian forces, serves to bolster Ukraine's resistance against Russia while simultaneously draining Russian resources and attention. This approach reflects NATO's broader objective of containing Russia's influence and preventing it from reasserting control over former Soviet territories.¹⁷ By strengthening Ukraine's military capabilities, NATO is effectively transforming the country into a proxy battlefield, where the alliance can confront Russia without direct engagement, thereby minimising its own risks while maximising the strain on Russia.

NATO's strategic interests in the conflict extend beyond the immediate goals of regional stability and defence. The alliance's actions can be interpreted as part of a larger agenda to expand its influence in Eastern Europe, which has historically been within Russia's sphere of control. This eastward expansion is not merely defensive but is perceived by Russia as an aggressive encroachment on its national security. By pushing NATO's borders closer to Russia, the alliance is effectively challenging Russia's dominance in the region and seeking to create a buffer zone that limits Russian influence. This strategy is deeply rooted in a Cold War mentality, where the primary objective is to diminish Russia's power rather than engage it as a partner in regional security.

Moreover, the spread of western values by NATO in Russia-Ukraine war may be regarded as cultural and political imperialism. The decision of the alliance to present its intervention as a defence of democracy and human rights is a tool to legitimise its strategic ambitions at the expense of Russia and its sovereignty and power. The opponents are of the view that NATO has contributed to the conflict by supporting the nationalist agenda of Ukraine and strengthening the Ukrainian military which has been breeding violence and instability instead of peace. This is not only a provocative strategy but it keeps a state of crisis that benefits the military-industrial complex of the West, who thrives on constant violence and the arms race. An expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and the military build-up in Eastern Europe perceived as the direct threat towards the national security of Russia by the Russian side has contributed to the development of tensions and the potential of the further expansion of the conflict to another level. NATO effectively isolates Russia by surrounding it with high-tech military bases, such as missile defence systems or even tactical nuclear weapons and provokes Russia to react in its

¹⁷ Relations with Ukraine, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (June26, 2025).Available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm

defence. This is dangerous as it may lead the region down a long and destabilising arms race that negates the chances of achieving a peaceful solution to the conflict.¹⁸

A critical review of the NATO goals in the war between Russia and Ukraine, using an offensive realist mindset, show that their plan was to establish the Western hegemony in Eastern Europe and to undermine the regional power of Russia in a systematic manner. Although the strategy has been working in affirmation of the NATO force, it runs the risk of promoting the conflict and instability in the region at the cost of long term peace and security of the relationship to the strategic interests of the alliance.

Importance of Energy Security

Energy security is considered as important element in understanding Russian Ukraine conflict. Russia is at the centre of the world energy market since it is a major producer and exporter of natural gas and oil. It has large reserves and advanced energy infrastructure making it a major supplier particularly to European nations. Long time the European Union (EU) has relied on the Russian energy sources where approximately 40 percent of its natural gas imports have been found to be of Russian origin.¹⁹ Such dependency is caused by geographical proximity, developed networks of pipeline and long-standing trade relations. Large pipelines such as Nord Stream, Yamal-Europe, and Ukrainian transit route have played a vital role in supplying Russian natural gas to different EU member countries thereby providing a stable supply that is vital in industrial sector and residential heating.

The energy security and the geopolitics of the EU have significant implications because the EU is dependent on Russian natural gas. This reliance makes the energy markets in Europe susceptible to interferences due to political fears or wars with Russia. Moreover, this dependence has given Russia a huge bargaining power in the international relations and economic relationships that take energy supply as an instrument. As a way of addressing these weaknesses, the EU has been engaged in active efforts to diversify its energy supply so as to avoid dependence on the Russian imports. In this plan, more imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) will be received in the state, including Qatar, the United States, and Algeria, along with enhancing

¹⁸ Douglas C Youvan, "Broken Promises: NATO's Eastward Expansion and the Russian Perspective on Security Guarantees", (August 21, 2024). Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383603749_Broken_Promises_NATO's_Eastward_Expansion_and_the_Russian_Perspective_on_Security_Guarantees

¹⁹ Syed Rizwan Haider Bukhari1 and Basharat Ullah, "Assessing The Ukraine-Russia Conflict: A Threat To Global Energy Security And The Prospect Of A Third World War", *International Journal of Advanced Research* 13,no.5(2025):403. Available at https://www.journalijar.com/uploads/2025/05/6841451881d74_IJAR-51948.pdf

investment in renewable energy supply, including wind and solar power. Besides, certain EU members, Germany among them, have changed their mind on nuclear energy by renewing the life of their nuclear power plants to minimise further reliance on Russian gas. The role played by NATO in the conflict can be seen as an expansion of the interest in the stability and the security of the energy infrastructure, such as pipelines and storage systems. NATO and European countries, in turn, are striving to diversify their energy, invest in alternative energy, and make new pipelines, e.g., the Southern Gas Corridor, to make their energy independence stronger and dependent on a particular few supplier.²⁰

Offensive Approach

The approach of NATO in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine reflects the complexity of the strategy and combines elements of defense and offense, and each aspect has its implications. The operations of the alliance have been calculated to strengthen regional stability and prevent Russian aggression but have not been spared in criticism as being provocative and even expansionist. On the defensive side, the presence of NATO military in Eastern Europe is a reassuring feature to member's states and lays emphasis on the features of collective defence by the alliance. Some of the strategies that NATO has employed in strengthening its eastern flank in case of Russian incursions are by deploying troops and strengthening the military infrastructure within the region. This is a military position that has played a significant part in ensuring stability in the region and offering aid to Ukraine thereby enhancing the defense forces of the latter against Russian backed separatists. Military assistance and training of Ukrainian troops has also been among the efforts of NATO and has helped this country to combat the aggression of the Russians.

NATO actions have not been conducted without controversy though. Russia has considered the activities of the alliance as a form of provocation and expansionism increasing the tension between the NATO and Moscow. Russia considers the deployment of NATO forces to its Eastern Europe, as well as the support of the alliance to Ukraine, as an outright threat to its national security. Also, the military drills and training activities conducted by NATO in Eastern Europe are widely viewed by Russia as intimidation and

²⁰ Anderson, Richard J. "Europe's Dependence on Russian Natural Gas: Perspectives and Recommendations for a Long-term Strategy." Occasional Paper Series, no. 019 (September 2008): 1–50. George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies. Available at <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/europes-dependence-russian-natural-gas-perspectives-and-recommendations-long-term-strategy-0>

war preparation activities and continue to fuel the tension in the region.

Opponents of the NATO policy believe that the strategy of the organisation does not have a consistent diplomatic element and does not consider the Russian security interests properly. Some people see the move of NATO to extend its territory to Eastern Europe as an encroachment on previous accords as seen in the NATO-Russia Founding Act that aimed at creating a platform of mutual co-existence between NATO and Russia. This is one of the perceived violations that have led to the loss of trust and stability in the region. As well, the fact that the alliance focuses on military resolutions, instead of a diplomatic approach has brought about concerns of the possibility of an escalation of the conflict that is even greater.

The strategy of NATO is described in terms of three strategies, defence, offense, and dialogue. On the defence side, the partnership is directed towards the development of its military preparedness and capabilities to counter the threats that emerge. On the offensive, the assistance of NATO to Ukraine and the location in Eastern Europe is meant to prevent further aggression on the part of Russia and stamp its authority in the area. At the same time, NATO also tries to conduct a diplomatic conversation to reach a solution to the problems that lie at the basis of the conflict and achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict. This diplomacy works wonders to minimise the loss of life and comply with international law and agreements. The offensive strategy implemented by NATO in the the Russia-Ukraine war has not been successful. Although the defence measures of the alliance and its support to Ukraine have enhanced the stability in the region and the deterrence, it has also been criticised to have instigated Russian enmity and have no clear diplomatic approach. Striking the right balance between military stance and diplomatic action is another major challenge facing NATO as it tries to negotiate the factors of the going war and find a balance to the war which will lead to a peaceful solution

Critical Analysis of Nato's Focus on Member States and Strategic Interests in Eastern Europe

The assistance that NATO gives its member states and their strategic interests in East Europe, even though this is meant to protect the stability of the region and to ensure that its objectives in the geopolitics is attained, has been severely criticised. Their emphasis on strengthening defence potential and defending the member states has been seen to be placing more weight on strategic interests than on actual diplomatic interactions and conflict resolutions. This practice has a number of essential overtones.

Prioritisation of Strategic Interest

The main issue that NATO faces in its operation in preserving and increasing its presence in Eastern Europe is usually to the detriment of the rest of its diplomacy. NATO has been accused of contributing to the conflict

instead of resolving the underlying conflict by focusing on the security of its member nations and increasing its strategic presence in the region. As the alliance military build-up and augmented their presence in Eastern Europe, that is meant to discourage Russian aggression may be considered provocative behavior that leads to a series of escalation. Such an attitude of militarism may have a negative impact on the chances of a constructive dialogue and a peaceful resolution since it strengthens an aggressive course instead of a collaborative approach towards Russia.

Neglect of Non –Member Interests

The interests of NATO to safeguard those member states especially by providing military and strategic solutions to the same has at times overshadowed the needs and interests of the non- member states including Ukraine. Although the assistance that NATO offers to defence capabilities of Ukraine is remarkable, the participation of the alliance is often described in the framework of selective approach that focuses on strategic benefits rather than total peace building processes. The absence of the proactive and inclusive diplomatic approach can be regarded as the inability to involve all the interested parties, such as Russia, in a productive way.

Inadequate Diplomatic Engagement

The focus on the military readiness and the strategic location in Eastern Europe casts doubt upon the willingness of NATO with the diplomatic solutions. Critics state that the NATO has placed a lot of emphasis on defence and deterrence policies including military drills and alliances reinforcement thus neglecting the need to be on viable diplomatic talks. This local orientation can undermine the emergence of strong, inclusive discussions which can be used to solve the multifaceted geopolitical interactions of the area. NATO runs the risk of continuing a series of confrontations instead of a permanent solution to the conflict by failing to focus on diplomatic discussions and negotiations.

Regional Stability Implications

The moves by NATO, which are motivated by a strategic necessity to stabilise the interests of its members as well as the rest of the member states, may further destabilise the region unintentionally. Some describe military operations and strategic surrounds by the alliance as worsening the situation, as opposed to bringing about a peaceful and balanced situation. Such a strategy may lead to an increase in the level of insecurity of non-member states and the intensification of the situation in the region, which complicates the attainment of long-term stability.

Conclusion

The participation of NATO in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a complex approach that aims to strengthen the stability of the region and make Russia feel the power of the U.S. in Eastern Europe. The active nature of its strategy which includes defensive and offensive aspects is intended to protect member states, increase their defence strength, and restructure the strategic balance in the region. NATO tries to counter the Russian ambitions putting up an increased military force, assisting Ukraine to defend itself, and using strategic alliance to make an enormous cost to Russia. This strategy has however not passed without controversy. The priorities of NATO and its member countries in regard to ensuring their own vested interests and their member countries have been dominant over the wider diplomatic actions and the concerns of non-member states such as Ukraine. According to critics, the military posing of the alliance, which is aimed at preventing aggression, can encourage even additional tensions and aggravate the situation in the region. The focus on defence and deterrence can defeat the chances of constructive dialogue and all-inclusive conflict resolution. In addition, the policy of NATO has been reproached due to the absence of a logical diplomatic approach, which may overlook the specifics of the conflict and the valid security interests of Russia. Some view measures of the alliance as being part of a circle of confrontation that does not aim at creating a balanced and peaceful solution. This tendency to strategic dominance and insufficient diplomatic participation threatens to destabilise the region even more and makes it even harder to reach a stable situation in the long term.

Although NATO approach to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine indicates that it is willing to defend its member countries and it is interested in safeguarding its geopolitical interests, it also highlights the major challenges. Striking the balance between military preparedness and diplomatic participation is still very essential as NATO tries to navigate the intricacies of the conflict and tries to facilitate a sustainable and peaceful decision. The emphasis of strategic superiority together with poor diplomatic interests threatens to destabilise the area further and make the process of long-term stability difficult.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Richard J. "Europe's Dependence on Russian Natural Gas: Perspectives and Recommendations for a Long-term Strategy." Occasional Paper Series, no. 019 (September 2008): 1–50. George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. Available at <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/occasional-papers/europes-dependence-russian-natural-gas-perspectives-and-recommendations-long-term-strategy-0>

- Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means For The West*, London: Yale University Press, 2014. Available at https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=NMK2BAAAQBAJ&printsec=copyright&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Aniere, Paul D. *Ukraine and Russia; From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Available at <https://archive.org/details/ukraine-and-russia-from-civilied-divorce-to-uncivil-war-2019-paul-d-anieri>
- Anyalebechi, Shammah Mahakwe. “NATO’s Expansionist Policy and Security Dilemma in Eastern Europe, 2009–2023.” *International Journal of Diplomacy and Political Relations* 1, no. 3 (2024). Available at: <https://pubjournals.com/ijdp/article/view/63>
- Asif, Ramsha, and Professor Dr. Irum Khalid. “Russia-Ukraine Conflict and Its Implications for Global Food Insecurity and Immigrant Influx.” *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (2024). Available at <Russia-Ukraine+Conflict+and+its+Implications+for+Global+Food+Insecurity+and+Immigrant+Influx.pdf>
- Bornu, Tonubari Zigha. “The Russian-Ukrainian war; its causes, background and effect”. *The American Journal of Political Science Law and Criminology* 7, no.5 (2025). Available at file:///C:/Users/IPTRR/Downloads/20_189-200_TAJPSLC_The+Russian-Ukrainian+war.pdf
- Bukhari, Syed Rizwan Haider, and Basharat Ullah. “Assessing the Ukraine-Russia Conflict: A Threat to Global Energy Security and the Prospect of a Third World War.” *International Journal of Advanced Research* 13, no. 5 (2025): 403. Available at https://www.journalijar.com/uploads/2025/05/6841451881d74_IJAR-51948.pdf
- Kappeler, Andreas. “Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the Imperial Past and Competing Memories”. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, no.2(2014). Available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1016/j.euras.2014.05.005>
- Lartey, Solomon. “The Ukraine-Russia Conflict: Historical Roots and Current

Implications.” (2025). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389697629_The_Ukraine-Russia_Conflict_Historical_Roots_and_Current_Implications/citation/download

McCallion, Christopher. "Assessing Realist and Liberal Explanations for the Russo-Ukrainian War." *Defense Priorities*, 2024. Available at: <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/assessing-realist-and-liberal-explanations-for-the-russo-ukrainian-war/>

Michta, Andrew A., and Joslyn Brodfuehrer. *NATO-Russia Dynamics: Prospects for Reconstitution of Russian Military Power*. Atlantic Council, September 19, 2024. Available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/nato-russia-dynamics-prospects-for-reconstitution-of-russian-military-power/>

Poli, Emanuele, and Anna Rosa Candura. “Annexation of Crimea to Russia: An Analysis of Geopolitical Events for Didactic Use.” *CoESPU Magazine: The Online Quarterly Journal of Stability Policing*, no. 3–4 (2023): 24. Available at <https://www.coespu.org/articles/annexation-crimea-russia-analysis-geopolitical-events-didactic-use>

Relations with Ukraine .North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (June26, 2025). Available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm?

Ritter, Daniel P. “A Spirit of Maidan? Contentious Escalation in Ukraine.” In *Global Diffusion of Protest: Riding the Protest Wave in the Neoliberal Crisis*, edited by Donatella della Porta, 191–214. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017. Available at: https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/315/edited_volume/chapter/2320278

Stent, Angela E. *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. Available at: <https://press.princeton.edu/books/ebook/9781400866151/the-limits-of-partnership-pdf>

Tian, Lei. “The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict on Global Economic Stability and Political Security”. *Advances in Economics Management and Political Sciences* 120(2024):93-100. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385333303_The_Impact_of_t

[he Russia-Ukraine Conflict on Global Economic Stability and Political Security](#)

Toft, Peter. "John J. Mearsheimer: An offensive realist between geopolitics and power". *Journal of International Relations and Development* 8, no. 4 (2005): 381–408. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263323588_John_J_Mearsheimer_An_offensive_realist_between_geopolitics_and_power

Yannick, Popouet Stephan. "The Impact of the War between Ukraine and Russia on Relations between Russia and the West". *Open Journal of Political Science* 15, no.4 (2025). Available at: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=145151>

Yekelchyk, Serhy. *Ukraine: What Everyone Needs To Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Available at: <http://dickyricky.com/books/history/The%20Conflict%20in%20Ukraine%20-%20Serhy%20Yekelchyk.pdf>

Youvan, Douglas C. "Broken Promises: NATO's Eastward Expansion and the Russian Perspective on Security Guarantees". (August 21, 2024). Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383603749_Broken_Promises_NATO's_Eastward_Expansion_and_the_Russian_Perspective_on_Security_Guarantees