



# Strengthening the eastern flank of the NATO territory due to the threatening of invasion from the Russian Federation

North Atlantic Council



Shattered Vows: Tracing the Devastation Caused by  
Violating Human Rights



**Forum:** The North Atlantic Council

**Issue:** Strengthening the Eastern Flank of the NATO Territory due to the Threatening of Invasion from the Russian Federation

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## Introduction

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO, a defensive alliance committed to safeguarding its members, has undergone significant adaptations. The Vilnius Summit in 2023 marked a pivotal moment. This summit approved a very detailed defence plan, maybe even the most detailed since the Cold War. The new Strategic Concept, endorsed at the Madrid Summit in 2022, recognizes Russia as the primary threat and commits to deploying additional forces on NATO's eastern flank. The NATO Force Model modernises the structure, emphasising deterrence and defence.

NATO's comprehensive approach spans all domains, incorporating nuclear, conventional, and cyber capabilities. Resilience, vital for prevention, involves civil-military cooperation and preparing societies for cyber threats. The Alliance's commitment to innovation, including artificial intelligence, ensures it maintains a technological aspect.

Equitable burden-sharing is emphasised, with Allies reaffirming the Defense Investment Pledge to invest at least 2% of GDP in defence annually. Some commit to exceeding this for comprehensive security. NATO's dedication to collective defence, resilience, and technological innovation solidifies its role as a bulwark against emerging threats, promoting stability and the core principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

## Definition of Key Terms

### [NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)]

A military alliance formed in 1949, NATO aims to ensure the security and freedom of its Western member nations through collective defence against common threats.

### [Eastern flank]

The easternmost region of NATO's territory, bordering Russia, gaining strategic significance amid heightened tensions. The eastern flank now stretches from Finland, the Baltic countries, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania to countries like Turkey and Italy. During the Cold War the eastern flank was threatened by the Soviet Union, today it is threatened by Russia's revisionism (proof of which can be seen in Ukraine)



### **[Revisionism]**

The advocacy of trying to change existing beliefs on how certain events took place or what their importance or meaning is. A revision of some accepted theory, doctrine or a view of historical events.

### **[NATO Russia Founding Act]**

The act was founded to form better relations between NATO and Russia, primarily to avoid any negative reactions to NATO's decision to expand itself. Both NATO and Russia agreed to work together to develop a strong, stable and equal partnership to strengthen security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Founding Act also calls for transparency on both ends regarding the creation and implementation of defence policy and military doctrines.

### **[Hybrid warfare]**

Warfare involves a mix of conventional and unconventional methods, exploiting vulnerabilities, including cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns.

### **[Montreux Convention]**

A 1936 treaty regulating naval passage through the Turkish Straits, impacting Black Sea security dynamics concerning NATO. This passage, the Bosphorus Passage, is one of the most important points in the maritime transportation of oil and is controlled by Turkey.

### **[UN Charter (United Nations Charter)]**

The 1945 foundational document of the United Nations, outlining its purposes, including maintaining international peace and security.

### **[Helsinki Final Act]**

A 1975 document outlining principles for state behaviour, signed during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).



## General Overview

As the ominous shadow of Russian aggression looms, NATO stands at a critical juncture, demanding a comprehensive and long-overdue effort to fortify its Eastern Flank. This extended overview delves into the multifaceted strategies and challenges characterizing NATO's response, amalgamating insights from the provided articles. It underscores the intricate geopolitical landscape and the imperative of a nuanced approach.

### Crafting a comprehensive strategy

Facing an ongoing and changing threat from Russia, NATO is working on a long-term plan to deal with it. This plan focuses on being strong, showing we can resist, and staying together. It's a big effort to respond to the challenges we're seeing in the world.

The plan's emphasis on being strong shows NATO wants to be ready to handle any challenges and recover quickly. The idea of deterrence means NATO wants to discourage any aggressive moves from happening by being powerful and having a good strategy. Unity stresses the need for everyone in NATO to stick together. But, there are tensions within the Alliance, especially among Southern European countries. This makes it hard to get everyone on the same page. NATO puts a lot of emphasis on being strong, showing deterrence and unity, these are core values of NATO.

These internal disagreements, combined with different views on the Russian threat, make NATO's job tougher. As NATO tries to deal with these challenges from within, there's a crucial need for everyone to be on the same side. This is even more critical because of the changing threats the world faces. If NATO is divided, it weakens the whole group and makes it difficult to deal with the Russian military aspirations and aggression.

This struggle for unity is a key part of how NATO is responding. Success depends on NATO figuring out how to bring different views together, work together, and present a strong front against Russia. The ongoing changes in this plan show how NATO is adjusting its strategy to keep its member countries safe and maintain stability in the region.

### Diverse Assessments and Unfinished Business

Opinions concerning the Russian threat significantly differ among NATO member-states. There has to be some apprehension, because of potential Russian aggression against Baltic states, including Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Ongoing deployments in NATO's Eastern Flank, particularly in the Baltic region, grapple with operational hurdles and also necessitate a reevaluation of existing strategies. This means a nuanced and steady approach is



necessary. An exemplary approach must also be adaptive and resilient, as well as effectively address the ever-evolving nature of the Russian threat.

### **Logistical Challenges and Resilience Imperatives**

NATO's aim to address the escalating Russian threat unravels logistical challenges in swiftly moving equipment, troops, and tanks across Europe, particularly to the Eastern Flank. Simultaneously, NATO acknowledges potential vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure, necessitating fortified resilience against sophisticated Russian cyber and hybrid threats. This entails bolstering capabilities to defend against cyber-attacks, ensuring secure communication channels, and enhancing overall adaptability.

### **Evolving NATO-Russia Relations and Founding Act Reassessment**

The Founding Act, governing NATO-Russia relations for over two decades, faces scrutiny amidst changing geopolitical dynamics. As NATO navigates the delicate task of engaging in dialogue with Russia, member states express reservations and nervousness about making unequivocal commitments on the Eastern Flank. Balancing diplomatic engagement with safeguarding collective security interests becomes increasingly intricate.

### **Recommendations for NATO's Future**

Crafting a robust, long-term strategy demands a candid and detailed discussion within NATO. This involves addressing cyber and hybrid threats emanating from Russia and formulating adaptive responses. Concrete recommendations emerge, advocating for the consideration of permanent troop basing in Poland and Baltic states to enhance reassurance. Proposals include establishing a Military Schengen arrangement to streamline the unhindered movement of equipment, troops, and tanks, overcoming logistical challenges. Additionally, revisiting the outdated NATO-Russia Founding Act is recommended to align with contemporary geopolitical realities.

### **Anticipating Future Challenges and Adaptions**

Looking ahead, NATO faces the imperative of adapting to an evolving threat landscape marked by Russian aggression, cyber threats, and hybrid warfare. The Alliance's ability to remain agile, cohesive, and resilient emerges as pivotal. Strategic foresight and continual reassessment of military posture, encompassing force deployment and technological integration, become crucial in navigating the complex and unpredictable challenges posed by Russia.



## Conclusion

NATO's response to Russian aggression demands not only a cohesive and adaptable strategy but also an introspective assessment of internal divisions and vulnerabilities. As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, addressing logistical challenges, reassessing NATO-Russia relations, and implementing pragmatic recommendations become pivotal in securing the Alliance's future. The nuanced nature of the contemporary geopolitical landscape mandates a proactive and comprehensive approach to ensure NATO's continued relevance and effectiveness in safeguarding its Eastern Flank.

## Major Parties Involved

### [NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation)]

NATO, a military alliance of 30 member countries from North America and Europe, is a key player in responding to the Russian threat in its Eastern Flank. Committed to collective defence, NATO has been actively formulating a comprehensive strategy to address evolving challenges, enhance resilience, and maintain unity among member states.

### [Russian Federation]

As a central actor in the geopolitical landscape, Russia's actions, particularly its aggression in Ukraine, have prompted NATO to reassess and fortify its Eastern Flank. Russia's military manoeuvres, cyber threats, and hybrid warfare tactics play a significant role in shaping the security dynamics in the region.

### [Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia)]

The vulnerability of the Baltic States to potential Russian aggression is a focal point in this issue. These NATO member countries, situated in the Eastern Flank, are directly affected by the evolving threat and are actively engaged in discussions and strategies aimed at enhancing their security.

### [Individual NATO member states]

Various NATO member states, including those in the Eastern Flank and beyond, contribute troops, resources, and strategic inputs to the alliance's efforts. The level of commitment and contributions from individual member states significantly influences NATO's overall effectiveness in navigating the Russian threat.



## [Belarus]

At the very start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Belarus lent its territory to Russia to attack Ukraine. Belarus however does not seem to have sent any of its soldiers to Ukraine. Belarus has also allowed Russia full access to its military bases, meaning Russia can launch aircraft and send shoot artillery and missiles from Belarus' territory towards Ukraine. Multiple, specific, sanctions have been put on Belarus, due to the country's growing involvement in the ongoing war.

## [Ukraine]

Somewhere between October and November of the year 2021, Russia began a spread of troops and military equipment along its border with Ukraine. In the following months, additional troops and equipment were sent to the border of Russia and Belarus. As Western countries began to suspect an invasion by Russia, Putin dismissed these accusations and assured them it was merely a previously scheduled exercise. On February 21 2022 Putin ordered the Russian troops to enter Ukraine, Western leaders responded to this occurrence by placing sanctions on Russia's financial institutions. Ukraine has currently regained 54% of previously occupied territory, meanwhile, Russia still occupies about 18% of the country. The frontlines have remained relatively stable for almost a year now.

# Timeline of Events

## **Late 1990s: Peak Point of Western-Russian Relations**

Western-Russian relations reach a relatively positive point around the year 2000. This period is marked by cooperation on various international issues, including arms control, economic collaboration, and counter-terrorism efforts.

## **2000: Vladimir Putin Assumes Power**

Vladimir Putin became the President of Russia in May 2000, succeeding Boris Jeltsin. Putin implements economic reforms and gains popularity domestically.

## **2008: Russian Invasion of Georgia Begins**

In August 2008, tensions between Russia and Georgia escalated over the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The conflict erupts into a full-scale war when Russia



intervenes, claiming to protect Russian citizens in the disputed regions. The war lasts for a brief period, resulting in Russian control over parts of Georgia.

### **Post-2008: Deterioration of Western-Russian Relations**

The invasion of Georgia strains relations between Russia and the West. Western nations, particularly the United States and European countries, criticize Russia's actions. The West condemns Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states and calls for the withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgian territory.

### **2014: Crimea Annexation**

Russia annexes Crimea, signalling a shift in regional dynamics.

The annexation prompts NATO to reassess its posture and readiness in the face of Russian aggression.

### **2014-2016: Increased Air Policing**

NATO responds by increasing air policing and surveillance aircraft in alliance airspace.

The alliance bolsters its aerial presence as a first measure to counter potential threats.

### **2017: Multinational Battlegroups**

-NATO establishes four multinational battlegroups of 1,000 troops in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

Ground forces are deployed to enhance deterrence and defence capabilities in the Eastern Flank.

### **Early 2022: Military Force Expansion**

NATO member countries begin increasing military forces in the Eastern Flank following heightened tensions.

The alliance responds to emerging threats by expanding its military presence on a bilateral and NATO-wide basis.

### **February 2022: Invasion of Ukraine**





Russia invades Ukraine, intensifying concerns about security in the region.

NATO, in response to the invasion, decides to add four additional battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

### **2014-2022: Adaptation of Military Posture**

NATO adapts its military posture, establishing new commands and logistics units.

The Response Force is significantly increased, with a focus on deterrence and defence.

### **March 2022: New Strategic Concept**

NATO leaders meet in Brussels to discuss a new Strategic Concept.

The leaders describe Russia's aggression as the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades, emphasizing the need for a renewed strategy.

### **June 2022: Adoption of New Strategic Concept**

NATO's next summit in Madrid leads to the adoption of a new Strategic Concept.

The Concept outlines the threats facing the alliance and its intended responses in the evolving security landscape.

### **Ongoing: Continuous Presence and Adaptation**

NATO maintains a continuous presence in the Eastern Flank, adapting strategies in response to dynamic geopolitical developments.

Ongoing efforts focus on addressing logistical challenges, bolstering cyber defences, and refining the alliance's overall posture in the region.

## **Previous attempts to solve the issue**

### **Post-Cold War Engagement (1991-2014):**

In the aftermath of the Cold War, NATO pursued a policy of engagement with Russia. Efforts were made to build a cooperative relationship, including the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002. However, these attempts failed to prevent escalating tensions, particularly with Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

### **Founding Act on Mutual Relations (1997):**



The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation was signed in 1997. While it aimed to build trust and cooperation, it became increasingly challenged as geopolitical dynamics evolved, leading to the need for reassessment.

### **Continuous Presence in Eastern Flank (2014-Present):**

NATO has maintained a continuous presence in the Eastern Flank since Russia annexed Crimea. This involved increased air policing, naval presence, and the establishment of multinational battlegroups. Despite these efforts, the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 highlighted the need for further enhancements.

## **Possible solutions**

### **Enhanced Diplomatic Engagement:**

One potential solution involves a renewed commitment to diplomatic dialogue between NATO and Russia. Establishing a dedicated platform for sustained discussions, facilitated by neutral intermediaries, could provide an avenue for de-escalation. Emphasizing shared security concerns and mutual interests, this approach aims to rebuild trust and explore areas of collaboration. Such engagement could include regular summits, joint military exercises, and cooperative efforts on regional stability, fostering an environment conducive to conflict resolution.

### **Collective Security Agreements:**

Proposing comprehensive collective security agreements within NATO, as well as with Russia, offers a structured approach to address concerns and build mutual trust. Crafting agreements that explicitly outline the responsibilities, commitments, and consequences for breaches could contribute to transparency and stability. This solution promotes inclusivity, ensuring that the security interests of all member states, including those in the Eastern Flank, are taken into account. Through collective security, the focus shifts from unilateral actions to collaborative efforts in safeguarding regional stability.

### **Joint Infrastructure Investment and Cybersecurity Initiatives:**

Collaborative investment in shared infrastructure and cybersecurity initiatives presents another innovative avenue. Establishing joint projects for critical infrastructure development, such as energy grids and transportation networks, fosters interdependence among NATO member states. Simultaneously, a collective approach to cybersecurity, including information-sharing and joint response mechanisms, can enhance resilience against hybrid threats. This solution promotes economic cooperation, contributing to the



prosperity and security of the entire NATO alliance while addressing vulnerabilities in the Eastern Flank.

These proposed solutions aim to balance interests, fostering cooperation and stability without unduly favouring specific countries or policies. It underscores the importance of inclusivity and creative thinking in addressing the complex challenges surrounding NATO-Russian relations and Eastern Flank security.

## Useful documents

NATO-Russia Founding Act (1997)

United Nations Charter

NATO Strategic Concept

Helsinki Final Act (1975)

Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits (1936)

European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), *Reformation nation: Wartime politics in Ukraine*, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/reformation-nation-wartime-politics-in-ukraine/>

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