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## MILITARY AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN NATO AS RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE

### ВІЙСЬКОВО-ПОЛІТИЧНІ ЗМІНИ В НАТО У ВІДПОВІДЬ НА ПОВНОМАСТАШБНЕ РОСІЙСЬКЕ ВТОРГНЕННЯ В УКРАЇНУ

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**Abstract.** *The article identifies seven key changes within NATO following the invasion: the approval of a new NATO Strategic Concept, the extension of the American troop presence in Europe, reinforcement of the eastern front, development of consistent plans for defense against Russia, increased defense spending, Sweden and Finland's membership in the NATO, and improved political solidarity among the member countries. These changes highlight NATO's efforts to anticipate new security threats in Europe and are a manifestation of the changes in this organization's response to threats in the geopolitical sphere.*

**Keywords:** *Russia's war in Ukraine, NATO, security policies, international security system, NATO Strategic Concept.*

**Анотація.** *У статті визначено сім ключових змін у НАТО після вторгнення: затвердження нової Стратегічної концепції НАТО, розширення присутності американських військ у Європі, зміцнення східного фронту, розробка узгоджених планів оборони від Росії, збільшення витрат на оборону, членство Швеції та Фінляндії в НАТО і посилення політичної солідарності між країнами-членами Альянсу. Ці зміни підкреслюють зусилля НАТО щодо передбачення нових загроз безпеці в Європі і є проявом змін у реагуванні цієї організації на загрози в геополітичній сфері.*

**Ключові слова:** *Війна Росії в Україні, НАТО, політика безпеки, система міжнародної безпеки, Стратегічна концепція НАТО.*

**Introduction.** North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been one of the cornerstones of transatlantic security since its establishment in 1949. Formally NATO was created as system of collective defense against potential assault from the Soviet Union and was a first step in the construction of so called “block-system”. Global political modifications and the appearance of new security challenges led to the ongoing transformation of the alliance.

The end of the Cold War period saw NATO change from a purely defensive alliance to an instrument of proactive crisis management and cooperative security. However, the scope of the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 on the part of Russia plunged the alliance into deep military and political implications. Not only have these events been a test of the core principles of NATO, but also of its operational readiness in a situation that calls for a redefinition of its strategic posture and defense mechanisms.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 acted as a booster in the rapid taking up of initiative by NATO on collective defense, raising military expenditure from member states and enhancing deterrence measures on its eastern flank. The escalation of Russia’s military actions in 2022 and later resulted in the Sweden and Finland rejection of their neutrality status and joining the NATO. Even though Sweden is not currently a full member of the alliance, all calculations (budget and military plans) are made taking into account its future full participation (*NATO, 2024*).

**The purpose of the article.** This article examines the military and political changes in NATO in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and as an element of the policy established in 2014 after the illegal annexation of Crimea. The article also explores how the Alliance has restructured its military strategies and political cohesion, as well as how it has reshaped its security policy.

**Literature review.** Existing literature highlights that NATO's response to Russia's invasion has involved significant shifts in both military posture and political strategy. Researchers such as R. McDermott, S. S. Cohen, and L. Freedman have documented NATO's enhanced military readiness and the deployment of additional troops to Eastern European member states as deterrence measures. These studies emphasize NATO's strategic recalibration, including the adoption of a more robust forward defense posture and increased military exercises aimed at demonstrating solidarity and readiness. Political responses within NATO have also been a focus of scholarly attention. Works by J. Goldgeier, M. Smith, and K. E. Brummer have explored the alliance's internal political dynamics, noting how Russia's actions have spurred greater unity among member states. These scholars argue that NATO has strengthened its political cohesion and decision-making processes, despite pre-existing tensions among members over burden-sharing and defense spending. However, while the existing literature provides a robust foundation for understanding NATO's responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, further research is necessary to uncover the complexities of these military and political transformations.

It is quite clear that the issue is not left out of the research of Ukrainian specialists, among whom it is worth mentioning M.G. Kapitonenko (*Kapitonenko M. (2024)*), H.M. Perepelytsia (*Perepelytsia H.M., 2021; Perepelytsia H.M., 2022; Perepelytsia H.M., 2023*), N.L. Yakoveno and others. However, for the most part, these studies cover issues of regional and international security, without focusing specifically on the transformation of the alliance in this context.

**Main results of the research.** Since the early 1990s the international security system was based on a complex network of security agreements, alliances, institutions and international organizations aimed at ensuring global peace and stability. The main principles of this system were collective security, deterrence and diplomacy.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrates the vulnerability of this security system. By violating the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the prohibition of the use of force, and by exposing the weaknesses of collective security, it challenges the very foundation of the international system designed to prevent such conflicts.

That’s mean we have two principal options: try to transform the existing system or create the new one. Here we need to remark that there were a lot of discussions about the existing international system, characterizing it as “hybrid”, “transitional” or “developing”. In such a way different analytics

tried to underline the temporary and unfinished status quo. That means that the new attempt to rebalance the powers on the international arena is a question of time.

In this context Russia's aggression against Ukraine (since 2014), escalation in the Middle East (Israeli-Hamas war, Syria etc.), periodical tensions in China-Taiwan contractions could be the signs of such dynamics.

Established to provide collective defense, NATO's role has evolved in response to the transformation of the global security structure and during the post-Cold War created the system of collective security based on solidarity, cooperation and actions in very spread areas, not only traditional military spheres, but in civil security, science, public communication.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine not only violated the fundamental principles of the modern security system, but also posed a serious challenge to NATO. The first decisions on changes in its activities reflecting the Russian actions were made by NATO at the Wales Summit in 2014, which took place after the illegal annexation of Crimea. These decisions were developed during next years and concentrated on such issues: financing, readiness and development of the eastern flank.

Financing of the NATO activity was a crucial issue for a long period. Due to the changing security situation and position of Donald Trump there was agreed a Defense Investment Pledge NATO (called for member states to meet the 2% of GDP for defense spending and the 20% of annual defense expenditure guideline on major new equipment by 2024). Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, most Allies have committed to investing more, and more quickly, in *defense (NATO, 2024)*.

The NATO Response Force (NRF) has such components: land, air, maritime and Special Operations Forces (SOF); High mobility, technological level and multilateral character. The Alliance began using these forces in the 2000s, but the mechanism was fundamentally developed because of the 2014 Wales Summit decision and became a response to Russia's activities.

The aim of the NRF is to provide a rapid military response to an emerging crisis, whether for collective defense or other crisis response operations. At the Wales Summit in 2014, NATO Allies decided to strengthen the NRF by creating a "forward presence" known as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The strengthening of the NRF is one of the measures of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) agreed by Allies to respond to changes in the security environment.

According to official position NATO has increased its military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance as a direct result of Russia's behavior, which reflects a pattern of aggressive actions against its neighbors. The several stages of development of eastern flank could be identified: Wales Summit, 2014; Warsaw Summit, 2016 (allies agreed to establish NATO's forward presence in both the northeast and southeast of the Alliance); 2022 – the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine reinforces the existed battle forces and creates new.

Although Ukraine is not a NATO member, the Alliance provides significant support, including military assistance and intelligence sharing. The Russian-Ukrainian war has reinforced the importance of the Alliance in maintaining European security. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced NATO leaders to make quick decisions to adapt to the new security reality in Europe. Therefore, it is important to consider the major military and political changes in NATO caused by Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Seven key changes in NATO have been identified for analysis.

The first change is the approval of the new NATO Strategic Concept. The 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid was the first summit in the new geopolitical reality. The aim of the summit was to adapt the Alliance to changes in the international security system. Although the process of change had begun before the summit, it was the decisions taken and recorded at the summit that laid the foundation for the Alliance's further transformation (*NATO, 2022a*).

At the Madrid Summit, the leaders of the member states approved the new NATO Strategic Concept. The new concept changes the strategic direction of the Alliance, focusing on an increased focus on strengthening deterrence and defense, along with a new emphasis on building resilience identifying Russia as the "most significant and direct" threat to the Alliance the first-ever reference to China as a strategic challenge and a statement that developments in the Indo-Pacific region affect the security of Allies (*NATO, 2022b*).

The new Strategic Concept reaffirms that NATO's primary task is to provide collective defense based on a 360-degree approach. It defines three fundamental tasks of the Alliance, namely: deterrence and defense; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security (*NATO, 2022b*).

The Strategic Concept states that the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has shaken the world and significantly deteriorated our security environment. Moscow's behavior reflects a pattern of aggressive actions against Russia's neighbors and the transatlantic community. Widespread instability, rising strategic rivalries and the spread of authoritarianism pose a challenge to the Alliance's interests and values.

In the new document, NATO emphasizes that the Russian Federation is also a model of how serious a threat authoritarian regimes pose to the world in principle. The Strategic Concept states that the Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to the security of the Allies and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Alliance has accused Russia of systematically using coercion, subversion, nuclear blackmail, aggression and annexation as instruments of foreign policy (*NATO, 2022*).

NATO's Strategic Concept 2022 reflects a shift to addressing more diverse and complex threats, recognizing the changing geopolitical landscape and emphasizing the need for adaptation and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.

The second change is an increase in the US military contingent in Europe. In view of the escalating conflicts and threats globally, America has made a historic move of boosting its military force in Europe to a troop strength of more than 20,000 (*U.S. Department of Defense, 2022*). This takes the United States just a few thousands of troops shy of the 100,000 troops mark in its forces in Europe for the first time since 2005 (*Vandiver, J., 2022*).

With the decision of the further raise of the number of U. S. troops in Europe it is willing to stress strategic goals and to maintain stability with partners there. This step also relates to an increased focus of the USA on Europe as one of the most important strategic zones and one of the main theaters of operations for the defense of its interests and security within NATO.

The rising of troop levels must be at the same time when the level of security threats and mostly coming from Russia increases and would need counteraction. Additional forces mean the commitment of the United States to its friends and its willingness to respond to threats that question the principles of the modern world and the rules that regulate life in Europe and the rest of the world.

The third aspect of the transformation process is the military strengthening of the eastern flank, that was mentioned above. As Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Allies agreed to change their approach on how to respond to the situation by boosting defense presence in the region. This decision also involved sustaining the present battlegroups and constituting four new multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. These steps have added the total to eight, NATO's multinational battlegroups (*NATO, 2023a*).

New battlegroups formed in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are for enhancing the protection and to counter possible threats in the region. All of them are groups of military personnel from NATO member countries, which once again illustrates the unity in the ranks of the Alliance in conditions of a tense situation in the world.

Thus, in general, the number of permanent bases of NATO has even increased, and the number of its personnel in Eastern Europe has doubled. This enables the Alliance to provide a better handling of probable security threats and boost the defense capacities of its members.

Today NATO troops are present forward along the entire eastern frontier of the Alliance from the Baltic to the Black Sea region. To achieve the desired combat readiness, international battlegroups are permanently stationed in the Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

This forward presence is as of now a significant component of the deterrent and proves NATO's commitment to protect each one of its members. It also gives a message to any attacker that the Allied forces are prepared and determined to stand as one through collective defense mode to maintain order and avoid warfare in the area.

The fourth change is the development of a detailed defense plan in case of war with Russia. In a long and elaborate diplomatic process, NATO countries have agreed on regional plans, which outline the actions of the Alliance in case of an attack by Russia.

These are: formation of several “land corridors” that will allow movements of U. S troops and armor to possible battlefronts in the case of a large-scale ground war with Russia in Europe. These corridors will be configured for quick arrival and thus, fast deployment and quick movement in case of a conflict for NATO forces. The plans also include the introduction of other contingents and strategic reserves in significant areas as a response to threats from Russia (*Barnes, J., 2024*).

Such an integrated approach to defense enhances the security of NATO in the region and shows the unity of actions in front of the modern challenges and threats in the contemporary world.

The fifth change is an increase in defense spending. NATO has significantly increased its 2024 budget; it proves the alliance is determined to match Russian aggression and enhance its defense. The NATO civilian budget will increase by 18.2% to €438.1 million, while the military budget will be reinforced by 12% to €2.03 billion (*NATO, 2023c*).

This is the cost of personnel, operating, and program expenditures for NATO Headquarters, as well as international staff. The military budget comprises running costs on a day-to-day basis of the NATO Command Structure Headquarters, all missions, and operations across the globe. The third vital component of the common funds at NATO is the NATO Security Investment Program (NSIP), comprising the main works of construction and command and control systems investment. The 2024 NSIP ceiling is €1.3 billion, representing an increase of 30% compared to 2023 (*NATO, 2023c*).

Indeed, the increase in budgets for NATO is a clear signal that the Alliance is unwilling to tolerate the aggressiveness of Russia and shows solidarity and readiness to defend values and freedom among each member of the Alliance.

The sixth change is the accession of Sweden and Finland to the Alliance. The Russian attack on Ukraine was the principal event that made Finland and Sweden give up their long-standing policy of neutrality and seek a NATO membership in May 2022. To both these Nordic countries, the Russian invasion signified intrusion of aggression from the east which threatened the security of the countries.

Finland became part of NATO on the 4th of April in 2023 while Sweden became on the 7th of March in 2024. Its accession contributed to enhancing the military potential of the Alliance in the northern zone in a rather meaningful extent (*NATO, 2023b*).

Ukraine is also aspiring into the NATO, having applied for an early July 2022 admission. As for NATO membership of Ukraine is concerned, there are certain difficulties now because of some of the members of the Alliance. Nevertheless, Ukrainian Euro-Atlantic fantasies are apparent and unshaken, as joining this organization is viewed as the insurance of the state’s stability and autonomy in the distant future.

This war led by Russia to Ukraine has certainly led to reforms in European countries so as to ‘unite’ hence pressing for the enhancement of partnership at NATO.

The seventh change is the strengthening of political cohesion among NATO member states. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has made the member states of NATO to increase the cohesion and cooperation within the alliance. At first, the cooperation was based on the concept of collective security, however, actions of Russia served here as a manifestation that it is not only a theory, but a necessity. Member states began increasing their finances for the conducted joint military programs, exercise, and defense facilities, thus increasing the level of interaction and the military readiness.

These actions have also assisted NATO capitals to be more attentive to security as well as defense issues. This means that national governments have augmented their budget towards defense, they have developed their own power of support and communication and coordination with the other allies to boost up the security.

Thus, the actions of Russia in Ukraine have produced not only words of political condemnation and sanctions, but also actual transformations in NATO and its activity as well as the improvement of the system of collective security and effectiveness of actions by the members of NATO in the defense.

**Conclusions.** NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine has marked a significant evolution in both its military strategies and political cohesion. This research has illuminated how NATO, originally formed to deter Soviet aggression, has adapted to confront modern security challenges, particularly in the wake of Russia's actions in Ukraine. The Alliance's approval of a new Strategic Concept, bolstering of its military presence in Europe, and fortification of its eastern flank underscore NATO's proactive stance in safeguarding its member states and reinforcing collective defense. Additionally, the development of detailed defense plans, increased defense spending commitments, and the accession of Sweden and Finland demonstrate NATO's resilience and expansion of its strategic reach. Moreover, the enhancement of political unity among member states signifies a renewed commitment to solidarity and shared values in confronting external threats. Together, these responses affirm NATO's enduring relevance and adaptability in safeguarding transatlantic security and stability amidst evolving geopolitical dynamics. As NATO continues to navigate these challenges, its ability to uphold collective security remains crucial in ensuring a peaceful and secure future for its member states and beyond, even in the time of global instability and insecurity.

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