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THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE
AND THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

Abstract: The Cold War period was characterized by competition between two opposing ideological and political camps and military blocs, with an arms race. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR resulted in the emergence of new countries in Europe, most of them pro-Western. They relatively quickly became members of European organizations, including NATO. This met with opposition from the Russian Federation, which was losing its former spheres of influence. NATO's formation of the eastern flank of the Alliance and Ukraine's pro-Western position led to the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The conflict began with the illegal annexation and then occupation of Crimea, and ended with open military aggression that continues to this day. The actions of the Russian Federation were met with a decisive response from the international community, in the form of broad political and economic isolation of Russia. The Alliance's response has been and continues to be to systematically condemn aggression during subsequent summits, as well as to strengthen its eastern flank, both from the north and south.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, NATO, Russian-Ukrainian war

Introduction

The creation of the North Atlantic Alliance was one of the significant events of the period after World War II, when two opposing political, ideological and military camps were formed and the Cold War and East-West rivalry were dangerously intensifying. The Alliance, expanded to include additional countries, initially only Western European ones, became a guarantor

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of transatlantic security and maintaining the balance of power during the Cold War. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union resulted in the appearance on the international arena of many new countries in Central and Eastern Europe aspiring for membership in the Alliance. The process of expanding NATO to include the countries of the former Eastern Bloc and former Soviet republics led to an increasing conflict with the Russian Federation, which is losing its former spheres of influence. Ukraine became the biggest problem, especially after the policy changed to pro-Western. Russia's actions towards Ukraine initially manifested themselves in incidents on its eastern border, and ended with the illegal annexation of Crimea and finally open aggression against this country. While the annexation of Crimea met with little response from the international community and NATO, Russia's armed attack on Ukraine resulted in the extensive involvement of many countries in aid activities, while condemning the aggression and introducing sanctions against the aggressor.

The period of the Cold War and European security, in the context of the activities of the USSR

With the end of World War II, two rival superpowers emerged on the international arena - the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Europe was divided into two hostile ideological, political and military camps until 1989. The USSR, apart from creating the Eastern Bloc as its own sphere of influence, tried to expand it to the other countries in the years 1947-1949, for example in the form of political agitation in Western countries or financial support for strike actions in Norway, Greece and Turkey[2]. These actions were met with a decisive response from the United States, which began to engage in the process of integration of Western European countries. American policy then focused primarily on helping with economic reconstruction, and the main goal was to achieve political stabilization in a period of growing tension between the East and the West[3].

The formation of the Western European security system began with the Dunkirk Treaty, concluded in 1947. France and Great Britain gave each other security guarantees in the event of a German threat. Great Britain's policy towards Germany began to change earlier, and only in the late 1940s did France recognize that it was not Germany, but the USSR, that was the potential

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[2] B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *Organizacje międzynarodowe*, Warszawa 2017, p. 146; A. Podraza, *Początki transatlantyckiego partnerstwa bezpieczeństwa: wybuch zimnej wojny i powstanie Sojuszu Atlantyckiego*, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" 2019, No 2 (65), pp. 66, 76.

[3] A. Podraza, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

aggressor. A continuation of the Dunkirk Agreement was the regulation of relations between individual Western European countries. Their goal was to establish a military alliance, on which the US made projects in the area of transatlantic security dependent. The Americans wanted to rebuild the German economy and create a federal German state from the western occupation zones. The result of multilateral negotiations was an agreement on Western European security. The breakthrough event that decided this was the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, but also the probable threat to Norway of signing an agreement according to the Soviet-Finnish model[4]. The deployment of its own troops in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe by the USSR from March 1948 was also significant[5].

These events accelerated decisions to establish a broad military alliance. On April 4, 1949, representatives of 10 Western European countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Great Britain and Italy) and the USA and Canada signed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Alliance has the character of a multilateral defense pact, with the assumption of common, collective defense of member countries in the event of aggression from third countries[6]. Article 5 of the treaty contains three basic principles applicable to all members. The first is the principle of solidarity in the event of an armed attack on one or more parties, which is treated as aggression against all allies, obliging them to defend the attacked country. The second principle is the principle of using armed force in defense of an attacked country, as part of the exercise of the right to individual or collective self-defense. The third principle provides for immediate action to be taken to the extent appropriate to the size of the threat, including the use of armed force[7].

During the Cold War, there were four strategic concepts related to the issue of broadly understood transatlantic security, with activities adapted to currently emerging threats. The first concept (1950) talked about the need to maintain the proportion of the possible military effort of the allies, depending on, among

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[4] A. Podraza, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81, 84.

[5] M. Marszałek, *Ewolucja Sojuszu Północnoatlantyckiego i jej wpływ na bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe*, [in:] *Współczesne wyzwania dla podmiotów euroatlantyckiego środowiska bezpieczeństwa*, ed. M. Marszałek, W. Kitler, Warszawa 2015, p. 11.

[6] W. Malendowski, *Architektura bezpieczeństwa europejskiego*, [in:] *Stosunki międzynarodowe*, ed. W. Malendowski, M. Mojsiewicz, Wrocław 2004, p. 563; A. Podraza, *op. cit.*, p. 91; J. Jagodziński, *Historia NATO: kiedy powstało, jak je rozszerzano?*, <https://histmag.org/Historia-NATO-kiedy-powstało-jak-je-rozszerzano> (27.01.2024); B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

[7] *Traktat Północnoatlantycki sporządzony w Waszyngtonie dnia 4 kwietnia 1949 r.*, Dz. U. 2000 Nr 87 Poz. 970 z późn. zm., art. 5; B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149; W. Malendowski, *op. cit.*, p. 563.

others, on geographical location, population and military capabilities. This concept became the basis for subsequent arrangements aimed at effectively planning subsequent actions to ensure peace and minimize the likelihood of another war breaking out. The second concept (1952) updated the tasks delegated to individual structures of the Alliance in terms of assessing emerging threats and methods of counteracting them. The third concept (1957), defined as the concept of massive retaliation, arose from the need to balance the superiority of the USSR's conventional forces. The basic element of deterrence was to be Western nuclear potential. Nuclear weapons were considered the basic element of deterrence, while maintaining the possibility of conducting conventional operations. In accordance with the fourth concept (1968), known as a flexible response, the US began to place particular emphasis on strengthening the conventional potential of member states as a deterrent, while minimizing the importance of nuclear weapons[8].

The period of the Cold War was also a time of NATO's expansion to include additional European countries. Greece and Turkey (1952), the Federal Republic of Germany (1955) and Spain (1982) joined the Alliance[9].

NATO-Russia and NATO-Ukraine relations after the end of the Cold War

The collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR resulted in further strengthening of NATO. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined the Alliance, in 2004 - Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, in 2009 - Albania and Croatia, in 2017 - Montenegro, in 2020 r. – North Macedonia[10], and in 2023 - Finland[11].

The Alliance therefore expanded to include the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, but also to include former Soviet republics, creating a broad eastern flank, which was viewed reluctantly by the Russian Federation, which was trying to maintain its former sphere of influence. It was therefore necessary to reach an agreement with this country in order to create a European security architecture. The first step was Russia's accession to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1991, and in 1994 to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. In 1997, the NACC was transformed into the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), with the active participation of Russia. In the same year, the bilateral NATO-Russia Founding Act (NRFA) was signed,

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[8] M. Marszałek, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.

[9] B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, p. 157; M. Marszałek, *op. cit.*, p. 12; J. Jagodziński, *op. cit.*

[10] M. Marszałek, *op. cit.*, p. 12; J. Jagodziński, *op. cit.*

[11] P. Molik, *Prezydent Finlandii zatwierdził akt przystąpienia kraju do NATO*, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci.swiat/artykuly/8687342,prezydent-finlandii-zatwierdzil-akt-przystapienia-kraju-do-nato.html> (27.01.2024).

which declared not to deploy significant NATO combat forces in the areas of the new member states unless the security environment changes. The NRFA established the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC). The Council's task was to consult on all security issues, including arms control and international terrorism[12].

NATO-Russia relations deteriorated in 1999, with the expansion of the Alliance to include former Warsaw Pact countries, NATO's involvement in Kosovo and the outbreak of the second war in Chechnya. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, a new platform for understanding was established in 2002 - the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), as a forum for consultation and cooperation. The Council dealt primarily with issues related to combating international terrorism, arms control, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and peacekeeping missions[13]. NATO-Russia relations deteriorated significantly when more former Eastern Bloc countries and former Soviet republics joined the Alliance. The confrontational course of the Russian Federation was confirmed by the military involvement of this country in 2008 in the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia, and the destabilization of eastern Ukraine, with military support for separatists in Donbas. These actions by Russia resulted in the suspension of cooperation within the NRC, with only diplomatic contacts remaining[14].

The beginnings of NATO-Ukraine cooperation date back to 1991, when the country joined NACC and then PfP (1994). In 1997, during the Madrid summit, a Charter of Detailed Partnership between NATO and Ukraine was signed, establishing the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC). Its task was to consult on cooperation in the field of security, including supporting reforms in this sector in Ukraine. The establishment of the NUC was also associated with the first talks on Ukraine's future membership in NATO. The summit in Washington in 1999 confirmed the Alliance's commitment to support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine as a key state for the security area in Eastern Europe. In the same year, the Ukrainian contingent supported the NATO mission in Kosovo. The 2002 summit in Prague resulted in Kiev

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[12] B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, p. 161; W. Malendowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 576-577; Ł. Jureńczyk, *Okoliczności i postawa NATO wobec polityki militarnej Rosji na Ukrainie*, „Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej" 2019, No 13, p. 116; S. Malik, *Polityka NATO wobec Ukrainy i Rosji po aneksji Krymu*, [in:] *Polska i Ukraina: problemy i perspektywy*, ed. M. Apollo, M. Krupska-Klimczak, Kraków 2019, pp. 83-84; W. Lorenz, *Wysunięta obrona – nowe podejście do polityki obrony i odstraszania NATO*, „PISM Policy Paper" 2022, No 2 (210), p. 3.

[13] Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 116; B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162; M. Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[14] M. Malik, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85; B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

signing the NATO Action Plan, which resulted in Ukraine's active involvement in subsequent stabilization missions. The Alliance also supported Ukraine's cooperation with the countries of the eastern flank, mainly Poland[15].

During the special NATO-Ukraine summit in 2005, President Viktor Yushchenko maintained Ukraine's aspirations to join the Alliance, continuing the extensive cooperation to the date. This position sparked strong opposition from Russia and many Ukrainian opponents of integration. For example, in Crimea, demonstrations were organized against the joint exercises of Ukrainian and NATO troops, Morska Bryza 2006, aimed at developing methods of defending the peninsula against the invasion of a totalitarian state. During the same period, Russia cut off gas supplies to Ukraine. During the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, the US sought to quickly admit Ukraine and Georgia to the Alliance, but no agreement was reached on this issue. In 2009, a NATO-Ukraine declaration was signed regarding the acceleration of Ukrainian reforms, especially in the area of security[16]. When President Viktor Yanukovych took power in 2010, Ukraine abandoned further talks on NATO membership[17].

Since 2010, Ukraine began to describe itself as a "European neutral state"[18], and in 2013, Yanukovych, under pressure from Russia, refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU). The basis for the refusal was its unfavorable economic conditions for Ukraine and the deterioration of relations with Russia. Signing the agreement would significantly reduce Russia's sphere of influence at a time when Russia was creating its own international structures in the form of the Eurasian Customs Union[19]. The situation changed with the victory of the opposition and the removal of Yanukovych from power in February 2014. The new Ukrainian authorities, led by President Petro Poroshenko, once again set a pro-Western course. We did not have to wait long for the effects of this attitude, and they were not predicted by any analytical centers of Western countries[20].

In response to the changes in the levels of Ukrainian government, demonstrations against this transformation began in Crimea, calling for an independence referendum and the annexation of Crimea to Russia. The

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[15] B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-163; M. Malik, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83, 86-88; W. Malendowski, *op. cit.*, p. 578; Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, pp.119-120.
[16] Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
[17] B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, p. 163; Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.
[18] Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.
[19] S. Malik, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
[20] Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120; A. Urbisz, *Uwarunkowania rosyjskiej aneksji Krymu*, [in:] *Międzynarodowe prawo humanitarne Tom VII Wojna na Ukrainie*, ed. D. R. Bugajski, Gdynia 2016, p. 12.

Federation immediately became involved in these events, and the new authorities of Crimea unanimously supported joining Russia. This was achieved in less than a month, as confirmed by a treaty in March 2014[21]. Just as quickly, in the spring of 2014, representatives of separatists in eastern Ukraine took control of this area. The heroic, although unsuccessful, Ukrainian defense of the airport in Donetsk, which lasted from May 2014 to January 2015, went down in history[22].

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict and NATO's reactions

After the annexation of Crimea, the international community and NATO had no idea how to solve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which was developing right next to the Alliance's eastern flank. However, Russia decided to take this step out of fear that the ongoing democratization of Ukraine and its intentions to join European organizations, as well as the planned further expansion of the Alliance, pose a clear threat to its own security and international position. The Russian authorities were aware of the fact that the conflict would not only strengthen NATO cohesion, but also redefine weapons and tactics[23].

In September 2014, during the NATO Newport Summit in Wales, Russia's actions towards Ukraine were strongly condemned, calling on the country to withdraw its troops from Ukraine and the border area and to end the illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea. It also pointed out Russia's obvious violations of international law and emphasized that a sovereign Ukraine is important for Euro-Atlantic security. The NATO-Ukraine Commission continued consultations and issued joint statements regarding current threats to Ukraine's integrity. The Alliance strongly supported diplomatic measures to resolve the conflict, such as the Minsk Agreements (2014 and 2015). However, no decision was made to introduce solutions that would help Ukraine maintain its territorial integrity[24].

The NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016 offered concrete cooperation to Ukraine in the form of the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP), which

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[21] A. Urbisz, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14; M. Stenka, *Wojna na Ukrainie jako przykład naruszenia normy ius cogens i wyzwanie dla bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, [in:] *Międzynarodowe prawo humanitarne Tom VII Wojna na Ukrainie*, ed. D. R. Bugajski, Gdynia 2016, p. 161.

[22] Ł. M. Nadolski, *Ostatnia bitwa „cyborgów". Zdobycie nowego terminala lotniska w Doniecku przez siły rosyjskie w 2015 r.*, [in:] *Międzynarodowe prawo humanitarne Tom VII Wojna na Ukrainie*, ed. D. R. Bugajski, Gdynia 2016, p. 100

[23] M. Stenka, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166; A. Urbisz, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

[24] K.A. Przybyła, *NATO wobec konfliktu na Ukrainie*, „Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe" 2016. No I-IV, p. 123; A. Urbisz, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121; B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

was intended to help carry out reforms aimed at strengthening the security sector and combat capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces[25]. The summit also emphasized that Russia's actions in Ukraine contradict the adopted security principles, leading to destabilization in the Alliance's member states and, above all, to a threat to the security of countries directly bordering Ukraine and the Russian Federation[26]. In the military dimension, the summit considered Russia's aggression against Ukraine and border provocations against eastern NATO member states as a source of threat to both the Alliance and peace in Europe. He also confirmed the need to further develop allied deterrence and defense capabilities, with a real military strengthening of the eastern flank[27].

2017 was the year of the "mini-summit" in Brussels, with the participation of the new US President Donald Trump, who was reluctant towards NATO due to the too low defense expenditures incurred by the member states, compared to the high ones contributed by the USA. Among the resolutions of the summit, the most important task was the strengthening of the north-eastern flank through the continuous, although rotational, deployment of battalion groups in Poland and the Baltic States and increasing the level of readiness of their commands. It was also decided to strengthen the south-eastern flank through the so-called a matched forward presence in the Black Sea and a frequent NATO fleet presence in the Mediterranean[28].

The year 2022 brought a serious threat to European and transatlantic security, when on February 24, Russia committed open armed aggression against Ukraine, starting a war that continues to this day, claiming many victims on both sides. The Russian attack on Ukraine definitely redefined NATO's activities regarding European security, including the eastern part of the continent. Even before the aggression, there were visible signs of conflict, primarily in the form of the concentration of Russian troops near the Ukrainian borders. On February 25, a virtual summit of the Alliance was held with the participation of Finland, Sweden and the EU, during which Russia was condemned as the aggressor solely responsible for the war, and Belarus - for complicity. Russia was called upon to immediately end hostilities, while declaring its willingness to continue dialogue, while respecting applicable international law. The independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within

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[25] B. Kuźniak, M. Marcinko, B. Ingelevič-Citak, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164; M. Stenka, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

[26] M. Stenka, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

[27] Ł. Jureńczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 122; K.A. Przybyła, *op. cit.*, p. 125-126.

[28] M. Madej, *NATO: wysunięta obecność w warunkach rosnącej niepewności*, „Rocznik Strategiczny" 2017/2018, pp. 50-52.

the 2014 borders were confirmed, as well as the declaration of its future membership in NATO, without specifying its date[29].

All resolutions of the virtual summit were confirmed in a statement issued after the extraordinary NATO summit in Brussels in March 2022. The Alliance as a whole committed to support Ukraine in the form of medical care, communications equipment and training. The supply of military equipment was left to the internal decisions of member states, which decided on transfers themselves. Initially, they included soldiers' equipment, weapons and ammunition, and portable anti-tank weapons, usually coming from former Russian arsenals located in the warehouses of member states and known to Ukrainian soldiers. From April 2022, the coordination of equipment assistance for Ukraine was handled not only by NATO structures, but also by the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG), with over 50 members, established on the initiative of the US and also bringing together non-NATO countries[30].

The Madrid summit in June 2022 adopted a new NATO strategic concept, in which the area of Europe was considered not to be at peace. Russia was considered the most serious threat to security, whose main goal is to aggressively return to its own spheres of influence. This approach included not only Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but also other activities of this country, such as disinformation, attacks in cyberspace, and destabilization of the political situation in many regions of the world. The summit confirmed the need to further strengthen NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities and to increase the presence and combat readiness of allied forces[31]. The Black Sea region has been recognized as an area of strategic importance that requires special defense, given Russia's extensive strategic potential with hybrid actions[32]. In the area of support for Ukraine, the Alliance coordinated individual activities of allied countries in the transfer of combat equipment to Ukraine. He himself provided non-combat assistance, including: training, civilian and protective equipment and intelligence, but also - under the CAP program - fuels and power generators[33].

The NATO summit in Vilnius in July 2023 made serious accusations against Russia, stating that it cannot be treated as a partner until it stops violating international law. It also resulted in commitments of further extensive support for Ukraine in the field of military and financial assistance, in which -

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[29] M. Madej, *NATO: chrzest po siedemdziesiątce*, „Rocznik Strategiczny" 2022/2023, pp. 49-51.

[30] *Ibidem*, pp. 51-52.

[31] *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55, 57-58.

[32] F. Bryjka, *Wpływ wojny na Ukrainie na politykę NATO w regionie Morza Czarnego*, „Biuletyn PISM" 2023, No 57 (2678), <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/wplyw-wojny-na-ukrainie-na-polityke-nato-w-regionie-morza-czarnego> (27.02.2024).

[33] M. Madej, *NATO: chrzest …*, p. 60.

in addition to the Alliance - the informal group of G-7 countries was also involved. This group, originally G-8, was reduced to include Russia, whose membership was suspended after the illegal annexation of Crimea. The Alliance emphasized the important role of Ukraine in the European security system, pointing to support for the adjustment process from funds from the CAP program. At this summit, Ukraine signed an agreement with a coalition of 11 countries regarding F-16 aircraft maintenance training, conducted mainly in Romania. Germany offered Ukraine the largest amount of heavy combat equipment, and deliveries of Western-made tanks began at the beginning of 2023. In terms of strengthening NATO's eastern flank, it was decided to provide additional military support from Germany, Canada and Spain, numbering several thousand soldiers stationed in this region. The summit's decisions were met with a quick response from Moscow, declaring that continued support for Ukraine by NATO comes at the expense of Russia's security, and further assistance to Ukraine will only prolong the war. According to the Russian media, Russia is actually fighting the Alliance, and the Alliance is fighting Russia through the hands of the Ukrainians, which may herald a prolongation of the conflict[34].

Conclusion

The creation of NATO was a fundamental post-war event in a period of intensifying East-West conflict. A strong military alliance was established, which played an important role during the Cold War, effectively preventing the outbreak of an armed conflict with the USSR. The alliance allowed the USA to remain on the European continent, consequently leading to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR. Despite many misunderstandings between member states, NATO's presence on the European continent allowed peace to be maintained throughout the Cold War and after its end. NATO's priority has always been the will to avoid war between the East and the West, especially a devastating nuclear war. The strategies developed by the Alliance during the Cold War and their consistent implementation effectively prevented the development of another pan-European conflict.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict revealed two extremely different positions of Russia and Western countries towards the current situation in Eastern Europe. Democratic countries have strongly condemned the aggression of the Russian Federation from the beginning as a threat to international security. From Russia's point of view, the annexation of Crimea was carried out at the express request of its inhabitants, expressed in a referendum, and military

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[34] T. Pawłuszko, *Szczyt NATO w Wilnie. Potrzebna kontynuacja*, https://sobieski.org.pl/szczyt-nato-w-wilnie-potrzebna-kontynuacja (16.02.2024).

actions against this country are only a response to the systematic expansion of NATO, perceived as a threat to the Federation. The current situation is extremely difficult for all international organizations to resolve. One way is broad sanctions against Russia. The Alliance's response is a policy of permanent forward presence, increasing the potential of allied forces in the countries of the eastern flank.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has created a threat to European security unknown since World War II, and the chances for a peaceful end to the conflict are so far slim. Therefore, what remains is the implementation of NATO's collective defense mission, with a credible defense and deterrence policy, through constant military reinforcement of the eastern flank areas with multinational combat brigades. Another important issue is developing the ability to quickly transfer allied forces to critical areas. It is also important to emphasize that NATO is an alliance with nuclear weapons, which should act as a deterrent if Russia wants to use them in the war in Ukraine. Provocations from Russia or Belarus are still possible, so it is necessary to develop appropriate methods of recognizing and counteracting them early.

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