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Security Metamorphosis:
Assessing the Impact of the Ukrainian Conflict on Global and European Orders

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Tempo sei maestro
per chi ti ama e per chi ti è nemico,
sai distinguere il bene dal male,
chi ti rispetta
e chi non ti dà valore.
Senza stancarti mi rendi forte,
mi insegni il coraggio,
quante salite e discese abbiamo affrontato,
hai conquistato la vittoria
ne hai fatto un capolavoro.
Sei come un libro, l'archivio infinito del passato
solo tu dirai chi aveva ragione e chi torto,
perché conosci i caratteri di ognuno,
chi sono i furbi, chi trama alle tue spalle,
chi cerca una scusa,
pensando che tu non li conosci.
Vorrei dirti ciò che non rende l'uomo
un uomo
finché si sta insieme tutto va bene,
ti dice di essere il tuo compagno d'infanzia
ma nel momento del bisogno ti tradisce.

Ogni giorno che passa, gli errori dell'uomo sono sempre di più,
lontani dalla Pace,
presi da Satana,
esseri umani che non provano pietà
o un po' di pena,
perché rinnegano la Pace
e hanno scelto il male.
Si considerano superiori, fanno finta di non sentire,
gli piace soltanto apparire agli occhi del mondo.
Quando ti avvicini per chiedere aiuto
non ottieni nulla da loro,
non provano neanche un minimo dispiacere,
però gente mia, miei fratelli,
una sola cosa posso dirvi:
nulla è irraggiungibile,
sia che si ha tanto o niente,
tutto si può risolvere
con la fede in Dio.
Ciao, ciao
Vittoria agli oppressi!

Tesfalidet Tesfom

Per Mamma e Papà

Vi dedico,

Ogni mio traguardo.

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the profound changes in international security dynamics resulting from the war in Ukraine. The study is structured into two chapters of introduction and a conclusion, in addition to the three central chapters, each of which addresses different aspects of the impact of the conflict. The introduction outlines the context of the war in Ukraine, the objectives of the paper, research questions, methodology, limitations and relevance of the study. It establishes the framework for understanding the wider implications of the conflict on global and European security structures. Chapter I provides a pre-war analysis of the European political, economic and social landscape. It examines the main European and international actors and organizations in the security system and reviews the main theories of global security, including Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism and Securitization Theory. Chapter II delves into NATO's strategic realignment, military deployments, defense spending and NATO-Russia relations. It also assesses the European Union's response through its Common Foreign and Security Policy, energy, and border security. Finally, the chapter highlights regional security changes, focusing on Eastern European countries, regional initiatives and traditional neutrality. Chapter III explores the roles of global actors such as the United States, Russia and multilateral institutions such as the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe. It addresses diplomatic efforts, humanitarian interventions and peace negotiations, analyzing their effectiveness in conflict resolution. The chapter also examines legal frameworks and allegations that influence the global order, including influences on global norms, perceptions of international law and breaches of trust. The final chapter answers the research questions, concluding how the war in Ukraine has redefined international security paradigms, accelerating changes already underway and opening new challenges for global stability.

KEYWORDS:

Europe, European Security, Ukraine War, Russia, NATO, Global Order, International Relations' Theories, United Nations

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ECB	European Central Bank
EEA	European Economic Area
eFP	Enhanced Forward Presence
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
ESDP	European Security and Defense Policy
EU	European Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
MS	Member States
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SAP	State Armament Programme
SC	Security Council
SMM	Special Monitoring Mission
TEC	Transatlantic Economic Council
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UKR	Ukraine
US	United States
WP	Warsaw Pact
WTO	World Trade Organization

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INTRODUCTION

The European continent benefited from the absence of armed conflict from its territories for almost eighty years, until the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in northeastern Europe.

At that juncture, as Professor Parsi writes, there became an awareness that the phase of convergence which had been underway, had been deserted to accommodate a new phase - *of divergence* - (Parsi, 2022) with consequences in its aftermath all yet to be witnessed.

The Ukrainian crisis, in fact, has proved to be anything except a mere regional crisis with its entanglements; generating a profound dynamic transformation within the international system of norms and practices as well the relationships and the alliances among the leaders of the globe, impacting the European and global order on the whole.

At present, providing an accurate account of the historical, political and social dimensions of the conflict, along with the actors involved in this unfolding narrative and the political theories within which the current study can be channeled, is a necessary step in addressing a well-in-depth political analysis that can shed light on the urgent situation that has arisen and the multifaceted outcomes it will engender in the future.

1.1 Contextualizing the War in Ukraine

Nothing is unleashed overnight. To confirm the rule, the Ukrainian war genesis traces back well before February 24, 2022, with roots embedded in three decisive events over the last decade: the Euromaidan Protests; the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the ongoing war in Southern Ukraine.

All would reside in the willingness of Ukrainian leadership to take a pro-European trajectory within President Yanukovych's administration during 2013, who put the basis to settle an European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement under the condition of establishing a free trade area granting an increase of Ukraine commerce and a greater access to Europe for Ukrainian citizens. A turnaround against Vladimir Putin's design of ''a deep-seated unity of Eastern Slavs-Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians'' (Mankoff, 2022), which translates into a military, economic and political domination of Russia over those countries once part of the Soviet Union, in perfect alignment with the *politics of eternity* stated by Professor Timothy Snyder in *On tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* of 2017*,* under which due to an attachment to a mythicized past, any change of historical essence won't be accepted, in line with Putin refuse to abandon Russian imperialism over the ex-Soviet Republics.

It is exactly under this logic that the influence of Moscow's schemes over Yanukovych resulted with an abandonment of the EU-UKR agreement, unleashing the so-called Euromaidan Protests in late 2013 by the name of the Kiev's Independence square targeted by Ukrainian demonstrators calling on a convergence with Europe (Mankoff, 2022).

The fierce repression that ensued only triggered more violence scooped into the Maidan Protests (or Revolution of Dignity) of 2014, aimed to outcry the widespread abuse of power and corruption under the influence of oligarchs (Risch, 2020).
The consequent escape of Yanukovich from the country made the Ukrainian Parliament vote to remove him from power, rampaging pro-Russian counter-revolutionary protests in the Crimean port of Sevastopol (Mankoff, 2022), joined by the Russian special forces ''by request of President Vladimir Putin [..] to protect Russian-speaking population in

Crimea'' (Anthony, 2015), culminating *de facto* in the annexation of Crimea[1] by the Russian Federation in March 2014[2]: the opening salvo of the wider conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

To further straining regional stability, by mid-April pro-Russian demonstrations managed to advance an insurgency in southeast and eastern Ukraine boosting hostilities between the national forces and these groups, reaching its peak along with the proclamation of the independent Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.

In the years ahead after the start of Donbass conflict, Russia was subjected to sanctions by Western countries, starting from USA's travel restrictions to economic penalties, reaching the end of 2014 with sanctions imposed by Australia, Canada, Japan and the European Union concerning ''asset freezes, restrictions on the supply of designated items and travel bans [...] on individuals and companies'' (Anthony, 2015); along with laws prohibiting the circumvention of sanctions imposed on Russia introduced by Switzerland and Lichtenstein. These first round of sanctions - since they will be introduced once again after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 - created an actual impact both directly and indirectly on the Russian economy, due to *increased geopolitical uncertainty,* as stated within the Finnish Ministry of Finance (MOF) report *''The Economic Effects of the EU's Russia Sanctions and Russia's Counter Sanctions''* of September 2014.

Overall, the events in Crimea led to a reassessment of global alliances. As non-aligned nations reevaluated their ties with Russia, from 2016 onwards NATO - the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - started to increase its presence in Eastern Europe to reassure its

[1] From the Russian point of view, we cannot speak about *annexation of Crimea;*
In this regard, Russian Prime Minister - Dmitry Medvedev - asserted during an official interview in 2014, that it was a voluntary act for Crimea to joining Russia's Federation: *''the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea held a referendum and voted for self-determination and for joining Russia in accordance with the existing procedure. And that's what they did. They started by proclaiming independence and after that, they asked to join Russia. We satisfied their request''.* (Russian Government, 2014);(Buliga, 2014).

[2] ''On March 21 after the ratification of the annexation treaty by the Russian parliament, Putin signed a law formally integrating Crimea into Russia'' (Stebelsky, I., Yerofeyev, Ivan Alekseyevich, Zasenko, Oleksa Eliseyovich, Hajda, Lubomyr A., Kryzhanivsky, Stepan Andriyovich and Makuch, Andrij, 2024).

member states by enforcing its military capabilities in regions neighboring Russia such as Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Romania (Mankoff, 2022).

Lastly, further deteriorating the security environment initiated by the Crimean annexation to Russia, was the landmark of the United States' Defense Department to withdraw from the *Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)*[3] on August 19, 2019; a decision whose only outcome was to spur Russia to expand its nuclear production. In fact, the historical agreement signed in 1987 between the US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Mikhail Gorbachev had a fruitful impact by limiting ''*both nations from fielding both short range and ''intermediate range'' land-based ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and missile launchers''* (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022); however, in the words of the Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper, the withdrawal was ''a direct result of Russia's sustained and repeated violations of the Treaty'' (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022, ibid).

In response to this maneuver, Vladimir Putin accepted the *cold era pact's* demise, together with Moscow's arrangement to expand its nuclear deployments over Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Russian periphery in Asia (Mankoff, 2022), rekindling tensions in the international order.

Thus, there is evidence that, by a ripple effect, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which began with the Euromaidan protests, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the self-proclaimed independent republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, has been playing a central role in regulating the entire European and global security network since 2013; revealing the Ukrainian willingness to converge with Europe as the main fuse of a new powder keg.

[3] The INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) Treaty better called as the''Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles'', required the destruction of ''the Parties' ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with range of between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, their launchers and associated support structures and support equipment'' (*Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty)*, n.d.-b).

1.2 Thesis' Objectives and Research Questions

This study was set to investigate the actual impact of the Ukraine's war on the security orders of Europe and the international system. In order to do so, it aims to achieve three main objectives:

- To evaluate the consequences both in the short and long-term concerning the European architecture of security;
- To ponder and assess the upheavals in power dynamics caused by the conflict, among Europe and the major leading players of the globe;
- To encompass the cardinal implications for international norms and practices related to sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination.

Along these lines, at the core of this dissertation there are two guiding thread questions:

- «Has the war in Ukraine had an impact at the European level? And how much of an international scope??»;
- «What have been the main changes compared to before the war?»;
- «What implications will it have on the global security framework in the future?».

These questions enable us to evaluate the complexities of this historical event by acting as a unifying theme throughout the thesis.

1.3 Dissertation Methodology and Limitations

The methodology used in this study work was intended to offer an exhaustive and methodical examination of how the Ukrainian conflict has altered both European and global orders. To guarantee a thorough grasp of the topic's many facets, the research strategy combines qualitative and quantitative methods.

Deriving out of data analysis, quantitative data will be evaluated, including policy change evidence, economic indicators, along casualties associated with conflicts, to detect patterns and correlations. On the other hand, thematic analysis will be used to examine qualitative data, which will include insights from interviews and document content analysis. Understanding the subtleties, opinions, and policy ramifications around the issue will be made easier with the help of qualitative data collection.
To meet the goals of the study and address the research questions, a range of data sources will be used, such as:

1) Archival materials - to provide a chronological timeline of events leading up to and throughout the Ukrainian conflict, historical documents, treaties, agreements, and official statements from pertinent parties will be examined.
2) Primary interviews - in exchange for opinion and insights on the conflict's effects, interviews with prominent officials, diplomats, and subject matter specialists will be reported.
3) Secondary sources - something written in relation to a primary source, a second-hand information[4] - to obtain data and viewpoints on the Ukrainian conflict, a thorough assessment of the body of academic literature, reports, and media sources will be conducted.

Furthermore, this study evaluates the use of a comparative methodology, for a better purposeful analysis of the long-term effects of the crisis aftermath. In order to catch changes in power dynamics, security norms and international relations, this will include investigating at the pre-, during, and post-conflict stages.

[4] (*UOFL Libraries: Primary Sources: Definitions & Examples*, n.d.)

Concerning the limitations of this dissertation, it is to be taken into account the limits inherent in the methodology and the gathering of data; in respect with the dynamicity of the international relations field and the conflicts itself, extremely current and still ongoing, together with the possibility of a lack of reliable data.

1.4 Relevance of the study

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to provide branch arguments that can provide significant insights into the historical and socio-political analyses of scholars, policymakers and the global community at large.

More than just a case study, the war in Ukraine offers a glimpse into the mutability of global security, finding itself both victim and perpetrator at the same time. This study is focused on understanding how conflicts, diplomacy and global alliances are evolving in the modern world due to this event, taking into account its effects on European and global orders.
The aim of this research is therefore to refine our understanding of the opportunities and difficulties that the international community faces when working to promote security, cooperation and peace.

In the following chapters we will explore the context, key events and their implications, and finally reveal how security has changed as a result of the conflict in Ukraine.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Political, economic, and social situation in Europe pre-Ukraine war

Gaining an overview of the pre-war environment is pivotal to a 360-degree comprehension of the dynamics that contributed to fostering the outbreak of the conflict. In this regard, this section is meant to provide a thorough analysis of the circumstances existing in Europe prior to the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, entailing a multifaceted examination of the political, economic and social elements which favored the configuration of European architecture in the sight of the war.

In a greater focus, in the following paragraphs will be investigated at first the European Union strategy of expansion and its direct impact on regional politics, by checking the Eastern European states' integration and their positioning towards Western Europe. More on NATO's role within the European security scenario will be explored considering its alliances with Eastern European countries. Converging on an economical perspective, it is of primary importance to concentrate on the economic interdependence and trade relationships within Europe, such as the role of its economic institutions going from the European Economic Area (EEA) to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). In this context, the energy dependencies developed through the years by Europe should be reviewed in relation to Russian natural gas exportation; assessing at a later stage the financial stability of European countries together with the modalities in which international financial institutions function in averting financial crisis.

Ultimately, it will be proposed a social-related overview on the European background before the Ukrainian conflict, grasping the demographic composition of European states and its implications for social cohesion, migration and labor markets; understanding the cultural and ethnic diversity within European countries, along with the pre-existent levels of social harmony; as determinant factor responsible for the alteration of European policies.

2.1.1 Political Landscape

The steady growth of the European Union has had a profound impact on the political scene in Europe. The EU, indeed, had a historic expansion in the early 2000s including several nations from Eastern Europe, creating a broad impact on regional politics in addition to changing the geopolitical landscape.

A first shift in power dynamics was granted in 2004 by the entering of Eastern European Countries of Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia plus two Mediterranean countries, Cyprus and Malta, subsequently to the recognition of eligibility criteria and founding values enshrined respectively in *Article 49* and *Article 2* of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).
Negotiations with each country started in 1997 namely in terms of designing to reunify the continent following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union (European Parliament, n.d.); and considering existing literature, the analysis conducted on the 10th anniversary of the EU integration of post-communist states revealed how the expansion process favored domestic conditions in those countries, further providing a beneficial contribution to closing the democratic divide between east and west against initial wariness (Sedelmeier, 2014).

Notwithstanding, the changes in political alliances brought about by EU growth represented a dynamic and complicated process. Eastern European countries brokered the delicate job of aligning their national interests with the larger EU agenda, confronted with problems ranging from political and economic to cultural and social elements. Thus, this delicate balancing endeavor laid the groundwork for Europe's shifting political environment prior to the Ukrainian crisis.

The European Union then continued to expand in subsequent years in the Balkans with the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, finally with Cyprus in 2013 as the 28th European country, now 27th following Brexit[5].

[5] Brexit: the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union formally occurred on January 31, 2020.

The integration of such countries posed the question of security guarantees for the newly admitted members, to which NATO provided an answer as a cornerstone of European security dedicated to maintaining stability on the continent.

Therefore, the North Atlantic Organization's enlargement into former WP countries[6] and Baltic states happened with the integration of Hungary, Poland and Czechia into the Treaty in 1999, Estonia Latvia and Lithuania as well Bulgaria and Romania in 2004, Albania and Croatia in 2009, Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2014 (Nato, n.d.). In this context, it is possible to channel the current antagonism between Russia and NATO on behalf of Moscow's perception that the West duped the former Soviet Union by breaching commitments made after the cold war in 1989-1990 that NATO would not expand to the east[7].

Hence, Vladimir Putin accused the West of forgetting and breaking promises (Shehadi & Shehadi, 2022), reasons which contributed to the invasion of Georgia in 2008 by Moscow's military troops following Georgia's candidacy in 2007 to NATO and the EU. A move that averted Ukraine's entry into the Atlantic Organization, at the time also a NATO candidate under the Yanukovych presidency; a candidacy, however, that was re-proposed in 2014 by Ukraine itself following the anti-Russian Maiden Revolution; and which led, once again, to Russia's annexation of Crimea.

When looking at the big picture, it emerges that "while Washington won the power fight over expansion, it did it in a way that led to confrontation rather than collaboration with Moscow'' (Shehadi & Shehadi, 2022); as also reflected in a national security strategy document on the Russian Federation signed in 2016 by President Putin, who has launched accusations against the United States and its allies for conducting a "policy of containment" on Russia, thereby exacerbating tensions between Moscow and the West (Financial Times, 2016).

[6] Warsaw Pact's countries.

[7] Putin claims that James Baker, the US Secretary of State under President George HW Bush, in a discussion on 9 February 1990 with the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, promised that NATO would not advance east once Russia approved German reunification (Shehadi & Shehadi, 2022).

2.1.2 Economic Background

Before the war in Ukraine, the Euro-Atlantic region was known for its high degree of interconnectedness between states. This interdependence was made possible by the expansion of the European Union and the creation of economic organizations such as the European Economic Area (EEA). Furthermore, the integration of Eastern European states into the broader European economic framework led to an increase in trade, cooperative investment and harmonization of economic policies.

Entered into operation in 1994 by the Treaty of Rome, EEA binds together the 27 EU Member States and the three EEA EFTA[8] States - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway - in a unified market known as the *internal market* (EEA Agreement, n.d.); indeed, according to *Article 1* of the EEA Agreement, following the integration of a new EU member state, the latter consequently apply to join the EEA.
The Agreement, more specifically, would serve the purpose of encompassing the free movement of commodities, services, people and capital in all EEA member states, further demanding collaboration in other critical sectors such as research and development, education, social policy, the environment, consumer protection, tourism, and culture, referred to jointly as "flanking and horizontal" policies.

In contrast, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) emerges speculatively to compete with EEA, resulting thus in two economic realities coexisting on the same level and complicating economic diplomacy. Created in 2015, EEU is led by Russia and aims at enhancing economic and financial cooperation among former Soviet states; precisely, formed by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to enable free movement of goods, capital and labor among the associated states. Additionally, from 2016 was approved under the EAEU heads of member states an initiative geared towards the creation of a *common gas market* in order to satisfy the internal gas needs of EAEU members by establishing pricing and tariffs (Aidarkhanova, 2023).

[8] EEA EFTA: States being part of both the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) and the European Economic Area (EEA).

Concerning energy resources, crucial in determining the economic dynamics of the area, it is important to highlight as for European energy dependencies, the major power supplier of petroleum oils and natural gas for EU states before 2022 was recognized to be Russia (Eurostat, 2023); for instance, in 2021 Europe was importing 83 percent of its natural gas before the Ukrainian invasion, including counting exports to the EU of Russian natural gas by almost half of the total (Euronews, 2023).

Wherefore, energy supplies imposed as a political tool exposing countries to geopolitical risks, complicating economic ties even more by pipeline politics.
The pipeline system[9], crossing the European continent for transportation of energy resources happened to become crucial about the ownership, control and geopolitics of pipeline routes themselves, clashing into tensions among European countries, causing disagreements over pipeline projects and issues over regional energy security. For instance, the Nord Stream pipeline running beneath the Baltic Sea and avoiding the erstwhile Baltic represents Russia's way of responding to its tense relations with Kiev and other NATO members or NATO candidates in the region, such as Georgia (Di Fraia, 2022). The Nord Stream 2 pipeline, taking the same pathway by transporting natural gas from the Siberian Vyborg to Germany, expanded this project.

Finally, an incisive factor of the economic landscape before the Ukraine invasion was the diversification of financial stability levels among European countries.
First of all, the Eurozone[10] - a geographical and economic region aimed at boosting economic integration by the adoption of a single common currency, the euro - heavily suffered from the 2008 financial crisis[11] which led to disrupting economic growth among

[9] Infrastructure built for the transport of energy resources.
[10] Introduced in 1999, the Eurozone concerns EU member states which decided to replace their own national currency with the euro, under the governance of the European Central Bank (ECB) over monetary policy of the Eurozone (Kenton, 2022). It is composed of France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Estonia, Cyprus, Croatia (the latter entered in 2023). Non-euro area Member States include Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden while Denmark remains a MS with an opt-out. Nonetheless, all EU members are part of the Economic Monetary Union (EMU) by coordinating their policy-making in economic terms. (European Commission, n.d.).
[11] Spread from the United States to Europe, especially to western Europe.

its members as well causing aftershocks in subsequent years; many European countries still report high levels of debt and wide unemployment such as Ireland, Italy, Spain and Greece requiring the involvement in their economies of the EU, ECB and the IMF by taking austerity measures (Duignan, 2023).

Not surprisingly, the role of financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB) emerged to be pivotal in the mitigation of the financial crisis by the introduction of financial aid packages, structural reforms and bailout plans, put in place to stabilize economies that were having difficulties tailoring the country's circumstances whilst boosting future growth (*IMF Lending*, 2022).

Although, these measures ignited the debate on sovereign powers and the assertiveness of economic policy; features and discussions influential in the shaping of responses to the unfolding crisis of 2022.

2.1.3 Social Scenery

Pre-Ukraine War Europe had a variegated socio-cultural panorama by features of population composition and migration patterns. In the former, urban-rural differences as for age distribution and population size variations all had an impact on social cohesion and policymaking.

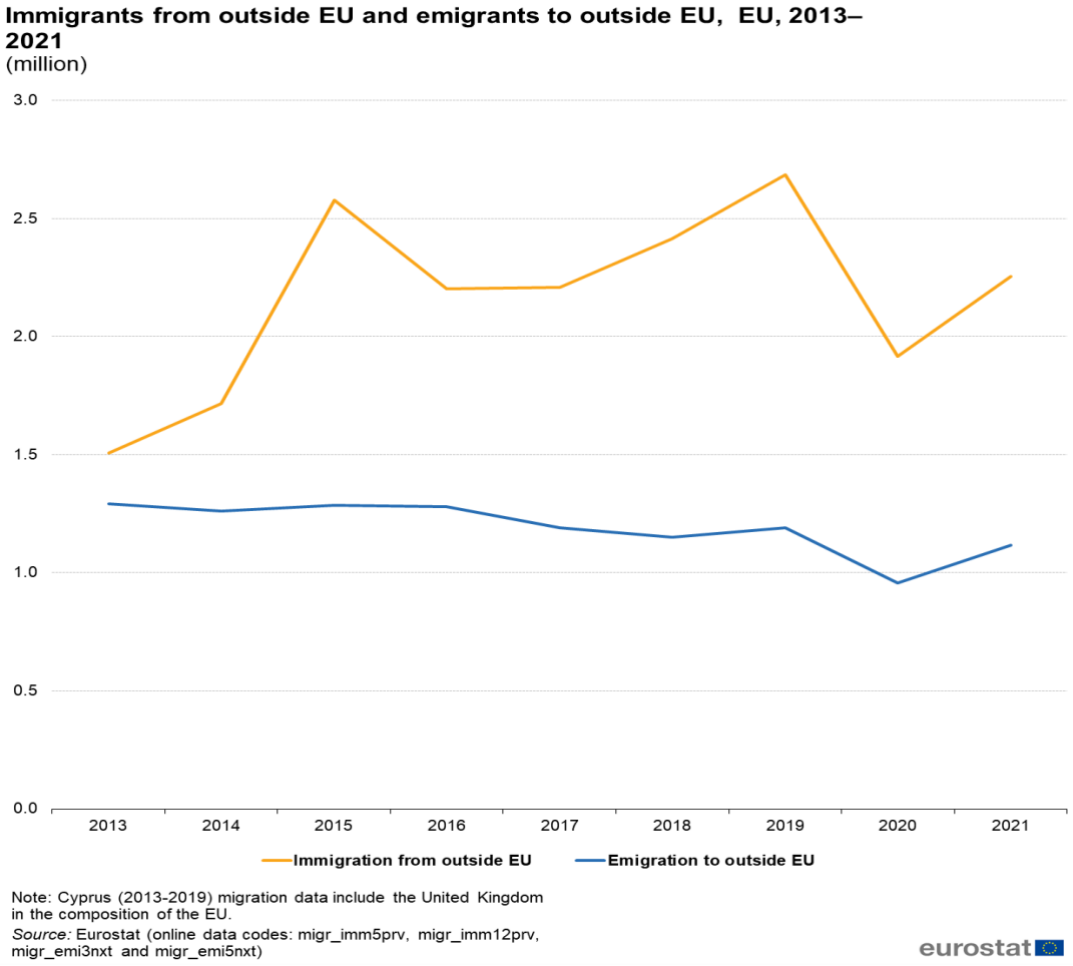
Statista's data revealed under the European *Union: total population from 2010 to 2022* an overall of approximately 447.03 million European inhabitants on January 1, 2022, with a slight commonplace tendency of growth over the years.
Nonetheless, looking more in depth, it comes forth how some European nations saw population growth and demographic transitions, whilst others faced problems from aging populations to labor markets, social welfare programs, and economic output.
A United Nation report of 2019 on the fastest population decline countries within the time interval of 2020-2050 recorded a rate decline ranging from a minimum of 10.1% to a maximum of 22.5% mentioning 18 European countries out of 20 countries compromised and including Ukraine within this list[12] (World Population Review, n.d.).
Furthermore, migration patterns both within and outside of Europe have had a significant impact on the continent's social fabric. For instance, emigration trends were observed in Eastern European countries as their citizens sought work opportunities in Western Europe. This movement had economic impacts on both sending and receiving countries, as well as influencing discussions about social services, labor market dynamics, and cultural integration.

Analyzing the data provided by Eurostat in *Figure 1,* on these terms, become visible a predominant trend of immigration to Europe for non-national citizens even if presenting in a disconnected pattern reaching its peach in 2019 with 2.6 million of people, decreasing heavily in 2020 but resuming the pace immediately after Covid-19 season, settling with 2.3 million of immigrants from outside EU to Europe in 2021.

[12] In descending order: Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Albania, Romania, Greece, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Georgia, Portugal, North Macedonia and Italy.

On the other hand, the emigration trend from the EU assumes a more constant linearity slightly in decrease for the whole period in question, starting from 1.4 million emigrants in 2013 while breaking the trend after Covid-19 pandemic and reaching 1.1 million people emigrating to outside EU borders.

Figure 1 *- Immigrants from outside EU and emigrants to outside EU (2013-2021), Source: Eurostat*



It turns out to be natural, therefore, to find a social environment in Europe characterized by a wide range of cultures and ethnicities where cultural exchanges and interactions are enhanced by the European Union's growth and rising mobility. Pointing out the social discourse facing minority cultures, religious freedom and language, thus struggling with multiculturalism and identity politics, allowing for the diversity of cultural practices while preserving the country's unity and social peace.

2.2 Actors and Organizations in the European and International Security System

The purpose of this section resides in giving the reader a general overview of major players influencing the European and global security framework prior to the Ukrainian crisis. In fact, in order to comprehend the conflict context more fully, it is pivotal to navigate through the positions, the roles and the interactions in which the conflict occurred.

Firstly, we give a detailed examination of the European actors' role in European security, considering the common foreign and security policy as well the relationships with member states and neighboring countries.
Secondly, NATO organization will be explored in its functions and relevance for European security, including its expansion strategy and bonding partnerships, along with its relationships with Russia.
Furthermore, an inquiry of OSCE will be enacted through its mandate, objectives and mechanisms for conflict resolution and crisis management in Europe.

Speaking about organizations working along the international scenario, it comes naturally to summon the United Nations, considering its peacekeeping operations, conflict resolutions and the Security Council's involvement in European affairs.
While other international agencies are covered by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) involved in shaping the international security system.

Concerning the single actors, Russia is to be mentioned for logical reasons, in light of its relationships with European countries and its approach to international security norms. Whilst the United States will be taken into account for its involvement in NATO, its security interests in Europe and its broader foreign policy objectives in the region.

2.2.1 European Actors and Organizations

Within a more strictly European panorama, the most important actor to be summoned is the European Union (EU), a twenty-seven states political and economic unification with a supranational character; precisely, bloc members under the 2007 Lisbon Treaty framed a distribution of their sovereignty and granted the EU extensive decision-making authority (McBride, 2022).

Exceeding the EU's set of ordinary competencies[13], it would fall among the *special competencie*s of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), a political initiative aimed at promoting European values[14], interests and its contribution to global security and peace assets. The policy is defined and conveyed by the European Union Council (formed by ministerial representatives from each MS) and the European Council (composed by the heads of state and government of the MS); hence, it requires unanimity for MS decision-making. Then, the President of the EU Council and the High Representative of the Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, represent the policy.

Moreover, even in the absence of a common army, the EU leads peace-keeping operations and conflict prevention via the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), leveraging both military and civilian capital.

Member states, in this context, maintain control over their defense policies, free to engage in bilateral and multilateral cooperation outside the EU framework.

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), for instance, strives to increase ties with surrounding countries, by fostering stability, prosperity, and security.

In addition to the EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a relevant actor in European security. NATO's primary values concern enhancing security and peace in

[13] Member states provided the EU with different degrees of authority over multiple domains - *competencies* - distinguishing *exclusive competencies* for which only the European Union can pass law (ex. customs union, trade agreements); *shared competencies* require legislation of national governments only whether the EU doesn't already have related laws (ex. single market legislation, agriculture, energy, transportation); *supporting competencies*, regard fields related to member states unique legislation (ex. culture, social policies, education). *Special competencies* exceed normal conditions and enable UE to act in exceptional ways (ex. CFSP, economic and employment policies coordination).

[14] Art. 2 - 3, Lisbon Treaty and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Europe and North America, while its essence is enshrined in *Article 5* of the North Atlantic Treaty, standing for *collective defense* meaning with this term ‘’an attack against one Ally is considered as an attack against all Allies’’ (NATO, 2023).

Founded in 1949 in order to create mutual assistance to mitigate the potential Soviet Union expansion from Eastern Europe to other regions of the continent,[15] the alliance continues to stay on active duty nowadays by participating in cooperative security initiatives outside of its borders, especially covering crisis management, conflict avoidance and peacekeeping missions.

Following the years to its creation, the organization has grown in number to the point of reaching 31 member countries - *the Allies* - counting nine rounds of enlargement to absorb new members, many of which coming from Central and Eastern Europe, with the last one happening in 2023 pertaining to Finland. By the same token, NATO keeps an “open-door policy’’ for European states, indicating in *Article 10* the proposition to welcome future candidates aligned to the organization’s requirements in the direction of joining the Atlantic Treaty.

Conforming to the previous European actors, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is a regional security organization operating among 57 member states located in Europe, Central Asia and North America. The core purpose of OSCE resides in his will to enlarge cooperation, strengthen security and grant democratic stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. The forum works among four dimensions stretching from politico-military managing from arms control to conflict prevention; economic and environmental protection addressing sustainable development; human rights promotion as well a “cross dimension’’ managing towards terrorism, cybercrime or trafficking in drugs. In regard to crisis management, the organization enacts three dispute resolution procedures: conducting field operation to maintain control on the located tensions; mediating through representatives for settling disputes amicably and encouraging confidence-building between member states.

[15] But also ‘’To keep Americans in, and Germans down’’ along with the famous words of Stanley Ismay, Nato’s first secretary-general (Shehadi & Shehadi, 2022) meaning that NATO’s founding principles involved not only defeating the Soviet Union but also involving the U.S. in European affairs as well as keeping Germans out of the reach of war.

2.2.2 International Actors and Organizations

Turning to the international system, it is necessary to take a broader view by mentioning the United Nations, Russia, the United States and economic global organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlighting their influence on the European and international security plan.

The United Nations (UN), with its 193 Member States, is the most expanded and best-known universal intergovernmental organization. Founded in 1945[16] as the successor to the *League of Nations,* the UN has since then been a global forum for dialogue between all nations to solve problems common to all mankind. Its purposes and principles contained in the founding *Charter* can be resumed in *art.1,* in the premise to "maintain international peace and security [taking to that end] collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace'' (United Nations, 2023).
The UN's normal operability relies on diplomatic mediation both preventing or after conflict; as well as conducting peacekeeping operations under the consent of the involved parties and strict authorization by the Security Council[17], which through *Chapter VII of the UN Charter* can approve the use of force against international fall out. Furthermore, the SC has the allowance to indict mandatory sanctions[18] to exert pressure on a State or other entity in order to get it to abide by the Security Council's goals without using force.

Russia, meanwhile, contributes to the security dynamics of the world by representing a nuclear power undergoing continuous military modernization.

[16] Precisely, the UN was formally established a few days after the end of the San Francisco Conference, on the 24th of October 1945 following the ratification of the Charter by France, China, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, the United States and a majority of other signatories (United Nations, 2023).
[17] The Security Council is composed of fifteen member states of which only five are permanent members (United States, Russia, China, France, United Kingdom), with power to veto any SC's resolution (*United Nations Security Council*, n.d.).
[18] Sanctions can vary following the purpose they are designed for. Going from comprehensive economic and trade sanctions, travel restrictions, financial or commodity restrictions, arms embargoes. Main eventualities for which they have been applied were to prevent non-constitutional changes, limit terrorism, safeguard human rights and encourage non-proliferation. (*Sanctions, United Nations Security Council*, n.d.)

Up front, it is to be reminded the *soviet legacy* held by Russia over the Eastern Bloc Countries[19], satellite states ruled by the Soviet Union until its demise in 1991, aimed at imposing the socialist political and economic model to exert control. Even by military means, throughout the Warsaw Pact of 1955, was established a collective defense convention meant to mirror NATO in the West, sparking an arms race lasting the entire Cold War (Nato, n.d.-b). Accordingly, Russia perceived a security threat in regard to NATO's presence near the borders of the erstwhile Soviet Union (Nato, n.d.).
Hence, since 2008, Moscow has been thoroughly modernizing its military arsenal in light of the dangers it sees to its essential interests both domestically and internationally. For instance, the state has sponsored the new State Armament Programme (SAP) 2018-2027[20], which is allocating billions of rubles toward the development and deployment of new weapons platforms as well as system updates (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2020); heightening concerns among EU countries regarding Russia's intentions to use its defense arsenal.

Mentioning nuclear arms control and disarmament, the Russian Federation is part of the *New START Treaty* with the U.S. (2011-2018 extended to 2026), conceived to restrict strategic offensive armaments such as intercontinental-range nuclear weapons, in the interest of both parties (United States Department of State, 2023).
Nevertheless, Moscow still contributes to the multilateral discussion on European security as a member of OSCE, as well by representing a source of interdependence following Moscow's energy provisions, in particular of natural gas, to European countries, thus posing economic and geopolitical implications.

Moving to the American continent, the United States comes into the picture as a key player in shaping the EU and international security panorama through its multifaceted interests in various areas of the world.

[19] East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, The Soviet Union itself: Eastern Bloc Countries from 1946 and 1991.
[20] The State Armament Programme (SAP) is a ten-year document revised every five years by the Russian President, laying out plans for research and development to create new systems, modernize and repair military hardware, and purchase new weapons (De Frahan, 2019).

Concerning the U.S. willingness to avoid the emergence of security threats in Europe, its commitment to collective defense is pursued by the States involvement in NATO, going back to Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty; likewise, as a founding member, the United States greatly enhances the military prowess and strategic orientation of the organization, keeping its military presence in Europe to strengthen deterrence by military drills and soldiers' deployment.

Moreover, the intertwined economies of the U.S. and the EU contribute to balancing the stability and security of the European continent, through transatlantic trade relationships by goods and services exchange, as well through investments flows as a source of direct investment benefiting both parties. A reference is the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) venue for a comprehensive discussion of economic issues between the EU and the U.S. particularly focused on budgetary growth through increased trade and job creation (Mission U, 2023). Not only, by encouraging the variety of energy sources and minimizing reliance on a single supply, the U.S. hopes to improve resilience against future shocks and contribute to European energy guarantee.

Finally, U.S security interests in the EU's countries advance cooperative efforts to solve global concerns such as global warming and democracy stabilization.

Addressing the underlying causes of internal conflicts through budget development, poverty reduction and the spread of prosperity is proven to avert instability of security systems on a regional and international scale.

In this regard, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are crucial because they support financial stability through the provision of financial assistance to nations facing monetary challenges under special conditions such as macroeconomic surveillance and economic reforms, or support trade-facilitated economic interdependence through the WTO dispute settlement process (WTO, n.d.).

2.3 Key Theories and Concepts on International Security

This final section from the first chapter of the study at hand is intended to provide the reader with theoretical underpinnings, more generally, a conceptual framework for interpreting the modifications in the international security system following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Among the key theories and concepts relevant to the study in question, we can highlight the Realism doctrine based around two key concepts: the balance of power and the Security Dilemma; while the first emphasizes the role of states and their distribution of power to secure their interests, the second examine how the states' efforts to enhance their security could lead to an escalation of tensions and conflicts.

Shifting to the Liberalism doctrine, it brings us into a broader discussion among the role of international institutions fostering peace and stability through diplomacy, while according to the Democratic Peace Theory, there would be less tendency to engage in conflicts among democracies.

Following the Constructivism theory, constructivist perspectives are adopted considering the function of norms and ideas in shaping state behavior and international relations; moreover, it is pursued an analysis on identity and social constructs as they would influence state actions and reactions through the global order.

Lastly, going through Security Studies, the concept of securitization is targeted, exploring the mechanism whereby societal problems are demonstrated being a security risk, and which repercussions they could cause to conflict and policy are reported.

By considering these theoretical perspectives, to be applied to the conflict and its aftermath, deeper insights into the complexities of international security dynamics will be conveyed.

2.3.1 Realism

States behavior and their confrontation in the international relations domain has been for long analyzed and scattered among diverging currents of thought.
Realism, or *political realism* (Walker, 1987), establishes as one of the key paradigms of the steadiest and oldest of the IR field.

Based on power and security, it stresses the struggle for states to preserve a certain level of forceful capability over the other states and their manners used in the pursuit of that aim. In fact, through the lens of realism, states would embody the kingdom of authority and law while being placed in the international orbit, an overlying sphere deprived of justice in absence of a common rule and a greater authority than the states themselves; thus, that foreign area would be subverted into a place for potential or active conflict among national authorities (Walker, 1987).

In a battleground lacking a referee, a situation of chaos and *anarchy* reigns and little or even no place for morality is left. Indeed, Niccolò Machiavelli from the fore-fathers of realism, describes this concept through his masterpieces of *Il Principe* and *Discussions* in which he states that the ruler is able to take any kind of action he deems right for the success of his kingdom *''Because the interest of the state is supreme and nothing supersedes or should be allowed to supersede it, the ruler [on Machiavelli"s account] is justified in employing whatever means he wills in order to secure the interest of the state even if such means are unethical.* (Ilodigwe, 2019).

Another fore-father of realism, the Greek historian Thucydides, in recounting the fifth-century BC Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens, envisions a key feature of realism for which the security issues prevail for states on any other domestic policy; they indeed attempt to balance their power and bolster their authority in order to discourage any aggressors while increasing their general level of security.
In his analysis, Thucydides recalls the *casus belli* of the Athenian-Spartans war being not among the events that preceded its disruption, but ''*the changing distribution of power*

between the two blocs [...] the growth of Athenian power made the Spartans afraid for their security, and thus propelled them into war'' (Walker, 1987).
What Thucydides explains within the previous lines, perfectly describes the *power of balance* theory within the realism paradigm, a mechanism based on imbalances of power and restoration of the equilibrium among states ending with the survival of major states. *(Balance of Power Theory, n.d.)*.

Deeper down, in the contingency of a state's expansion, fear would spread of its potential intentions to dominate other states. Correspondingly, in the international arena, any other state would react to balance that power, by engaging in a range of actions: from increasing its military buildup, as well as empowering by economic growth, to forming counterbalancing alliances with other nations, often happening for low-grade states who prefer to coalesce with stronger rival or withdraw from competition instead of counterbalance it (Walker, 1987).

In this way, the *balance* formerly breached is being restored almost naturally by the reaction of other nations, going to create each time a new system of power. Throughout history there have been various systems in place, such as a multipolar system where are existing various centers of power at the same time, as in the case of Europe during World War I and World War II; a bipolar system during the Cold War; or again a unipolar system, in which the power is at the hands of one hegemonic actor and the others seeks to prevail or ally with it, how the United States positions within the contemporary world.

Nevertheless, a crucial paradox embedded in the doctrine of realism develops underlying the challenges posed by the balancing of states for power.
In the absence of an international sovereign, building a defensive harness is top priority in the political agenda for leaders of each state, who perceive security menace subjectively and act accordingly as far as they feel vulnerable (Jervis, 1978). By doing so, they recur to preventive strikes inclined to consider the worst-case scenario, at the heart of the *security dilemma.*
The more policy makers feel suspicious and threatened by the intentions of others, the more they will engage in conflicts and hostile actions, hindering cooperation (Jervis,

1978), since for them the finest way to minimize ambiguity is through growth and enforcement of relative supremacy; not only to conquer others but to guarantee they won't turn into a security threat afterward on (Kapitonenko, 2023).

While considering such a perspective, it comes easily to mind how this logic perfectly fits the Russian strategy culture.
Through the centuries Moscow's policy of territorial expansion has evolved stretching until nowadays with the Crimean annexation and the last Ukrainian invasion.
Indeed, Putin's official address to the *Citizens of Russia and friends,* speech he delivered on February 21th, 2022, on the eve of Kiev invasion, he clearly expresses his concerns with regard to the new Military Strategy adopted by Ukraine in 2021, described as favoring ''terrorist underground movement in Russia's Crimea and Donbass [and which would set] contours of potential war'' ending ''with the assistance of the international community on favorable terms for Ukraine''; as well Putin's concerns rely on Western engagement with Kiev, NATO's continued expansion, and the prospect for nuclear weapons race of Ukraine within *foreign technological support* "The United States and NATO have started an impudent development of Ukrainian territory (Herszenhorn & Bayer, 2022) as a theater of potential military operations'' (*Address by the President of the Russian Federation*, 2022).

It is clear how the *potential* threat already poses a threat for Russia and other states within the realist paradigm.
Once again, the security dilemma enacts a defense-attack process that reflects on policy makers within the worst-case scenario, in the same way Putin felt the need to declare war in the present rather than risk vulnerability in the future (Kapitonenko, 2023).

2.3.2 Liberalism

A significant theoretical viewpoint in the discipline of international relations is liberalism. This wave of thought that arose in the aftermath of World War I, places a greater emphasis on the configuration of international institutions toward a collaborative effort and the chance to discover shared beliefs among states, just as Realism did on power, rivalry, and state-centric conduct.
Hereunder are some essential notions linked to liberalism in the IR domain.

At the heart of liberalist concern, there are the citizens, with particular solicitude on their freedom, the right to life, and property right.
In contemplation of such principles, it is important to notice how domestic policies concerning citizens could be directly influenced by the ongoing events happening abroad at the external sphere, as wars for territorial expansions, with potential defacement or restriction to the very cancellation of those entitlements they are intended. In this regard, the primary goal of liberalist authorities is to provide the creation and implementation of structures able to safeguard individual freedom by restricting and regulating the exercise of political power, namely against foreign threats (McGlinchey, 2022).

Following the research article of Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, *The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order* of 1999, is the explanation of liberal principles in their contribution to shaping international relations and governance starting from three interlocking factors.

First of all, international organizations work with international law and agreements to establish a communitarian system of relations that greatly transcends that of just nations by fostering cooperation among them; for instance, the United Nations organization delivers all member states a voice in the international community and a place for diplomacy commitment.

Second, the creation of a market-based international economic system enhancing free trade and capitalistic commerce logic, thus granting the spread of financial benefits

among the international community which directly decreases the willingness to engage in wars disrupting or canceling the profits from economic interdependence. Some organizations examples in this field are to be found among the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The third component of crucial importance for the liberal international order is the implementation of international norms, supporting liberal principles such as democracy, human rights, rule of law and global cooperation. This normative system is created to assure the setting of standards in behavior and engagement that states should respect, and for which would be held accountable in case of infringement. Thus, both economic sanctions or judicial accounts are reported and applied in order to enforce community rules; the economic sanctions imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea are a case in point.

More extensively, within the liberal theoretical framework exists a *Democratic Peace Theory* according to which wars and conflicts would be particularly disfavored among democracies.
Regarding this theoretical perspective, it is relevant to disprove the monadic proposition on the tendency of democratic states to not utilize force regardless of the kind of regime in the other state they targeted (Placek, 2021). Conversely, it is more appropriate to discuss the significant advantages of democracies in relation to conflict, starting from structural and normative standpoints.

In accordance with *structural theorists* of the Democratic Peace Theory, the bureaucratic network resulting from representative government institutions would pose internal restraints on power. More in depth, democratic structured states provide their citizens leverage over government decisions, through the mechanisms of competitive elections and free speech; which would enable them to remove the party leader or policymakers out of office if they were inclined to initiate an unwarranted conflict (Placek, 2021).

In this manner, democratic leaders would be more likely to refrain from turning disagreements into real wars and less disposed to initiate the use of violence versus

another state. If democracies have to commit to war, they would be more prone to enter low-key conflicts than full scale wars, and only those who are convinced they can win and in the shortest range of time, from the moment public support for war will not endure over time in liberal states (Placek, 2021).

Normative theorists, instead, suggest a downward trend in war in democratic states due to a greater willingness to cooperate among democracies owing to a democratic political culture which would guarantee a mutual legitimization and would promote the use of peaceful means for conflict resolution.
This culture consequently would extend beyond internal borders reaching the other liberal countries' leaders. Pursuant to this ideology, democracies would recognize their allies with regard much as they treat the interests of their population; non-democracies, on the other hand, would be seen with mistrust as they would be perceived as tyrannical and violent towards their own citizens (Placek, 2021).

Nevertheless, only by integrating these two perspectives, from structural and normative proponents, the democratic peace theory emerges as a persuasive and applicable concept.

The liberal paradigm continues to show its usefulness in the modern international order. The emphasis on cooperation, economic interdependence, and the promotion of liberal values all contribute to the maintenance of world peace and stability. For instance, despite Moscow's autocracy, Ukraine wants to establish itself as a democratic country, and since the beginning of the Ukrainian invasion, there has been an increasing entente between democratic states.

2.3.3 Constructivism

Constructivism constitutes a theoretical perspective of the IR field emphasizing the influence of ideas, normative conventions, and identities on state action as well on the composition of the international system itself.

In contrast to liberalism and realism, constructivist theorists insist on a social construction of reality and the impact of shared beliefs on governmental behavior. But moreover, the constructivist paradigm differs from the long-established international relations theories by its focus on the individuals, in place of the state.

To account for this theoretical perspective most thoroughly, it is imperative to start with the meaning it ascribes to ideas. Constructivist proponents presume that the object in itself would represent nothing more than the significance it is given to it; in particular, it would be the social recognition to determine the value of the object of matter.

In their study *Solidifying Constructivism: How Material and Ideational Factors Interact in European Defence,* Mayer C.O. and Strickmann E. write ‘’A dollar is a dollar, because we believe in its value’’: it is through the expectations and ideas formed about a given reality that its relevance is defined.
In this sense, the material reality which is shaped by ideas and beliefs - in the IR case, ideas on world politics - would be constantly subjected to change and evolution over time, centered on the actors’ mindfulness.
In turn, the actors would be subject to a mutual socialization of sorts by ending up influencing each other on a given meaning expressed toward a given situation, which speaking about state affairs, would translate into a process in which states adapt dynamically their beliefs following the interactions with other entities.
Thus, relationships between national entities would evolve exponentially depending on states’ exchanges, defining the *intersubjective structure* (the shared beliefs among states) all except static and unmovable over time, unlike within the realism paradigm for which it was the anarchic structure of the international system to affect state behavior (*E-International Relations, 2022*).

In addition to ideas, a key element in constructivism theory is the analysis of the (multiple) identities states would assume. In point of fact, as states conduct multiple interactions with other actors through the international sphere, they would acquire diversiform identities; meaning with this definition, the representation of interests and actions related to an actor. For instance, while the identity of a state is small in power, its aspirations would reflect such magnitude; on the other hand, a great state would tend to possess interests in conquering entities under its *grandeur* (*E-International Relations, 2022*).

Thanks to this view, it would be easy to understand and categorize a state under a certain identity paradigm which would make it possible to forecast its movements and intentions; indeed, it is supposed that an actor would never act in contrast to the profile delineated by its identity (*E-International Relations, 2022*).

Finally, constructivist theorists empower the impact social norms would have by shaping international institutions by establishing standards for conduct and directing interactions between states. In the wake of the *logic of appropriateness,* respecting a given identity, states would be required to adhere to *the code* connected to its identification. More in-depth, there are ranked norms depending on the effect they would generate: *regulative norms* would construct order and constrain behaviors; *constitutive norms* would put the basis to create new actors and interests as new action categories, while *prescriptive norms* would prescribe specific norms.

An example of the enactment of such notions can be given by considering the European Union as the actor and its response to the Russian invasion of Ukrainian borders. The EU boasts the principles of democracy and freedom of speech, meaning that its identity relies on those principles; consequently, its negative reaction to the war outbreak and its positioning on Ukraine's side does no more than confirm that the EU honors its identity profile, acting in defense of a democratic country and rejecting any forms of war of aggression for territorial expansion.

2.3.4 Securitization Theory

Prominent among the assorted currents of thought within international security studies is the theory of securitization, which tends to position itself in the wake of constructivist theory, adhering to a constructivist view of security as it is contextualized by the relevant authorities in the social and political spheres, the so-called securitizing actors. Indeed, at the core of this theory would be a planned and purposeful designation by politicians and decision-makers of public security issues, both domestic and international, which would thus not be naturally emerging issues but targeted for political gain. As such, this theory would focus on how certain security-related issues would be pushed to the top of the political agenda priority.

Following the definition of securitization, it would ascribe a process by which some topics of public concern are timbered as security risks, consequently necessitating drastic countermeasures. In order to achieve this result, it would be enacted a framing of the problem in question within the label of *existential threat, extremely dangerous, particularly alarming* towards a *referent object* - a state or a civilization (*E-International Relations, 2022*).

The mainstays of this process are built, in fact, around two concepts: namely the speech act and the referent object; while a third element would be optional, but still very important for their implications, the security measures.

Every securitizing actor would adopt a careful style of language structured upon a rhetorical but unequivocal choice of words meant to convey a message of urgency, occasionally exaggerated, around a matter of security crucial to the very existence of the audience, to raise the issue beyond politics; this *speech act,* is no other than a conceptualization of an issue describing how words can describe reality at the same as being able to construct that reality. For instance, warnings about a security problem often frame a response that invokes measures of a military nature (*E-International Relations, 2022*).

Another key component within this strategy is the above-mentioned *referent object* - a state, a national or international community - towards which the *speech act* would be addressed. This is of particular importance from the moment that an appropriate identification of the referent would determine the scope and the scale of the securitization process.

To this extent, the Copenhagen School[21] has given a great contribution revealing new referent objects within the securitization theory depending on the context they would be referred to. Within a traditional approach, tackling a *survival issue* there would be a call for the use of military measures; in this case the referent would be ''Mon sectorial'' acknowledging the state as the main actor and its extensions, the government and the society. Nevertheless, the newest Copenhagen School would broaden the agenda, shifting to a ''multisectoral'' context involving four additional categories on security framing: national sovereignty as a referent object within the political context; collective identities for societal security; national economies for the economic context and species and habitats regarding environmental security (Does, 2013).

In each case, the success of the securitization process would depend only on the legitimacy given by the audience regarding the announced threat, allowing them to adopt extraordinary security counter-actions.

The emergency measures in question could notably override the normal political process, involving the suspension of certain rights, and increasing the surveillance and use of military forces over the territory (*E-International Relations, 2022*).

Notwithstanding, broader consequences of an advanced securitization process could lead to a revolution of conflict dynamics and policymaking to the point of managing a reallocation of resources, the granting of certain concerns priority over others, and the conceptualization of international affairs as a fight for security.

Finally, the Copenhagen School enhances a *spectrum* classification for public concerns going from non-politicized to politicized, and then to securitized (Does, 2013).

[21] The Copenhagen School, along with the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, were established in 1985 aiming at the promotion of academic research on international security. The school positions itself as a forerunner to the emergence of novel perspectives on security and defense issues which go beyond conventional paradigms and have a predominately practical and realistic nature (Oliveira, 2021).

Topics that are not addressed by the state or are object to public debate are referred to as *non-politicized* issues. In contrast, politicized topics could be defined within the political sphere as being included in public policies that demand action from the government. The last categorization involves *securitized situations* at the extreme range, requiring exceptional measures above and beyond the states' regular political procedures.

Securitization theory, therefore, can be understood as a security strategy driven by interests hence extremely political; a blueprint working towards the depiction of a certain reality - portrayed as existentially menacing - with the aim of impacting pragmatically the reality itself.

Concerning the Ukraine war, securitization can be considered as the paradigm whereby explaining the great consent to the Russian side of the coin from its citizens; following the opinion polls conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in the months succeeding the invasion, the draws would reveal a tendency to support Putin's special operation in Ukraine from the majority of respondents (Chambers, 2022).
Data shows approval of Russian Armed Forces' actions toward UKR for 81% of respondents in March 2022 (53% of which consider it a reason for ''national pride'') while only 14% are against it and 6% are unsure about it. Besides, over the war's first four months, the extent of such support barely altered, sliding to 75% of respondents still favoring Moscow's position against Kyiv in June 2022 (Volkov & Kolesnikov, 2022).

Underlying such a strong consensus would surely reside in a metabolization of Russia's aggressive vision as necessary to prevent a potential existential threat - in this case, Ukraine's proximity to the West.

CHAPTER II

SHIFTING POWER DYNAMICS IN EUROPE

3.1 NATO Conflict Response

This chapter analyzes how the power dynamics in Europe have been rapidly shifting, with NATO's strategic response to Russia's actions in Ukraine reshaping its military posture and alliances. This shift underscores a renewed focus on deterrence, defense spending, and regional security cooperation.

First, NATO's main concern was to modulate the collective defense of its member states and re-evaluate the Alliance's deterrence strategies to strengthen regional security and support Ukraine at a time when the security environment in Eastern Europe was drastically altered due to Russia's annexation of Crimea, its support for separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, and finally, the invasion of Ukraine. The Atlantic Organization believed that Putin's war policies could pose an increasingly significant threat to European and global security (NATO, n.d.).

NATO has greatly expanded its military presence on the eastern flank and its support for Ukraine, as we will see in the second paragraph. This entails carrying out extensive military drills and sending out more multinational battlegroups. NATO allies' increased defense spending, especially in Eastern member states, demonstrates their strong commitment to improving preparedness and deterrence against possible Russian threats.

Finally, it will be noticed how NATO-Russia relations have sharply deteriorated since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, shifting from post-Cold War cooperation to heightened tension and military confrontations. Despite initial collaborative efforts, practical cooperation was suspended in 2014. Reflecting the complexity of ongoing geopolitical tensions, NATO has recently concentrated on bolstering its defensive posture while maintaining open lines of communication for conflict resolution and possible future arms control agreements.

3.1.1 Strategic Realignment

On February 24, 2024, the North Atlantic Council (NAC)[22] has resolutely condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine, denouncing the involvement of Belarus in facilitating the offense. The NAC, while reiterating its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, heralded a corollary of economic and political consequences, querying the Kremlin for an immediate military ceasefire, demanding to respect the international humanitarian law and international law "*the UN Charter, along with Russia's commitments in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, the Budapest Memorandum and the NATO-Russia Founding Act*'' (Nato, n.d.). He also called upon Russia to engage in diplomatic dialogue, as in the case of the NATO-Russia Council (RNC), which remained open to cooperation and consensus building[23].

Meanwhile, in order to preserve regional security and guarantee the defense of all nations enclosed by the Euro-Atlantic area, the NAC has settled the activation of NATO defense plans within NDPP system[24]. In particular, the deployment of five phased response plans was announced to consolidate, firstly, the deterrence posture in the east, the defense posture and the restoration of security. In addition, the mobilization of land and air defenses in the eastern part of the alliance was ensured, along with the reorganization of additional maritime resources, requiring an increase in the readiness of allied military forces for the event of any contingency.

[22] The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the main political decision-making body within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Established under Article 9 of the founding Treaty, the Council meeting discussions cover all aspects and activities of the Organization, bestowing a final report and recommendations. Hence, NAC's policies express the collective will of all Alliance member states, going through a unanimous basis of decision (NATO, n.d.).

[23] The NATO-Russia Council (RNC) was founded on 28 May 2002 on the occasion of the NATO-Russia Summit in Rome. The NRC took the place of the previous Permanent Joint Council (PJC), established by the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997. Within the new dialogue format, the Allies and Russia had to be considered equal partners in a reestablished landscape of mutual cooperation (*NATO-Russia Council*, 2022).

[24] The NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) is the primary instrument for assisting the discovery, building, and execution of NATO's current and future capabilities requirements. It assigns those needs as Capability Targets to each ally, helping with their execution and does frequent progress evaluation by offering a framework for the coordination of national and Alliance defense planning initiatives. The NDPP final goal is ensuring the prompt development and provision of the military and non-military capabilities required to fulfill the agreed-upon defense goals embodied in the Strategic Concept (NATO, n.d.).

On the 25 of February, an extraordinary virtual summit of NATO Heads of State and Government was set, during which the NAC decisions were confirmed, assuring the displacement of all measures needed to ensure strong and undeniable deterrence credibility at the moment as in the future; stressing the preventive and proportionate nature of the measures, averting the purpose of escalation for the conflict.

On March 24, 2022, a new extraordinary summit of NATO heads of state and government took place in Brussels. Once more, the focus was on Russian aggression, and the Allies reaffirmed their commitment to the cause by offering Ukraine significant assistance and promising to step up their deterrence tactics.
In this instance, an explicit request was made to China, asking it to leverage its influence over Russia to attain a peaceful and immediate resolution of the conflict, instead of providing Putin with economic or military protection. In contrast, Belarus was asked to stop acting as Russia's accomplice (Nato, n.d.).

On the 29 and 30 June 2022, NATO leaders and key partners gathered for the Madrid Summit, discussing the current security concerns. Despite terrorism manifestation in all its forms, the Russian Federation was mentioned to be the most *''significant and direct threat to Allies' stability and peace in the Euro-Atlantic area"* (Nato, n.d.). Hence, NATO's commitment was stated to respond to its actions following the rules of international law. In this sense, the leaders endorsed NATO's new Strategic Concept[25], a guiding document reflecting the main NATO geopolitical concerns.
On this occasion, it reflected the considerations emerging during the Summit over the Euro-Atlantic security environment. In point of fact, the 2022 Strategic Concept identifies Russia as the uttermost concerning matter, in addition to mentioning China for the first time within this document, while noting other emerging issues, for instance, cyber and hybrid terrorism. It further spells out the three primary duties of NATO, namely cooperative security, crisis prevention and management, deterrence and defense in the context of NATO's transatlantic unity. In a more practical sense, in the document a larger

[25] NATO' Strategic Concept is a NATO's guiding document representing the alliance's common goals and priorities in the face of changing security threats and acts as a framework for decisions made about operations, policy, and other matters. It is re-evaluated every 10 years, or possibly for exceptional emergency geopolitical situations as in the case of 2022.

increase in the number of troops is commanded, including troops specifically designated to protect *specific allies;* it also implemented the strengthening of NATO's eight multinational battle groups, placing weapons and equipment in the eastern part of the alliance; ensuring the commitment of the allies to spend *at least* 2 percent of their GDP on defense[26] by 2024; pledging to boost NATO's joint defense funding (Nato, n.d).

Pointedly to the Ukraine war, enhanced the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for Ukraine[27], aimed at improving Ukraine's cyber defenses and resilience *like secure communications*, *anti-drone systems and fuel,* as well as supporting the Ukrainian defense sector modernization, finally transitioning from outdated Soviet-era equipment to strengthening long-term interoperability. Again, the allies will be called upon to assist and support Ukraine's efforts in its post-conflict reconstruction and reform path. Together with the UKR partner, NATO decided on new support packages for other alliance partners at potential risks, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova (Nato, n.d.).

On February 24, 2023, the NAC released a statement commemorating a year since Russia began its aggressive war against Ukraine pointing out the Russian invasion as *''the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades''* (NATO, n.d). Hence, the Allies committed to intensifying more than ever and *until it will be needed* their political and practical engagement in supporting Ukraine meanwhile it undergoes unjustified encroachment, in order to help prevail over the aggression. Allies reaffirmed the unwavering support to its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, claiming Ukraine's natural right of self-defense and its preference in adopting its own security measures. Moreover, the Allies expressed their determination to maintain international coordinated pressure on Russia whilst condemning all those - including Belarus - who actively favor Putin's war. They recall responsibility for human rights violations under the rule of humanitarian international

[26] GDP= Gross Domestic Product.

[27] The Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for Ukraine was endorsed on 9 July 2016 in Warsaw on occasion of a Heads of State and Government of the NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting.The CAP is a measure intended to provide tailored assistance to Ukraine carrying essential security and defense plans and reforms.

law, in particular against the Ukrainian civil population, inviting the Russian Federation to immediately cease hostilities and withdraw all military forces from Ukraine soil in line with the UN General Assembly's resolutions. Finally, within the statement, they reiterate the NATO direction towards the *open-door policy,* for which every European country willing to accept the North Atlantic Treaty principles and disposed to contribute to the North Atlantic security area, to become an effective member of the Alliance whether explicitly encouraged to do so by the other member states. In the case of Ukraine, the Organization aims to bolster their partnership in sight of UKR's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, besides assisting the most exposed countries to exit Russia's influence.

On 11 and 12 July 2023, took place the Vilnius Summit of NATO, was considered of epical importance for its geopolitical impact. First of all, the Summit's centerpiece was mainly Ukraine's admission to the Alliance. The Heads of State and Government's meeting was a step forward in its membership, even though timing, manner and procedures of future enrollment were deliberately left vague, in contrast with Kyiv's hopes (Comitato Atlantico Italiano, 2023).
Moreover, the Summit signified Finland's entry into the Alliance which officially occurred on the 4th of April, 2023, after standing for membership on 18 May 2022, following the outbreak of war. In addition, some tangible progress toward Sweden's accession to NATO was achieved during the summit - because of the openings made by Turkish President Erdogan - a final step that will be happening not much beyond, namely on March 7, 2024.

Furthermore, the presence of Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan at the Summit, indicated the attention given by NATO to the Indo-Pacific panorama and confrontation with China. Nevertheless, the final communiqué contains meaty considerations to the wider Mediterranean and the Sahel, with a view to a reorganization of NATO strategies. Of particular note is Russia's growing military buildup in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean, as well as its considerable military capabilities in the Arctic, which would be a security concern for the Euro-Atlantic area according to NATO leaders (Camera dei Deputati, 2023).

The Summit upheld the commitment to allocating at least 20 percent of defense budgets to major equipment, including related research and development, as well the significance of meeting the goal of 2 percent of defense spending relative to GDP.
Finally, the Summit restated the core relationship of the alliance between NATO and EU coupled with the demand for a more robust and proficient European defensive strategy that would work in tandem with NATO to enhance transatlantic and international security. Likewise, the Allies firmly support NATO's cooperation with other global and regional institutions, such as the African Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations. The final message conveyed by the Summit was meant to suggest the relevance of the decisions taken that paved the way for the Alliance's continued adaptation to the changing global environment (Camera dei Deputati, 2023).

On the 24 of February 2024, for the occasion of the second anniversary of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Presidency Office of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO has released a statement in which it emphasized once again the stance of the Alliance, strongly denouncing the aggression and supporting the Ukrainian side, thus holding Russia solely responsible for triggering *the most serious security crisis on the European continent since the Second World War* (PA NATO, 2024).
The undisputed continuation of the full mobilization of resources in support of Ukraine was promised until Ukraine managed to prevail, mentioning the granting of economic, military, political and humanitarian support. The conflict was thus defined as a test of democracies' ability to resist the cruelty and tyranny of authoritarianism as a whole, pushing NATO's ultimate goal of safeguarding common security, and defending Euro-Atlantic zone democracy against the grip of totalitarian regimes. (PA NATO, 2024).

Equally important to note, the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO denounced the military aid Russia receives from the regime of Belarus, North Korea and Iran, as well as other partners providing any kind of assistance in the pursuit of the continuation of the war, showing the global entanglements that such a conflict entails.

3.1.2 Military Deployment and Defense Spending

Since the very beginning of the Russian invasion in 2022, NATO and the Allies have been providing unprecedentedly high levels of support to Ukraine by military means and humanitarian aid that would foster the strengthening of the potential for self-defense as much as protection and ensure a common security shield.

In point of fact, NATO has stepped up its military presence in the eastern flank of the Alliance - running from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south - as a direct consequence of the bellicose actions conducted by Russia against its neighbors and the transatlantic community.

Figure 2 - *NATO's Eastern Flank: Stronger Defense and Deterrence - Map. (Source: NATO. March 21, 2022)*

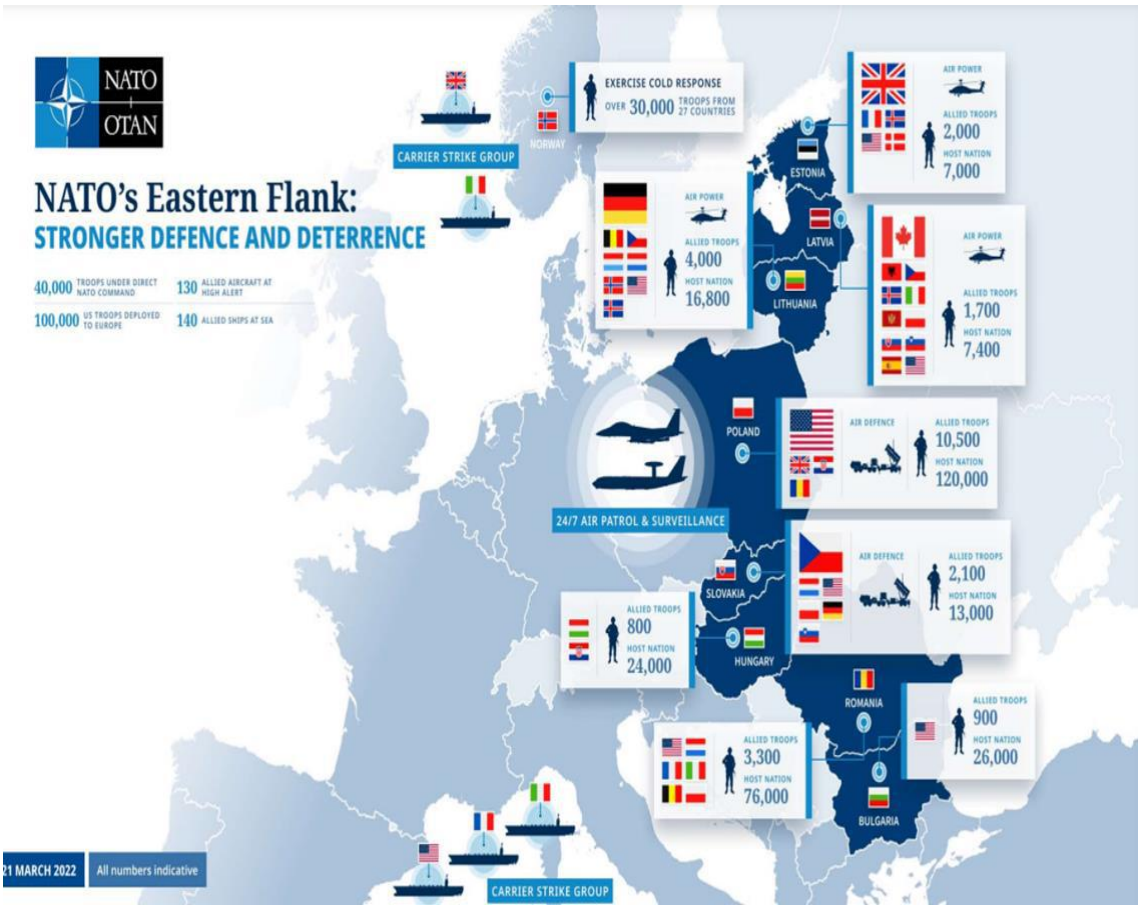
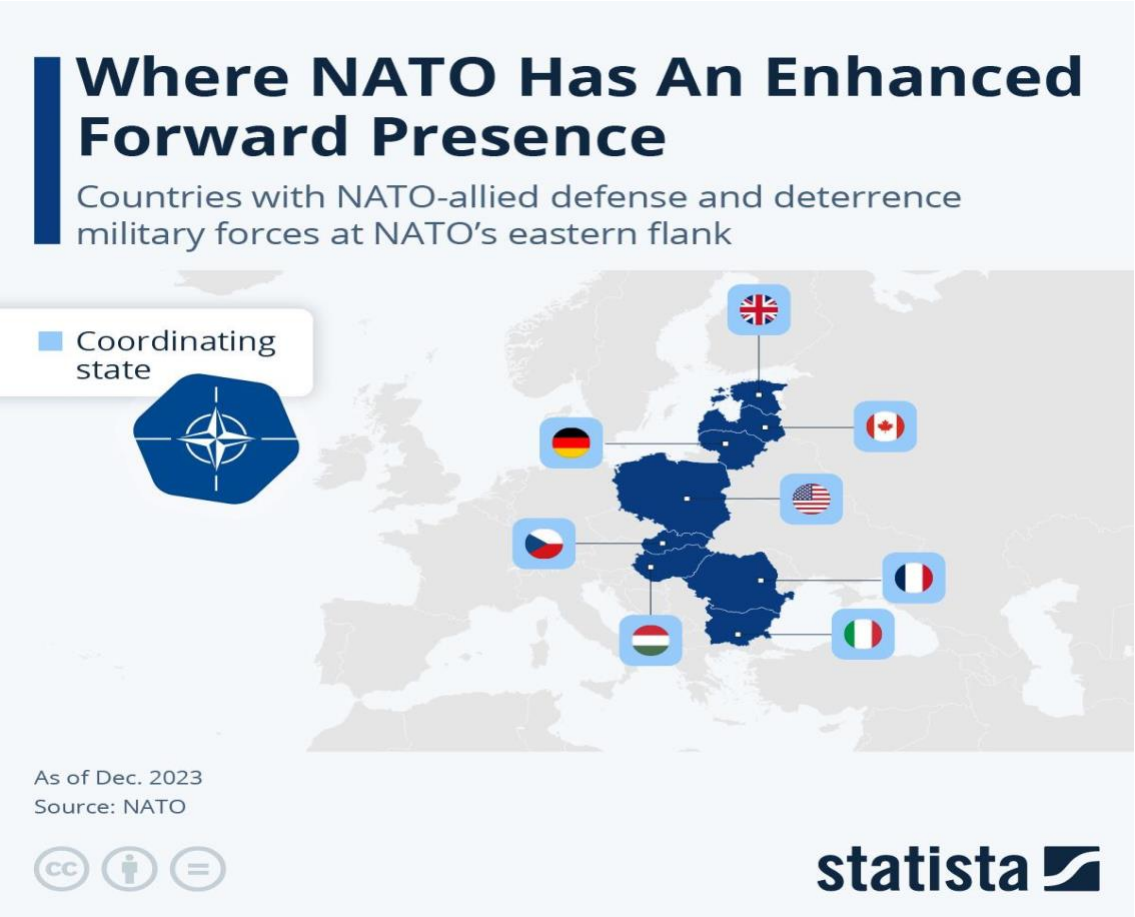


Figure 3 *- Where NATO has an enhanced forward presence. (Source: Statista Daily Data. 2024, April 9)*



At the 2022 Madrid Summit, Allies agreed upon the deployment of four multinational groups (battlegroups) to be fielded respectively in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, in addition to the four battlegroups already in place between the Netherlands and Poland, effectively doubling the troops number on the ground. Furthermore, it was convened to resettle the defense strategy on a long-term basis to cope with the new security environment, by projecting a new NATO Force Model[28], which was meant to provide a heightened presence of troops on the ground and increase readiness on the eastern flank, including the deployment of more aircraft, besides the enlargement of integrated air and missile defense collection and, at sea, the deployment of aircraft carriers, submarines, in addition to a significant number of combat ships on a permanent basis. Finally, it was

[28] The new NATO Force Model replaces the previous NATO Response Force by decision of NATO leaders after the 2022 Madrid Summit. It is designed to improve the readiness of action response at short notice for any contingency, going from allocating 40,000 troops in about 15 days to 200,000 troops in about 10-30 days (*New NATO Force Model*, n.d.).

agreed at that time to provide substantial financial aid, cyber security assistance, and equipment to protect against biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear threats (Nato, n.d.).

At the 2023 Vilnius Summit, the Alliance heads of state and government reaffirmed the decisions taken at the Madrid Summit to field additional robust and combat-ready forces on NATO's eastern flank, in furtherance of complementing the existing eight multinational battlegroups. Moreover, a new generation of regional defense plans was approved by the Allies, willing to enhance the coherence between national plans for the NATO member states' forces, posture, capabilities, command and control, and overall NATO's collective defense planning.

In 2024 NATO led the largest military exercise since the end of the Cold War, under the name of Steadfast Defender. The operation was enacted from January to May, grouping over 90,000 troops from all 32 NATO Allies and took place all across Europe, from the High North to Central and Eastern Europe. The exercise mainly aimed to reveal the Atlantic Alliance capability of defending its territory, giving a strong deterrent effect; while also aiming to placate the worries of the nations closest to Russia on NATO's eastern border. Finally, there was the strictly operational role of Steadfast Defender which meant ensuring that all protocols were harmonized by putting in place for the first time a collective performance of all 32 NATO Allies armies, for instance enacting the employment of aircraft, armored force, navies, or artillery altogether (Comitato Atlantico Italiano, 2024).

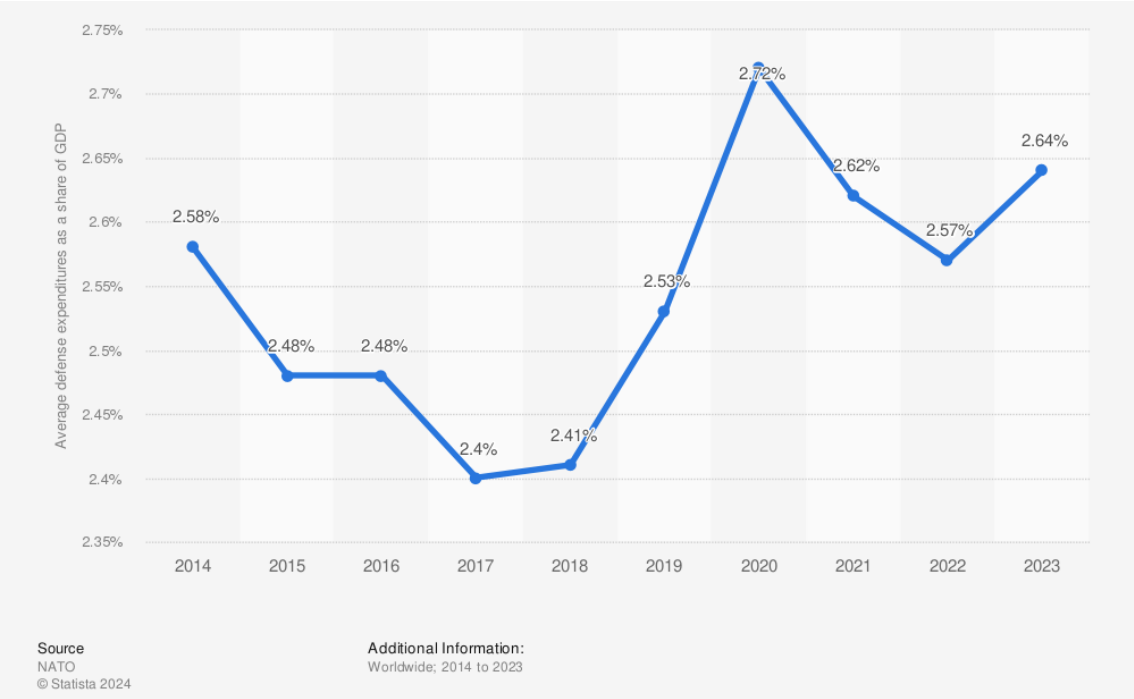
The *deterrence effect* is of particular relevance since military experts warned about the likelihood of a direct confrontation with Russia expected within the next 20 years in Eastern Europe. This connection is useful to reflect on the opinions of the Chair of NATO Military Committee Admiral, Rob Bauer, shared on the occasion of a Joint Press Conference for NATO Chiefs of Military Defense held on January 18, 2024, advertising of the necessity of the worst case scenario for a war confrontation with Russia which may acquire sufficient war capacity to invade other countries not satisfying just with conquering the Donbas region (*Joint Press Conference*, 2024). Therefore, he suggested reactivating and renovating the Western country's war industry which had been left behind just after the end of the Cold War and converted to civil activities more needed at the time; because

of a lack of sustain by the United States more likely to be engaged in the Indo-Pacific. Hence, the Ukrainian conflict restored centrality to the warfare industry in modern times, particularly to the use of artillery, drones, and electronic warfare. (Comitato Atlantico Italiano, 2024).

Dealing with military rearmament, it is observable how the countries' defense spending and investment have remarkably increased since the war's outbreak. As it has been mentioned before, following 2006 NATO Defense Ministers guidelines - coming after the Russian invasion of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 - every Member State has to commit to the financing of the Organization devolving a minimum of 2% of their GDP per year, while also supplying at least 20% of annual defense expenditure to major new equipment (*Funding NATO*, 2024).

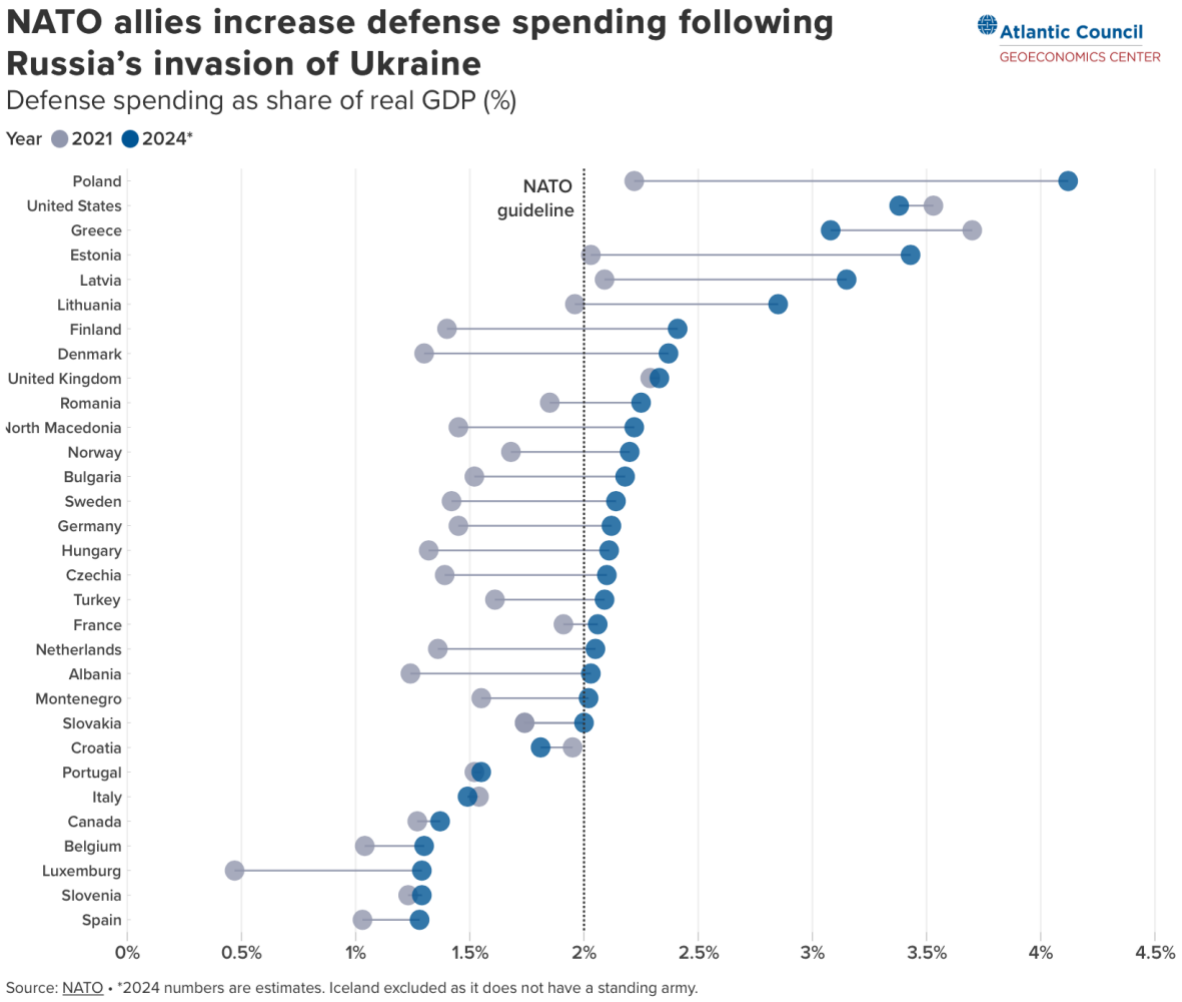
As the wartime persecution of Ukraine is still ongoing since 2022, it is to be mentioned a remarkable increase in the number of allies who have optimized their NATO funding reaching the required minimum for defense, as cited by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Wilson Center's Research Group speech on March 14, 2024. The commitment "almost fourfold increased from 2021 when only six nations achieved the goal" (Euronews, 2024) showing the European Allies better involved than in the years leading to the conflict.

Figure 4 - *Average defense expenditure of NATO countries as a share of GDP from 2014 to 2023. Source: Statista*



For instance, as can be ascertained by looking at *Figure 4,* NATO Member States allocated 2.64 percent of their GDP on defense on average in 2023, up from 2.57 percent the year before (Statista, 2024). The allies have thus committed to meeting the minimum required by NATO's general guidelines, although with some exceptions from country to country.

Figure 5 - *NATO allies increase defense spending following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Source: NATO, Atlantic Council*



In *Figure 5,* data show how in 2024 Poland and Estonia - both bordering Russia - have spent more than 4% of their GDP on defense, surpassing the United States in this regard. At the same time, to remarkably overtake previous years expenditure have been Estonia (3.43%), Latvia (3.15%), Lithuania (2.85%), Bulgaria (2.18%), Slovakia (2%), all coming from the eastern flank. As well as Denmark (2.37%), and North Macedonia (2.22%) boosting their efforts. Plus, according to NATO's data, defense spending increased by

nearly 18% in just 2023 alone among European Allies and Canada, marking the largest increase in decades (Euronews, 2024). Cases such as for France (2.06%), the United Kingdom (2.33%) and Türkiye (2.09%) remained almost unchanged. Few exceptions for the United States (3.38%), Greece (3.08%), and Croatia (1.81%) who, in turn, diminished their contributions.

Altogether, an overall increase in NATO funding by allies can be seen. Compared to only three member states in 2014, a total of 23 allies met and even exceeded the goal of allocating at least 2 percent of GDP to defense in 2024.

Before moving on to the next paragraph, a necessary clarification concerning NATO's defensive deployment must be made both specifically on the eastern flank, as well as more generally regarding defensive and non-offensive action. Unlike what Russia has put in place, the mobilization that NATO is implementing is defensive and respects the deterrence function; explaining the reason why NATO decided not to close the skies by creating a no-fly zone over Ukraine to avoid creating further tensions that could lead to an escalation of the conflict for which the Alliance would actually be held accountable (Comitato Atlantico Italiano, 2024).

3.1.3 NATO-Russia Relations

The past 30 years have witnessed a multitude of transitions in the interactions between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation.
From an early rapprochement of the two entities following the end of the Cold War, there has been a mutual distrust passing through various settlements. The nature of the relationship nowadays can be summarized by NATO's strategy toward Russia, which wants to keep the enemy close to it to possibly deter or prevent its misdeeds. Hence, even though practical cooperation has been suspended especially after the events of 2014, leaving their ties at the ‘’lowest point’’ (NATO, n.d.), political and military communication channels have remained open.

Beginning with the *official 2022 NATO factsheet document* on *NATO-Russia relations*, the following stages of their interactions before the ultimate invasion of Ukraine were highlighted:

- The first turning point in NATO-Russia relations happened in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with NATO attempts to establish a workable partnership with Russia by fostering communication and real-world cooperation in areas of shared interests, as well as Russia joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council the same year, marking a historic milestone in the closeness between the two.
- As a result of Russia’s 1994 enrollment in the Partnership for Peace Program and its consequent deployment of peacekeepers in the late 1990s to support NATO-led peacekeeping missions in the Western Balkans, practical cooperation has been definitively stipulated.
- In 1997 Russia entered the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, which united partners and Allies in the Euro-Atlantic region, as well the NATO-Russia Founding Act[29] for bilateral cooperation,

[29] The NATO-Russia Founding Act, signed in Paris in 1997, was a *blueprint of their cooperation*. The signing conditions demanded an exchange for Russian consent for a first-time enlargement of NATO, while the Alliance essentially made significant military concessions to Boris Yeltsin’s Russia. The latter, even though reluctantly, embraced the idea of NATO expansion with the signing of the Founding Act despite constant claims that the alliance had betrayed them by

which established the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as a platform for collaboration and consultation.

- Lately, Russia suspended the link established with NATO as a consequence of a different stance towards the Kosovo crisis of 1999, nevertheless resuming it with the closure of NATO's air campaign in the region, restarting an active fraternization by its participation in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).
- Communication and collaboration were further strengthened in 2002 when the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) took over as the PJC. In actuality, the NRC oversaw a productive collaborative effort across multiple domains, providing a forum for discussion on current security issues that both Russia and NATO share.
- Diplomatic presence within NATO initiated in 1998, however it, was only in 2001 with NATO building up the Information Office (NIO) in Moscow, and the Military Liaison Mission (MLM) in 2002 that a main hub for information collection and distribution between NATO's Military Committee in Brussels and the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense was put in practice.
- Due to Russia's military intervention in Georgia, taking place in August 2008, official NRC meetings were halted, and certain domains of cooperation were suspended at least not before 2009 spring.
- Inexorably, 2014 became a watershed year in NATO-Russia relations after Russia's unlawful annexation of Crimea, which resulted in the decisive suspension of the partnership and thus the military and civilian practical services established under the NRC with Russia.
- Consequently, to Russia's actions, NATO resolved to lower the number of accredited Russia's personnel within the Russian Mission at NATO Headquarters in October 2021 just as it did in 2018 because of an uncleared situation involving Russian intelligence officials possibly infiltrated.
- The same month, Russia decided to halt operations of its diplomatic representation to NATO, while demanding NATO to close the NIO and the MLM in Moscow. Notwithstanding, NATO preferred to maintain some lines of communication with Russia open whilst bolstering a more defense and deterrence strategy.

expanding in 1999. In exchange, NATO agreed to limit Russia's ability to advance conventional and deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of potential new members (Cornil, 2024).

- In December 2021, according to a legally enforceable treaty proposed by Russian authorities to NATO and US, the European Security Architecture (ESA) had to be redrawn in order to make NATO unable to expand further eastward and station military soldiers and weapons in member states which joined the Alliance after 1997.

After yet the last illegitimate Russian aggression on Ukraine in 2022, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, NATO allies expanded their presence in the Alliance's central, eastern and southeastern regions and implemented a NATO Response Force plan to counter Russia's military buildup in and around Ukraine (NATO, n.d.).

To this extent, a military mobilization on the ground by both entities was implemented, which showed a clear deterioration of diplomatic relations. Nonetheless, NATO still kept the lines of contact open both politically and militarily, with the allies firmly in favor of using nonviolent methods, including the Minsk Agreements[30], to ease tension, handle the crisis, and resolve the conflict. This encompasses, albeit with little actual collaboration, military-to-military interactions and discussions within the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council. The ultimate goal of these engagements was to ensure transparency and investigate potential future arms control agreements, especially on the growing threat of cyber-attacks (hitting national cyber security systems) and hybrid warfare (including the use of disinformation, economic pressure, and irregular military tactics) as highlighted by the Ukrainian conflict.

After an attentive analysis of their relationship, it is apparent that the Ukrainian crisis has significantly altered the dynamics between NATO and Russia, resulting in higher levels

[30] The Minsk Agreements, wrongly referred as ‘’Minsk I and II’’ are two sets of agreements arranged in 2014 and 2015 resulting from the negotiations of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Russia, Ukraine and the separatist leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk areas, in order to put and end to hostilities and create a stable peace between Ukrainian forces and the rebels backed by Russia in eastern Ukraine.They covered many topics going from security, economic, political and humanitarian issues. Although they have been partially successful in lessening the conflict’s intensity, their complete adoption has proven difficult to achieve. The accords emphasize how crucial it is to maintain diplomatic relations and how a thorough and all-encompassing strategy is required to end the war and guarantee a long-term peace in the area. (Comms & Comms, 2024).

of hostility, and a greater emphasis on a cautious attitude to communication and collaboration.

Looking forward, relationships between NATO and Russia will be intricate and multifaceted including mainly deterrence and confrontation. Hence, resuming a constructive partnership in the foreseeable future is improbable given the current state of the Ukrainian conflict, divergent geopolitical goals and mutual mistrust.
However, the Atlantic Organization declares itself to be strategically committed to safeguarding the security of its member nations while managing the intricacies of its connections with Russia, as seen by its actions. Thus, NATO's approach is seemingly going to keep its focus on maintaining a potential deterrent while looking for ways to engage Russia positively.

3.2 EU's reaction to Russian aggression

The EU has acted decisively to support Ukraine and strengthen its security since Russia invaded the country in 2022. Sanctions against Russia, financial assistance, military assistance to Ukraine and political declarations are some of the measures taken against it. Thus, by increasing defense spending, investing in military capabilities and stimulating EU-NATO cooperation, the EU has acted to improve its security. For instance, the EU defense strategy was outlined through the adoption of the Strategic Compass in 2022, with a strong emphasis on investment, collaboration and rapid deployment. In turn, the European Peace Facility has demonstrated the EU's commitment to increasing expenditure on defense among member states and to mutual protection by providing Ukraine with significant military support.

In addition, the EU has significantly changed its energy policies in reaction to the conflict in Ukraine, with the goal of promoting green energy and lowering dependency on Russian fossil fuels. Introduced in May 2022, the RePowerEU plan prioritized energy efficiency, increased production of renewable energy, and energy diversification. Likewise, the EU has established a common gas procurement system, lowered energy prices, and secured energy supplies through appropriate gas storage. Despite continued difficulties and the requirement for additional cuts in Russian gas imports, these initiatives have bolstered EU energy independence and aided Ukraine.

Furthermore, the conflict has severely impacted Ukraine's agricultural exports, prompting the EU to launch the Solidarity Lanes Action Plan in May 2022 to facilitate the overland transport of Ukrainian goods. This plan has significantly mitigated the global food crisis caused by the disruption of Black Sea exports. The EU's measures have ensured continued agricultural trade, supported Ukraine's economy, and addressed temporary market distortions in neighboring member states. Additionally, the EU has suspended import taxes on Ukrainian goods, reinforcing its political and economic support for Ukraine.

Eventually, the Ukraine conflict has significantly affected EU border security and migration, leading to an influx of Ukrainian refugees. The EU implemented the Temporary Protection Directive to provide welfare assistance and security for displaced individuals. Thus, Frontex operations have been expanded to enhance border management, and the EU has invested in border infrastructure and technology. The crisis has highlighted the need for a unified approach to migration and asylum policies, prompting the development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) to address disparities among member states.

3.2.1 Common Foreign and Security Policy

Beginning with the exceptional European Council meeting on February 24, 2022, start date of the Russian invasion, the European Union has adopted a comprehensive set of political declarations and measures of a regulatory and financial nature addressed to the EU's support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its borders recognized by the international community. Additionally, the EU granted a military and economical backup to Ukraine while also enacting a framework of sanctions for Russia's unlawful behavior.

EU leaders reiterated their intention to strengthen EU-NATO cooperation in the Versailles Declaration, which was released on March 10, 2022, to "take more responsibility for its own security [and] increasing its power to act autonomously" (European Council, n.d.). Hence, by raising their defense spending, collaborating on initiatives like joint procurement, investing in military capabilities, bolstering research and innovation synergies and growing the EU's defense sector, the EU Member States committed to incrementing their investment in defense capabilities and cutting-edge technologies.

Moreover, on 21 March the EU leaders designed the *Strategic Compass* "an ambitious plan of action" (Przetacznik, 2022) for bolstering the EU's security and defense strategy by 2030, as a response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Within this document it was stated the commitment of all 27 European MS to investing in defense and cooperating with partners ensuring mutual defense. With greater specificity, four key points were listed concerning the need to *act*, for instance, increasing the conduct of regular exercises or rapid deployment capacity up to 5000 troops and 200 fully equipped CDSP[31] mission experts within 30 days; as well as the need to *secure* Europe enhancing the EU's role in maritime security and boosting intelligence capabilities. Further, *the* Strategic Compass mentioned investing by increasing defense spending and joining investments in next-generation capabilities, well as urging the building of a strong *partnership* with NATO,

[31] CDSP stands for Common Security and Defence Policy. About this, review chapter 1, paragraph 2.2.1.

UN, regional organizations as OSCE, AU[32], ASEAN[33], including bilateral cooperation with like-minded countries such as the US, the UK, Norway, Canada or Japan, enhancing dialogue (Council of the EU, 2022).

Sticking with security, the European Union has moved through the Council of the EU by allocating 6.5 billion (in different packages of decisions) for the supply to Ukraine of military equipment under the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EPF as an off-budget mechanism was financed by EU Member States directly depending on the expected EPF budget, which for the period 2021-2027 has a maximum total financial limit of more than 17 billion euros. This instrument, financing CFSP actions, was rooted in operations and assistance measures (*European Peace Facility*, 2024). On March 18, 2024, the Council decided to create a Special Assistance Fund for Ukraine to increase the EPF financial ceiling by 5 billion (in current currency) for Ukraine. Hence, the EU mobilized to be able to provide the Ukrainian armed forces with both lethal and non-lethal military equipment and training, covering their changing demands.
With greater operational support, bolstering bilateral efforts of European MS, and emphasizing increasing procurement from the European and Norwegian defense industries, it was stated the willingness to maximize the EU's added value (Council of the European Union, 2024).

Overall, following the data provided by the Delegation of the European Union to the United States in the report *"EU Assistance to Ukraine''* published in June 2024, Europe's support in military assistance reached 38 billion euros, gradually increasing, going from "ammunition to air-defense systems, Leopard tanks, fighter jets", including €12 billion from the EPF coming from the Member States fundings. Specifically, to ammunition, the EU was reported to provide €2.2 billion for the cooperative purchase and "delivery of up to one million more rounds of artillery ammunition by the beginning of 2024'', as well as an additional €535 to significantly increase the manufacture of ammunition by the EU defense sector.
In practical terms, 60.000 Ukrainian military personnel were meant to receive training under the €390 million EUMAM[34] by the end of 2024, making the EU the country's

[32] African Union.
[33] Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
[34] European Union Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM).

largest source of military training to the armed services. With an extra €27 million to be counted while being donated to assist Ukraine in demining areas that have been liberated from temporary Russian military occupation.

Most recently, at the European Council meeting on June 27, 2024, European leaders reaffirmed the EU's steadfast commitment to perpetuate providing *political, financial, humanitarian, and military support for Ukraine and its people,* which - since the war outset - can count on 110 billion euros made available in *financial, military, humanitarian and refugee assistance* (Council of the European Union, 2024).

Whilst, from a wider perspective on the European security framework, during the two-day European Council summit held on the 21-22 March 2024, it was agreed by European leaders the need to increase European *defense readiness and capabilities* which was solicited to increase the defense expenditure, foster collective investments, promote the development of new defense technologies as well as address shortages in the defense sector. To achieve these objectives, the actions to implement have been reported to be the mobilization of funding, by means cherry-picked by the Council and the Commission, also the execution of the European Defense Industrial Strategy (EDIS), and the advancement in the European Defense Industry Programme (EDIP) (Consilium Europa, n.d.).

In light of the above, a consideration needs to be made concerning the unifying effect that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has provoked on EU Member States, which as never before have found a common way to dispute foreign policy issues as *one voice*. The Member nations have responded swiftly, decisively and adaptably by agreeing to assemble significant financial relief packages, for instance, the EU broke with a long-standing prohibition of not supplying armaments to conflict zones by financing firearms and equipment for Ukraine (Puglierin, 2024). A second notable arrangement interested EU enlargement to the east, initiated and being led in December 2023, by offering *candidate status* not only to Ukraine[35], but also to Moldova, countries currently in the process of accession negotiations.

Finally, from the outset, member states decided to crack down on Russian freedoms as a result of their actions in Ukraine regarding the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Thus, the EU decided to sanction Russia by trying to deface

[35] Ukraine applied for EU membership on February 28, 2022. Lately on June 17, 2022, the EU Council issued its opinions on the matter and finally on June 23, 2022, it granted the candidate status to Ukraine by inviting the European Commission to report about the conditions fulfillment which have been specified in the Commission's opinion on the membership application (European Council, 2024).

its economic base, deprive Putin's warfare of critical technologies and markets, and curtail its ability to wage war.
The key measures regarded the sanctions on individuals and entities, for instance by targeting political leaders, oligarchs, military officials and institutions supporting aggression. While the economic sanctions were meant to afflict economic sectors like finance, energy, transport, technology and raw materials.

By far, there have been approved fourteen packages of restrictive measures, starting from the first one implemented on February 23, 2022, to the last one, on June 24, 2024.
More in detail, the first package planned to target Russian State Duma members, the economic relations with non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk and limited access to EU capital and financial markets. The second package (Feb 25, 2022) envisioned sanctions directly towards Putin, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and other crucial figures, including a suspension of visa facilitation for Russian officials. The third package (Feb 28, March 2, 2022) designed the closure of EU airspace to Russian aircraft, the ban on transactions with the Russian Central Bank and the SWIFT ban for seven Russian banks. On March 15, 2022, a fourth package was approved meaning to ban transactions with specific state-owned enterprises and to restrict exports and imports on specific goods. A fifth package (April 8, 2022) intended to enshrine import bans on coal, wood, cement, seafood and liquor, prohibited Russian vessels in EU ports and sanctioned 217 individuals and 18 Russian-affiliated entities. The sixth (June 3, 2022) banned imports on Russian oil, provided further SWIFT bans, and sanctioned 65 individuals and 18 entities. The seventh ''maintenance and alignment'' package (July 21, 2022) banned Russian gold imports and sanctioned 54 individuals and 10 entities. The eighth package (October 6, 2022) imposed a price cap on maritime transport of Russian oil, expanded export restrictions and sanctioned 30 individuals and 7 entities. The ninth (December 16, 2022) banned the export of drone engines, restricted further the number of transactions with Russian banks and sanctioned 141 individuals and 49 entities. The tenth package (February 25, 2023) prohibited the export of critical technology and the import of asphalt and synthetic rubber, sanctioning 87 individuals and 34 entities. The eleventh package (June 23, 2023) enhanced the cooperation to prevent sanctions circumvention, assured stricter export controls and sanctioned 71 individuals and 33 entities. A twelfth package was approved on December 18, 2023, imposing the ban on Russian diamonds and certain goods, enforcing the oil price cap and sanctioning 106 individuals and 88 entities. The thirteenth package (February 23, 2024) further restricted drone-related activities and goods, sanctioned entities in third countries supporting Russia as well as 69 individuals and 47 entities. The latest restriction package, the fourteenth, banned the reloading services for Russian liquified

natural gas (LNG) on EU territory and LNG new investment projects; it outlawed the use of Russia's Financial Messaging System (SPFS) and sanctioned 69 individuals and 47 entities - political parties, foundations and NGOs - which will no longer be allowed to accept fundings from Russia (European Council, 2024).

It is useful to remark how the European Union provided some additional sanctions on third countries such as Belarus, Iran, and North Korea consequently to their involvement in the Russian aggression by taking Moscow's side.
For instance, Belarus was sanctioned on March 9, 2022, and June 29, 2024, by targeting their banks and financial inflows. While Iran (July 20, 2023) and North Korea (February 23, 2024) have been sanctioned by the Council because of their military support for Russia's unfair war on Ukraine.

Therefore, in gradual steps the international framework is being shaped, deploying old and new alliances.

3.2.2 Energy Security

Within the sanctions imposed on Russia, it is observable how the energy sector was of particular interest and, hence, was targeted by the European Union.
This is a clear suggestion of the unprecedented changes implemented in the energy market by EU leaders due to geopolitical tensions developed after February 2022.
The conflict in Ukraine has, in fact, determined a massive turning point in the energy provisions to which Europe as a whole and its Member States drew upon, mainly from Russia, opening a phase of substitution with new producers.

In this regard, the European Commission presented in May 2022 the RePowerEU, a plan to expedite the shift to green energy and drastically reduce reliance on Russian fossil resources. The main objective of the programme was to lay the foundation exactly for European energy self-sufficiency.

REPowerEU was in fact grounded on the diversification of energy furniture starting from a reduction of Russian imports from 45% in 2021 to 15% in 2023; it also outlined a ban on imports such as maritime imports of crude oil, refined petroleum products and coal from Moscow. Finally, it proposed energy alternatives valuing an increase in reliable partner imports and domestic renewable energy production.
Two more targets focused on energetic sustainability and the production of clean energy, by reaching an 18% decrease in gas consumption between August 2022 and March 2024, reducing gas demand by 15%, as well as increasing renewable capacity through the doubling of solar power generation from 2019, and electricity generation from renewable sources to exceed that from gas, then by investing in renewable energy such as solar and wind capacity.

The plan was followed by the submission of legislative proposals adopted in the next months in the form of regulations. Following the information provided by the European Commission on the topic, the first key results obtained had been positive, securing the EU energy thanks to proper gas storage which reached 90% in mid-August 2023, surpassing expectations for winter filling both in 2022 and 2023.

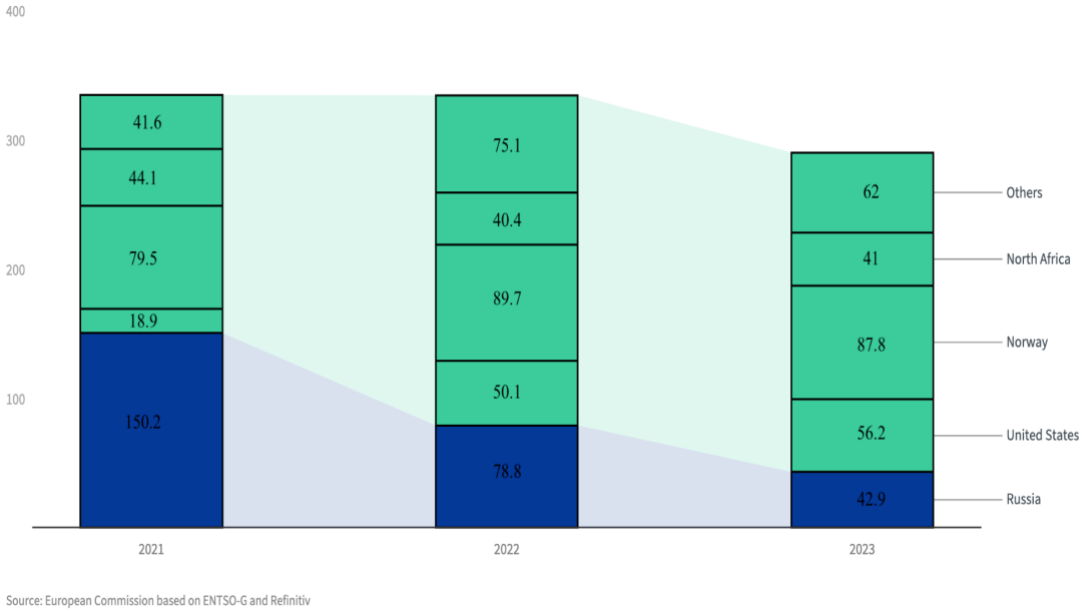
Moreover, the EU Energy Platform was put into place, the energy prices significantly decreased from their high in 2022 and a common gas procurement system has been introduced. Lastly, remained the 42.5% renewable energy target set by the Renewable Energy Directive and the Green Deal Industrial Plan to increase the industrial output of products and technology with zero net emissions (*REPowerEU*, 2022).

Even though within the near future the EU plans a further reduction of Russian gas imports, an enhancement of industrial decarbonization, an acceleration of renewables rollout and investment in energy infrastructure for the improvement of energy efficiency, the comprehensive outcome obtained since moving in the direction of the phase-out from Russian fuel consumption has been beneficial to EU Member States, who strengthened EU energy independence, supported Ukraine and enshrined a failure of Russian attempt to divide Europe, boosting a greater European *union*.
Since Russia invaded Ukraine the European Union, and its MS stepped up their energy diplomacy.
Following the data gathered by the European Council Foreign Relations' *Energy Deals Tracker*[36], a new trend emerged from the over 180 agreements in the energy sector, at both government and corporate levels reached between the EU and its Member States, as well as other nations, since the beginning of the war (Comms & Comms, 2024).

Imports of Russian pipeline gas fell from 150.2 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2021 to 42.9 bcm in 2022 (see Figure 5), then from more than 40% in 2021 to more than 8% in 2023, according to data from the European Council and the Council of the European Union. The main factors contributing to the decline were a significant increase in LNG imports from various partners and a general drop in gas consumption within the EU; moreover, an increasing part of the other partners' deficits compensated for this.

[36] The Energy Deals Tracker, issued by the ECFR, is an instrument providing a comprehensive overview of the energy-related agreements between EU and its Member States, as well as with third countries, in order to improve European's capacity to secure their energy sector in the long term.

Figure 6 *- Changes in EU's gas supply from major partners to the EU between 2021 and 2023 (Source: European Commission based on ENTSO-G and Refinitiv)*



For instance, looking at Figure 6, the major gas suppliers in Europe in 2023 are the United States, to which EU imports grew from 18.9 bcm in 2021 to 56.2 bcm in 2023 (19.4%); Norway, increasing its share from 79.5 bcm in 2021 to 87.7 bcm in 2023 (30.3%); North Africa even if with a slight decrease from 2021 with 44.1 bcm to 41 bcm in 2023 (14.1%). From the *others,* reliable EU partners are the United Kingdom and Qatar.

In summary, Europe's energy structure has significantly altered its energy structure by drastically reducing its dependence on Russian fossil fuels and promoting trade with new trustworthy energy partners, while accelerating the transition to renewable energy and enhancing the Union's energy security and unity.

3.2.3 Food Safety

Ukraine is one of the strongest exporters in the world for nutritional products such as sunflower, barley, corn, and oilseeds[37]. Notwithstanding, Russia's illegitimate and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has severely hampered its ability to export globally, particularly through the Black Sea, with enormous repercussions on the world food and feed industry, considering how previous to the conflict almost 90% of Ukrainian agricultural exports came from the Black Sea.

In this regard, in May 2022 the European Commission launched the *Solidarity Lanes Action Plan* in order to enable Ukraine to export its agricultural goods by setting up pathways for overland transport (via rail, road and inland waterways) of grain, ensuring that despite Russia's attacks, products continued to flow to and out of Ukraine, instead of being left to waste in silos.
Since they were put into place, in the period ranging from May 2022 and April 2024, the Solidarity Lanes have facilitated the import of 52 million tons of necessities and the export of about 136 million tons of commodities, including 70 million tons of grain. An estimated 157 billion euros of goods worth have been saved thanks to the trade made through these routes, and more than €2 billion in funding has been raised to assist operator liquidity, capacity expansions, and maintenance, all of which had a major positive economic impact on Ukraine and the world's food viability - for instance, exporting as far as China and Africa in addition to Europe.
Moreover, important advances have been generated including the improvement of road transport agreements with Moldova and Ukraine, new rail connections, and EU investment in infrastructure (European Commission, n.d.)

However, this resulted in a temporary distortion in the markets of Ukraine's five neighboring member states - Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia respectively - which led to the request of 2 May 2023, for the introduction of temporal

[37] Following the data provided by the European Commission, customarily, 75% of Ukraine's grain output is exported, contributing roughly 20% of the country's yearly export earnings.

restrictive measures on exports of a range of Ukrainian foodstuffs, which once expired on September 15, 2023, were not further renewed.
Therefore, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia have implemented restrictive measures on Ukraine’s grain on a bilateral basis, bringing President of Ukraine’s Zelensky to declare its intention to pursue the matter as an appeal to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for redress from such conditions.

On January 31, 2024, however, the European Commission declared that import taxes and quotas on all shipments from Ukraine to the EU would be removed until June 5, 2024. The EU's continued financial and political support for the country is demonstrated by this extension.

3.2.4 Border Security and Migration

The European Union's border security policy and migratory patterns have been significantly impacted by the ongoing war in Ukraine, with a particular focus on member states in Eastern and Central Europe. The conflict's humanitarian catastrophe has indeed increased the pressure on migrant flows, forcing the EU to adapt and adjust improving its border control policies.

Following the data provided by UNHCR by the end of 2023, an estimated 3.7 million people had been forced to flee their homes due to the conflict in Ukraine, remaining internally displaced, with 6.3 million individuals seeking safety overseas, and nearly 6 million of them branching out in Europe.
In this regard, the European Union quickly came to a consensus decision to implement the Temporary Protection Directive[38] (European Commission, 2022), which granted rights to welfare assistance, employment opportunities, and education to those in need while providing clarity and security, thanks to the unity of the Member States laying at the heart of this strategy. The Commission took charge of organizing a 'Solidarity Platform' where MS could smoothly communicate with each other regarding reception capability. It was stated that over 4 million Ukrainians applied for temporary protection which entitled them to employment, housing, healthcare, and education for their children. Nearly 8 million refugees have been registered in the EU, mostly women, children and elderly people, whilst approximately 20 percent of youngsters from Ukraine are currently seeking asylum in the EU (Delegation of the European Union to the United States, 2024).

As a direct result of this phenomenon, the European Union has been subjected to increasing pressure on migration flows. For instance, millions of Ukrainians have taken up residence in EU neighbors, especially in center-eastern Europe, in nations such as Poland with 956,635 refugees as of March 2024, the Czech Republic with 381,400 refugees, Hungary with 65,585, Romania and Slovakia with respectively 78,745 and 115,875 refugees (Statista, 2024).

[38] In regard to the Temporary Protection, the Council of the EU agreed on June 25, 2024, to extend the directive effectiveness until March 2026.

Although in absolute terms, the main destination country remains Russia with 1,212,585 refugees (Statista, 2024), mainly for functional reasons such as geographic proximity, linguistic and sometimes ethnic ties, lower cost of living or the absence of logistically feasible alternatives, have driven a large part of the population of eastern Ukraine to take refuge in the territories of the Federation.
In any case, Europe is under severe strain because of all the migratory inflows, which are not only related to the crisis in Ukraine but also add up to a constant condition of instability in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, leading to a delicate standpoint of flow management.

Therefore, European leaders' reaction to the migratory phenomenon has resulted in a set of improvements made by the European Union in sight of the heightened migration demands. First of all putting in place a greater border management, by the extension of Frontex Operations. Frontex, the European Border, and Coast Guard European Agency have emerged to be essential in helping Member States through provisioning stronger external border control by providing extra staff and expertise to MS - for instance deploying added Frontex staff at the EU-Ukraine, Moldova-Ukraine and Romania borders - carrying out coordinated actions as for risk assessment and arranging for the return of people ineligible for international protection, also by offering technical assistance. Secondly, the EU has been enhancing the monitoring and supervision of border crossings by the deployment of cutting-edge technologies including drones, satellite images, and biometric systems. It has managed to provide further funding - for instance, the Home Affairs budget for 2021-2027 has seen a substantial increase of resources to guarantee Member States supply proper asylum processes and reception facilities (European Commission, 2022) - setting aside more money to fortify border infrastructure, boost border guard capacity, and increase detection capabilities[39]. Ultimately, to enhance inflow surveillance and guarantee the appropriate treatment of migrants, the EU has set up hotspots in frontline states where incoming migrants can be registered, identified, and screened.

[39] For instance, since the beginning of the war, the European Union allocated around €18 billion overall from the EU budget to support Ukrainian refugees (Delegation of the European Union to the United States, 2024).

Despite the efforts for the implementation of enhanced border surveillance and control, discussions on solidarity, burden-sharing between nations and the management of refugee flows have provoked debates in Member States due to the convoluted migration scenario within Europe, disputes worsened with the onset of the Ukrainian war.

In fact, even though the debate was already in place from the 2000s, the crisis has brought to light the differences in the ways various Member States perceive and handle the constraints posed by migrations.

Therefore, in order to address the disparities in how different EU member states experience and respond to migratory pressures, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)[40] reform has been developed, contemplating a more equitable and unified approach to immigration and asylum laws throughout the whole of the EU.

[40] Since 1999, the CEAS has been operational. But in 2020, the European Commission decided to overhaul the system based on three key tenets: efficient processes for asylum and repatriation; solidarity; fair responsibility sharing; and improved ties with other nations (Common European Asylum System, n.d.).

3.3 Changes in Regional Security

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the landscape of regional security in Europe has undergone significant transformations.

To strengthen their national security and stabilize the area, Eastern European nations - especially those that share direct borders with Russia or Ukraine - have made calculated changes. Poland, for instance, has increased military spending and fortified its defense infrastructure as a major NATO defense spender. In response to Russian aggression, the Baltic States have also increased their military and financial defense efforts. Bulgaria and Romania have strengthened their regional defense capabilities and NATO alliances.

Additionally, regional initiatives such as the Visegrád Group, the Baltic Assembly, and the Three Seas Initiative have adapted to address the evolving security dynamics, emphasizing increased cooperation and resilience.

Lastly, historical neutral nations like Finland, Sweden, Austria, and Switzerland have also reassessed their positions due to the perceived threat of Russia, enhancing their engagement with NATO and other security frameworks while navigating their traditional neutrality.

As it will be illustrated in the following paragraphs in more detail, these collective responses illustrate a profound shift in regional security strategies driven by ongoing geopolitical tensions and the need for enhanced defense and cooperation.

3.3.1 Eastern European Countries

In reaction to the Ukrainian crisis, Eastern European nations, particularly those bordering Russia or Ukraine, have reviewed their security measures.
Some strategic adjustments have been put into effect to markedly improve both national security and regional stability in response to the *perceived threat*[41] posed by Russia.

The first case under analysis is Poland, which in the year 2024 was found to be the largest defense spender among NATO member states (*Figure 4*), devoting 4.12 percent of its DGP to the cause (Sbusch, 2024). As a matter of fact, the Polish defense budget grew by 46% from 2022 to 2023 (Parzonka & Van Rij, 2024), with plans to further increase. Following the Polish Ministry of Defense's statement of July 7, 2024, in response to false information about a possible budget cut spread by local media *TV Republika*, the government declared to increase the army budget by 10 percent in 2025 as part of a long-term security strategy covering the period 2025-2028 in order to strengthen the Polish armed forces in the face of the current geopolitical threats (Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej - Portal Gov.pl, n.d.).

Moreover, Poland's complicity in European defense has improved not only through the increasing financial support given to the EU's defense industry and capabilities, but also through the strengthening of its military presence. Apart from the scope of the Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) for which Poland has been the host country for NATO's multinational battlegroups since 2017, the newest NATO base - a ballistic missile defense installation under US command - was placed in Poland, demonstrating the close cooperation and close bilateral relations. In addition, in 2024, in cooperation with Germany, Poland deployed 2,500 troops committed to the EU Battlegroups, while as a frontline state, it participated in the EU Military Assistance Mission in Ukraine, as part of which it provided training to *a third of the 50,000 Ukrainian soldiers enlisted in the mission.*

[41] In line with the Securitization Theory, presented in chapter I, paragraph 2.3.4.

To resume, while in the previous years, Poland was wary of supporting EU defense projects out of concern that they would mimic NATO architecture, it has recently started to consider NATO as pivotal in European security, showing its potential to emerge as one of the main security players in Europe within the next few years (Parzonka & Van Rij, 2024).

The second study-case is the one of Baltic States - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - which as a consequence of Russia's unjustified annexation of Crimea first and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine then, have gradually moved towards the enhancement of their national security.
First of all, they increased their military expenditure quickly exceeding NATO's 2% threshold. Confronting data from *Figure 4,* in 2021 Lavia was spending 2.09% of its GDP while reaching 3.15% in 2024. Lithuania also grew its military expenditure going from 1.96% in 2021 to 2.85% in 2024; Estonia raised its spending on defense going from 2.03% in 2021 to 3.43% in 2024.

Equally with Poland, the Baltic States welcomed the deployment of NATO eFP multinational battlegroups over their territories first in 2017, led by the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany respectively. In 2022 consequently, to the Russian action of aggression, it was decided by NATO to increase the strength of the multinational battlegroups from battalion to brigade level in the Baltics. (Budginaite-Froehly, 2024). Additionally, within a bilateral agreement with Germany it was decided to station an additional brigade in Lithuania permanently, searching for a major impact on the ongoing attempt to increase Allied presence in the Baltic States.
Furthermore, the Baltic Sea region has seen the stationing of a sizable contingent of Allied troops in all three states, bringing for the first time NATO partners to unite and jointly counteract a military escalation in the Baltics.

Finally, in the most recent months, significant advancements have been made in the Baltic republics' defense programs in the direction of defense industry modernization. Lithuania

and Rheinmetall[42] inked a contract in June 2024 to frame a 155 mm artillery shell ammunition facility for NATO use. In March, Latvia passed a new *Defense Industry Law* and in July, Lithuania is meant to follow suit.
Overall, the Baltics demonstrated a willingness to be prepared for any assault, strengthening their defense sectors by developing strategic alliances, upgrading technology, increasing military equipment manufacture, and increasing global competitiveness (Budginaite-Froehly, 2024).

Romania and Bulgaria, on their side, fortified their strategic partnership with NATO. In a Joint Press Statement of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Romania and the Republic of Bulgaria, released on March 15, 2024, on the first anniversary of the signing of the *Joint Political Declaration for a Strategic Partnership between Romania and the Republic of Bulgaria,* it was stated how amidst continued Russian aggression against Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria were dedicated to defending the Black Sea region as well NATO's Southeastern border. In particular, they placed a high priority on assisting Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, in enhancing their resilience, sovereignty, and European integration along with fortifying the Euro-Atlantic security zone in conjunction with NATO member states. In order to strengthen defense, safeguard freedom of passage and safeguard vital energy infrastructure in the Black Sea, they announced to keep working in symbiosis with NATO and the EU. They also sought to invigorate security and collaboration in the Western Balkans and support the restoration of peace based on international law (Press Release, 2024).

It should also be noted that both Bulgaria and Romania participated in joint exercises and hosted NATO military assets, while they increased their defense spending from 1.52% in 2021 to 2.18% of GDP for Bulgaria, and from 1.85% in 2021 to 2.25% in 2024 for Bulgaria.

[42] Rheinmetall - the International Integrated Technology Group - is a German firearms manufacturing company.

3.3.2 Regional Initiatives

The security challenges posed by the Ukrainian conflict have given rise to several regional initiatives as well as national ones, including the Visegrád Group, the Baltic Assembly and the Three Sea Initiatives.

The Visegrád Group ("Visegrád Four" or "V4"), comprising Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Czechia, was formed on February 15, 1991, aiming to promote collaboration in Central Europe by highlighting common values. It was only on May 1, 2004, that all of the V4 nations acceded to the EU, in the hopes of moving past their historical differences. The Group, *currently referred to as the most clearly profiled initiative in Central Europe* - is designed to improve transatlantic and European security through military coordination within current structures, for instance passing by mutual contacts from the highest-level political summits to non-governmental associations and research bodies in the region, along with emphasizing the maintenance of cultural cohesiveness, with the ultimate goal of bolstering regional stability and showcasing their capacity for integration (International Visegrád Fund, 2008)

Following the analysis provided by the Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies, due to varying responses to the Russia-Ukraine War, the V4 proved to be internally divided. Slovakia, for instance, solicited support from the EU after voicing concerns about the economic effects of EU sanctions on Russian energy, whilst Poland and Czechia, criticizing Hungary for not embracing energy restrictions, have adopted a more assertive position against Russia. As a result, tensions among the V4 emerged among the Group, hindering their cooperation. However, although it currently appears difficult to reestablish the group's pre-war collaboration within the EU - especially between Poland and Hungary which recently worked to strengthen their ties - changing dynamics point to the possibility of future reconciliation. (ÖZKAN, 2022).

Pivotal is an organization for interparliamentary cooperation between Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, named the Baltic Assembly (BA). Founded in 1991 and focuses on working together to address regional and global issues through political, economic, and cultural

means. During 2024, the BA is being led by Lithuania which affirmed to concentrate on strengthening the Baltic region's resilience, development and security. The conflict in Ukraine has had a major impact on the Baltic Assembly's agenda and operations, primarily highlighting the developments for policies that prioritize security, energy independence, economic resilience, and regional unity. For instance, by putting cyber defense systems in place and fending off hybrid threats, the Baltic States have improved their security cooperation in addition to the previously listed measures. They diminished their energy dependence on Russian energy and accelerated the investments in renewable energy sources and infrastructure (LNG terminals, interconnectors). BA further called for stronger EU and NATO support for Ukraine while exacerbating sanctions for Russia and focused on economic initiatives that would mitigate the impacts of the war. Paramount was the need for regional unity and cooperation reinforced among the Baltic States because of the conflict, while also understanding the importance of joining efforts in fields such as digital modernization and infrastructure development, ensuring collective resilience (Baltic Assembly, n.d.).

The Three Sea Initiative (3SI) involves 13 countries located between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas[43] and three international partners - Germany, the United States and the European Commission. Formed in 2015, the 3SI aims to enhance regional connectivity and security, as well as economic resilience by implementing infrastructure projects in the transportation, energy, and digital sectors. To achieve general peace and prosperity in the area, the initiative also emphasizes the vitality of teamwork among its member states in the security domain. Gitana Nauseda, the President of Lithuania - the country chairing the 3SI in 2024 - pronounced on the improved connectivity and collaboration in the North-South axis corridor as strategically critical especially in light of Russia's illegitimate and unjustified war against Ukraine, contemplating a more interconnected Europe and tighter transatlantic alliance. Indeed, the Initiative was motivated by the war to ensure infrastructure resilience, energy independence and improved security cooperation as top priorities. In response to the changing geopolitical environment, the 3SI demonstrates that it continues to strengthen regional solidarity and collective security.

[43] Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Slovak Republic, Hellenic Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Hungary.

3.3.3 Old Neutrality

Due to the Ukrainian crisis, and in response to broader shifting geopolitical conditions, several historically neutral European nations have reexamined their neutrality positions, strengthening their participation in NATO and other security organizations.

Since the very beginning of the Russian aggression on Ukraine, which has *shattered a long-standing sense of stability in northern Europe* (Chatterjee, 2023), Finland and Sweden have increased their collaboration with NATO[44] by regularly participating in NATO military exercises, upgrading their interoperability with NATO forces, as well engaging in high-level discussions to address regional security concerns, particularly in the Baltic Sea region. In addition, concerns over Russia's security have caused a spike in popular support within both Nordic States for tighter connections with the Atlantic Organization, which has prompted discussions about their possible membership, departing from the long-standing nonpartisan stances they had since World War II for Finland, and even the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) for Sweden.
It was under these circumstances that first Finland, and lately Sweden - even if with some initial resistances from Hungary and Turkey[45] - have effectively joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Finland applied as a NATO candidate on May 17, 2022, becoming the 31° member of the Alliance on April 4, 2023. Sweden, on the other hand, applied for NATO membership on the same day as Finland even if it officially became NATO 32° member on March 7, 2024.

Austria, as a member of the European Union, has always preferred to stay apart from NATO or other military organizations. This positioning is reasonably linked to Vienna's neutrality, which has been upheld by its own constitution ever since it gained complete independence from the Allies in 1955, which forbids the nation from accepting foreign bases and entering military alliances, thus emerging as especially resilient to losing its impartiality. Nevertheless, Austria has authorized the military's deployment to the Red

[44] Finland and Sweden became both official partners of NATO in 1994 (Chatterjee, 2023).
[45] Turkish President R.T. Erdogan expressed his opposition to Finland and Sweden joining NATO, justifying its position in consideration with the two nations permit organizations that Turkey considers terrorist organizations to operate on their territory (YPG, PYD, PKK, KCK..)

Sea (March 6, 2024), encouraged the transfer of European armaments to Ukraine and reinforced defense ties with its NATO allies in Western Europe (Höller, 2024).
The chancellor of Austria, Karl Nehammer, was interviewed by the research hub Group d'Études Géopolitique on April 8, 2024. During the interview, the chancellor stated that although Austria is militarily neutral, it is increasing its military budget "just like every other member state." As a result, the GDP proportion allocated to defense will increase from 0.77% in 2022 to 1.5% by 2027. The chancellor enounced how the aggressive war in Ukraine demonstrated that Austria can be an "extremely dynamic'' member of the EU without actually providing fatal weapons or munitions, keeping an approach of peace promotion, whilst backing consecutive sanction packages against Russia (Gressani, 2024). Therefore, what follows is that Austria's strategic stance is based on a robust commitment to its neutrality while actively contributing to European security and defense through increased military investment, humanitarian aid, and support for sanctions against Russia.

While upholding its long-standing neutrality policy, Switzerland has increased its participation in European security frameworks. In fact, Bern has been taking part in EU security missions and enhancing collaboration in EU counter-terrorism and cyber defense since the start of the Ukrainian invasion.

Although Switzerland has always refrained from taking sides in European disputes[46], in 2022 it voted in favor of enforcing sanctions against Russia on behalf of the European Union, sparking in public opinion the conviction of moving in the opposite direction with its historical identity, at the point of feeding public appetite for NATO membership and pushing government representatives to evaluate the idea of deepening cooperation with the Organization. Moreover, the Russian strike prompted a decision to increase Swiss military spending to 1% of its GDP by 2035 from 0.8% in 2022, considering also that it will host fighter aircraft landing during the army's training operations for the first time since the Cold War (O'Sullivan, 2024).

[46] Swiss neutrality is enshrined in the *Act of Perpetual Swiss Neutrality and Inviolability*, signed on March 20, 1815, by the Congress of Vienna held in order to restructure the power balance over Europe, so that Russia, Britain, Prussia and Austria - the countries that defeated Napoleon, which invaded Switzerland - would have had equal authority (Pauchard, 2024).

Notwithstanding, “though the nation demonstrated more partisanship in the Ukrainian conflict than in any other recent conflict, its neutrality stance is still well-liked at home” (Berni, 2023) as a national poll in 2023 suggested the fondness for a neutrality policy for over 90% of the population voting for backing neutrality (O’Sullivan, 2024).

CHAPTER III

4.1 Involvement of Global Actors

The following chapter analyzes the positions and reactions of the most significant international actors in light of the Ukrainian war, assessing the diplomatic efforts made to resolve the hostilities. Furthermore, the impact of the conflict on the legal framework will be analyzed, considering its repercussions on global norms and the legitimacy of the international system itself.

More in-depth, in this first paragraph will study the United States and Russian involvement in the conflict, as well as the multilateral institutions' ability to respond to the controversies.

Investigating the U.S. engagement in the Ukraine crisis, special attention will be paid to new diplomatic, military, and economic connections. The main areas of interest for this study will focus on the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Russia, the US government's massive military aid to Ukraine, and the broader implications of these actions for international alliances, finalizing the relationship between the US and Russia. Finally, the impact of the US in comparison to global efforts to end the conflict will be considered, as well as the implications for the country's foreign policy will be clarified by this analysis.

Looking into Russia's intentions, military actions, and diplomatic efforts during the conflict, it will evaluate how the war has affected Russia's ties with other international players. In this section, Russia's intentions, military actions, and diplomatic efforts during the Ukraine conflict will be examined, alongside the shifting dynamics of its international alliances. The analysis will assess how the war has led to deteriorating relations with the West, the imposition of sanctions, and strengthened ties with non-Western powers such as China. Additionally, the varying responses of countries across regions like Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America will be considered, highlighting how the conflict has pushed global alliances towards a more multipolar order.

Finally, this section will look at the responses of the UN, OSCE, and Council of Europe, among other multilateral organizations, to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It will examine humanitarian efforts, international peace initiatives, and resolutions. The focus of the analysis will be on the limitations imposed on the OSCE by Russian obstruction, the veto power of Russia on the UN, and the Council of Europe's decisive actions, including the expulsion of Russia. The varying levels of effectiveness of these institutions will be assessed in light of the Russian opposition and underlying structural problems.

4.1.1 USA Entanglement

As in most global antagonisms, the United States can be seen to be involved in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict under three aspects: through diplomatic posture, economic support, and military assistance. Concurrently, it will be shown how the war has influenced American foreign policy.

Russia's actions in the conflict have been strongly condemned by the United States, which has described them as a breach of both national sovereignty and international law. The U.S. government has repeatedly called for an immediate end to hostilities, the withdrawal of Russian forces, and respect for Ukraine's territorial sovereignty in statements from the White House, the State Department, and other important agencies.
The U.S. has backed several UN resolutions denouncing Russia's aggression and showcasing the significance of an international system based on rules. To form a cohesive front against Russian actions, the US has actively engaged with international allies and organizations, along with NATO, the G7, and the European Union. High-level diplomatic gatherings, phone correspondence between President Biden and other world leaders, and public statements to energize backing for Ukraine as well as ratchet up pressure on Russia have all been part of this. Correspondingly, the U.S. has consolidated international sanctions, pressed peace talks, and obtained promises for humanitarian aid by using its diplomatic clout. In an effort to reduce tensions and promote a diplomatic settlement, the U.S. has also maintained open lines of communication with Russia through its diplomatic channels (United States Department of State, 2024).

Speaking of sanctions, since the beginning of the conflict, the U.S. has targeted Russia with a series of economic sanctions that focused on key sectors of the Russian economy, including finance, energy, defense and technology, with the aim of both signaling growing international opposition to Russia's actions and reducing its economic capacity to support military operations. In addition, as a leader in imposing tough sanctions on Russia, the U.S. has inspired many allies to follow suit with equal or supplementary measures through global organizations such as the G7 and NATO; at the same time, as

part of this leadership, the U.S. has coordinated with the European Union, the U.K., Canada, Australia, Japan, and South Korea to present a unified front.

More explicitly, the financial sanctions included blocking transactions with major Russian banks, such as Sberbank, VTB, and Gazprombank, and removing them from the SWIFT international payment system. Furthermore, by freezing their assets, these sanctions aimed to stop Russian oligarchs, public officials, and organizations connected to the Kremlin from accessing and using foreign financial systems.
To nullify Russia's technological development and military power, export restrictions were imposed on vital technologies, primarily semiconductors, aircraft, and military hardware. Not to mention, energy sanctions were implemented, mainly to limit the export of Russian coal, natural gas, and oil, thus depriving the Russian government of a significant revenue stream.

Regarding the military, the U.S. has led the way in providing Ukraine with military support and has extended a wide range of assistance to fortify Ukraine's defenses against Russian aggression. This support comes in the form of direct financial assistance, both lethal and non-lethal weaponry, and extensive intelligence sharing. For instance, following the information provided by the U.S. Department of State dating September 6, 2024, US has provided “more than 55.7 billion dollars in military assistance’’ counting as key components of their military aid, are the provision of air defense systems, fires, aircraft and unmanned aerial systems, anti-armor and small arms, as well maritime systems, other capabilities, and training programs for Ukrainian forces. In order to guarantee a consistent flow of military supplies and coordinated support for Ukraine, the US has additionally assisted NATO allies in coordinating military logistics and assistance.

Most importantly, as the Russian-Ukrainian conflict prompted a reaction from the United States, which worked to defend Ukraine, the United States influenced the reaction to the conflict of other states and global entities.

The U.S. has changed its foreign policy in several areas, including alliances, energy policy, defense strategy, and interactions with both allies and adversaries.
First, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to European security through NATO, ensuring the Alliance's cohesion and efficacy, calling on allies to increase defense spending, and expediting NATO's expansion with auxiliary members. The US also kept a central interest in the Indo-Pacific region and increased its presence in key Eastern European countries like Poland, Romania, and the Baltic States in order to thwart China's rise in the area.

Secondly, regarding the energy security sector, the U.S. has tried to diversify its energy suppliers as much as possible away from Russian gas and oil, seeking to make themselves independent. Domestically, the U.S. has increased its production and export of liquefied natural gas (LNG), trying to compensate Europe by decreasing imports of Russian gas. On a broader level, this maneuver, also carried out by Europe itself, has accelerated global efforts to invest in renewable energy and green technologies, reducing global dependence on energy suppliers with authoritarian regimes.

Into the bargain, the United States has been working closely with its allies in the European Union, NATO, G7, and other democratic mechanisms to coordinate responses to Russian aggression, including plans for military assistance, economic initiatives, and diplomatic strategies. Thus, the United States has been using financial regulations, export controls, and economic sanctions more frequently as tools of foreign policy; the ultimate goal of this intent was to prevent enemies from accessing international markets and to present a united economic front. The Biden administration also sought to deepen its relations with non-NATO countries - among them, emerging democracies and middle-class powers like Japan, South Korea, and Australia, in the Indo-Pacific area - that expressed similar concerns about authoritarian aggression beyond the borders of Europe.

The war prompted the U.S. to intensify its efforts to reorganize global supply chains in an attempt to become less dependent on its enemies. Specifically, such efforts to “shore

up" supply chains vital to important industries (i.e. pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, rare earth minerals) to create and expand supply networks began to emerge on the political agendas of states in general already in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
As mentioned earlier, the U.S. post-Ukrainian war actions included reinvigorating its defense spending and prioritizing countering conventional war threats in Europe. At the military level, more work has been done on ground forces, air defenses and long-range precision weapons, a strategy that brings out the shift from a post-Cold War focus on counterinsurgency or asymmetric warfare[47]. This suggests a shift to new warfare or conflict-prevention trends involving the integration of military and non-military strategies: work has been done on countering disinformation, cybersecurity resilience and recognition of information warfare.

Ultimately, the Russo-Ukrainian War has had a disastrous effect on U.S.-Russian ties. They have reached their lowest point of degeneration since the end of the Cold War, with the U.S. focusing its foreign policy on isolating and containing Russia since the beginning of the Ukrainian invasion in 2022 and closing the bridges they had constructed during those years, making them "adversaries once again" (NatStrat, 2021).
In this regard, the upcoming U.S. elections in November 2024 will be particularly crucial in determining global stability, leaving the priorities, policies and strategy of the new administration with the crucial task of addressing current and future geopolitical issues, combining the possibility of increasing tensions or opening up new chances for communication and cooperation; especially due to the interaction with the rise of China (Khan, 2024), as will be discussed in the next section.

[47] As was the case during the Vietnam War between the United States and Vietnam, asymmetric warfare is a form of conflict in which the belligerents have radically different military might, strategies, or tactics.

4.1.2 Russia's Global Alliances and Strategic Shifts Post-War

Russia's involvement in the war altered its relations with other world powers, reshaping coalitions and the dynamics between adversaries. Deep hostility has characterized relations between the West and Russia in particular, leading to the downgrading of diplomatic ties and the imposition of hitherto unheard-of sanctions by Western governments.

When analyzing Moscow's international relations following the invasion of Ukraine, it is crucial to take into account its sturdy economic and strategic ties to China. As a matter of fact, both Russia and China intend to challenge the U.S. global dominance system and forge stronger ties, that pre-existing from before the conflict.
Beijing, nevertheless, did not fully back Putin's military campaign. Instead, it has contributed to lessen the effects of the sanctions placed on Moscow by providing lifelines through the purchase of Russian goods and energy. Therefore, it is better to characterize the alliance as cautious since China has carefully balanced its cooperation, avoiding direct involvement in hostilities while still preserving its economic ties to the West. By abstaining from voting on most UN resolutions in favor of a ceasefire and accusing the United States of ignoring Russian security concerns in Ukraine, Beijing has de facto exploited the conflict, playing both the West and Russia. China has benefited from the global energy crisis by purchasing cheap Russian energy while entering the European market since *"Europe's dependence on China is growing as fast as it is losing its competitiveness to China''* (NatStrat, 2021b); as well by suggesting a Chinese peace solution. Overall, it can be said that it was Xi Jinping China who endorsed a *pragmatic approach* with Russia.

Russia has also strained relations with some *emerging powers* such as India and other non-aligned countries with whom Moscow has had a ‘’traditional relation’’. Speaking of New Delhi, it avoided directly condemning Russia although it pursued closer ties with Western powers, pursuing a more balancing act: buying Russian oil while maintaining strong relations with the United States, which shows the complexities of its stance (NatStrat, 2021b).

While Russia's ties with Southern Europe and South Asia have remained fairly stable despite the double-teaming of some countries, Central Asia's countries have definitely depressed their relations with Putin after the conflict. As a matter of fact, Russia's neighborhood felt the effects of the "Special Military Operation" first (NatStrat, 2021b). These countries aimed to gain independence from Moscow's sphere of influence by pursuing a more temperate multilateralism that would involve both China and the West, showing publicly their stances; for instance, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan abstained from voting on the UN resolutions denouncing Russia, while Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan did not participate at all. It can be concluded that Russia weakened its position over those nations while they tried to review their financial and security reliance.

Russia's allies in Southeast Asia have responded to its actions in Ukraine in a complex and nuanced way. While the West has largely united in denouncing Russia, ASEAN[48] countries have taken different stances due to their unique geopolitical and historical ties. Singapore, for example, defied convention and backed certain sanctions, while Myanmar publicly backed Russia, in part due to its military ties. Countries like Vietnam and Laos, which have Soviet-era ties to Russia, have chosen to remain neutral by abstaining from UN voting. Overall, it can be demonstrated that Russia has maintained crucial alliances that have reduced broader regional censure, even in the absence of the influence of the United States or China in the region (NatStrat, 2021b).

Significant geopolitical shifts have been brought to light by West Asia's reaction to Russia's actions in Ukraine, exposing fissures in long-standing pro-West alliances. The Gulf monarchies have kept lines of communication open with Russia despite supporting the West in the UN elections. They see the war in Ukraine as one of many worldwide conflicts rather than as a single danger to the global rules-based system. Whereas the UAE[49], Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman have avoided using terms like "invasion" preferring to call for negotiated settlements, Qatar and Kuwait have been more

[48] ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, founded on August 8, 1967. The member states are Brunei Darussalam, Cambogia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. (*Library Guides: Southeast Asian Region Countries Law: Regional & Amp; Comparative Resources*, n.d.)
[49] United Arab Emirates (UAE).

outspokenly in line with the West and have denounced Russia's invasion. Following the beginning of the conflict, Russia's ties with these Gulf states, especially the UAE, have gotten stronger. The UAE has developed into a hub for Russian financial and trade activities, helping Russia get around Western sanctions.

Long-standing allies like Iran, Syria, and Iraq have sided with Russia, which is not surprising. Turkey, a NATO member, has, however, deftly handled its relations with both Russia and Ukraine, serving as a mediator in issues like the Black Sea grain deal and peace negotiations. More concretely, while maintaining diplomatic relations with Russia regarding energy and regional security, Erdoğan's Turkey has given military support to Ukraine (NatStrat, 2021b).
Most remarkably, for all its friendly relations with the West, Israel has remained cautious. Israel's regional interests, especially in Syria, have prompted it to maintain a careful diplomatic balancing act with both Russia and Ukraine (NatStrat, 2021b).

Africa's response to the Ukrainian crisis has been intricate, influenced by its vulnerabilities as well as its wish to stay out of international power struggles. Even though the war has made food, fertilizer, and energy shortages worse, African nations have resisted joining the Western-led "cancel Russia" movement and have refused to impose sanctions on Russia. The 2023 summit with President Putin was attended by fewer African leaders than in previous years, but this suggested a cautious engagement. However, important African countries like Egypt were present, demonstrating their diplomatic ties. Africa's proactive role in finding solutions was highlighted in June 2023 when President Zelensky and President Putin met with an African Peace Mission composed of leaders from seven different nations.

The African Union has also placed a strong emphasis on reforming global governance, claiming that historical imbalances are what are causing crises like those in Gaza and Ukraine. South Africa has backed Russia, abstaining from significant UNGA[50] votes and drawing comparisons between the war in Ukraine and the West's double standards in

[50] UNGA, General Assembly of the United Nations.

Gaza[51], despite Kenya's outspoken criticism of Moscow. This is in line with Africa's larger demand for a more just international order that righteous wrongs from the past (NatStrat, 2021b).

Finally, though there have been some significant exceptions, Latin America's response to the war in Ukraine has generally followed the region's long-standing respect for international law. Despite the fact that many Latin American countries abstained from joining the sanctions or arming Ukraine, they denounced Russia's actions in UN votes. This nuanced strategy clearly demonstrates a wish to stay impartial in world geopolitics (NatStrat, 2021b).

What emerges from the different global reactions to Russia's belligerent actions is a variegated response depending on the exceptional cases of each of the countries, but above all a willingness to distance themselves from a "Cold War picture" (NatStrat, 2021b) in which countries take one side or the other, turning instead towards greater multipolarity.

[51] The so-called double standard refers to the criticism by some countries in the global South, as well as critics in the West, of the international community's selective application of international law. In the aftermath of the outbreak of war in Ukraine, it became apparent how the international community has clung to Ukraine, while other conflicts - such as those in Syria, Yemen or Palestine - have not received the same level of attention or legal intervention.

4.1.3 Multilateral Institutions' Response

The United Nations (UN), along with other global institutions like the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), contributed to the conflict by endorsing resolutions, advocating for humanitarian efforts, keeping an eye on the fighting, and mediating for an end to hostilities.

The UN has responded to the Ukrainian crisis in a broad and complex manner, in line with its mission to enforce international law and its role as a global peacekeeping force, while showing that certain structural shortcomings are limiting the exercise of its powers.

Since the very beginning, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has vigorously repudiated the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Starting from the first major UNGA resolution adopted in March 2022, 141 countries agreed to deplore the aggression, indicating widespread support for Ukraine - even though 5 countries voted against it (Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, the Russian Federation and Syria), and 35 countries abstained (among them China, India and several African and Latin American countries) demonstrating a stance against the general rhetoric (General Assembly, 2022).
A year after the war, with a resolution adopted on 23 February 2023, again 141 countries voted to demand the immediate ending of the Ukrainian conflict, asking for Russia to leave the occupied country under the UN Charter; although here 7 countries voted against, including Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Mali, Nicaragua, Russia and Syria, while 32 countries abstained, among those China, India and Pakistan. On that occasion, the Assembly President mentioned that a "new chapter of history'' was happening, with "stark choices" being made as an international community (UN News, 2023).

Besides publicly condemning the war, the United Nations has taken the lead in organizing humanitarian relief efforts in Ukraine through organizations like the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), delivering vital aid to millions of displaced people. These organizations have worked to provide food, shelter, and medical

supplies to those impacted by the conflict, both inside Ukraine and in neighboring nations that are taking in refugees.

In addition, the United Nations has demonstrated efficacy in its endeavors to look into and collect claims of war crimes during hostilities. In March 2022, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) established an impartial commission to investigate human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine under Resolution 49/1. Accountability is crucial, and the UN has called for unbiased investigations and potential legal action against those responsible for the reported atrocities, which include attacks on civilians and vital infrastructure.

The UN's role in mediating the Black Sea Grain Initiative has been one of its most significant diplomatic successes concerning the conflict. This deal, which was enabled by the brokering of both the UN and Turkey after Russia killed off the deal, made it possible for Ukrainian grain to be safely exported across the Black Sea after the outset of the war, reducing the conflict's impact on the world's food supply, particularly for those weaker nations in the Middle East and Africa that depend on grain imports from Ukraine.

Throughout the conflict, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has consistently called for a peaceful resolution to the war. Although his calls have not yet resulted in a tangible peace process, he has urged all parties to participate in talks and dialogue in order to put an end to hostilities. For instance, in September 2022 Guterres qualified as illegal and a violation of international law the Russian decision to annex after a "*referendum''* parts of the sovereign territories of Ukraine within the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson (UN News, 2022). In an attempt to mediate, Guterres made trips to both Moscow and Kyiv during these years of war; although, without evident success.
Even though the UN has made progress toward bringing an end to hostilities and promoting peace, a structural barrier has hindered its efficacy, harming the organization's reputation on a global scale. In fact, the UN Security Council (UNSC), which is in charge of upholding international peace and security, has faced significant challenges in trying to resolve the conflict for the UN. As a permanent member with veto power, Russia has routinely obstructed resolutions that criticize its policies or call for particular actions to

be taken. This impasse has caused frustration for many member states and brought attention to the UNSC's shortcomings in resolving disputes involving veto-wielding members.

Moving on to the OSCE organization, since 2014 - in the wake of the Russian annexation of Crimea - Ukraine has taken a prominent place in OSCE activities. It is to be remembered that in 2014 and 2015 it was the OSCE brokering the conclusion of the Minsk Agreements in order to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Even after the worsening of the situation at the beginning of 2022, the organization engaged in the first front to facilitate high-level discussions to resolve differences at the diplomatic level - although declaring it impossible to operate with a business-as-usual approach due to the very nature of Russian aggression *"the most severe assault on European security since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act with widespread implications for the whole OSCE region and beyond''* ("PA President Cederfelt Addresses OSCE Ambassadors, Baltic Assembly" 2022).

Most importantly, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict had an overwhelming impact on OSCE activities, mainly due to Russia's veto of OSCE decisions regarding the organization's involvement in providing aid to Ukraine; according to the OSCE statute, resolutions of the organization are reached by consensus and must therefore always be approved by all its members. For instance, exceptionally because of the Russian veto, the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) of the OSCE - one of the primary international bodies on the ground in Ukraine, in charge of ensuring the ceasefire, verifying the withdrawal of heavy weapons and reporting on the security situation in the country. Russian obstructionism also resulted in the termination, on 30 June 2022, of the activities of the Project Coordinator's Office (PCU), which had operated in Ukraine for 25 years until then, cooperating with the national authorities in the politico-military, economic, environmental and humanitarian fields. It was only through a maneuver concerning the *voluntary funding* of OSCE projects by its member states that an attempt was made to circumvent the Russian veto, which cannot be placed on extra-budgetary funds (OSCE, 2023). The organization is thus managing to help Ukraine equally, as through the new

“Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU)‘’ inaugurated on 1 November 2022 (OSCE, n.d.).
Once again, due to Russian obstructionism, no decision was made on the $143 million budget balance, the election of the OSCE President for 2024, or even on a new special monitoring mission in Ukraine.

A concrete example of how the war is changing international relations and climate, in the case of the OSCE, was the unique case where the Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau - OSCE chairperson at the time, 2022 - banned a foreign minister, Russian Sergey Lavrov, from attending a council meeting, leaving Russia represented by its ambassador to the OSCE, Alexander Lukashevich (Liechtenstein, 2022). Here, even the Ukrainian foreign minister of the time, Dmytro Kuleba, reiterated its call for the suspension of Russia from the OSCE; although other states adopted a more cautious or critical stance regarding this prospect, such as Austria Hungary and Kazakhstan, attacking the decision to exclude Lavrov from the meeting, also stressing the need to preserve OSCE as a peace forum *‘’this unique platform that used to be our collective answer to the tensions of the Cold War and the deep divisions between East and West’’* (Arms Control Association, n.d.) as Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg stated on the subject.
In response, OSCE Secretary General Helga Smith expressed her opposition to the Polish decision to exclude Russia, pointing out that the OSCE lacks an expulsion mechanism precisely in order to preserve the nature of the organization itself, as a unique and inclusive body, which requires an open dialogue only possible when Russia, North America, Europe and Central Asia are seated together at the same table (The Kyiv Independent news desk, 2023).

On a slightly different level, was the reaction of the Council of Europe (CoE). This organization, whose goal is to advance democracy, human rights, and the rule of law throughout Europe, has responded to the war with vigor and determination, taking a strong stance in confrontation with Russia.

On the first day of the invasion, February 24, 2022, the CoE Committee of Ministers (CoM), denounced the Russian attack with the utmost vehemence, restating the CoE's

unwavering dedication to independence and sovereignty within the acknowledged borders of the Ukrainian territory. Nonetheless, the PACE - the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - took an even more adamant stance, holding an extraordinary session on March 14 and 15, 2022, to discuss Russian aggression against Ukraine and the possibility of the Russian Federation leaving the Organization. On March 16, it unanimously adopted a position at the conclusion of the meeting, urging the Committee of Ministers to *"demand that Russia withdraw from the Council of Europe immediately"*. Following Article 8[52] of the CoE's charter, the Committee of Ministers took the historic decision to exclude Russia from membership - causing the immediate cessation of Russia's rights as a member state within the Organization after 26 years of adherence[53] (Council of Europe, 2024).

Analogously, since September 16, 2022, Russia ceased to be a member of the European Convention of Human Rights (Council of Europe, 2024). The consequences accrue to persons under Russian jurisdiction who are permanently deprived of the guarantees provided by the Convention. Nevertheless, the European Court of Human Rights remains able to investigate claims of alleged violations that occurred prior to this date.

[52] Pursuant to Art. 8 CoE Statute member states may be suspended from their rights of representation and, if they do not withdraw upon request, excluded by CoM in case of a serious violation of Art. 3 CoE Statute, which obliges the member states to accept the principles of the rule of law and human rights as well as the objective of cooperating in the realization of the aim of the CoE (EJIL: Talk!, 2022).

[53] Russia had first joined the Council of Europe on February 26, 1998.

4.2 Diplomatic Efforts and Conflict Resolution

The role of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention in the Ukraine conflict will be discussed in this paragraph before an analysis of the various peace agreements and proposals made during the conflict is done.

First, the efforts of the international community to assist civilians through humanitarian aid, sanctions, and inquiries into violations of human rights will be examined. However, the analysis will draw attention to the geopolitical risks - such as Russia's veto in the UN Security Council and concerns about escalation between nuclear-armed powers - that limit a full-scale intervention. Critiques of the unequal international response to crises will also be covered, raising doubts about the objectivity of humanitarian ideals in this intricate geopolitical environment.

Thereafter, this section will analyze the various peace negotiations and proposals put forth during the conflict, including the five rounds of talks between Russia and Ukraine that failed to reach a ceasefire. Particular attention will be given to the March 2022 "Istanbul Communiqué," which addressed Ukrainian neutrality but faltered over issues like security guarantees and Crimea situation. The analysis will also cover global peace initiatives, such as China’s 12-point plan, the joint proposal with Brazil, and the Zelensky peace formula, which has garnered significant international attention. The complexities of achieving a resolution, including Russia's demands and Ukraine's resistance to compromise, will be explored within the broader context of geopolitical dynamics.

4.2.1 Humanitarian Intervention and Responsibility to Protect

The international community has teamed up to prevent and alleviate extreme human suffering, such as mass atrocities or humanitarian disaster cases, since the last global war. In this context, the principles of humanitarian intervention and Responsibility to Protect (R2P) have been implemented to guarantee civil protection even in the event that national governments demonstrate as unwilling or unable to act so that the international community will be able to step in and defend populations' violations of human rights, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Humanitarian intervention concerns "a series of actions undertaken by an organization, a state or a coalition of states intended to alleviate extensive human suffering within the borders of a sovereign state. [Aa a matter of fact] it constitutes a *breach of sovereignty* in the name of *individual rights*'' (Bell, 2023). Whilst R2P refers to the responsibility of the entire international community to protect the realm of human rights against all kinds of atrocities (Diplomatic Courier, 2024). In 2005 the United Nations adopted the principle of Responsibility to Protect acknowledging three main pillars:

1. The responsibilities of each State to protect its populations;
2. The responsibility of the international community to assist States in protecting their populations[54];
3. The responsibility of the international community to protect when a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations (United Nations, n.d.).

R2P is thus a call to action for governments, as well as for international organizations and institutions, to intervene on behalf of populations that are in extreme distress.

In the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the international community has taken various steps to protect civilians in Ukraine.

First of all, a significant amount of humanitarian aid has been provided to Ukraine intending of to help those impacted by the conflict; major services have been sent by groups like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and numerous non-governmental organizations

[54] (General Assembly - Meetings coverage and press releases, 2022b).

(NGOs) shipping food, medical equipment, shelter and emergency housing options. As well, entities such as the European Union or the United States declare to have allocated millions for humanitarian aid programs to help Ukrainians people affected by the war; precisely €966 by the UE since February 2022 (EU Commission, 2024), and the U.S. with "more than €700 million'' in assistance to support Ukraine (United States Department of State, 2024).

Moreover, sanctions against Russia have been endowed - as mentioned in the previous chapter - mainly focused on applying political and economic pressure, further functioning as instruments to lessen the additional suffering of civilians by exerting pressure on Russia to end hostilities.

Developments in the conflict started to be promptly monitored since the very beginning, once again, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, by OSCE and UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU)[55], have contributed to the upkeep of international awareness and accountability by documenting human rights violations and offering vital information on the humanitarian situation.

Lastly, steps to remove civilians from conflict areas and establish safe passageways, such as safe corridors, cross-border support, and relocation programs, have been included in the strategies adopted by the Ukrainian and international governments. Nevertheless, a number of challenges have impeded these endeavors, including the ongoing hostilities and the absence of collaboration from all stakeholders.

Despite various efforts to protect the civilian population involved in the war, the full-scale humanitarian intervention under the Responsibility to Protect has not been carried out.

A major reason for the lack of impactful intercession is the high geopolitical risk associated with the conflict; under the R2P, military action has been severely hindered by the fear of starting a wider conflict involving NATO and Russia, both of which are nuclear-armed powers. For this reason, many nations favor non-military solutions due to the dangers of future potential military conflicts.

[55] The HRMMU has operated in Ukraine since March 2014 referring to the development of hostilities in order to guarantee that those who are responsible for crimes will be held accountable. Since the Russian aggression of February 2022, the Mission's main focus has been on documenting the violation of international law and humanitarian international law committed by both parties involved in the conflict.

A second cause for concern that has brought the international community's intervention to a halt is a structural limitation of the UN's system of rules: the UN Security Council - which has the power to authorize the use of force in extreme cases concerning the threat to the peace, the breach of the peace or the act of aggression (Diplomatic Courier, 2024) consists of five permanent members, including Russia. In this sense, Russia as a permanent member owns the right to veto any decision made by the Council, making it almost impossible to authorize collective action under the R2P framework concerning the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Hence, Russia has been adamantly against any intervention that it believes to be outside its sphere of influence or sovereignty. This opposition hindered the UN's ability to take decisive action and complicated international efforts to agree on intervention tactics.

Ultimately, the international response to the Ukrainian crisis has been criticized for what is seen as its selectiveness and inconsistency. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has garnered a great deal of media and institutional coverage, whereas other global crises, like those in Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, or the most recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have not drawn the same level of international attention or intervention. This discrepancy raises questions about the objectivity and universality of humanitarian principles by implying that the application of R2P may be unduly impacted by geopolitical considerations.

All things considered, the principles of humanitarian intervention and Responsibility to Protect remain pertinent in the manner that the international community handles crises such as the Ukrainian conflict. Notwithstanding, a more cautious and comprehensive response has been required due to the complexity of the geopolitical environment, the involvement of major powers, and the risks involved with direct intervention.

4.2.2 Peace Talks and Peace Negotiations

A few days after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, attempts at peace emerged in the hope of facilitating an end to hostilities as quickly as possible, although two and a half years later no negotiations have yet been reached.

For a total of five rounds, multiple talks started between Russia and Ukraine - focused mainly on the creation of *humanitarian corridors* - following the 24 February 2022, held both in Belarus and Turkey during the springtime (Melkozerova, 2024). According to the timeline ‘’Conflict in Ukraine: A timeline (current conflict, 2022-present) published by the House of Commons Library on 16 July 2024, by author Nigel Walker, the first round of talks was held on 28 February 2022 in Belarus; the second and third on 3 and 7 March, on the Belarus-Ukraine border; the fourth and fifth on 10 and 14 March, in Ankara, Turkey (Walker, 2024). Nevertheless, during each round, Russia failed to reach an agreement on any proposal, not even on a temporary cease-fire (Melkozerova, 2024).

A major attempt was made at peace negotiations on 29 March 2022, in Istanbul, under Turkish mediation where the Ukrainian delegation presented the *"Istanbul Communiqué*". Within the ten-point proposal, were outlined the conditions for a ceasefire, permanent Ukrainian neutrality and international security guarantees, albeit proposing to clarify Crimea’s status in fifteen years. The Communiqué also included far-reaching concessions from Ukraine, indicating its willingness to compromise for peace. Notably, the withdrawal of Russian forces behind the line of contact as of 23 February 2022, was not demanded (Fischer, 2022).

Although the document had been pre-agreed by the parties involved and sought to find a middle ground in the conflict resolution process *while* simultaneously addressing Russia’s initial demands, negotiations stopped in May 2022 due to a combination of factors, particularly regarding the status of Crimea and the security guarantees[56].

[56] First of all, in spite of the agreement, hostilities persisted, especially in Eastern Ukraine. Moreover, the security guarantees demanded by Ukraine in exchange for its neutrality evolved by April into two separate agreements (a ceasefire agreement with Russia and a security agreement with other guarantor states, excluding Russia as a guarantor) refused by Russia, requesting a key role and more comprehensive security guarantees connected to its own strategic interests.

Despite the final results, the Istanbul Communiqué was greatly supported internationally, which demonstrated the dedication of the international community to a peaceful resolution. For instance, various mediators and facilitators participated in the peace talks, such as Turkey, which enabled to bring the parties together, employed its distinct standing as a regional force with connection to both Ukraine and Russia; Germany and France, although not directly participating in the Istanbul meeting, continued to support and maintain diplomatic initiatives as members of the Normandy Format[57]; The OSCE and the UN, while not actively mediating in the Turkish-led negotiations, ensured that ceasefire agreements were respected and recorded conditions on the ground, providing a forum for dialogue and assistance to humanitarian efforts.

Apart from the peace dialogues between the parties directly involved, peace initiatives proposed by various countries of the world emerged as the months of war progressed, in particular by the Arab League, the African Union, Indonesia, the Holy See, Brazil and China.

Among these, one of the most prominent is the 12-point peace proposal of China released in February 2023, and a new one released on 23 May 2024 in conjunction with Brazil. The former, after it was leaked to the press last year, was met with a lackluster response; nevertheless, before traveling to China for a short visit to meet President Xi Jinping on 16-17 of May, Putin applauded Beijing's strategy saying during an interview that China clearly comprehended the conflict's *''root causes''* and its *''global geopolitical importance''* praising its efforts as *''necessary to eliminate the Cold War mentality''* (Jazeera, 2024).

Russian Pr. Putin and Chinese Pr. Xi Jinping deepened their relationships calling *for a new era of collaboration, expanding their no-limits alliance* they had declared in 2022 (just before Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine). Indeed, Beijing made a concerted effort to present itself as a peacemaker in the conflict in Ukraine, at the same time it has not condemned Russia for its action nor has sent it *actual weapons and ammunition* for enhancing the war (Jazeera, 2024).

[57] The Normandy Format is a diplomatic group that was formed in 2014 and consists of Germany, France, Russia, and Ukraine. It has been essential in promoting communication and debate, especially with regard to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Albeit, in recent times, the main discussions have focused on the peace formula proposed by Ukrainian President Zelensky on 11 October 2022, which is still regarded as the only feasible starting point for a long-term peace process by most Western countries, net of the other proposals made. The Zelensky formula consists of 10 points covering the withdrawal of Russian troops on Ukrainian grounds and the restoration of its territorial integrity; the liberation of its war prisoners as well as the illegally deported; the creation of a special Tribunal for war crimes committed by Russians, including a mechanism of international compensation for the damages caused by them. It demanded the building of post-war security architecture within the euro-atlantic area, with other aspects of the 10-point peace formula covering nuclear security, with the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants; the food safety, by allowing the export of grain to poorer countries; the energy security, by applying restrictions on Russian energetic resources prices; finally asking for the environment protection comprising land clearing and treatment of polluted water (BRAND UKRAINE NGO & MFA Ukraine, 2023).

The peace formula is undergoing informal discussions - at the National Security Counselors level - which are recording a gradual increase in the number of participating countries from time to time. The first meeting, held on 24 June 2023 in Copenhagen, with the attendance of 15 countries, was followed by meetings on 5 August in Jeddah with the participation of 43 countries, on 28 October in Valletta with the participation of 65 countries, on 14 January 2024 in Davos - on the margins of the World Economic Forum, with the participation of 83 countries; and lastly, on 15-16 June 2024 in Switzerland, with the participation of no less than 92 countries and 8 international organizations[58].
It is important to notice the increasing involvement of southern countries, including Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and South Africa in participating in such peace meetings. Russia was absent - and not even invited to the Swiss Summit - while China only attended the Jeddah meeting, refusing to meet up without Russia's presence (Astier, 2024).

[58] The 8 international organizations include the Council of Europe, the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Observer), the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament, OSCE, the United Nations (Observer), and the Organization of American States.

Of Russia, delivering a speech at the Moscow conference of Russian ambassadors on June 14, 2024, Putin stated that Moscow would be prepared for an immediate ceasefire ‘’literally at the same minute‘’ in which the Zelensky government would be prepared to grant international recognition of the current Ukrainian territorial arrangement (i.e. the recognition of the territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, occupied by Russian forces after 24 February 2022, as well as Crimea), but above all to accept the veto on Ukraine's membership in the NATO military alliance.
President Zelensky’s peace formula would not constitute viability for Russia due to its “prohibitive requirements for negotiations” (Astier, 2024).

Ukrainian presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, deemed the plan “offensive to common sense" having also stated on previous occasions how Ukraine does not intend to give up any territories in addition to not wanting to grant negotiations at the same time to avert a possible Russian military resupply; according to its predictions, any scenario of a frozen war with Russian territorial annexations fixed and without Ukraine's entry into NATO would encourage Moscow and bring the war back after a short pause.

Therefore, despite the international diplomatic initiatives showing a shared desire for peace at the international level, there remain many obstacles in the way of a resolution, bringing to light the geopolitical upheaval that the war in Ukraine has entailed since its earliest days.

4.3 Legal Frameworks and Charges for Global Order

This paragraph will focus on the long-term and knock-on effects of the Ukrainian conflict's distrust of international law enforcement.

In the first case, it will investigate how the Russian economy has survived harsh sanctions, which raises concerns about the overall efficacy of these initiatives. The challenges the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice have encountered in their efforts to bring charges against Russia will then be used to illustrate the hurdles of holding powerful countries responsible for transnational crimes. There will be a discussion of the boundaries between self-defense and outside intervention, especially given NATO's backing for Ukraine. Lastly, it will look at how Russia's actions have weakened the concept of territorial integrity and may lead to a redefining of international security standards.

Secondly, it will examine how trust in multilateral cooperation and international agreements has been damaged by the Ukrainian conflict. An attempt will be made to understand how Russia's actions have highlighted the challenge facing international organizations such as the United Nations and alliances such as NATO, increasing doubts about the validity of the international system's security guarantees.

4.3.1 Shaping Perceptions of International Law

Significant flaws and restrictions in the application of international law, particularly when strong states are involved, have been brought to light by the Ukrainian crisis. Due to their incapacity to stop or promptly address violations committed during the conflict, international law enforcement mechanisms - such as sanctions, International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutions, and International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings - have come under scrutiny for their effectiveness.

Economic sanctions against Russia are among the main enforcement instruments that the West has employed. Sanctions *"penalties",* as mentioned in the previous sections, have been implemented "by the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union, along with countries including Australia, Canada and Japan", with more than 16.500 sanctions[59] established for Russia since the beginning of its ''special military operation'' (BBC News, 2024).

Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated how these coercive measures, while symbolically significant, in concrete terms have not achieved the purpose of forcing Russia to alter its unlawful activities. As a matter of fact, Russia has been able to deflect sanctions by selling oil abroad at a price above the G7 ceiling (see: footnote 57), by increasing its supply of oil barrels to China and India, by making China its substitute for high-technology products compared to those manufactured in the West, and by importing large quantities of sanctioned Western goods, purchasing them through nations such as Georgia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (BBC News, 2024).

[59] Those penalties comprised Putin regime's wealth as the primary objective, by freezing bank assets in foreign exchange, or not allowing the use Swift as a fast messaging service for financial institutions. Western countries have additionally prohibited technology exports of goods and flights from Russia, sanctioned oligarchs (the wealthy business people linked with the Kremlin); Westerns have as well impacted the Russian oil sector, for instance, the U.S. and the U.K. have outlawed natural gas and oil from Russia, and the EU (as aforementioned in the second chapter) has forbidden the import of crude by sea. Moreover, the G7 - the organization of the world's seven biggest *advanced* economies - set a maximum price per barrel for Russian crude oil ($60=£47 from BBC reports) (BBC News, 2024).

Speaking in terms of economic growth, the International Monetary Fund estimated that Russia's gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 2.1% in 2022, the first year of the conflict; although, following Statista Research Department's report, published in June 21, 2024, Russia's real GDP increased by 5.4% in the first quarter of 2024 when compared to the same period the year before (Statista, 2024). A clear suggestion of how resilient the Russian economy has been despite the Western measures directed against it.
Hence, considering the evidence, in the event of a protracted conflict involving a powerful state, sanctions might not represent the most functional measure to compel adherence to international law.

With a focus on the treatment of civilians by Russian military forces, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has started investigating allegations of war crimes in Ukraine.

The ICC is *"an independent, permanent court that tries individuals accused of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole, namely the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression''* (International Criminal Court, 2015). However, the Court operates based on a specific requirement, it is competent to pass judgment on the responsibility for international crimes committed in states that have accepted its jurisdiction by ratifying the Rome Statute, or that have been committed by nationals of the above-mentioned states. Although Ukraine has not ratified the Statute, it has availed itself of the possibility provided for in Article 12(3), which provides for acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction in cases concerning specific events that occurred in its territory. In this evidence, for an investigation to be eventually opened is necessary for the ICC to receive a report from the Prosecutor of a State Party to the Rome Statute or the UN Security Council of facts that may amount to crimes under its Statute (International Criminal Court, 2015).

Within the Ukrainian case, on February 28, 2022, the Prosecutor at the ICC court, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, demanded authorization to investigate facts that happened in Ukraine during the ongoing conflict. On the following 2 March, the Court allowed the investigation to be opened after assessing the reports received (International Criminal Court, 2023). On 17 March 2023, the ICC issued an international arrest warrant against

the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and the Russian Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, accused of deportation and illegal transfer of population, especially children, from the occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation[60] (International Crime Court, 2023).

Notwithstanding, as mentioned before, the court has limited enforcement powers since it relies on state cooperation for arrests. In this eventuality, only the States who ratified the Rome Statute are bound by obligations of cooperation with the International Court of Justice, thus are obliged to arrest the addressee of a warrant if the latter is in their territory; moreover, the presence of the defendant is necessary in order for the trial to take place. Aware of these factors, President Putin decided not to attend the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) meeting held from 22 to 24 August 2023 in Johannesburg, the capital of South Africa, a country that, having ratified the Rome Statute, would be held responsible for the execution of Putin's arrest warrant if he showed up (BBC, 2023).

Under these circumstances, emerge the structural flaws of the International Criminal Court caused by the lack of jurisdiction over non-signatory states like Russia. Hence, the ICC's investigations may have long-term and symbolic significance, although they appear not to have much of an immediate effect on the conflict.

It is important to note how the international community kept looking for more legal tools to prosecute crimes committed on Ukrainian territory during the conflict. The International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA), for instance, was founded in The Hague on July 3 (Eurojust, n.d.).. The Joint Investigation Team's prosecutors from Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania, and the ICC itself make up the ICPA, which is hosted by Eurojust[61]. It is thought that the court serves as a mechanism for the eventual creation of a special court that would prosecute Russian military and political perpetrators of serious

[60] Crimes under articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute of the International Crime Court. ICC, 2023. (Ordine internazionale e diritti umani, 2023).

[61] *The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation is known as Eurojust. Eurojust seeks to make Europe a safer place by coordinating national authorities' efforts to look into and prosecute transnational crimes from both EU Member States and non-EU states.* (EuroJust: Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation of the European Union, n.d.).

international crimes in Ukraine, as well as for exchanging information on evidence (ICPA, n.d).

Furthermore, on 2 February 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), a United Nations tribunal, agreed to consider the legal case lodged by Ukraine against Russia. In the request, filed in March 2022, Kyiv demanded not to be recognized as the perpetrator of the genocide of Russian-speaking civilians living in the Donbas region, as accused by Moscow. In turn, Ukraine has accused the Putin regime of violating the 1948 Geneva Convention on Genocide during the first recognition of the self-proclaimed Donbas republics and with the subsequent invasion of Ukraine. With this ‘’*clever legal maneuver’’*, Ukraine used the dispute settlement clause to take Russia to court, aware of the lack of an international tribunal that can try cases relating to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its leaders' acts of aggression, just as there is no international tribunal that can try cases relating to Russia's violations of the UN Charter (Hathaway, 2024).

Even the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), one of the most powerful institutions entrusted with maintaining international peace and security, is called into question regarding the effectiveness of international law enforcement agencies. As was indicated in the previous section, the UNSC's ability to address the Ukrainian conflict has been severely limited by Russia's veto power as a permanent member of the UN.
The five permanent members of the United Nations - China, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and the United States - have the right to veto resolutions, which means they can prevent a decision from being made. This requirement has effectively made any resolution that suggests sanctions and peacekeeping efforts or criticizes Russia's actions pointless, underscoring the structural challenges of enforcing international law when a permanent member is implicated in transgressions.

Moreover, significant legal precedents in international law could be established by the Ukrainian conflict, especially concerning state conduct and global reactions to abuses of human rights and sovereignty.

The international norm of territorial integrity, which is essential to maintaining peace and stability throughout the world, has been seriously threatened by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its continued military intervention in eastern Ukraine since 2022. These acts have undermined the idea that states have the right to territorial sovereignty independent from external interference, also they have violated the UN Charter, which forbids the use of force to change international borders (UN News, n.d.). Whether Russia's actions are not addressed, it may create a dangerous precedent that would encourage other nations with expansionist inclinations to invade or annex neighboring territories under the same pretexts. For instance, other governments may adopt Russia's story of defending ethnic Russians in Crimea and eastern Ukraine under the pretense of defending relatives across national boundaries, undermining the norm.

On top of that, the Ukrainian crisis has brought up questions about the meaning of self-defense under international law, particularly in relation to restrictions on the use of force and the involvement of third parties. In light of the UN Charter's Article 51 (UN Codification Division Publication, 2024) guaranteeing states the inherent right to self-defense in the event of an armed attack, the military actions taken by Ukraine to defend itself and recover territories that Russia has occupied are essentially seen as legitimate.

However, the conflict has prompted more extensive discussions further about the limits of self-defense and the use of force.

Firstly, the constitutionality of third-party intervention in a conflict involving self-defense is called into question by the military assistance given to Ukraine by NATO members and other states. While Ukraine's right to request and accept defense assistance is protected by Article 51, there is disagreement over whether such support would incite more conflict or be viewed as unlawful interference. Some have questioned whether NATO members' extensive provision of weapons and training could be interpreted as entering the conflict, despite the majority of experts maintaining that aiding a country in defending itself is permissible under international law so long as it does not contravene neutrality principles.

Secondly, the conflict has also sparked discussions about collective defense measures as intended by Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, under which an attack on one member is deemed an attack on all. Although NATO has not used Article 5 in this conflict, its strong backing of Ukraine raised the possibility of a new meaning of collective defense in which non-member nations also receive assistance and protection inadvertently. A changing perspective which may affect discussions about collective security and intervening when a state is threatened in the future in relation to international law.

4.3.2 Erosion of Trust

Global trust in international treaties and agreements, especially those concerning territorial integrity and security guarantees, has been heavily influenced by the Ukrainian conflict; the 1994 Budapest Memorandum is an important example. According to this memorandum, Ukraine agreed to surrender its nuclear arsenal in exchange for security guarantees from Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom (Yost, 2015). Yet, the legitimacy of these security commitments was seriously undermined by the Russian invasion in 2022 and earlier by the annexation of Crimea in 2014, both of which are violations of this agreement (Myers, 2022).

As a result, many states - particularly those in unstable areas - began to doubt whether international agreements could offer real cover in light of the treaty violation. As such, states' trust in the reliability of security guarantees provided by powerful countries in the event of conflict is diminished, especially those from NATO members or alliances such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Thus, the vision of the potential of international agreements to deter aggression and uphold sovereign rights has been undermined by the Ukrainian conflict.

Besides, the value of diplomacy and treaty-making in contemporary conflicts has been called into question due to Russia's disdain for international agreements, particularly those pertaining to ceasefires and peace negotiations. These violations may make international diplomacy more difficult as countries lose interest in signing future agreements, especially with competitors.

A more general decline in confidence in multilateral cooperation, a fundamental component of the contemporary international order, has also been attributed to the conflict. In this context, three types of dynamics emerged: the polarization of the international system, the mistrust among allies, and global governance’s implications.

At heart, the conflict in Ukraine created deep divisions within the international community, especially between Western nations and Russia, while some countries in the

global South chose to take a neutral or non-aligned position. The spirit of multilateralism underpinning the modern international system has been undermined by this polarization, making cooperation in international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) more difficult, as Russia's veto power in the UNSC. has shown, highlighting the very limits of multilateralism in situations where major powers are directly involved.

Next, the conflict has also strained relations within multilateral organizations like the European Union and NATO, as member states have heatedly discussed the hostilities and the best ways to intervene. In fact, even though NATO has remained mainly united in its support for Ukraine, differences in opinion regarding the type of military aid to be provided, how to handle refugees, and the course of European energy policy have exposed fissures that could undermine multilateral cooperation.

Certainly, the risk emerged that hypothetical future international collaborations may be undermined as they are affected by the decline in trust in multilateral cooperation. This could create an impact on international efforts to tackle pressing problems such as public health, international trade, and climate change, for which multilateral institutions are essential. A decline in trust in these institutions in general could make collective action in other areas more difficult, further threatening the stability of the global order.

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to determine the effects of the Ukrainian war initiated by the Russian government on February 24, 2022. According to the investigation's findings, the conflict marks a major shift in the political, economic, and security environment of not just Europe but the entire world.

The three main chapters offered an in-depth overview of the dynamics that resulted in the conflict, as well as the responses of the international community to it.

The first chapter has delineated the structural causes of the conflict, highlighting how the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union associated with the growing economic interdependence, has created a strained environment wherein Russia perceived an existential threat. International security theories - realism, liberalism, constructivism, and securitization theory - have offered a key to comprehending the actors' reactions and their strategic choices.

In more detail, according to the realist theory, to regain its influence and secure its borders, Russia ultimately intervened in Ukraine after recognizing the threat posed by NATO's and the EU's eastward expansion. On the contrary, the European Union's response, which included sanctions against Russia and aid for Ukraine, is in line with the liberal perspective, which upholds international law and encourages collaboration among democratic states in order to preserve global order. As per constructivist theory, Russia has crafted a narrative that defends the invasion as a "protection" of Ukraine's Russian-speaking citizens and situates the country within its sphere of influence. Meanwhile, Western responses, which consider Russia as an aggressor, were also shaped by shared identities and values, such as democracy and human rights, which had an impact on NATO and EU policies that supported Ukraine. Lastly, following the securitization theory, the Russian invasion has been framed as a threat to the security of all of Europe, not just Ukraine, which supported NATO's stepped-up defense efforts and resource mobilization as well as EU sanctions.

The second chapter observed the firm answers of NATO and the European Union regarding the Russian invasion of Ukrainian soil. Thus, as mentioned before, NATO has intensified its military and humanitarian support to Kyiv governance, while also further reinforcing its presence in Eastern Europe; on the other hand, the EU has imposed drastic measures such as sanctions and increased the defense budget for European countries, at the same time it initiated plans for energy security by favoring detachment from Russian dependencies.

The third chapter took into account the role of global actors within the crisis, such as the United States, Russia, and the multilateral organizations - the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It has emphasized the intentions of Russia in searching for new allies within a rising context of multipolarity; as well as the difficulties of reaching a diplomatic resolution accentuated by the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and limitations imposed due to geopolitical risks, for instance in the case of treating with a nuclear power such as Russia, highlighting the complexity of the conflict.

All this revealed the fragility of European security, causing a change in the reactions of international actors to the crisis and the way they interact with each other.
Indeed, the war made manifest the vulnerability of Europe's eastern borders, especially when subjected to external threats; for this reason, Eastern European states, such as Poland and the Balkan countries, perceived greater exposure and, fearing another military intervention or a so-called "special operation", pushed for an intensification of NATO's presence in their area. Moreover, the hostilities challenged existing security policies and the strategy of trust and cooperation with Russia, highlighting the need for a completely new approach to the friend-enemy relationship.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, there has also been an unexpected change in international alliances and cooperation.
Firstly, the invasion has led to a strengthening of NATO, which has admitted two new members, Finland and Sweden respectively, following its welcoming policy, although not without first overcoming certain obstacles posed by some existing member states, as in

the case of Erdogan's Turkey; these demands have suggested a change in the general perception of global security, as well as the importance of military cooperation.
Secondly, the conflict has made clear the need for a re-evaluation of relations between global powers; as in the case of the United States, which has strengthened its leadership within Europe, while Russia has tried to get closer to non-Western countries such as China or new allies.

Again, one of the main consequences of the Ukraine crisis on the international system has been the revival of multilateralism. Organizations such as the EU and NATO have indeed shown that a coordinated, group response can be more successful than a series of discrete individual acts. To manage security crises and other global issues such as climate change, pandemics and nuclear proliferation, there could be a return to an international system based on collaboration and shared responsibility. In this regard, the multilateral organizations involved include NATO, the European Union, and the United Nations. In particular, the war has forced the EU to promote greater security and defense integration, demonstrating that cooperation between member states can improve their ability to counter common threats. This in turn sparked new debates on how to reduce dependence on the US and increase the EU's military capabilities. An important role has also been played by the NATO alliance, which has strengthened deterrence in Eastern Europe and coordinated military assistance to Ukraine's neighbors. The expansion of NATO to nations such as Finland and Sweden showed how the war has highlighted the need for a collective security system. Finally, despite the Security Council stalemate due to the Russian veto, other UN institutions, such as the General Assembly and specialized agencies like the Human Rights Council, have taken a stand against the invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, the risk of distrust in the international system of rules due to Russia's protracted behavior to the detriment of efforts made in conjunction between states should not be underestimated; a demonstration of this is Russia's resilience in not isolating itself despite the sanctioning measures against it, but rather turning to other allies more akin to its political and governance ideologies.

Furthermore, the war has led to an evolution of security doctrines, particularly for the concept of human security and energy security. By protecting people from economic, social, and environmental threats, human security diverts attention from conventional military elements. As a matter of fact, security is not just about national defense; it is also about human welfare, the right to life, and human dignity. Hence, the conflict has brought to light the severity of humanitarian crises, such as the management of refugees and human rights violations. As for energy security, the warfare has prompted an evolution of European countries' energy policies, since for a shared willingness they engaged in reducing their dependency on Russia's supplies, granting an acceleration towards the green transition for the use of renewable energy; thus, this key security has become a crucial aspect within national security strategy. In turn, sanctions and the overall geopolitical crisis have prompted a desire to diversify sources and suppliers of those sources, which has resulted in a reorganization of global supply chains with a tendency toward regionalization, which contrasts with the contemporary phenomenon of globalization. In order to guarantee supply resilience and prevent issues like those with Russian gas or Ukrainian wheat from recurring, nations are attempting to forge stronger alliances and trade agreements with regional partners in the wake of the conflict.

Finally, an impinging influence of the war regards the accentuated polarization among geo-political blocks, resulting in a clear conflict between various worldviews and governing models. On the one hand, the West, including the U.S., the UE, and their allies, advocate for an international order based on rules, national sovereignty and territorial integrity principles, thus claiming the respect of international law, configuring a liberal governance model. On the other hand, nations that oppose what they perceive to be Western meddling in their domestic affairs and the expansion of liberal democracy instead support authoritarian governmental models that favor state control, like Russia, which has worked to strengthen its ties with authoritarian nations, primarily China and Iran.

Therefore, the war in Ukraine has pushed the phenomenon of antagonism in international relations to the extreme by encouraging such fragmentation of the vision of the international system. As tensions between opposing blocs heighten the likelihood of direct armed confrontations, such geopolitical polarization - which was already evident with other leading players from 1947 to 1989 - only increases the risk of conflict. In fact, isolation strategy and the formation of new alliances based on ideological affinities could be used to pursue protectionist policies, highlighting international division and decreasing collaboration on global issues like health and climate.

Straightforwardly, what can be assessed in the final analysis is how the war in Ukraine has created a *watershed* in European security and international relations, exposing structural weaknesses that had previously gone unnoticed and forcing a rethinking of alliances and tactics. The military and economic reactions showed that no actor can handle the challenges of the twenty-first century alone and emphasized the necessity of a coordinated and collective approach to handling global crises. On the same page, a more intricate and linked understanding of global threats is reflected in the development of security doctrines that incorporate human and energy elements.

As a result, this conflict may herald a new era marked by a stronger dedication to cooperation and resilience or, conversely, by anarchy of governance where the strongest wins over the least powerful net of any rules.

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