

NATO's Expansion And New Strategic Concept Broaden The Prospect Of Armageddon



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A bleak future lies ahead.

The 2022 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) summit, which was held in Madrid, Spain, from June 28-30, has produced a new strategic concept for an alliance which only a few years ago was declared “brain-dead” by French President Emmanuel Macron that will define its future for the next ten years.

Indeed, thanks to Russian President Vladimir Putin, the world’s largest military alliance has made a comeback, and with a vengeance. Russia has once again become its main target. The new strategic concept names it as the “most significant and direct threat to the security of allies and to the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area.”

Countries with a long history of neutrality, such as Finland and Sweden, will soon be joining NATO after Turkey dropped its opposition. NATO will add 1300 kilometers more of border with Russia. Since 2016, NATO also has an “enhanced forward presence” in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

The western encirclement of Russia, which loomed large both before and after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and has continued with the same zeal even after communism had collapsed, is now virtually complete.

This is a development with staggering implications for international peace and

security. NATO was of course a source of instability and a threat to international peace and security throughout the Cold War as it was a central instrument to the US imperial project. With its eastward expansion following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO's role in restoring America's unipolar world hegemony sowed the seeds of mistrust between Russia and the western powers and set the stage for the renewal of a protracted conflict, reminiscent of the Cold War.

The U.S.-led and western-centric alliance bears a great deal of responsibility for the ongoing tragedy in Ukraine. Many top foreign relations experts had [predicted](#) that NATO's eastward expansion was a move that would eventually provoke a hostile Russian reaction. Russia had been warning the west about [NATO expansion](#) for decades.

In September 1993 Boris Yeltsin send a letter to Bill Clinton in which he warned that an enlargement of NATO might be interpreted by Russia as a national security threat.

"We believe that the eastward expansion of NATO is a mistake and a serious one at that," [Boris Yeltsin](#), Russia's first post-Soviet president, told reporters at a 1997 news conference with US President Bill Clinton in Helsinki, where the two signed a statement on arms control.

At the Madrid summit, NATO leaders agreed to a new strategic concept for the alliance that will make the world even more dangerous than it is now. But before we delve into what NATO's new strategy means for world order, let's briefly recall the history of the U.S.-led military alliance.

NATO was created in 1949 by the United States and 11 other western nations with the stated objective of acting as a deterrent to an invasion of western Europe by the Soviet Union.

Of course, there was no Soviet military threat. Stalin had no intention of invading western Europe. He was a ruthless tyrant in charge of a police state that he had built, almost single-handedly, but his approach to foreign policy was not driven by ideology but rather by the dictates of Realpolitik. He was an ultra-realist, having no desire for a military confrontation with the Americans and the British on the continent.

"I can deal with Stalin. He is honest—but smart as hell," [Harry Truman](#) wrote in

his diary entry dated July 17, 1945, the first day of the Potsdam Conference in Germany.

Indeed, Stalin's geostrategic approach was not geared towards the export of a revolutionary ideology. "The export of a revolution is nonsense," he pointed out in a 1936 interview given to Roy Howard, president of the Scripps-Howard Newspapers. Stalin's primary concern was the security of the Soviet Union. His interest in having Eastern Europe under his thumb was for the purpose of creating a buffer zone between the West and the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union lost as many as 27 million lives during the Second World War, half of her industry, and thousands of villages, towns, and cities were destroyed. That's the price that it paid for saving the world from Nazi Germany. To be sure, it would be good to remind western readers that "four-fifths of the fighting in Europe took place on the Eastern front, and that's where Germans suffered virtually all of its casualties," as [Rodric Braithwaite](#), former British Ambassador to the Soviet Union/Russian Federation accurately stated during the course of a lecture that he delivered on June 13, 2005, at Kennan Institute.

For all the above reasons, the mere suggestion that Stalin might have any intention of embarking on wild military adventures to conquer Paris or London should have been rejected as utterly ridiculous by any rational policymaker at the time, but obviously that wasn't the case. Take, for instance, the attitude of an anticommunist reactionary like Winston Churchill. His pathological hatred toward the Soviet Union was so intense that even with Operation Barbarossa well under way, and the Soviet Union on the verge of collapse, it was communist Russia, not Nazi Germany, that he considered as the barbaric antithesis of western civilization. "It would be a measureless disaster if Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe" he wrote to Anthony Eden in late 1942.

As stated earlier, NATO's explicit purpose was to "deter Soviet aggression." But the creation of NATO had another goal, though it was never mentioned either by NATO leaders or foreign policy experts and commentators. The goal was to cement western Europe's position in the capitalist world economy with the U.S. at the helm. A year earlier, the Marshall Plan had been introduced, whose purpose was to prevent the spread of communism in western Europe, stabilize the international economic order, and provide markets for U.S. goods. By integrating

European countries into NATO, the U.S. was seeking to safeguard its investments in the European economies. In other words, NATO was also seen as a bulwark against radical political change inside different European countries. It was a way to ensure that their future is tied to the capitalist world order.

NATO began to expand only a few years after its creation. Two countries with proclivity for authoritarianism but avowedly anti-communist political establishments, namely Greece and Turkey, joined NATO in 1952. Of course, both countries had already felt the presence of the U.S. in their domestic political affairs long before they were formally accepted into the transatlantic alliance. When the British informed the United States on February 24, 1947, that Great Britain “...feels itself unable, in view of the economic situation in Great Britain, any longer to bear the major share of the burden of rendering assistance in the form of money and military assistance which Greece and Turkey should have if they are to preserve their territorial integrity and political independence,” a piece of news that undoubtedly made senior level officials at the State Department jump with excitement, Truman appeared before a joint session of Congress less than a month later to request \$400 million of economic and military assistance to both the Greek and Turkish governments.

At that time, Greece was in the midst of the second stage of a civil war (1946-49) and the communists were on the verge of proclaiming a provisional government in the northern mountains. Local conditions and geopolitics would eventually play a role in the defeat of the communists, but U.S. assistance to the Greek army was as instrumental in the crushing of the second communist insurgency as was British support to the Greek government for the defeat of the communists in the first stage of the civil war (December 1944-January 1945).

“It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures,” proclaimed Harry S. Truman on March 12, 1947. By “free peoples,” of course, Truman meant the forces fighting against communism. It didn’t make a difference if, as in the case of Greece, those forces happened to be fascists. Great Britain had also sided with Nazi collaborators and the most reactionary elements inside Greece in its noble attempt to deprive those political groups that had fought against the Axis powers during the Second World War from having any role in the future governance of the country.

In the case of Turkey, the Truman Doctrine served as a tool of influence in the making of Turkish foreign policy and by linking the country with western states. Only a handful of critics inside the U.S. were concerned over the fact that Turkey was governed by military regimes with no respect for human rights and freedom and that it had actually signed a treaty of friendship with Hitler in the summer of 1941.

Unlike Switzerland, whose neutrality toward warring nations originates with the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and was confirmed by the League of Nations in 1920, Turkey remained neutral during the Second World War for purely pragmatic reasons. It did not sever its relations with Nazi Germany until early August 1944, when it was quite evident by then that Germany was going to lose the war and that the Soviet Union was a rising power. And when it finally declared war on Germany in late February 1945, it did so under pressure and in exchange for a seat in the future United Nations. At the Yalta Conference, held from February 4-11, 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin had issued a call for a United Nations conference at San Francisco on April 24. Only nations that had declared war on Germany and Japan before March 1945 would be invited to the San Francisco Conference.

The Truman Doctrine changed U.S. foreign policy and created a new world (dis)order. It launched the Cold War and made the U.S. the world's policeman. Europe was, of course, the most geographically important region for the United States, which is why NATO was founded. The alliance's first secretary general, Baron Hastings Ismay, was right on the mark when he described its purpose as follows: "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

It took several years for the Soviet Union to create a rival organization, and it did so only when NATO failed to keep the Germans down. Indeed, the Warsaw Pact was created in response to the integration of West Germany into NATO in 1955. In the early 1950s, the Soviet government considered joining NATO, but the idea was met with silence at first and later rejected on the grounds that Soviet membership was incomparable with NATO's promotion of democratic values. In fact, the Soviets seemed to have been quite sincere when they expressed interest in the establishment of pan-European security structures. They were deeply concerned about the prospect of a Third World War which, as far as they were concerned, would have meant the end of human civilization due to the existence of nuclear weapons. The west, however, had no interest in any European security

treaty that involved the Soviets.

From the perspective of the Soviet Union and its Eastern allies, NATO became a security threat when West Germany was allowed to join the U.S-led military alliance.

The last country to join NATO before the collapse of the Soviet Union was Spain in 1982. The structure of NATO evolved throughout the Cold War and so did its approach towards defense and deterrence, though nuclear weapons remained a key component of the alliance's collective defense policy.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of the Cold War, and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev played a pivotal role not only in the events that led to the Berlin wall coming down and the subsequent unification of Germany but also in the political transformation of Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union on Christmas Day 1991.

However, the end of the Cold War did not lead to the disappearance of NATO. Margaret Thatcher, who, incidentally, strongly opposed the reunification of Germany following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, undoubtedly spoke for all Cold War warriors when she addressed the question of whether NATO should disappear now that the Cold War was over by stating: "You do not cancel your home insurance policy just because there have been fewer burglaries in your street in the last twelve months."

But expansion? No one spoke openly of a NATO expansion eastward in the immediate aftermath of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. In fact, during discussions over the process of German reunification in 1990 and on into 1991, "not one inch eastward" assurances about NATO expansion were given by western leaders to [Mikhail Gorbachev](#). On different occasions throughout this time period, President George H. W. Bush and scores of other western leaders (Kohl, Mitterrand, Thatcher, Major and others) offered assurances to the Soviets about "protecting Soviet security interests and including the USSR in future European security systems."

NATO's enlargement in the post-Cold War era, which began to take shape in the mid-1990s with the advent of the Partnership for Peace program, had two key objectives: first, to reshape the European order, and second, to marginalize Russia. Eastern European countries, especially the Baltic states, were of course

more than eager to join NATO not simply for security purposes but also as a quicker path to European Union (EU) membership.

NATO made its first post-Cold War enlargement in 1999 when the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland became members. There was no reaction on the part of the Kremlin, even with regard to Poland. First, because Russia was in the midst of political and economic chaos, and second, because all political groups in Poland were supportive of both NATO and EU membership. But Russian opposition to NATO expansion was already on the record. In fact, in the autumn of 1996, the Russian State Duma unanimously adopted a resolution which condemned NATO expansion and warned that it would lead to a crisis.

NATO went through several other rounds of enlargement since the end of the Cold War. In 2004, seven countries became members of the alliance: Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; in 2009, Albania and Croatia joined NATO, while the most recent members to join the alliance were Montenegro in 2017 and the Republic of North Macedonia in 2020.

At the NATO Summit in Bucharest on April 2008, the U.S. also pushed for an immediate Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine, but Germany, France and smaller NATO states balked at the idea. The case of Georgia and Ukraine was regarded by key European leaders as highly controversial because they knew that such a move would risk provoking a hostile reaction by Russia. On several occasions Vladimir Putin had warned NATO and U.S. leaders that offering NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine are “red lines” for Russia. Nonetheless, in order to placate Washington, European leaders made a vague pledge to invite Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO at some point in the future.

“We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO,” NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told a news conference during the NATO summit in Bucharest after leaders had failed to include Georgia and Ukraine at the present time in its MAP.

On August 8, 2008, Putin gave Russian forces a green light to invade Georgia. The conflict was over in a matter of days, but Human Rights Watch said that forces on all sides “committed numerous violations of the laws of war” during the conflict. The conflict was over South Ossetia. Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili made the tragic mistake of ordering a military assault on the pro-Russian breakaway

region, but there is little doubt that Russia's invasion of Georgia was also a signal to NATO to keep away from its borders.

Russia's military invasion into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, is unjustified and in gross violation of international law. [Noam Chomsky](#) ranks the Russian invasion of Ukraine alongside the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland. Yet, no one can overlook the fact that Russian leaders had been warning the west for decades about NATO's expansion eastward. No one can honestly say that the US was not in fact deliberately provoking the Russian bear throughout the post-Cold War era. As [John Mearsheimer](#) has pointed out in connection with the current invasion of Ukraine, the trouble actually started at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008.

Yet, none of this seems to matter to NATO and U.S. leaders. On the contrary, they are determined to double down on provocation and aggression. At the Madrid summit, NATO leaders took far-reaching decisions that could trigger global instability, and much worse.

NATO branded Russia "a direct threat" to its members' peace and security. This is a wild idea, because by doing so, NATO is implying that Russia has plans to attack western capitals.

The idea that Russia poses a military threat to the west is as ludicrous as Marjorie Taylor Greene saying that "children should be trained with firearms."

In fact, it is NATO that poses a direct threat to Russian security.

With the adoption of the new strategic concept, the U.S. will significantly expand its military presence (with more troops, warplanes, and ships) on European soil. As such, Europe's existential dilemma of whether to be or not to be a U.S. vassal has finally been resolved.

With the accession of Finland and Sweden, the NATO-ization of Europe is almost complete. The only EU member states who are not yet part of NATO are Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, and Malta.

For clearly defensive purposes, naturally, NATO will also increase massively the number of troops on the eastern flank nearest Russia, and the number of troops on high alert will soar well over 300,000, compared to 40,000 troops that make up

the alliance's current quick response force.

There should be no mistake about it. The new strategic concept amounts to the revival and resurgence of an old NATO vision, which is none other than assuring the conditions for the reproduction of U.S. global hegemony.

This is why NATO's regional partners—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea—were invited to participate in a NATO summit for the first time. The Indo-Pacific has emerged as one of the most dynamic regions in the world and it is home to China. The quest for global hegemony on the part of the U.S.-led, western-centric military mandates that steps be taken to address existing, new, and future threats and challenges.

Accordingly, NATO leaders declared China a security challenge for the first time. They shied away from labelling it an “adversary” for various reasons, even though the U.S-China relationship is in fact quite adversarial.

Firstly, the economies of China and the United States are intricately linked. Cutting China out of the global supply chain and key industries is a nearly impossible task for the United States at the present stage. China is also the European Union's biggest trading partner. Therefore, neither Europe nor the United States have a strong wish to treat China as an adversary.

Secondly, while Russia can be contained in the military realm, China cannot. Only direct military confrontation with China may halt the growth of its military predominance in east Asia. But China is outside NATO's sphere of interest, and while the U.S. will seek to bridge Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific alliances, it cannot be taken as a given that European states will align themselves with the perspective of the U.S. regarding the Indo-Pacific region.

Indeed, one should not expect European citizens to offer support to military adventures abroad. A recent survey released by the [European Council of Foreign Affairs](#) reveals that, although in the first 100 days of Russia's war on Ukraine, European citizens supported western intervention and the economic sanctions, “now in all countries, apart from Poland,” the public mood is in favor of peace. Indeed, “The survey reveals a growing gap between the stated positions of many European governments and the public mood in their countries” and “only in Poland, Germany, Sweden, and Finland is there substantial public support for boosting military spending.”

NATO's new strategic concept comes at a critical juncture in the evolution of the post-Cold War international system where insecurity reigns supreme and the dominant actors are nuclear superpowers. It is indeed a reckless and highly dangerous initiative that will lead to greater animosity between Russia and the West, to greater mistrust between U.S. and China, and will most likely solidify the authoritarian Russia-China axis. All the needed prerequisites for the eruption of total war.

Unsurprisingly, Beijing already slammed NATO over its so-called new strategic concept, and [Chinese President Xi Jinping](#), perhaps in anticipation of the far-reaching decisions made by NATO leaders at the Madrid summit, assured Putin in mid-June of China's support on Russian "sovereignty and security."

[Putin](#), for his part, warned Finland and Sweden that there would be symmetric responses on the part of Russia in the event that "military contingents and military infrastructure were deployed there," which would include the deployment of nuclear weapons in the Baltic Sea region.

To be sure, a bleak future lies ahead. NATO took decisions at the Madrid summit that may very well lead to the eruption of a global Cold War. In this sense, NATO continues to follow the same path of conflict escalation, except that its endless expansion policy is now broadening the prospect of Armageddon.

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