

**Transforming threats in the new millennium and adaptation of NATO**Ata Taha Kuveloğlu<sup>1</sup>**Abstract**

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union forced the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was established to ensure the security of the member states, to take a common stance especially against the new threats of the post-Soviet era international threats, and to carry out out-of-area operations. The international war on terrorism declared by the United States (US), which is NATO's dominant force, following 9/11, has also contributed to NATO's interest as a global border guard to shift from Europe to countries in the Middle East. At the summits held, NATO decided to update its strategic concept accordingly. The cooperation between the US and other members of the organization has been dramatically affected as a result of the shift to unipolar world order. Relations with allies have suffered from the preemptory stance and one-sided strategies adopted by the US since 9/11. Due to shifting security understanding, NATO has begun to push its partners to develop new security policies. In this study, by comparing the Cold War policy of the organization and the post-Cold War policies; the transformation in the perception of security will be tried to be analyzed. In the changing dynamics of the post-Cold War world architecture, the measures taken by NATO to keep up with the "new world order" and their weight in world politics will be scrutinized.


**Keywords:** NATO, International Security, US, Collective Security, Ukraine Crisis

**1. Introduction**

NATO, which was established on 4 April 1949 under the leadership of the US; with the involvement of Western European nations such as the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, to establish collective security under the North Atlantic Treaty and provide assurance against the Soviet threat. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the transformation of NATO gained momentum and a different dimension, especially after 9/11. The post-Cold War period brought a new understanding to international security perceptions, and the civil war arguments started to change. Moreover, the concept of humanitarian intervention started to be used more widely and its content was expanded in this era. The change in the security perceptions of the countries has further reinforced the principle of immediate and total resistance to risks. 9/11 attacks not only created a great change in security perceptions but also triggered vision-based changes in operational and strategic terms. After this date, security and terrorism subjects were not limited to national borders for NATO and started to be seen as an international security issue. After 9/11, terrorism has become the most emphasized issue both for the US and NATO. A statement "*you are either with us or with the terrorists!*" (Voanews, 2009) made by President George W. Bush a few days after the attacks, indicated the determination of the US stance against terrorism.

As it is known, NATO was a "Western" alliance that emerged as a result of the separation and polarization that led to the Cold War in an unstable and tense environment after the Second World War. NATO's main purpose was to ensure the freedom and security of its allies through military and political channels. At this point, the political leg of the matter, the establishment of democratic values, and the military leg of the Washington Agreement, which is the basis of the collective security principle of the organization and constitutes the statement "an attack against one Ally is considered as an attack against all allies" (NATO, 2019).

In this context, to the extent required by the conditions of the period, the organization began an expansion trend after the Cold War by embracing its common awareness of former members of the Warsaw Pact and opposing nations. This was precisely in accordance with the international open-door

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strategy of NATO. With important summits and released strategic documents, NATO has encountered transformations, and it began to bear the tag of "international gendarmerie" in a way after 9/11. At summits, cooperation and solidarity between the member states of the organization as well as with other organizations or intergovernmental organizations were emphasized. The rise of China and issues like increasing failed states worldwide has led to a change in the attitude of NATO and the US, which has the highest spending share in NATO (NATO, 2017), towards the security issues and have started to take shape in the new period.

Considering that it provides critical data on the importance of the existence of NATO when it is evaluated in the context of the ongoing debates about how necessary the organization is in the post-Cold War conjuncture since the pre-crisis period, the Ukraine Crisis has been included in a separate title. Is NATO still an adequate and necessary institution in balancing Russia's aggressive foreign policy in the post-Cold War period and preventing it when appropriate? Can the Ukraine Crisis be evaluated in this context? Does NATO's military presence in the region drive Russia into a Cold War psychology in the post-Cold War period, triggering its aggressive approach, and therefore creating a security dilemma?

This study has been prepared for the need to seek answers to these questions.

## **2. Changing Dynamics in the International Security Perception and Transformation of NATO**

The concept of security has undergone many changes until today, and states have adopted a security understanding according to the conditions of the period. This understanding has been transformed by some external factors such as the diversity of threats, wars, alliances, and the policies followed by other states. The notion of security, in its simplest terms, means being free from threats. On the other hand, the concept of emancipation, which has a deeper meaning, is used to express that individuals or communities can choose their actions without being hindered by physical or human factors (Booth, 1991: 319). States may choose to resist these threats within their own capacity, or they may choose to form alliances and divide the burden of the threat among allies against the common enemy.

The main purpose of states is to protect their territorial integrity. This essentially means being prepared for attacks from a neighboring country. Although concepts such as power, interest, and threat are also a part of the liberal framework, realism expresses this formulation in the most concrete way. States' behaviors and goals are in this direction; are shaped around the policies they pursue in terms of interests, threats, opportunities, and finally their capacities (Viotti & Kauppi, 2014: 186-187).

Waltz (1979: 126) states that the prerequisite for states to pursue welfare, power, and interests in an anarchic international system is that these states have ensured their security. In the international system where there is no higher authority, aggressive states are more likely to fight. Similarly, the ineffectiveness of international organizations, their failure to prevent conflicts and wars not only put away the possibility of eliminating threats but also fuels the perceptions of states' security dilemmas (Miller, 2008: 16). Besides, Walt (1985: 5-6) states that if the states in the system become very powerful without being restrained, it will pose a threat to the security of all the states in the system and it is critical for a powerful state to ally with the weak rather than ally with the strong one in order not to lose its own effectiveness.

Since the ideologies of states are extremely complex, it is difficult to predict which actions of states can be perceived as a threat. Economic threats, on the other hand, are more difficult to detect than military and political threats (Buzan, 1983: 77-79). The fact that states focus only on military strategies in terms of their national security makes them more vulnerable to non-military threats and makes it difficult to eliminate other threats (Ulman, 1983: 153). A correct reading of the concept of security and its application to the dynamics of the security understanding of states are the basic conditions of pursuing an inclusive security strategy (Buzan et al., 1998: 195). Alliances form an important part of the security perception of states. The most important reason why states form alliances is the perception of threat. States that feel threatened either join an alliance to balance or follow a power greater than themselves (bandwagon) (Walt, 1985: 4).

With the end of the Cold War, major security problems were expected to end. But it didn't happen as expected. After the inevitable transformation of the bipolar system, security problems became much more complicated. 9/11 was a concrete example of this uncertain world. States accelerated their search for weapons of mass destruction. In addition to the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction; new security subheadings such as human rights, civil wars, ethnic and religious conflicts began to set the agenda of states' security agenda (Roskin & Berry, 2014: 277).

In the process from the beginning to the end of the Cold War, the concept of security has been equated by increasing states' power through armament. Most of the realist theorists argued that it is easier to achieve relative gain rather than absolute gain through cooperation and pointed out the difficulty of continuing cooperation (Baylis, 2008: 74-75). On the other hand, an unsafe Europe meant a threatened the US. This fear was the starting point of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Europe was articulated to the US through NATO with strategic interdependence, and this formula would have been sufficient for 60 years (Brzezinski, 2009: 6). On the other hand, European-based institutions such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are also the harbinger of a turning point in relations between Europe and the US. Either this union will end by decreasing in its importance or it will be renewed in some way. The issue of which of these will be shaped by the policies to be followed mainly by the US (Daalder, 2003: 157).

Although the concept of security has traditionally been perceived as the security of states, changing threats have led to the inclusion of concepts such as human security. Even though the efforts of policymakers in this regard are beneficial, they are insufficient unless action is taken on a global scale (Bilgin, 2003: 203). NATO, which read this change well, has added objectives such as protecting human rights, democracy, and individual freedoms among its existing purposes (NATO, 2010b).

Mearsheimer (1990: 52) stated that the Soviet Union acts as the glue that held NATO together and that the removal of the USSR threat would mean the departure of the US from Europe. However, with the dissolution of the USSR and the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact from the stage of history, NATO has adopted two basic policies in order to adapt to the new security environment and to deceive the alliance's new legitimacy ground: Transformation and enlargement (Dönmez, 2010: 107). In order to adapt to the post-Cold War changes, some alterations were made within the organization, and NATO was tried to be transformed into a structure that could meet new needs. The area of responsibility of the organization has expanded not to be limited to the North Atlantic and European regions, which it has assigned as its area of responsibility before the Cold War. The organization has begun to gain a more global dimension with its operations and humanitarian aid.

Three historical realities that the Alliance has institutionalized in world affairs for 60 years must be taken into account in evaluating the changing role of NATO. First, the conclusion of the centuries-long 'civil war' in the West with transcontinental and European hegemony; second, the contribution of US to European security against Soviet dominance after World War II; third, the peaceful end of the Cold War and the convergence of US military capabilities and economic influence with the political and economic strength of Europe has been the key strength of NATO. This combination makes NATO internationally crucial. At this stage, within the context of new missions, it is necessary to preserve the geopolitical connection between the US and Europe (Brzezinski, 2009: 2-3).

With the end of the Cold War, NATO revised its missions in the new period at the summits it organized and continued to seek solutions to new threats that emerged. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it has been observed that the threats did not disappear, on the contrary, new and asymmetric threats were added to the traditional ones in the process. In parallel with the transformation of NATO from "a defense and deterrence provider" to an "exporter of stability" after this period, alternative measures emerged regarding the defense burden. More indicators were used when evaluating the individual joint efforts of the members. NATO was included in out-of-area operations, first in the Balkans and later in Afghanistan, the debates on defense burden-sharing escalated, with a focus not only on military assets but also on fair sharing of risks. Despite all these debates, NATO's increasing influence and active role

in world politics are largely proportional to its will and ability to project military power over a long period of time (Ringsmose, 2010: 332-335).

On the other hand, the lack of NATO's adequacy on certain issues has become more evident in the lack of NATO's political instruments to react or take action to this political picture, which appeared as a NATO problem after Russia annexed Crimea. Faced with Russia's propaganda in Georgia in 2008, NATO's plan to boost its military capability, with the organization's ineffectiveness, revealed that NATO should be more than a military alliance (Ullman, 2018). 9/11 also pointed out that the security threats against NATO members originated from outside Europe and NATO was incapable of preventing them. After the attacks, NATO's 5th article was operated for the first time, and a significant portion of the allies offered support for the operation in Afghanistan. The rejection by the US of support offers from member states created confusion within the organization about the course of the alliance (Schmidt, 2006: 97-98).

The threats that emerged with the end of the Cold War have both diversified and became uncertain. While the issues that were previously seen as having the potential to affect international security are limited to issues such as terrorist attempts; with the end of this period, natural disasters, smuggling, environmental problems, epidemics, increase in the military capacity of other states, chemical, and biological attacks, cyber wars, mass destruction weapons factors such as its proliferation, drug trafficking, climate change, ethnic conflicts, and economic crises have also started to be considered as factors that might threaten international security (Açıkmeşe, 2011: 49). In the new world order emerged, with the effect of globalization, the conflicts that have arisen in distant geographies are not limited to neighboring countries but have the potential to pose a worldwide threat. As in the case of Syria today, threats such as civil war can trigger factors such as immigration, and situations such as diverse threats and increasing asymmetric war risks transform the threat perception of states, as well as international organizations.

Security concerns started to be evaluated not in terms of the balance of power but in terms of the region, the importance attributed to NATO's central front started to decrease, the Middle East was placed at the focal point of threat perceptions, operations were expanded within the scope of responsibility not to be limited at the regional level. For instance, Turkey's position on NATO's southern flank helped it highlight the advantage of the system's new flexibility (Karaosmanoğlu, 2014: 17). From the end of the Cold War until today, NATO has always been in an effort to renew itself in this direction. To achieve this, for instance, forces were deployed to the Balkans in the 1990s and to Afghanistan in the 2000s (Gheciu & Paris, 2011: 75). The most important reason for the organization to pursue such strategies was to both expand its sphere of influence and strengthen its defense capacity against potential threats. NATO embodied this with the "strategic concepts" determined at the summits, according to the conjuncture of the period.

### **3. Strategic Concepts and Footsteps of Change**

Mearsheimer (1994: 13-14) emphasized that NATO was an important example of the state of realist thought in organizations and emphasized that the West had won the Cold War and prevented the Third World War by means of NATO. Expressing that the organization is an instrument used by the United States to eliminate the Soviet threat, he argues that NATO cannot remain as it was during the Cold War and must reinvent itself. Accordingly, the organization continues to organize summits in order to facilitate its adaptation to the conditions of the period and to put them on a legal basis, and constantly update its vision and mission with strategic documents.

NATO's strategic concept searches and changes are not entirely new. Many strategic concepts have been published since 1949 until today. With the end of the Cold War process, NATO revised its missions in the new period at the summits it organized and continued to seek solutions to new threats that emerged. After the Cold War, the summit was first held in London, followed by summits in Rome, Brussels, Madrid, Washington, Prague, and Istanbul (NATO, 2020). However the alliance's constant tendency to expand has added to the existing strategic challenges; the fact that the organization had to fight on many

fronts with the expansion of NATO, which could focus its attention on a single common enemy during the Cold War, drew the alliance into a complex security environment and forced it to make difficult choices about which issues to focus on (Moller, 2020: 526). Therefore, the claim that NATO lost its strategic focus did not last long, a comprehensive perspective was designed in the NATO meeting held in Rome in 1991 and the organization started to update itself within the framework of these new threats (Gül, 2015: 262-263).

The alliance's effort to find a new purpose for itself was realized for the first time with the Brussels summit in 1994. Along with the emphasis on Europe's security, measures to be taken against emerging threats were discussed; it was decided to intensify efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In addition to the issues such as how NATO's military capacity would be used against changing conditions, what could be done within the scope of supporting democratic societies; it was declared that it would take initiative in such matters as promoting preventive diplomacy, preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, preventing terrorism and human rights violations (NATO, 1994). With this summit and the accompanying decisions, NATO embodied that it has become a shield against complex threats, not against a single enemy as it was in the Cold War era.

However, some of the most important summits in NATO's transformation were the London and Rome summits in 1990 and 1991 and the Washington summits held on the organization's 50th anniversary. At these summits, new functions and new responsibilities were assigned to the organization with the end of the Cold War. Turkey, on the other hand, has a direct impact on NATO's transformation. Above all, the NATO-Russia Council was established at the 2002 Rome Summit to improve relations between the allies and Russia. This is a result of the softening of NATO's military structure with political and civilian issues due to the transformation it has gone through (Dedeoğlu, 2008: 324). Further concrete steps were taken at the Riga summits in 2006 and Bucharest in 2008 at the point of transformation of NATO (Uzgel, 2013: 307). In the document dated April 24, 1999, which is the second strategic document published by NATO, the alliance's point of view on "security" is not only military protection, but it also included issues such as economic, political, and social dimensions, and terrorism, as well as the spread of weapons of mass destruction, problems, ethnic conflicts, human rights violations, and expanded the security perception. The "open-door policy" included in Article 10 of the NATO agreement, the second strategic concept adopted with the Washington Summit in 1999, and the inclusion of Eastern European countries and former Warsaw Pact countries in NATO is a turning point in the expansion and transformation of the organization (NATO, 1999). Under these breakthroughs, NATO was increasing its sphere of influence, while at the same time taking measures in line with the changing perception of its security perception.

Apart from the fact that terrorism was the main topic of the Prague Summit in 2002, with the second enlargement decision, Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Latvia were called to join the organization. At the 2004 Istanbul Summit, progress was made on issues such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. Another point that drew attention at the Istanbul Summit was NATO's decision to expand to the Caucasus and Central Asia. It has been thought more would be needed and would increase the importance of the organization (Uzgel, 2013: 311-313).

With the 2010 Strategic Concept, which was recently published, NATO's transformation continued. This concept meant to develop new strategies together with its crisis management experiences in Afghanistan and the Balkans, as well as define the new types of threats that emerged especially after 9/11. According to this published strategic concept, the principle of "Active Participation, Modern Defense" stood out, and the proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, terrorism, cyber security, and fundamental environmental problems were at the center of the threat perception (NATO, 2010). The 2010 Strategic Concept also has a crucial role in NATO's transformation. The concept, whose foundations were laid in the Lisbon Summit in 2010, while determining NATO's basic duties and principles, is also important in terms of determining NATO's sphere of influence and security circle. Defining collective defense, joint security, and crisis management as basic tasks, NATO was given the first signals to be a global gendarmerie with the summit and strategic document that declared the issues

such as terrorism and human rights violations could no longer be considered for a certain environment and that global measures should be taken (NATO, 2010a).

At the NATO summit held in Chicago in 2012, the decision to develop and integrate missile defense systems, along with the smart defense strategy, was one of the important decisions taken to reduce the defense burden of the allied states. An effort was made to encourage countries to counter existing threats with their own defense capabilities. Likewise, the importance given by NATO to energy security was mentioned once again and it was decided to establish a NATO Energy Security Center in Lithuania (NATO, 2012).

At the summit held in Wales in September 2014, it was emphasized that NATO should remain strong to prevent the Russian actions in Ukraine, as well as the rising terrorist movements in Syria and Iraq. Russia, which was a "strategic partner" in 2010, was declared a "common enemy" at the 2014 Wales Summit (İşyar 2017: 267). At the same time, it was important for NATO's interests in the region to establish a strong political and military relationship with Russia, NATO's biggest neighbor (Stamatopoulos, 2014: 20-21). However, it can be said that one of the most important decisions taken at this Summit was the decision of the countries to commit 2 percent of their GDP for the defense expenditures of the organization (NATO, 2014).

On the other hand, after the end of the Cold War, rapid developments in computer and internet technologies turned into channels where personal information, as well as information belonging to public institutions, are stored. In addition to services such as electricity distribution, the control of areas such as highways, airways and seaways were also started to be provided by computers (Bıçakçı, 2014: 117-118).

Besides, energy technologies, energy markets, and climate change issues can help NATO to become a leading actor in energy security. Because these systems are highly integrated with computer systems, they have also become extremely vulnerable to cyber-attacks (Bocse, 2020: 16). Security threats in such an important area assumed that these tasks had reached the level that could threaten not only states but also international security. At the Bucharest Summit held between 2-4 April 2008, it was decided to increase the cyber defense capabilities of the organization and its allies and to cooperate against possible cyber-attacks (NATO, 2008). In this respect, cybersecurity has been a part of NATO's transformation and the priority agenda item of NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA). The unit carried out the largest cyber exercise in history between 23-27 April 2018, drawing attention to the importance NATO attaches to this issue (NATO, 2018).

In addition to all these, NATO reiterated at the summit held in Brussels in 2021 that it guarantees values such as democracy, individual freedom, human rights, and the rule of law; stated that Russia's aggressive attitudes both threaten Euro-Atlantic security and undermine democracy worldwide (NATO, 2021). Although the organization had the chance to play a role for a free and integrated Europe with the end of the Cold War, its democratic missions emerged prominently after 1991. With the enlargement wave that started in 2004, it has strengthened the importance it attaches to democratic values both in terms of making applications for other states and in the bond between allied states (Poast & Chinchilla, 2020: 486). With all these summits and strategic concepts announced, NATO was revealing its gradual enlargement and how it would fight against renewed and uncertain threats. Each new summit was a kind of effort to keep up with the changing world agenda. When evaluated in this context, one can see that NATO did not reach its current vision and mission in a day, and it was updated as a result of threat perceptions and difficulties encountered over time.

NATO enlargement had put an end to the possibility of alternative European security arrangements that could prevent a possible hostile relationship between the United States and Russia before they began. Although Russia's attacks on Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 could not be directly reconciled with NATO's enlargement policy, Russia was concerned about the possibility of these two states joining NATO eventually (Menon & Ruger, 2020: 395). The Ukraine-Russia crisis that broke out in 2022 and the subsequent Russian occupation was also the continuation of this fear. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 made it concrete in the eyes of European states that Russia is a country that acts with an

understanding that refuses a neighboring country's right to determine its borders of territory and instead shapes it under the threat of force. Europe, which previously accepted that Russia had certain behavioral limits, understood that the main issue in the Ukraine crisis was the loss of Russia's influence over a country with critical geopolitical importance rather than a theoretical framework (Rühle, 2014: 234).

#### 4. NATO's Stance on the Ukraine Crisis

Although the rivalry of the two superpowers seems to have weakened with the end of the Cold War, they did not work together on the issue of the order in Europe; instead, the fact that the US not only made Europe the basis of the central organization with NATO but also followed the policies of expansion towards the East, triggered a strong opposition of Russia. One of the biggest reasons for Russia's opposition to NATO's expansion to its borders is the idea that NATO is approaching the frontier of its conventional forces (Mearsheimer, 2001: 50,133). Despite this, NATO did not give up on its expansion policy, and continued to let the Soviet bloc countries in one by one and reached the current borders of Russia.

Russia, on the one hand, emphasizes that NATO is an "outdated" organization from the Cold War era, on the other hand, it continues to shape its current goals according to the Soviet Union's time, acting with Cold War reflexes. Putin's desire for the United States to separate security ties with Europe and his persistent opposition to NATO's enlargement stem from the same Cold War mentality (Rachwald, 2011: 126). Russia, which does not favor Ukraine's NATO membership, sees Ukraine's rapprochement with the West as a threat on its borders. Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine aims to diminish the influence of NATO and also the US in the region. Russia has been massing large numbers of troops on the Ukrainian border for some time and has been demanding major security concessions from NATO. To legitimize its actions, Russia alleges NATO's failure to keep its promise that it would not expand eastward in the 1990s, to the regions in Russia's influence. The US and NATO, on the other hand, state that no such promise was made (Masters, 2022). Unfounded allegations and denials pave the way for the Ukraine crisis to become prone to having consequences in favor of Russia in such a vicious circle.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 caused a change in the understanding of European Security by many researchers. Terms like "game-changer," "wake up call," and "paradigm shift" all referred to significant cracks and shifts in Russia's Western strategy (Rühle 2015: 80). The invasion of Ukraine, launched by Russia on February 24, was a concrete reflection of Russia's attitude towards Europe and the US. On the other hand, according to Wolff (2015: 120-121), NATO seems to have come to the end of an enlargement policy based on free and holistic Western values. Western ideology and politics, which had been successfully operated until the 2010s, seem to have lost their influence "forcibly" as it approaches the borders and sphere of influence of Russia, which has a completely opposing ideology. The reason behind the non-renewal stems of the enlargement ideology of the organization is a result of NATO's difficulties in adapting to today's world; the current enlargement policy ignores new security paradigms and this situation pushes Russia to legitimize its aggressive policies. Accordingly, Mearsheimer (2014: 89) states that if NATO continues its current policies, Russia will continue its aggressive policies; underlines that NATO's efforts to ensure that Ukraine follows a policy that is neutral and that Russia does not see as a threat will both improve the relations between the West and Moscow and create an environment in which all parties will win.

Ukraine has shown the will to become a member of NATO against a Russian threat that may be triggered as a result of its rapprochement with the West, but NATO (NATO, 2022) has approached cautiously in this regard. The US, which sees Europe as a "buffer zone" for its own security, tries to act by taking into account both Europe's dependence on Russia and Europe's border security regarding the Ukraine crisis. In this context, although Ukraine's full membership in NATO is not viewed positively at this stage, NATO continues to adopt a solid position that fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On the other hand, Europe, which is one-third dependent on Russia for energy, prevents NATO from making radical decisions on the Ukraine crisis. *"We are concerned about the energy situation in Europe because it demonstrates the vulnerability of being too dependent on one supplier of natural gas and that's the reason why NATO allies agree that we need to work and focus on diversification of*

*supplies*” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated (Al Jazeera, 2022). With this statement, NATO's Ukraine dilemma became official. NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary-General Mircea Geoana made this even clearer by announcing that NATO would not be militarily involved in the Ukraine crisis (Nicholson, 2022).

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Ukraine's accession to NATO could ignite the NATO-Russia conflict, which is likely to turn into a nuclear disaster. In addition, he gave a tacit warning to the US, emphasizing the low probability of its European allies taking a front against Russia in Ukraine's effort to retake Crimea after a possible NATO membership (Starkey, 2022). Similarly, *"it is absolutely imperative for us to ensure that Ukraine never, ever becomes a NATO member,"* said Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov (Kirby, 2022). The underlying reason for this concern of Russia is the fear that if Ukraine becomes a NATO member, it can take back Crimea with the help of the alliance and subsequently increase NATO's influence on Russia's borders.

## 5. Conclusion

The world has witnessed countless military alliances throughout history. However, it would not be wrong to say that NATO has been one of the longest-running and most successful of these alliances. Because in the global world, formations that ignore the principle of mutual dependency of nations and cannot adapt to change are doomed to failure. At this point, the destruction of the First World War and the Second World War, the subject of interdependence reached such a point that the alliance of states became an obligation, not an option. In this sense, uniting under the umbrella of the Alliance was not only a necessity to share costs but also an opportunity for member countries to achieve their goals.

After the Second World War, the world was divided into two poles in the grip of capitalism and communism. NATO alliance was established against a possible Soviet threat, and the anxiety created by this led the Soviet Union to establish the Warsaw Pact. In this period, it would not be wrong to state that the security dilemma was also behind the scenes of the absence of a hot conflict. Buzan supported this thesis by saying that the technological developments during the Cold War were the basis of securitization between East and West (Buzan, 1991: 112-113). The rapidly ongoing arms race at both poles created a mutual fear and deterrence effect. Considering that the risks and threats have increased unpredictably today, it is seen that NATO stands out as an assurance in reducing these risks and threats and maintains its importance.

While NATO was structuring itself in terms of adapting to developing and changing conditions and maintaining its existence, significant changes began to be observed in its strategy. In this context, while it was initially a regional organization, it continues its revision towards becoming a global organization. Particularly, 9/11 had a great share in this transformation and the internal renewal efforts.

Despite the ever-changing and uncertain security problems since its establishment, NATO has managed to draw a successful organizational profile in the process. It is not difficult to predict that the role and importance of the organization not only for its allies but also for the establishment of international security will continue in the future. Because one of the things that make the organization, which has a history of more than 70 years, valuable in the international arena, is its military power option. Cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) in the intervention in international affairs complements each other in terms of both the legitimacy of NATO and the lack of military power of the UN. One of the most important factors that will affect NATO's future is the question of how it will adapt itself to evolving and uncertain threats.

The Ukraine issue, on the other hand, has become a kind of testing platform for Russia to measure the limits of the West and the US. While Russia is looking for ways to increase its influence without completely severing its relations with the West and NATO; the organization had the chance to observe its limitations more concretely. However, understanding of encouraging Ukraine to be neutral and not pursue policies that are diametrically opposed to Russia, even implicitly, would mean ignoring Ukraine's will as a state and could threaten the definition of freedom used by NATO throughout the enlargement process and cause the organization's achievements to be questioned. The war initiated by Russia in



Ukraine has radically changed the perception that NATO has lost its former importance. Russia's recent aggressive policies have embodied the tasks that a collective defense organization like NATO can undertake in world peace.

Although NATO's subsistence in the 21st century does not necessitate an aggressive Russia (Rühle 2015: 86), the Ukraine crisis that broke out in the first quarter of 2022 and Russia's imperialist reflexes made it concrete that the alarm bells were ringing for Ukraine's European neighbors as well. However, the necessary economic threshold is uncertain, issues such as the establishment of economic development and democracy can reduce civil war. Organizations like NATO can contribute to world peace by increasing the legal accountability of failed states which is seen as a threat to international security. Besides, the pandemic that broke out in 2020 once again demonstrated the resistance of an international organization such as NATO to uncertain risks and the need to follow a more comprehensive path in crisis management (Gjørnv, 2020).

To sum up, it is not incorrect to say that NATO's enlargement policy poses a kind of security dilemma for Moscow. Every state that is a member of NATO – especially the former Soviet bloc countries – means that Russia's influence is decreasing, and this situation is associated with a strengthening NATO. Russia evaluates this situation as a threat under a national issue. One can say that NATO's importance in global security continues today without any doubt. Even the Ukraine crisis triggered Russia's aggressive stance as a country that wanted to be kept under its influence without being under the umbrella of NATO. Because becoming a full NATO member could be too late for Russia. Russia's premature attitude stems from its belief that it is more rational to stand against Ukraine which is weaker than itself, rather than a NATO member.

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Bu çalışmanın tüm hazırlanma süreçlerinde etik kurallara ve bilimsel atıf gösterme ilkelerine riayet edildiđini yazar(lar) beyan eder. Aksi bir durumun tespiti halinde Business, Economics and Management Research Journal'ın hiçbir sorumluluđu olmayıp, tüm sorumluluk makale yazar(lar)ına aittir. Bu çalışma etik kurul izni gerektiren çalışma grubunda yer almamaktadır.

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