

## **Reimagining NATO Enlargement**

Ukraine, Georgia, and the Transformation of Euro-Atlantic Security Governance

*Chick Edmond*

2 April 2026

<https://doi.org/10.36304/ExpwMCUP.2026.05>

**Abstract:** The debate surrounding the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has taken on new urgency with recent Russian aggression toward Ukraine and continued instability in the Black Sea region. The purpose of this article is to reimagine the future of NATO expansion through the lens of Ukraine and Georgia's potential membership, and how they can contribute to the development of Euro-Atlantic security governance. A mixed methods methodology was employed, including qualitative analyses of policy documentation, interviews, and quantitative assessments of regional security. This research explores how the balance of power may be altered, how the concept of collective defense evolves, and what the implications are

---

Chick Edmond is a political scientist and graduate researcher in the international studies program at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. His research focuses on nuclear deterrence strategies, public policy, geopolitics in Europe and Africa, and the balance of power between NATO and Russia. He also is particularly interested in how historical and contemporary deterrence policies shape regional and global security policies. <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9633-0945>. The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Marine Corps University, the U.S. Marine Corps, the Department of the Navy, or the U.S. government.

for the broader security environment in Europe. The research uses three key terms—*security governance*, *strategic ambiguity*, and *regional resilience*—and places these terms within the theoretical context of three international relations theories: *neorealism*, *liberal institutionalism*, and *social constructivism*. The findings indicate that the inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO would result in significant changes in how deterrence and defense are employed while challenging existing norms and practices of NATO and the Euro-Atlantic community. One of the primary implications of the integration of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO would be the necessity of developing adaptable institutional frameworks, increased burden sharing, and expanding definitions of security beyond military capabilities. Recommendations are provided to both member states, aspirant countries, and international partners regarding the use of credible commitments, flexible accession processes, and adequate support structures. Ultimately, this study indicates that transforming Euro-Atlantic security governance is a complex process that is influenced by the interactions among geopolitical, institutional, and normative variables rather than simply an outcome of expansion. This study contributes to the body of literature related to alliance politics and provides tangible policy options for policymakers who are tasked with navigating a period of increasing uncertainty.

**Keywords:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, enlargement, Europe, Atlantic, security governance, Ukraine, Georgia, strategic ambiguity

## **Introduction**

The expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been one of the most impactful developments in post-Cold War European security. Initially designed as a means to solidify democracy and prevent aggression in Central and Eastern Europe, NATO's expansion has developed into a multifaceted project of both a political and strategic nature. Recent years have seen renewed discussions of whether Ukraine and Georgia should join NATO and have once again exposed severe divisions throughout the alliance regarding the risk and benefit of further enlargement. Criticisms of Ukraine and Georgia joining NATO have included concerns that further expansion may lead to increased escalation and NATO "overextension," while proponents have argued that credible security guarantees to Ukraine and Georgia are imperative for regional stability. The Black Sea region has emerged as a focal point of competing influences and has challenged the ability of existing security governance mechanisms to adapt to these emerging influences. Consequently, the development of NATO's enlargement policy represents a window into the broader issues of the future of collective defense, alliance cohesion, and the management of major power rivalries.

Despite considerable academic scholarship on NATO enlargement, much of the literature has focused on the experiences of Central and Eastern European states that were accepted into NATO during the 1990s and early 2000s. Due to continuing territorial disputes, ongoing Russian opposition, and continued democratization in Ukraine and Georgia, the challenges faced by Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO represent a different set of challenges from those experienced by previous entrants. These differences make it difficult to apply the same established criteria for membership to Ukraine and Georgia

and raise important questions about NATO's ability to adapt to new geopolitical realities. As NATO continues to navigate an increasingly unstable security environment, the decisions it makes regarding Ukraine and Georgia will have long-term implications for both countries, and ultimately for the legitimacy and credibility of the alliance as a whole. The stakes are especially high due to the evolving nature of hybrid threats, the increasing number of nonstate actors, and the changing balance of power in Eurasia.<sup>1</sup> To understand the dynamics at work in this area will require a holistic examination that moves beyond formal policy statements to examine the underlying motivations behind the actions of member states and the interests of key stakeholders. Identifying the motivations of stakeholders is essential to developing an effective strategy that can both deter aggression and create a lasting and stable security partnership. This article addresses this void by conducting a comprehensive evaluation of how NATO's enlargement, particularly in regard to Ukraine and Georgia, is transforming the governance of Euro-Atlantic security.

The core issue of this research is the longstanding asymmetry between NATO's commitment to "open door" policies and the ambiguous status of Ukraine and Georgia with regard to their membership in NATO. Although NATO has consistently reaffirmed that it remains committed to admitting European democracies willing and capable of meeting its requirements for membership, little meaningful progress has been achieved in facilitating the ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia. The disconnect between NATO's policy commitments and the uncertain status of Ukraine and Georgia creates an environment of uncertainty that is exploited by outside actors, primarily Russia, and reduces the credibility of Euro-Atlantic security guarantees. The

opaque status of Ukraine and Georgia with regard to their potential membership in NATO creates an environment of uncertainty that complicates the defense planning for both countries, diminishes the effectiveness of deterrent measures, and creates incentives for adversaries to challenge the existing order.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the lack of clear avenues for accession has created domestic instability in both countries as reform initiatives have become linked to the unpredictable nature of international politics. The interaction between alliance politics, regional security dynamics, and domestic transition in Ukraine and Georgia therefore constitute a complex problem without simple answers. Solving this problem requires a detailed comprehension of both the structural and agent-based factors influencing NATO's enlargement policy. In particular, it is crucial to evaluate how institutional, normative, and material factors combine to produce the current condition of strategic ambiguity. By examining the causal factors leading to this strategic ambiguity, this article will elucidate the conditions under which enlargement can contribute to, rather than detract from, Euro-Atlantic security governance.

The primary research question driving the analysis of this study is: How does the potential membership of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO influence the transformation of Euro-Atlantic security governance? This question is motivated by the realization that the politics of alliances are not fixed but continue to evolve based on the changing nature of security environments, evolving threat perceptions, and the agency of both member and partner states. Through the use of the comparative case studies of Ukraine and Georgia, this research will seek to identify the mechanisms by which enlargement influences collective defense arrangements, burden sharing practices, and the broader structure of regional security. Additional

subquestions include the following: What are the primary barriers to membership for Ukraine and Georgia in NATO? How do internal debates and external pressures of NATO influence policy outcomes? What lessons can be learned from this experience to inform future rounds of enlargement or other forms of institutional innovation? These questions have both practical and academic significance for scholars who are seeking to better understand the challenges of deterring and reassuring in the face of growing uncertainty in the global security environment.

The primary hypothesis of this study is that the inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, either as full members or through enhanced partnership agreements, will significantly alter Euro-Atlantic security governance by adjusting deterrence and defense postures, modifying the decision-making processes of the alliance, and challenging the existing norms of collective security. It is hypothesized that enlargement will enhance the capacity of NATO to deter aggression from external actors but will also add new dimensions of complexity in terms of burden sharing, escalation management, and reconciling diverse national interests. Additionally, the process of enlargement is likely to induce adaptive changes in the institutional frameworks of NATO as the alliance adjusts to incorporate new members with different security needs and political paths.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the hypothesis expects both positive and negative externalities and implications for the stability and resilience of the overall security regime. Testing this hypothesis requires an analysis of both intended and unintended effects of enlargement, as well as the mechanisms by which policy decisions are converted into institutional responses.

Methodologically, this research uses a mixed-methods approach that employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of the transformation of Euro-Atlantic security governance. Qualitative data are derived from policy documents, official statements, and interviews with current and former policymakers from NATO member states, Ukraine, and Georgia. These qualitative sources are supplemented by content analysis of media coverage and scholarly debates to provide insight into the narrative constructions of enlargement. Quantitatively, the analysis of regional security will employ indicators of regional security such as military expenditures, troop deployments, and incident data to determine the tangible impacts of evolving alliance relations. Comparative case studies of Ukraine and Georgia will be used to highlight the similarities and differences in the two countries' accession experiences as well as the factors influencing their respective interactions with NATO. Process tracing will also be used to chart the sequence of key decisions and events that have influenced the enlargement debate since the early 2000s. The use of multiple data sources and methods allows for greater confidence in the results and enables a more complete understanding of causality. The employment of multiple methodologies is essential to capture the complexity of both the topic and the policy environment in which it occurs.

Conceptually, this article is grounded in the literature of security governance, which examines the multitude of actors, institutions, and processes that govern security in today's world. The literature provides a valuable framework for evaluating how NATO has transitioned from a classical collective defense organization into a more flexible and multilayered security community. The literature also highlights the importance of both

formal and informal mechanisms of cooperation, as well as the roles of norms, rules, and practices in governing the behaviors of states and other security actors. Additionally, the literature introduces the concept of strategic ambiguity to describe the tensions that exist within NATO's enlargement policy, particularly the tension between deterring external aggression and managing the risks of escalation. Finally, the literature introduces the concept of regional resilience to emphasize the capacity of states and institutions to absorb shocks and adapt to evolving security environments. These concepts provide the analytic tools to support the subsequent theoretical and empirical analyses of the article.

Theoretically, this research relies on three primary international relations theories: neorealism, liberal institutionalism, and social constructivism. *Neorealism* identifies the enduring significance of power and security competition in determining alliance behavior. From a neorealist perspective, NATO's inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia can be viewed as a response to the shifting power dynamics and threats in the Euro-Atlantic area that will impact the deterrence and escalation dynamics.<sup>4</sup> *Liberal institutionalism* emphasizes the role of institutions in reducing anarchy, promoting cooperation, and reducing transaction costs among states. This perspective views enlargement as a process of institutional adaptation and norm diffusion, with the potential to create stability in the regional security environment and facilitate democratic consolidation in Ukraine and Georgia. *Social constructivism* places emphasis on the role of identity, norms, and discourse in shaping the aspirations of candidate countries and the decision-making processes of incumbent member states. Together, these three theoretical frameworks provide a robust framework for analyzing the

transformation of Euro-Atlantic security governance in light of NATO enlargement.

This article is organized as follows: The next section reviews the conceptual framework of the study, emphasizing the key concepts of security governance, strategic ambiguity, and regional resilience. The subsequent section explains the theoretical framework of the study, employing neorealism, liberal institutionalism, and social constructivism to explain the dynamics of NATO enlargement. The empirical core of the article then discusses the primary findings of the case studies of Ukraine and Georgia, identifying the influence of their potential membership in NATO on the politics of the alliance, the regional security environment, and the institutional adaptations of the alliance. The next section addresses the broader implications for Euro-Atlantic security governance, including lessons that can be applied to future enlargement rounds and recommendations for policymakers. The final section summarizes the principal arguments of the article and reflects on the possibilities of creating a transformed and resilient security order in Europe. The research employs a diverse array of academic and policy sources to ensure both analytical rigor and practical applicability throughout the article.

### *Historical Contextualization*

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 caused a seismic shift in the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Former Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Georgia had no sooner declared their independence than they faced the twin tasks of creating functioning states and negotiating an ever-changing regional security architecture.<sup>5</sup> During the

1990s, NATO initiated its first wave of post-Cold war enlargements through the admission of countries from Central and Eastern Europe, indicating its willingness to continue expanding.<sup>6</sup> The motivation behind NATO's policy was to solidify democratic gains and preclude the possibility of the resurgence of authoritarian regimes in Europe.<sup>7</sup> However, NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe directly challenged Russia's sphere of influence, thereby planting the seeds for later confrontations.<sup>8</sup>

Both Ukraine and Georgia articulated a desire for European and Atlantic integration by the beginning of the 2000s and consequently sought stronger links to the West in terms of security and institutions to counteract potential Russian interference.<sup>9</sup> Both states' aspirations were formalized during the 2008 Bucharest NATO summit, when NATO leaders stated that both would ultimately join NATO, though without providing a specific timeline.<sup>10</sup> The vague nature of this agreement placed both states in a gray area—neither completely part of NATO's strategy nor entirely outside it—and therefore put them in an especially precarious position vis-a-vis Russian pressure and hybrid attacks.<sup>11</sup> The Russian invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 revealed the limitations of NATO's open-door policy while also raising acute concerns regarding the reliability of Euro-Atlantic security guarantees.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the cases of Ukraine and Georgia have become central to academic debates over the risks and benefits associated with NATO's future enlargement and security governance in Europe.

### *Security Governance*

*Security governance* involves a multitude of players, institutions, and activities involved in managing and addressing security issues in a particular region or

system. Unlike the more traditional view of security governance based on the state, security governance acknowledges the role of international organizations, nonstate actors, and informal arrangements in determining security outcomes.<sup>13</sup> NATO's evolution from a collective defense organization into a multilateral security provider is a manifestation of this shift in emphasis.<sup>14</sup> Ukraine and Georgia's pursuit of membership in NATO necessitates the creation of new types of governance through, for example, trust-building exercises, joint training operations, and increased interoperability.<sup>15</sup> These developments illustrate how adaptable security governance mechanisms can be in response to changing threat environments and regional contexts.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, security governance highlights the importance of norms, rules, and common practices on which cooperation can take place, even when there is no formal membership. In addition to these general considerations, the governance of the Black Sea region is further complicated by the interplay of conflicting national interests, historical grievances, and the presence of revisionist actors.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, examining the transition of Euro-Atlantic security governance is contingent on understanding the institutional innovation and normative framework negotiations that have taken place in relation to the enlargement debate.

### *Strategic Ambiguity*

*Strategic ambiguity* represents a policy posture in which an actor deliberately maintains uncertainty regarding their intentions or commitment(s) to others, often to deter an adversary while simultaneously avoiding direct confrontation or overcommitment.<sup>18</sup> In terms of NATO's enlargement policy,

strategic ambiguity has been evident in NATO's repeated assertions of its open-door policy and its continued support for the membership aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia without establishing definitive timetables or guarantees.<sup>19</sup> This approach achieves multiple objectives: it sends a message of deterrence to Russia; provides assurances to potential candidate countries; and maintains the unity of the alliance amid differing views held by individual members.<sup>20</sup> However, one of the drawbacks of employing ambiguity is that it creates uncertainty, which can be used by adversaries and undermines the credibility of security guarantees.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, ambiguity puts a great deal of pressure on domestic reform processes in aspirant countries, as the lack of clarity surrounding accession prospects undermines public confidence and political will.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, strategic ambiguity has created a precarious balance within the Black Sea region in which ambiguity simultaneously constrains escalatory tendencies and generates insecurity.<sup>23</sup> Understanding the dynamic implications of strategic ambiguity is essential for evaluating the risks and opportunities associated with NATO's responses to Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the issue of whether longer-term stability can be generated without making more explicit commitments remains unanswered.

### *Regional Resilience*

*Regional resilience* represents the ability of a country, institution, and/or society to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to shocks and disruptions, whether they are military, political, or economic.<sup>25</sup> Within the context of Euro-Atlantic relations, resilience has emerged as a key component of NATO's response to the new security environment, including a broad range of efforts to enhance

defense capacities, civil preparedness, and social cohesion.<sup>26</sup> For Ukraine and Georgia, developing regional resilience is both a necessary condition and a consequence of being integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures.<sup>27</sup>

Resilience initiatives in Ukraine and Georgia include defense sector reform, counterhybrid warfare strategies, and the establishment of robust democratic institutions.<sup>28</sup> These actions are intended to limit vulnerability to external pressures, particularly those originating from Russia.<sup>29</sup> However, regional resilience is a relational concept that is dependent on the quality of relationships and the distribution of resources and knowledge among partners.<sup>30</sup> In turn, the pursuit of regional resilience has stimulated innovation in security governance, as NATO and partner countries establish flexible and scalable responses to evolving threats.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, regional resilience is both a result of and a factor in the transformative process of Euro-Atlantic security governance as a result of the ongoing enlargement debates.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Neorealism*

Neorealism, also referred to as *structural realism*, argues that due to the anarchic nature of the international system, states will inevitably focus on survival through power balancing and self-help.<sup>32</sup> Scholars of neorealism contend that NATO expansion is a rational response to perceived threats emanating from Russia and other actors outside the NATO area by Western states.<sup>33</sup> The incorporation of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO was viewed as an attempt to shift the regional power balance in favor of NATO, thereby enhancing the deterrent posture of the alliance.<sup>34</sup> Neorealists assert that such

actions, although possibly stabilizing for the alliance, are likely to generate counterbalancing responses from Russia, thereby increasing the likelihood of escalating conflict.<sup>35</sup> The neorealist framework highlights the security dilemma faced by aspiring members of NATO, as attempts to increase security through membership in the alliance may be viewed as increasing insecurity by the adversary.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, neorealism serves as a theoretical lens for analyzing both the motivations for expanding NATO and the structural limitations placed on the effectiveness of such expansion.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the neorealist lens emphasizes the central role of military capabilities, alliances, and the distribution of power in determining the outcome of NATO expansion debates.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, neorealism provides valuable insight into the competitive dynamics and geopolitical risks associated with the transformation of Euro-Atlantic security governance.

### *Liberal Institutionalism*

*Liberal institutionalism* posits that international institutions can minimize the negative effects of anarchy by creating frameworks for cooperation, lowering transaction costs, and facilitating the diffusion of norms.<sup>39</sup> From this perspective, NATO expansion is seen as a means for creating zones of peace, encouraging democratic consolidation, and promoting collective security.<sup>40</sup> Liberal institutionalists argue that the prospect of becoming a member of NATO will encourage candidate countries to undertake reforms and align themselves with NATO standards.<sup>41</sup> The examples of Ukraine and Georgia demonstrate how the adaptation of institutions can assist in managing security issues through transparency, confidence building, and consultative mechanisms.<sup>42</sup> Critics of liberal institutionalism, however, point out that

institutional overreach and divergence in the preferences of members can impede the effectiveness of expansion as a governance tool.<sup>43</sup> The theory also emphasizes the role of transnational networks, civil society, and epistemic communities in shaping the outcome of expansion.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the emphasis of liberal institutionalism on rule-based order, mutual trust, and common values provides a complementary view to the security-centered assumptions of neorealism and highlights the possibility of positive-summing outcomes.

### *Social Constructivism*

*Social constructivism* challenges materialist and rationalist explanations of the world by emphasizing the role of ideas, identities, and discourse in constructing international reality.<sup>45</sup> Constructivist scholars suggest that NATO expansion is not simply determined by the level of power or institutional design but is influenced by collective meanings, identities, and the politics of legitimation.<sup>46</sup> The aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia to become members of NATO stem from their sense of belonging to Europe, their historical experiences, and their desire to identify with Euro-Atlantic norms.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the hesitancy of certain member states to support further expansion is linked to different views of European identity and the limits of the security community.<sup>48</sup> Social constructivism highlights the process of norm diffusion, socialization and rhetorical entrapment, which can affect the supply and demand sides of expansion.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, it highlights the importance of legitimacy and recognition in determining alliance politics and possibilities for institutional change.<sup>50</sup> In terms of the development of Euro-Atlantic security governance, the constructivist perspective explains why there continues to

exist a degree of strategic ambiguity surrounding NATO's intentions and why there is competition over the criteria for membership and the changing definition of collective defense.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, by placing the role of ideas at the forefront, social constructivism enhances understanding of how NATO expansion changes the way security is governed regionally.

### *Case Studies: Ukraine and Georgia*

The cases of Ukraine and Georgia represent both the complexities and contradictions involved with the expansion of NATO and the development of Euro-Atlantic security governance. Ukraine's development was characterized by a series of dramatic political events, such as the Orange Revolution of 2004–5 and the Euromaidan protests of 2013–14, that demonstrated Ukraine's desire to move toward the West and its susceptibility to Russian coercion.<sup>52</sup> After Russia annexed Crimea and began a conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, Kyiv greatly increased its pace of defense reform, strengthened ties with NATO, and incorporated into its constitution a commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.<sup>53</sup> Although these actions were taken to help protect Ukraine, the country is still an outsider to the alliance, continues to be exposed to various forms of security threats, faces many internal challenges related to reform, and remains uncertain regarding the support it will receive from Western allies.<sup>54</sup>

Georgia's development is similar to that of Ukraine in several ways, specifically in its efforts to become a member of NATO and its exposure to Russian military action. In particular, the 2008 Russo-Georgian War illustrated the perils of ambiguous policies when Georgia's application for membership in the alliance prompted a response from Russia without the assurance of

substantial protection or support.<sup>55</sup> Georgia has since become one of NATO's most active partner countries and has provided troops to alliance operations while undertaking sweeping defense reforms.<sup>56</sup> However, Georgia's path to becoming a member of the alliance remains stalled due to unresolved territorial conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as internal debates among NATO members about the potential risks associated with future enlargement.<sup>57</sup>

Although neither Ukraine nor Georgia have directly obtained membership in NATO through their partnership with the alliance, they have used their partnership to encourage internal reform and increase their military interoperability with NATO. That said, both countries have also experienced the consequences of being located in a geopolitical gray area.<sup>58</sup> The examples of Ukraine and Georgia demonstrate the double nature of NATO's open-door policy: on the one hand, it represents a catalyst for change; on the other hand, it creates vulnerabilities for those seeking to join the alliance.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the potential for either country to become a member of NATO has major implications for regional stability, alliance credibility, and the overall development of Euro-Atlantic security governance.<sup>60</sup>

**Table 1.** International positions on NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia

<b>Actor/bloc</b>	<b>Official position</b>	<b>Strategic logic</b>	<b>Security interpretation</b>	<b>Governance perspective</b>
United States	Strong support for NATO's open-door policy and sovereignty-based accession	Containment of Russian influence; preservation of liberal international order	Enlargement as deterrence and stability mechanism	NATO as a security governance institution

United Kingdom	Supportive of enlargement	Balance of power and transatlantic security	Enlargement strengthens European defense	Institutional expansion of Euro-Atlantic order
Poland	Strong support	Historical buffer logic; threat perception of Russia	NATO as existential security guarantee	Enlargement as civilizational alignment
Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)	Strong support	Existential security logic	Enlargement as survival mechanism	Normative inclusion in Western order
Germany	Cautious/ambivalent	Stability management; economic interdependence with Russia	Risk of escalation	Governance-first integration
France	Cautious/strategic ambiguity	Strategic autonomy concerns	Security risk containment	Institutional gradualism
Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece)	Mixed/neutral	Low direct threat perception	Limited strategic urgency	Peripheral governance interest
European Union	Political support (nonmembership authority)	Institutional alignment logic	Normative security	Governance harmonization
NATO (institutionally)	Open-door policy maintained	Alliance credibility and legitimacy	Deterrence logic	Security governance expansion
Russia	Strong opposition	Sphere of influence preservation	NATO as existential threat	Governance displacement
China	Neutral/abstentionist	Noninterference doctrine	Bloc politics avoidance	Antialliance governance model
Non-Aligned Movement	Mostly neutral/abstentions	Sovereignty principle	Antibloc security logic	Multipolar governance preference
African Union	Neutral	Nonintervention norm	Low strategic engagement	Sovereignty-based governance
Arab League	Neutral	Regional stability focus	Limited relevance	Nonalignment logic
Organization for Security and	Dialogue-oriented	Conflict prevention	Cooperative security	Multilateral governance

Cooperation in Europe				
United Nations (General Assembly)	Supportive of Ukraine and Georgia's sovereignty	International law framework	Normative security	Legal-institutional order
United Nations (Security Council)	Paralyzed by veto	Power politics	Institutional deadlock	Governance fragmentation
Japan	Supportive of Ukraine's sovereignty	Rules-based order defense	Normative alignment	Institutional solidarity
Canada	Strong support	Liberal internationalism	Collective defense	Governance expansion
Nordic states (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)	Supportive (post-2022 shift)	Regional security integration	Collective deterrence	Governance consolidation

Source: courtesy of the author.

Table 1 illustrates that Western nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Nordic states, along with some Eastern European countries, such as Poland, generally support expanding NATO as a means of providing collective defense and deterrence and maintaining a liberal international order. Conversely, Russia has expressed the strongest opposition to the expansion of NATO, stating that the expansion represents an existential threat. Other actors, such as China, the Non-Aligned Movement, regional organizations (African Union, Arab League), and other international entities have taken a more neutral or abstentionist position in relation to NATO expansion, generally expressing concern over issues of sovereignty and nonintervention and promoting a multipolar approach to governance.

Additionally, the table highlights more nuanced positions of major European powers and institutions. For example, Germany and France have generally adopted more cautious and/or ambivalent positions toward the expansion of NATO; are generally concerned with the potential for escalating conflict; have significant economic ties to Russia; and are seeking greater strategic autonomy. Most Southern European countries have taken a somewhat mixed or neutral position on this issue, largely because they perceive little direct threat from NATO's expansion.

Finally, multilateral institutions, such as NATO, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations (UN), tend to focus on governance, normative security, and building the credibility of institutions to provide a framework for the interaction between security imperatives and the development of collective governance mechanisms. Overall, the table shows the multiple and sometimes conflicting reasons why many countries around the world react to the possibility of NATO expansion, as well as how each country's history, home region, and governance philosophy all impact the dynamics of international security.

### **Main Research Findings**

#### *NATO's Enlargement Has Increased Deterrent Effects, but It Also Poses a Greater Risk of Escalation*

NATO's decision to expand its membership to Ukraine and Georgia has clearly increased deterrent effects on the alliance's eastern flank, sending a strong signal to allies and adversaries alike that NATO is committed to its member states.<sup>61</sup> This deterrent posture is evident in an increased number of

combined military exercises, intelligence sharing, and the forward deployment of troops along NATO's borders to discourage potential aggression from Russia.<sup>62</sup> However, these actions also contribute to an increasingly unstable security environment since Russia views NATO's expansion as a direct threat to its vital national interest and responds accordingly.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, NATO faces a classic security dilemma: actions intended to improve stability are likely to create instability.<sup>64</sup> Both Ukraine and Georgia have experienced increased levels of military tension and hybrid warfare tactics as a direct result of their aspirations.<sup>65</sup> As such, the danger of unintended escalation is exacerbated by the ambiguity surrounding NATO's commitments, which contributes to confusion and miscalculation.<sup>66</sup> While enlargement does strengthen deterrence, the lack of clarity regarding red lines and responses to them increases the likelihood of crisis spirals.<sup>67</sup> Overall, the evidence presented here illustrates the two-sided nature of enlargement as both a source of stability and instability.<sup>68</sup> NATO therefore needs to develop mechanisms to reconcile its commitment to credible deterrence with those required to prevent crises. Ultimately, the evolving security environment necessitates developing adaptable policies that reduce the risks associated with escalation while also preserving unity among member states.

### *Strategic Ambiguity Creates a Credibility Gap and Hinders Reforms*

NATO's reliance on strategic ambiguity toward Ukraine and Georgia has produced mixed results, as ambiguity has served to deter adversaries while creating uncertainty among aspirants.<sup>69</sup> While ambiguity provides NATO with the flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, it also creates a

credibility gap that adversaries can use to their advantage.<sup>70</sup> Interviews conducted with senior officials from both Ukraine and Georgia reflect a widespread concern over NATO's vague language and lack of clear timelines and conditions for accession, which undermines the impetus for domestic reform.<sup>71</sup> The uncertain status of both countries has also complicated their defense planning, as they must continue to plan for self-reliance while also planning for eventual integration into NATO.<sup>72</sup> Russian actors have exploited this uncertainty to destabilize both countries using hybrid tactics and political influence.<sup>73</sup> The lack of explicit guarantees has paradoxically rendered both countries vulnerable to coercive pressure, while at the same time discouraging conventional attack.<sup>74</sup> This has created persistent political instability and a cycle of reform followed by disillusionment.<sup>75</sup> The credibility of NATO's open-door policy is at stake; if ambiguity continues, it threatens to diminish trust in both the alliance and its enlargement agenda.<sup>76</sup> Addressing this issue will require greater transparency, consistent messaging, and tangible steps toward integration. Without these measures, strategic ambiguity will be detrimental to Euro-Atlantic security governance.

#### *Institutional Change Was Required but Remains Incomplete*

NATO's interaction with Ukraine and Georgia has resulted in significant institutional changes, such as new partnership structures, interoperable programs, and customized support packages.<sup>77</sup> However, these changes have been limited by internal divisions among member states and fear of overextending the alliance. NATO has developed new mechanisms for nonmember states, such as the Enhanced Opportunities Partners (EOP) program, but these mechanisms provide no access to the full range of

membership benefits.<sup>78</sup> Internal disagreements over burden sharing and differing threat perceptions within NATO hinder consensus building and create obstacles to deepening integration.<sup>79</sup> There is case study evidence illustrating that although both Ukraine and Georgia have taken strides in harmonizing their defense sectors with the standards of the alliance, there are still remaining gaps in civil-military relations, democratic oversight, and anticorruption initiatives. Moreover, the institutional changes required to accommodate Ukraine and Georgia's desire to join NATO must be balanced against the need to ensure that the alliance remains inclusive and effective. Rapid enlargement could dilute the cohesion of the alliance.<sup>80</sup> Interviews conducted among aspiring and incumbent members illustrate that both groups recognize the need for flexible, scalable integration pathways to allow for different membership paths. The extent to which NATO is able to adapt institutionally will ultimately determine its long-term relevance and resiliency in the face of new security challenges.<sup>81</sup> The fact that institutional changes remain incomplete emphasizes the need for continuing reform and innovation.

### *Enlargement Transforms Regional Security Governance*

Ukraine and Georgia's pursuit of membership in NATO have spurred a broader transformation of regional security governance, moving the focus from fixed defense postures to dynamic and networked forms of security.<sup>82</sup> The transformation of regional security governance is evident in the proliferation of multilateral exercises, capacity-building initiatives, and increased coordination with the EU and other regional organizations.<sup>83</sup> New governance approaches place emphasis on flexibility, resilience, and the

capacity to respond to hybrid threats, indicating a shift away from traditional state-based forms of governance.<sup>84</sup> The experiences of Ukraine and Georgia show that aspiring member states can function as norm entrepreneurs, promoting reforms and innovations within the broader security community. Regional resilience is achieved through means beyond the military, such as strengthening civil society, critical infrastructure, and democratic institutions.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, the evolving governance structure is influenced by the interactions between outside actors, including Russia, the EU, and the United States, each with their own agendas.<sup>86</sup> The experiences of Ukraine and Georgia show that the increasing complexity of security governance in the Black Sea region is driven by the transformation of governance practices. This redefinition of governance practices reflects a response to changing security threats, as well as a source of those threats. In the end, the experiences of Ukraine and Georgia suggests that successful enlargement of NATO requires not simply military integration but a complete rethinking of security governance. This finding demands greater attention to the nonmilitary aspects of alliance politics.

#### *Nonstate Actors and International Organizations Influence Enlargement Outcomes*

The roles of nonstate actors and international organizations have assumed a growing importance in shaping the processes and outcomes of NATO enlargement. In Ukraine and Georgia, civil society organizations, think tanks, and media outlets have been influential in supporting reform, monitoring government performance, and influencing public attitudes toward NATO. Meanwhile, malevolent actors—including transnational crime networks and Russian proxy actors—have sought to undermine integration through

disinformation and political subversion. International organizations such as the UN, the EU, and the OSCE offer alternative sources of support and legitimacy, but they also add another layer of complexity to the relationship.<sup>87</sup> The relationships between state and nonstate actors create both opportunities and challenges for security governance, as numerous actors seek to define the rules and practices of regional order. Interviews conducted with both aspiring and existing NATO members illustrate that collaborative action between international organizations can increase resilience and facilitate reform, whereas organizational fragmentation and/or competition can undermine progress. The increasing salience of nonstate actors also underscores the necessity of inclusive policy frameworks that engage civil society and the private sector. Effective governance necessitates not merely cooperation between governments but also robust partnerships with civil society and the private sector. The experiences of Ukraine and Georgia illustrate both the promise and perils of complex, multistakeholder security environments. Future enlargement efforts will be required to address this reality to produce sustainable outcomes.

## **Implications**

### *The Need for Adaptive Institutional Frameworks*

The evidence from the case studies of Ukraine and Georgia demonstrates the necessity of developing an adaptive institutional framework for NATO to deal with new and varied member states' needs. Adaptability allows for the tailoring of integration processes and the possibility of variable commitment geometries, especially when dealing with the wide range of characteristics seen among applicant countries. However, rigid institutional structures risk

leaving capable partners behind or diluting the coherence of the alliance through overly rapid enlargement.<sup>88</sup> Mechanisms such as the EOP program provide a way to create a middle ground between full membership and partner status, but these require continued improvement. NATO's ability to learn and adapt to the changing security environment will likely determine the future of Euro-Atlantic security governance. Maintaining institutions that are responsive and resilient to both internal and external pressure is key to preserving the capacity to manage enlargement pressures.

### *Burden Sharing and Collective Resilience*

The inclusion of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO will require a rebalancing of burden sharing within the alliance. The alliance will need to ensure that new members make meaningful contributions to collective defense without placing undue burden on existing members.<sup>89</sup> Responsibility for defense spending, capacity building, and crisis response are critical to sustaining and increasing the credibility of the alliance. If burden sharing is inequitably distributed, there is a high likelihood of resentment by other members, which will undermine the solidarity required for effective collective action. Collective resilience—encompassing both the military and nonmilitary dimensions—will be crucial for addressing hybrid threats and complex emergencies. Consequently, the success of NATO will depend on its ability to fairly allocate burdens and benefits to members both new and old, which will require a significant cultural change toward mutual support and shared vulnerability.

### *A Broader Conceptualization of Security and Governance*

The evolution of Euro-Atlantic security governance will require a broadening of the conceptualization of security beyond traditional military defense. The experiences of Ukraine and Georgia show that developing resilience against hybrid threats will require incorporating civil society, critical infrastructure, and governance reforms into security planning.<sup>90</sup> In addition, NATO and its partners will need to collaborate with a broader range of stakeholders including nonstate actors and regional organizations to build integrated security architectures. This expanded concept of security is consistent with global trends in security governance, which increasingly emphasize networked approaches to security and whole-of-society approaches to governance. The implications of this expanded understanding are that effective alliance politics will require both hard and soft security measures. The adoption of this holistic approach will enable NATO to better address the multifaceted nature of the current threats facing the alliance and establish itself as a model for adaptive and inclusive governance.

### *The Risks and Rewards of Strategic Ambiguity*

Strategic ambiguity employed by NATO has implications for both deterrence and alliance credibility. Although ambiguity can help manage escalations and maintain alliance unity, it can also create vulnerabilities for adversaries to take advantage of. Persistent ambiguity regarding membership prospects for Ukraine and Georgia undermine the reform incentives of both countries and expose them to coercive behavior by adversaries. Therefore, NATO must strike a balance between flexibility and clarity and ensure that ambiguity does not erode trust or embolden adversaries.<sup>91</sup> Clearer communication and

transparent benchmarks could reduce the adverse impacts of ambiguity. Alliance credibility will depend on NATO's ability to navigate competing priorities without sacrificing core principles. The strategic ambiguity used by NATO must therefore be carefully managed to avoid either unintentional escalation or erosion of confidence.

### *Roles of Nonstate Actors and International Organizations*

The increasing role of nonstate actors and international organizations has become integral to the functionality of Euro-Atlantic security governance. Civil society, media, and transnational networks have a direct impact on policy outcomes and public discourse and drive reform in aspiring states. Competing international organizations present opportunities for cooperation as well as challenges of coordination. Therefore, NATO and its partners will need to develop inclusive strategies to harness the potential of these actors while minimizing the risks of fragmentation or competition. Increasingly effective governance will require multilevel and multiactor collaboration. The development of resilient security communities will rely on using the strength of both state and nonstate actors. This ultimately reflects the complexity of security management in the twenty-first century.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### *Develop an Incremental Membership Pathway for Both Countries*

NATO must develop clear and detailed incremental membership pathways for both Ukraine and Georgia. This is to outline specific milestones and timeframes for achieving membership, which would help to reduce uncertainty and encourage sustainable reforms by creating incentives for

both countries to continue their reforms and thereby counteracting potential exploitation of ambiguity by adversaries. Clearer pathways would allow the alliance to set reasonable expectations regarding the pace and extent of reforms required by candidate countries and enable greater consensus among member states that have differing tolerance levels for risk. The first steps toward membership may involve increasingly intensified cooperation in areas such as joint military exercises, enhanced intelligence sharing, and progressive integration into the alliance's command structure. The alliance should then document each incremental step formally in official policy documents and update these documents periodically in accordance with developments in the region.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, implementing transparent reporting of the candidates' progress and independent third-party monitoring would increase accountability and enhance public trust in both aspiring and existing member states. Through the establishment of a clear membership pathway, NATO would enhance deterrence and limit the potential for adversaries to interfere with the process. This incremental approach is consistent with a flexible yet credible approach to enlarging the alliance and reflects best established practices in the field of international institutional enlargement. Furthermore, it offers an acknowledgement of the political and security realities facing both Ukraine and Georgia as well as the alliance as a whole.

### *Broaden Collective Security beyond Military Cooperation*

NATO and its partners must expand the scope of enlargement beyond purely military domains and incorporate nonmilitary domains such as cybersecurity, civil preparedness, and governance reform. Comprehensive security requires

that all member states and aspiring member states possess robust capabilities to resist hybrid threats and social disruption. Therefore, the alliance should invest in the capacity building of critical infrastructure protection, information resilience, and democratic oversight. NATO must also enhance cooperation with civil society and the private sector to employ additional expertise and resources. The alliance should prioritize the implementation of joint training programs, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing platforms to cultivate a sense of collective resilience among member states. NATO must also support regional initiatives complementary to its goals, such as regional security forums in the Black Sea region and EU partnership programs. By employing a whole-of-society approach to security, the alliance will be able to effectively manage the increasing complexity of modern security challenges. This strategy encourages innovation, inclusiveness, and adaptability, and it enables both Ukraine and Georgia to become integral components of the broader security community regardless of when they may become formal members of NATO. Ultimately, nonmilitary integration will contribute to strengthening both deterrence and social cohesion.

### *Strengthen Burden Sharing Mechanisms and Incentives*

To ensure that the expansion of NATO is sustainable, the alliance must improve the burden-sharing mechanisms among both current and future members. The alliance should therefore implement country-specific contribution frameworks that reflect the varied capacities and requirements of individual countries. To encourage defense spending, capability development, and crisis response participation, the alliance can embed

incentives into the accession criteria and partnership programs.<sup>93</sup> NATO should also implement measures to promote transparency in burden-sharing metrics and recognize nonmilitary contributions as part of the collective effort.<sup>94</sup> Increased dialogue regarding burden sharing can assist in preventing resentment and in cultivating a spirit of solidarity among member states as new nations join the alliance. NATO should also regularly assess and adjust these burden-sharing formulas to ensure fairness and effectiveness. Finally, the alliance should also examine alternative funding models, such as joint procurement and pooled resources, to optimize efficiency.<sup>95</sup> Creating a culture of shared responsibility will strengthen the cohesion within the alliance. This approach will ensure that enlargement increases, rather than decreases, collective security. Ultimately, effective burden-sharing is essential for developing a resilient and credible NATO.

#### *Institutional Adaptation Must Be a Priority of the Enlargement Strategy*

Institutional innovation must be a primary aspect of NATO's enlargement strategy. The alliance must continue to evolve and develop adaptable institutional structures capable of accommodating diverse member states and responding to rapid changes in the security environment. The alliance can employ flexible institutional mechanisms, such as variable geometry, differentiated commitments, and modular integration, to manage heterogeneity and minimize the risks associated with overreach. NATO should continue to invest in ongoing learning and policy experimentation by applying both the successes and failures experienced during prior enlargement rounds. The alliance should conduct regular assessments of its institutions, scenario planning, and cross-institutional collaboration with the

EU and OSCE to further enhance adaptability.<sup>96</sup> The alliance should also strengthen processes for resolving disputes and managing crises to maintain unity amidst diversity. Institutional reform should be participative, allowing for both member states and partners to participate in the design and implementation of new mechanisms. Through prioritizing innovation, NATO can remain relevant and responsive in a volatile security environment. The commitment to institutional reform will be vital to the success of both current and future enlargement efforts. Ultimately, institutional agility is key to the alliance's long-term viability.

*Support Deeper Engagement with Nonstate Actors and International Organizations*

NATO must develop a comprehensive strategy for engaging with nonstate actors and working with international organizations in the Euro-Atlantic area. Civil society, the private sector, and transnational networks are essential partners in developing resilience and promoting democratic governance. The alliance must establish regular consultation mechanisms, joint projects, and public diplomacy initiatives to draw on the expertise and legitimacy of these actors. NATO should seek to coordinate its activities more closely with other international organizations, such as the EU, the OSCE, and the UN, to enhance policy coherence and resource mobilization. NATO must also consider the threats posed by malicious nonstate actors, including disinformation campaign, and hybrid threats, through joint monitoring and rapid response teams. Multilevel engagement will assist in bridging the gaps between national, regional, and societal security efforts.<sup>97</sup> By developing a culture of inclusive security governance, the alliance can strengthen its legitimacy and effectiveness. These partnerships will serve as a source of valuable feedback

for the alliance's own institutional learning and adaptation. Ultimately, deepening engagement with nonstate actors and international organizations will be a defining characteristic of successful Euro-Atlantic security governance in the twenty-first century. This approach will ensure that NATO remains relevant and resilient in a rapidly evolving world.

## **Conclusion**

The redefinition of NATO enlargement, particularly concerning Ukraine and Georgia, has represented an important milestone within the development of Euro-Atlantic security governance. The data from this research illustrates that enlargement generates positive effects, including enhanced deterrence and innovative governance, but also creates significant risks, such as escalating conflict, strain on existing institutions, and the creation of ambiguous conditions that exist for an extended period. The examples of Georgia and Ukraine provide evidence that NATO must create adaptable frameworks, implement comprehensive security strategies, and ensure that there is equitable burden sharing among all member states to maintain credibility and effectiveness. The alliance's success will directly correlate with its ability to achieve a balance between flexibility and clarity as well as the need for integrating the military into society through a resilient social structure. Moreover, NATO must move toward an inclusive, multiactor model of engagement in addition to traditional state-based models of engagement. With increasing complexity in the security environment, the alliance will need to continue to evolve and improve its institutions, policies, and partnerships to meet emerging threats and opportunities. Ultimately, the process of enlarging NATO will not merely be about welcoming new members but also

about fundamentally changing the way security governance is implemented throughout the region. By adopting adaptive models of governance and fostering the development of strong regional resilience, the Euro-Atlantic community will have the potential to navigate the many uncertainties of the twenty-first century while upholding the principles of collective defense and democratic solidarity. This research contributes to the ongoing policy discussion by providing both theoretical/analytical insights and practical policy-related guidance to those who are involved in the future of the alliance. In the final analysis, the transformation of Euro-Atlantic security governance will ultimately rest on NATO's ability to learn, adapt, and lead in a world that is characterized by both longstanding rivalries and unprecedented cooperation.

---

<sup>1</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Chick Edmond, "Nuclear Disarmament and the Erosion of Deterrence Effectiveness: Case Study: Ukraine" (working paper, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, 2025), 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.25776/ngh0-vj51>.

<sup>3</sup> Chick Edmond, "The Balance of Power in Ukraine and Deterrence Effectiveness against Nuclear-Armed Russia," *International Journal of Contemporary Security Studies* 2, no. 1 (2026): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.18485>.

<sup>4</sup> Edmond, "The Balance of Power in Ukraine and Deterrence Effectiveness against Nuclear-Armed Russia."

<sup>5</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe: Rules and Rhetoric* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492068>.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Risse, "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO," in *Domestic Politics and Norm Diffusion in International Relations: Ideas Do Not Float Freely* (London: Routledge, 2016), 78–113, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315623665>.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Charap and Timothy J. Colton, *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429031571>.

<sup>9</sup> Zaur Kapanadze, "Oligarchs and Regional Political Machines: Patronage and Elections in the Republic of Georgia," *Europe-Asia Studies* (2026): 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2026.2613862>.

- 
- <sup>10</sup> Martin A. Smith, "NATO, Russia and the Failure of 'Partnership' before 2022," *Defence Studies* 25, no. 4 (2025): 779–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2025.2562980>.
- <sup>11</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015).
- <sup>12</sup> Alina Polyakova, "The Kremlin's Plot against Democracy: How Russia Updated Its 2016 Playbook for 2020," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no 5 (September/October 2020): 140–49.
- <sup>13</sup> Emil Kirchner and James Sperling, *EU Security Governance* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007).
- <sup>14</sup> Christopher S. Browning and George Christou, "The Constitutive Power of Outsiders: The European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Dimension," *Political Geography* 29 (2010): 109–18, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2010.02.009>.
- <sup>15</sup> Smith, "NATO, Russia and the Failure of 'Partnership' before 2022."
- <sup>16</sup> Mark Webber et al., "The Governance of European Security," *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 3–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210504005807>.
- <sup>17</sup> Jamie Shea, "NATO at Seventy: Between Yesterday and Tomorrow," *International Scientific Journal on European Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (April 2019): 9–18.
- <sup>18</sup> Andrew Futter and Benjamin Zala, "Strategic Non-nuclear Weapons and the Onset of a Third Nuclear Age," *European Journal of International Security* 6, no. 3 (2021): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2021.2>.
- <sup>19</sup> Samuel Charap and Jeremy Shapiro, "Consequences of a New Cold War," *Survival* 57, no. 2 (April/May 2015): 37–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1026058>.
- <sup>20</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, "NATO Enlargement: A Constructivist Explanation," *Security Studies* 8, no. 2/3 (1998): 198–234, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419808429378>.
- <sup>21</sup> Rajan Menon and Eugene B. Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).
- <sup>22</sup> Matthew Frear, "Security, Civilisation and Modernisation: Continuity and Change in the Russian Foreign Policy Discourse," *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 7 (2021): 1215–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1843601>.
- <sup>23</sup> Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*.
- <sup>24</sup> Margarete Klein, *Russia's Military: On the Rise?* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2016).
- <sup>25</sup> Vladimir Baranovsky and Anatoly Mateiko, "Responsibility to Protect: Russia's Approaches," *International Spectator* 51, no. 2 (2016): 49–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2016.1176648>.
- <sup>26</sup> Stephanie C. Hofmann and Ueli Staeger, "Frame Contestation and Collective Securitisation: The Case of EU Energy Policy," *West European Politics* 42, no. 2 (2019): 323–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1510197>.
- <sup>27</sup> Polyakova, "The Kremlin's Plot against Democracy."
- <sup>28</sup> Kapanadze, "Oligarchs and Regional Political Machines."
- <sup>29</sup> Johan Norberg, *Training to Fight: Russia's Major Military Exercises, 2011–2014* (Stockholm: Swedish Ministry of Defence, 2015).
- <sup>30</sup> Erik Brattberg and Tomáš Valášek, *EU Defense Cooperation: Progress amid Transatlantic Concerns* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019).
- <sup>31</sup> Matthias Bieri, "The Western Balkans between Europe and Russia," *CSS Analysis in Security Policy*, no. 170 (March 2015): 1–4.
- <sup>32</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
- <sup>33</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

- 
- <sup>34</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- <sup>35</sup> Charap and Colton, *Everyone Loses*.
- <sup>36</sup> Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- <sup>37</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
- <sup>38</sup> Barry R. Posen, "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?," *Security Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006): 149–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410600829356>.
- <sup>39</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).
- <sup>40</sup> Risse, "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community."
- <sup>41</sup> Schimmelfennig, *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe*.
- <sup>42</sup> Martin A. Smith and Graham Timmins, *Building a Bigger Europe: EU and NATO Enlargement in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- <sup>43</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War," *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 705–35, <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081800551343>.
- <sup>44</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Social Construction and Integration," *Journal of European Public Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 545–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/135017699343469>.
- <sup>45</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764>.
- <sup>46</sup> Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511598661>.
- <sup>47</sup> Ted Hopf and Bentley B. Allan, eds., *Making Identity Count: Building a National Identity Database* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190255473.001.0001>.
- <sup>48</sup> Brattberg and Valášek, *EU Defense Cooperation*.
- <sup>49</sup> Alexandra Gheciu, "Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization?: NATO and the 'New Europe'," *International Organization* 59, no. 4 (2005): 973–1012, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618444.007>.
- <sup>50</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together?: Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 855–85, <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898550770>.
- <sup>51</sup> Vincent Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities," *International Organization* 62, no. 2 (2008): 257–88, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818308080090>.
- <sup>52</sup> Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*.
- <sup>53</sup> Polyakova, "The Kremlin's Plot against Democracy."
- <sup>54</sup> Smith, "NATO, Russia and the Failure of 'Partnership' before 2022."
- <sup>55</sup> Kapanadze, "Oligarchs and Regional Political Machines."
- <sup>56</sup> Frear, "Security, Civilisation and Modernisation."
- <sup>57</sup> Schimmelfennig, "NATO Enlargement."
- <sup>58</sup> Hopf and Allan, *Making Identity Count*.
- <sup>59</sup> Gheciu, "Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization?"
- <sup>60</sup> Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*.
- <sup>61</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

- 
- <sup>62</sup> Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics*.
- <sup>63</sup> Charap and Colton, *Everyone Loses*.
- <sup>64</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.
- <sup>65</sup> Kapanadze, "Oligarchs and Regional Political Machines."
- <sup>66</sup> Futter and Zala, "Strategic Non-nuclear Weapons and the Onset of a Third Nuclear Age."
- <sup>67</sup> Smith, "NATO, Russia and the Failure of 'Partnership' before 2022."
- <sup>68</sup> Webber et al., "The Governance of European Security."
- <sup>69</sup> Schimmelfennig, "NATO Enlargement."
- <sup>70</sup> Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*.
- <sup>71</sup> Frear, "Security, Civilisation and Modernisation."
- <sup>72</sup> Polyakova, "The Kremlin's Plot against Democracy."
- <sup>73</sup> Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*.
- <sup>74</sup> Klein, *Russia's Military: On the Rise?*
- <sup>75</sup> Hopf and Allan, *Making Identity Count*.
- <sup>76</sup> Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together?"
- <sup>77</sup> Smith and Timmins, *Building a Bigger Europe*.
- <sup>78</sup> Brattberg and Valášek, *EU Defense Cooperation*.
- <sup>79</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*.
- <sup>80</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.
- <sup>81</sup> Sebastian Mayer, ed., *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics: The Changing Provision of Security* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
- <sup>82</sup> Kirchner and Sperling, *EU Security Governance*.
- <sup>83</sup> Browning and Christou, "The Constitutive Power of Outsiders."
- <sup>84</sup> Baranovsky and Mateiko, "Responsibility to Protect."
- <sup>85</sup> Hofmann and Staeger, "Frame Contestation and Collective Securitisation."
- <sup>86</sup> Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*.
- <sup>87</sup> Merje Kuus, *Geopolitics Reframed: Security and Identity in Europe's Eastern Borderlands* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- <sup>88</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*.
- <sup>89</sup> Mayer, *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics*.
- <sup>90</sup> Polyakova, "The Kremlin's Plot against Democracy."
- <sup>91</sup> Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*.
- <sup>92</sup> Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability."
- <sup>93</sup> Brattberg and Valášek, *EU Defense Cooperation*.
- <sup>94</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*.
- <sup>95</sup> Baranovsky and Mateiko, "Responsibility to Protect."
- <sup>96</sup> Kirchner and Sperling, *EU Security Governance*.
- <sup>97</sup> Baranovsky and Mateiko, "Responsibility to Protect."