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DIPLOMATIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE WAR ON RUSSIA–NATO RELATIONS

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Abstract

The Russia–Ukraine war has fundamentally altered the global diplomatic landscape, particularly affecting relations between Russia and NATO. The conflict has significantly weakened communication and cooperation between the two sides, deepening tensions that had existed since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. This study examines the diplomatic implications of the Russia–Ukraine war for Russia–NATO relations through a systematic qualitative literature review. It is grounded in structural realism, which explains state behaviour in an anarchic international system through the logic of power, national interest, security competition, and balance of power.

The findings show that the war has contributed to a near-complete breakdown of Russia–NATO relations, including the suspension of cooperation mechanisms, increased military tensions, NATO enlargement with Finland and Sweden, and the expansion of economic and diplomatic sanctions. These developments have reshaped the European security architecture and intensified the security dilemma between Russia and Western states.

The study concludes that the Russia–Ukraine war has transformed Russia–NATO relations into a long-term strategic confrontation. Although limited channels of communication may remain necessary for crisis management, the restoration of meaningful strategic partnership appears unlikely in the short and medium term. The article argues that these developments have broader implications for global security, energy stability, diplomatic order, and the future of cooperative security mechanisms.

Keywords: diplomatic consequences, Russia–Ukraine war, NATO, Russia–NATO relations, global security, international relations, European security architecture, structural realism, security dilemma, post-Soviet region

ROSSIYA–UKRAINA URUSHI SABABLI ROSSIYA VA NATO MUNOSABATLARIDA YUZAGA KELGAN DIPLOMATIK O‘ZGARISHLAR

Annotatsiya

Rossiya–Ukraina urushi global diplomatik manzarani tubdan o‘zgartirdi, ayniqsa Rossiya va NATO o‘rtasidagi munosabatlarga kuchli ta’sir ko‘rsatdi. Mojaro ikki tomon o‘rtasidagi aloqa va hamkorlikni sezilarli darajada zaiflashtirib, Rossiyaning 2014-yilda Qrimni anneksiya qilganidan beri mavjud bo‘lgan keskinliklarni yanada chuqurlashtirdi. Ushbu tadqiqot Rossiya–Ukraina urushining Rossiya va NATO munosabatlariga diplomatik ta’sirini tizimli sifatli adabiyotlar tahlili orqali o‘rganadi. Tadqiqot strukturaviy realizm nazariyasiga asoslanadi. Ushbu nazariya anarxik xalqaro tizimda davlatlarning xatti-harakatlarini kuch, milliy manfaat, xavfsizlik raqobati va kuchlar muvozanati orqali izohlaydi.

Tadqiqot natijalari Rossiya va NATO munosabatlarining deyarli to‘liq izdan chiqqanini ko‘rsatadi. Jumladan, hamkorlik mexanizmlarining to‘xtatilishi, harbiy keskinlikning ortishi,

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Finlandiya va Shvetsiyaning NATOga qo‘shilishi hamda iqtisodiy va diplomatik sanksiyalarning kuchayishi kuzatildi. Ushbu jarayonlar Yevropa xavfsizlik tizimini qayta shakllantirib, Rossiya va G‘arb davlatlari o‘rtasidagi xavfsizlik dilemmasini yanada kuchaytirdi.

Tadqiqot xulosasiga ko‘ra, Rossiya–Ukraina urushi Rossiya va NATO munosabatlarini uzoq muddatli strategik qarama-qarshilikka aylantirdi. Inqirozlarni boshqarish uchun cheklangan muloqot kanallari zarur bo‘lib qolishi mumkin bo‘lsa-da, yaqin va o‘rta muddatda mazmunli strategik sheriklik tiklanishi ehtimoli past. Maqola ushbu jarayonlar global xavfsizlik, energetik barqarorlik, diplomatik tartib va hamkorlikka asoslangan xavfsizlik mexanizmlari kelajagi uchun kengroq oqibatlarga ega ekanini ta’kidlaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: diplomatik oqibatlar, Rossiya–Ukraina urushi, NATO, Rossiya–NATO munosabatlari, global xavfsizlik, xalqaro munosabatlar, Yevropa xavfsizlik arxitekturasi, strukturaviy realizm, xavfsizlik dilemmasi, postsovet hududi

ДИПЛОМАТИЧЕСКИЕ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ВОЙНЫ МЕЖДУ РОССИЕЙ И УКРАИНОЙ ДЛЯ ОТНОШЕНИЙ РОССИИ И НАТО

Аннотация

Война между Россией и Украиной коренным образом изменила глобальную дипломатическую ситуацию, особенно оказав значительное влияние на отношения между Россией и НАТО. Конфликт существенно ослабил коммуникацию и сотрудничество между двумя сторонами,

углубив напряжённость, существовавшую со времени аннексии Крыма Россией в 2014 году. Данное исследование рассматривает дипломатические последствия войны между Россией и Украиной для отношений России и НАТО посредством систематического качественного обзора литературы. Исследование основано на теории структурного реализма, которая объясняет поведение государств в анархической международной системе через призму силы, национальных интересов, конкуренции в сфере безопасности и баланса сил.

Результаты показывают почти полный распад отношений между Россией и НАТО, включая приостановление механизмов сотрудничества, усиление военной напряжённости, расширение НАТО за счёт Финляндии и Швеции, а также усиление экономических и дипломатических санкций. Эти процессы изменили архитектуру европейской безопасности и усилили дилемму безопасности между Россией и западными государствами.

Исследование приходит к выводу, что война между Россией и Украиной превратила отношения России и НАТО в долгосрочное стратегическое противостояние. Хотя ограниченные каналы коммуникации могут оставаться необходимыми для управления кризисами, восстановление полноценного стратегического партнёрства в кратко- и среднесрочной перспективе представляется маловероятным. В статье подчёркивается, что данные процессы имеют более широкие последствия для глобальной безопасности, энергетической стабильности, дипломатического порядка и будущего механизмов совместной безопасности.

Ключевые слова: дипломатические последствия, война между Россией и Украиной, НАТО, отношения России и НАТО, глобальная безопасность, международные отношения, архитектура европейской безопасности, структурный реализм, дилемма безопасности, постсоветский регион

Introduction

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The Russia–Ukraine war represents one of the most significant geopolitical crises in contemporary international relations, with far-reaching implications for global security, diplomatic stability, and the future of European security architecture. The conflict has reshaped relations between Russia and NATO member states, leading to heightened tensions, reduced diplomatic engagement, and the breakdown of long-standing cooperation mechanisms. It has also intensified debates regarding the role of international organisations, military alliances, and diplomatic institutions in maintaining stability during periods of major-power confrontation.

Russia–NATO relations had already become increasingly strained after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, the full-scale escalation of the Russia–Ukraine war in 2022 further deepened this deterioration and transformed the relationship into a more adversarial and security-oriented form of engagement. While the post-Cold War period initially created opportunities for institutional cooperation through mechanisms such as the NATO–Russia Founding Act and the NATO–Russia Council, recent developments have weakened the practical significance of these frameworks.

This study focuses specifically on how the Russia–Ukraine war has influenced diplomatic relations between Russia and NATO. It examines both historical developments and recent changes in diplomatic interaction, including the suspension of cooperation mechanisms, the rise of military tensions, NATO enlargement, economic sanctions, and the broader transformation of the European security order. By using a systematic qualitative literature review, the study synthesises academic and policy literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving relationship between these actors.

The transformation of NATO–Russia relations after 2022 should also be understood within the broader weakening of the post-Cold War European security framework. Europe has entered a more militarised and strategically uncertain phase, characterised by increased defence spending, the erosion of cooperative security mechanisms, and reduced trust among major actors. These developments indicate that the Russia–Ukraine war is not merely a regional conflict but a systemic shock to international security architecture.

This study is grounded in structural realism, which provides a useful theoretical framework for analysing the diplomatic implications of the war. Structural realism emphasises the anarchic nature of the international system, the importance of power distribution, and the tendency of states to prioritise survival and national interest. From this perspective, the deterioration of Russia–NATO relations can be understood as part of a broader security dilemma in which both sides interpret the other's actions through the logic of threat perception, strategic uncertainty, and balance of power.

The main aim of this article is to examine how the Russia–Ukraine war has transformed diplomatic relations between Russia and NATO countries. In particular, the study investigates how the conflict has intensified the security dilemma, reshaped European security architecture, contributed to the deterioration of institutional cooperation, and created long-term implications for global diplomatic order.

Literature Review

The relationship between NATO and Russia has a complex history dating back to the end of the Cold War. NATO–Russia cooperation began in the early 1990s, when Russia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. In 1994, Russia became a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, which opened opportunities for cooperation in areas such as peacekeeping, security dialogue, and military transparency. The relationship saw further institutional development through the NATO–Russia Founding Act in 1997 and the creation of the NATO–Russia Council in 2002.

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These initiatives were designed to facilitate cooperation, consultation, and decision-making on issues of mutual importance.

However, the cooperative framework was always fragile. Although the post-Cold War period created expectations of partnership, Russia and NATO continued to hold different views of European security. NATO enlargement, military presence in Eastern Europe, and divergent interpretations of sovereignty and regional influence gradually contributed to mutual suspicion. While NATO presented enlargement as a defensive and voluntary process based on the sovereign choices of European states, Russia often interpreted it as a strategic challenge to its security environment.

Tensions became more visible after Russia's military intervention in Georgia in 2008. This event led to the temporary suspension of some cooperative meetings and projects between NATO and Russia, although efforts at dialogue were later revived. Despite attempts to maintain cooperation, NATO consistently rejected Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent entities separate from Georgia. This period demonstrated that institutional cooperation could continue only as long as fundamental security disagreements remained manageable.

The 2014 Crimea crisis marked a major turning point in Russia–NATO relations. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, NATO suspended practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia. Although political channels of communication were not completely closed, the practical basis of cooperation was significantly weakened. This development represented a shift from the post-Cold War partnership model toward a more cautious and deterrence-oriented relationship.

The current Russia–Ukraine war has further strained this relationship, leading to a near-complete breakdown in cooperation and communication between NATO and Russia. The conflict has intensified military tensions, increased NATO's presence in Eastern Europe, strengthened sanctions regimes, and accelerated alliance enlargement. Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO represents one of the most significant strategic consequences of the war, as it changed the security geography of Northern Europe and the Baltic region.

Existing studies have examined various aspects of the Russia–Ukraine war, including its historical background, military developments, economic sanctions, humanitarian consequences, and implications for energy security. However, there remains a need for more focused analysis of how the war has transformed Russia–NATO diplomatic relations as an institutional and strategic relationship. Much of the current literature focuses on short-term policy responses, while less attention has been paid to the long-term deterioration of cooperative mechanisms and the broader implications for European security architecture.

Recent academic and policy discussions suggest that the post-2022 deterioration of NATO–Russia relations has reached an unprecedented institutional low. Nevertheless, the literature remains fragmented in explaining this decline as a structural phenomenon. Some studies focus mainly on sanctions or battlefield developments, while others emphasise NATO enlargement, military deterrence, or diplomatic isolation. This creates an analytical gap in understanding whether Russia–NATO relations have entered a stable equilibrium of hostility or whether they remain in a transitional phase that may eventually allow limited re-engagement.

This article addresses this gap by analysing the diplomatic consequences of the Russia–Ukraine war through the lens of structural realism. It argues that the deterioration of Russia–NATO relations should not be viewed only as a result of immediate political decisions, but as part of a broader structural shift in global power politics and European security relations.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the conceptual framework of realism, particularly structural realism. Structural realism provides an appropriate theoretical lens for analysing the diplomatic implications of

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the Russia–Ukraine war because it focuses on the structure of the international system, the distribution of power among states, and the role of national interest in shaping state behaviour.

According to structural realism, the international system is anarchic because there is no central authority above states capable of guaranteeing their security. As a result, states must rely on self-help and seek to protect their interests in an uncertain environment. This perspective is highly relevant to Russia–NATO relations, where both sides interpret the other's actions through the lens of security, power, and strategic intention.

One of the central concepts of structural realism is the security dilemma. The security dilemma occurs when measures taken by one state or alliance to increase its own security are perceived by another actor as threatening. This dynamic is visible in Russia–NATO relations. NATO's strengthening of its eastern flank is presented by the Alliance as a defensive measure intended to reassure member states. Russia, however, may interpret such actions as strategic pressure. Similarly, Russia's military actions and security claims are viewed by NATO members as sources of instability and threat. This mutual interpretation contributes to a cycle of mistrust and escalation.

Structural realism also emphasises balance of power. States and alliances respond to perceived threats either through internal balancing, such as increasing military capability, or external balancing, such as strengthening alliances. The Russia–Ukraine war has been followed by both forms of balancing. NATO member states have increased defence spending and military readiness, while Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO represents a major example of external balancing in response to a changed security environment.

The theory also highlights the importance of realpolitik and national interest. From this perspective, diplomatic relations are shaped not only by legal principles or institutional commitments, but also by calculations of power, security, and strategic advantage. This framework helps explain why cooperation between Russia and NATO has become increasingly difficult despite the existence of earlier institutional mechanisms.

Therefore, structural realism enables a systematic analysis of the complex dynamics between Russia and NATO in the context of the Ukraine war. It helps explain why institutional cooperation has weakened, why military deterrence has become more important, and why the current crisis may have long-term consequences for the global diplomatic and security order.

Methodology

The current paper uses a systematic qualitative literature review to examine the diplomatic effects of the Russia–Ukraine war on Russia–NATO relations. This method is appropriate because the topic is complex, multidimensional, and closely connected to ongoing developments in international relations, diplomacy, security studies, and European politics.

A systematic literature review allows the researcher to collect, evaluate, and synthesise existing academic and policy literature in a structured manner. It provides a more focused approach to identifying relevant studies, comparing key arguments, and developing a balanced interpretation of the available evidence. In this study, the systematic review approach is used not to measure statistical outcomes, but to identify recurring themes, patterns, and interpretations in the literature on Russia–NATO relations.

The data collection process involved the identification of relevant keywords and search terms related to the diplomatic implications of the Russia–Ukraine war. The following terms were used individually and in combination:

- diplomatic implications;
- Russia–Ukraine war;
- NATO–Russia relations;

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- Russia–NATO relations;
- European security architecture;
- global security environment;
- post-Soviet region;
- structural realism;
- security dilemma;
- NATO enlargement;
- sanctions and diplomacy;
- military deterrence;
- alliance politics.

The literature search focused on academic databases, institutional repositories, and policy sources. These included peer-reviewed articles, books and book chapters, NATO documents, European Union materials, United Nations documents, government reports, and selected think-tank publications. Sources were selected according to their relevance to Russia–NATO relations, the Russia–Ukraine war, diplomatic consequences, security architecture, and structural realist interpretation.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to ensure that the review remained focused and academically reliable.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Sources directly related to Russia–NATO relations, the Russia–Ukraine war, European security, diplomacy, sanctions, deterrence, or alliance politics	Sources that discuss the war without clear relevance to Russia–NATO relations
Peer-reviewed articles, academic books, institutional reports, policy papers, and recognised think-tank analyses	Unsourced opinion pieces, social media posts, and politically biased commentary without academic value
Sources published mainly after 2014, with particular attention to post-2022 developments	Sources published before 2014 unless they provide important historical or theoretical background
Sources that contribute to understanding diplomatic, institutional, or strategic consequences	Sources focused only on unrelated military details or domestic political issues
English-language sources and selected relevant materials from international organisations	Sources unavailable in full text or without clear authorship

The data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis. The selected sources were read repeatedly in order to identify key arguments, recurring concepts, and major patterns in the literature. Initial codes were developed around themes such as institutional breakdown, diplomatic communication, NATO enlargement, deterrence, sanctions, security dilemma, and European security architecture. These codes were then grouped into broader analytical themes and interpreted through the theoretical framework of structural realism.

The methodological limitation of this study is that the Russia–Ukraine war remains ongoing. As a result, diplomatic consequences continue to develop, and the conclusions of this article should be understood as an analysis of current trends rather than a final historical judgement. Another limitation is that the study relies on secondary sources and does not include interviews with diplomats, policymakers, or security officials. Future research could expand this analysis through expert interviews, discourse analysis, or comparative studies of NATO policy documents before and after 2022.

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Findings

The findings of the systematic qualitative literature review indicate that the Russia–Ukraine war has fundamentally affected Russia–NATO relations in several interconnected ways. The most significant consequences include the weakening of institutional dialogue, the erosion of mutual trust, the rise of military tensions, NATO enlargement, increased sanctions, and the transformation of the European security architecture.

1. Weakening of Institutional Cooperation

One of the most important diplomatic consequences of the Russia–Ukraine war is the weakening of institutional cooperation between Russia and NATO. Although practical cooperation had already been suspended after the 2014 Crimea crisis, the post-2022 period has further reduced the possibility of meaningful institutional engagement. Mechanisms that were originally designed to facilitate dialogue and consultation have lost much of their practical significance.

The NATO–Russia Council, established in 2002, was intended to serve as a platform for consultation, cooperation, joint decision-making, and crisis management. However, the deterioration of trust after 2014 and the escalation of the war in 2022 have limited its role. The relationship has shifted from institutionalised cooperation to restricted communication, where dialogue is more likely to focus on risk reduction rather than partnership.

This development shows that the war has not only affected political rhetoric but has also damaged the institutional foundations of Russia–NATO relations. The decline of such mechanisms reduces opportunities for transparency, confidence-building, and diplomatic crisis management.

2. Intensification of the Security Dilemma

The second major finding is that the Russia–Ukraine war has intensified the security dilemma between Russia and NATO. Both sides interpret the other's actions as threatening, while presenting their own actions as defensive and necessary.

NATO's increased military presence in Eastern Europe, reinforcement of its eastern flank, and support for Ukraine are viewed by NATO members as necessary measures to protect alliance security. Russia, however, interprets these actions as evidence of NATO's strategic pressure. At the same time, Russia's military actions and security claims are interpreted by NATO as sources of instability and threat. This mutual suspicion creates a cycle in which each side's attempt to increase security contributes to greater insecurity for the other.

From a structural realist perspective, this pattern is not unusual. In an anarchic international system, states and alliances cannot rely fully on the intentions of others. They therefore focus on capabilities, military posture, and strategic signals. The Russia–Ukraine war has strengthened this logic and reduced the space for trust-based diplomacy.

3. NATO Enlargement and Strategic Recalculation

Another significant consequence of the war is NATO enlargement. Finland and Sweden's decision to join NATO marked a major shift in the European security environment. Their accession demonstrated how the war changed threat perceptions and encouraged states to reconsider their long-standing security policies.

From the perspective of structural realism, this development can be understood as external balancing. States facing an uncertain security environment may seek protection through alliance membership. Finland and Sweden's accession strengthened NATO's position in Northern Europe and changed the strategic geography of the Baltic region.

Diplomatically, NATO enlargement has further complicated Russia–NATO relations. Enlargement has long been one of the most sensitive issues between the two sides. The accession of

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two historically non-aligned states indicates that the war has produced consequences that go beyond Ukraine and directly affect the wider European security order.

4. Rise of Military Tensions and Deterrence Politics

The Russia–Ukraine war has also contributed to increased military tensions between Russia and NATO. The conflict has led to a stronger emphasis on deterrence, military readiness, defence spending, and alliance cohesion. NATO has strengthened its posture in Eastern Europe, while Russia has continued to frame NATO activity near its borders as a security concern.

This development reflects a broader shift from cooperative security to deterrence-based security. In the post-Cold War period, Russia–NATO relations included elements of partnership and dialogue. In the current period, however, deterrence has become the dominant logic. This does not necessarily mean that direct military conflict is inevitable, but it does indicate that the relationship is now shaped more by caution, preparedness, and strategic competition than by cooperation.

The rise of deterrence politics has important diplomatic consequences. It narrows the space for negotiation, increases the risk of misperception, and makes crisis-management mechanisms more important. In such an environment, even limited communication channels become essential for preventing escalation.

5. Economic Sanctions and Diplomatic Pressure

Economic sanctions have become another important element of the diplomatic consequences of the Russia–Ukraine war. Although sanctions are economic instruments, they also function as diplomatic tools. They communicate political disapproval, impose costs, signal collective alignment, and restrict normal engagement.

The sanctions imposed by Western states have contributed to Russia's growing isolation from many Euro-Atlantic political and economic structures. At the same time, sanctions have also affected global energy markets, trade patterns, and diplomatic alignments beyond Europe. This shows that the consequences of the war are not limited to Russia and NATO alone but extend to the wider international system.

However, sanctions do not eliminate the need for diplomacy. Even under conditions of confrontation, communication may remain necessary on issues such as nuclear risk, humanitarian concerns, energy security, and crisis management. Therefore, sanctions should be understood as part of a broader diplomatic strategy rather than as a complete replacement for dialogue.

6. Transformation of the European Security Architecture

The final major finding is that the Russia–Ukraine war has contributed to a significant transformation of the European security architecture. The cooperative security model that emerged after the Cold War has been seriously weakened. In its place, a more militarised and competitive security environment has developed.

This transformation includes increased defence spending, NATO enlargement, reduced trust, weakened arms control prospects, and a stronger focus on territorial defence. These developments suggest that the war has created long-term consequences for European security. The relationship between Russia and NATO is unlikely to return quickly to the type of cooperation that existed in the early post-Cold War period.

The European security architecture is therefore entering a period of strategic uncertainty. While diplomatic engagement may continue in limited forms, the broader relationship is likely to remain shaped by deterrence, mistrust, and competition.

Discussion

The findings highlight the decline of Russia–NATO relations as a major departure from the security landscape that emerged after the Cold War. The deterioration of the relationship has produced

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cascading effects that extend beyond the immediate conflict in Ukraine and may influence the broader global security environment for years to come.

The suspension and weakening of cooperative mechanisms such as the NATO–Russia Council mark a shift toward a more adversarial relationship. This development is consistent with the assumptions of structural realism, which argues that great powers and alliances operate in a competitive international system where security and survival remain central concerns. In such a system, cooperation becomes difficult when actors perceive each other as strategic threats.

The Russia–Ukraine war has intensified this logic. NATO's efforts to strengthen deterrence and reassure member states are interpreted by the Alliance as defensive and necessary. Russia, however, may view these measures as part of a broader pattern of strategic pressure. At the same time, Russia's military actions are interpreted by NATO as evidence of insecurity and instability in the European security order. This mutual perception illustrates the security dilemma at the centre of Russia–NATO relations.

The war has also strengthened alliance politics. NATO enlargement with Finland and Sweden demonstrates how states respond to perceived insecurity by seeking stronger external security guarantees. This development has increased NATO's strategic depth in Northern Europe and changed the balance of power in the region. However, it has also contributed to further tension in Russia–NATO relations, as enlargement remains one of the most sensitive issues in the relationship.

Economic sanctions and diplomatic restrictions have further contributed to the deterioration of relations. These measures have increased Russia's isolation from many Western institutions and reduced the possibility of normal diplomatic engagement. At the same time, they have become part of the wider diplomatic response to the war, showing how economic tools can be used as instruments of foreign policy and strategic pressure.

The discussion also shows that Russia–NATO relations have not entered a condition of complete silence. Even during periods of strategic confrontation, limited communication remains necessary. Diplomatic channels may be required to prevent miscalculation, manage escalation risks, address humanitarian concerns, and maintain basic crisis-management mechanisms. Therefore, the current relationship can be described as managed confrontation rather than total diplomatic collapse.

Structural realism provides a strong explanation for these developments, but it should not be treated as the only possible interpretation. Institutional factors, historical memory, leadership narratives, domestic politics, and international law also influence Russia–NATO relations. Nevertheless, structural realism remains particularly useful because it explains why security competition has become more important than cooperation in the current environment.

Overall, the Russia–Ukraine war has transformed Russia–NATO relations from a difficult partnership into a long-term strategic confrontation. This transformation has important implications not only for Europe but also for global diplomatic order, alliance behaviour, and the future of international security institutions.

Conclusion

This study examined the diplomatic consequences of the Russia–Ukraine war for Russia–NATO relations through a systematic qualitative literature review and the theoretical lens of structural realism. The analysis showed that the war has significantly deepened the deterioration of Russia–NATO relations, weakened institutional cooperation, intensified the security dilemma, contributed to NATO enlargement, increased military tensions, and reshaped the European security architecture.

The study found that Russia–NATO relations had already become strained after the 2014 Crimea crisis, but the full-scale escalation of the war in 2022 accelerated and deepened this process. The relationship has shifted from limited cooperation and institutional engagement toward deterrence,

strategic mistrust, and managed confrontation. Although some channels of communication may remain necessary for crisis management, the restoration of meaningful strategic partnership appears unlikely in the short and medium term.

The findings also suggest that the diplomatic consequences of the war extend beyond Russia and NATO. They affect global security, energy stability, alliance politics, arms control debates, and the broader geopolitical order. The conflict has demonstrated how regional wars can produce systemic consequences when they involve major powers and military alliances.

From the perspective of structural realism, the deterioration of Russia–NATO relations can be understood as a result of an anarchic international system in which states and alliances prioritise security, power, and strategic advantage. The war has intensified the security dilemma and encouraged balancing behaviour on both sides. This has reduced the possibility of trust-based cooperation and increased the importance of deterrence.

The study has certain limitations. Since the Russia–Ukraine war is ongoing, its full diplomatic consequences cannot yet be completely assessed. In addition, this article is based on secondary sources and does not include interviews with diplomats, policymakers, or security experts. Future research could examine Russia–NATO relations through expert interviews, comparative policy analysis, or discourse analysis of official statements before and after 2022.

In conclusion, the Russia–Ukraine war has transformed Russia–NATO relations into one of the most serious diplomatic and security challenges of the contemporary international system. The future of this relationship will depend not only on the development of the war itself, but also on the ability of both sides to manage confrontation, reduce the risk of escalation, and preserve limited channels of communication in an increasingly uncertain global order.

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