

**EVALUATING NATO ENLARGEMENT: FROM COLD WAR VICTORY TO THE  
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**Abstract**

This book examines the main stages and authoritarian obstacles of NATO enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe after the Cold War, which gradually transformed into a hybrid conflict. In the various chapters of this book, the authors compare the main advantages and disadvantages of NATO enlargement in terms of the results of defending democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. The authors analyze the relationship between NATO enlargement and U.S. foreign policy on democracy and security in Central and Eastern Europe, which are indicators of NATO's resilience as a political and military intergovernmental organization. The book analyzes the challenges of democratizing political regimes from the perspective of political security, including the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022.

**Keywords:** NATO Enlargement, Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine War, Political Alliance, US Foreign Policy, US-Russian Relations.

In the current conditions of the duration and full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine since February 24, 2022, the mechanism of European integration of the EaP countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia), as well as their future tasks of membership of these countries in the EU, is changing completely (Krayevska 2020; Czepil, Krayevska

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and Andeva 2024), since a new ‘hot war’ and the risk of a nuclear war due to Ukraine require strategic decisions from NATO and the U.S. (Goldgeier and Shifrinson 2023).

After the end of the Cold War, in the context of new challenges to the world order, NATO’s tasks also changed in order to protect ‘old’ and new democracies in the global security architecture of the new era. The transformation of NATO was a logical consequence of the broader process of the formation of a new world order after the end of the Cold War, which is also characterized as the transformation of NATO to mark the end of the bipolar confrontation and the victory in this confrontation (Goldgeier and Shifrinson 2023).

NATO enlargement was caused by the collapse of the USSR and the democratization of post-communist and post-Soviet countries, as the new political leadership of these countries had a chance to become part of Western democracies, strengthening their security and stability in the transformation of the political system (Sayle 2023). The profound and qualitative change in these countries emphasized the fact that we are talking about a change in the basic characteristics of international cooperation within and around NATO, that is, the goals, principles and logic of interaction between these countries.

The vectors and policies of NATO transformation, pursued by the leadership of Western democracies, are an integral component of the leadership of the U.S. global strategy, aimed at maintaining joint consolidation by strengthening those international institutions in which the U.S. plays a leading role (Shifrinson 2023). Of particular note in the context of this book are the concepts of transformation supported by the American leadership in doctrinal documents, speeches, and legislative texts, as they formed the basis of the American policy of NATO transformation (Menon and Ruger 2023). Of interest were also the alternative concepts proposed by American think tanks and leading experts, as their ideas eventually became official, were used to support the political leadership of new democracies and identify their capabilities for implementing certain projects (Colbourn 2023).

In various chapters of this book, special attention is paid to the fact that with the beginning of a full-scale military invasion of Russia into Ukraine, the traditional and established security system in the sphere of international relations at the present stage is undergoing significant changes (Marten 2023). After the end of the Cold War, new challenges and threats arise, and there is a need to identify new approaches to respond to them. Institutions and organizations that were established long before the end of the bloc confrontation are faced with the need to adapt to new realities. Unlike the Warsaw Pact, NATO did not end its activities, but on the contrary, with all consistency approached the issue of ensuring the protection of its borders, as well as the allied countries. As a priority for NATO development, the strategy of expansion to the east was chosen, which required the preparation of Eastern European states and familiarization of their governments with the democratization of political regimes (Lanoszka 2023).

In the post-Soviet region, the processes of state-building and nation-building are still ongoing, which have an ambiguous impact on the development prospects of the newly formed individual countries. The process of NATO expansion directly restrains

Russia, which, from the point of view of the Russian political elite, is a challenge to Russia's national security in the Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic space.

In this book, NATO policy in the post-Soviet space examines the conflict situations of Georgia and Ukraine, since they are on the agenda of the Russian-American confrontation. The problematic nature of these countries has resulted in the escalation of internal contradictions, which have involved the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This confirms the fact of military and political confrontation, which has been going on for decades, and NATO enlargement, of course, affects the interests of all post-Soviet countries (Sushentsov and Wohlforth 2023; Zubok 2023; Moore 2023).

The relevance of the research of this book is associated with the following factors:

- Firstly, the U.S. plays a leading role in modern world political processes. This is achieved to a large extent due to the rational use and gradual transformation of the system of international institutions created by them after the Second World War. The future configuration of the international system depends on the success of the transformation policy pursued by the United States in relation to key international institutions.
- Secondly, the American policy of NATO transformation is a logical continuation and an integral element of the global strategy of the United States. A comprehensive analysis of the main concepts of the transformation of the North Atlantic Alliance contributes to the understanding of the main components of the U.S. global strategy at the present stage.
- Thirdly, NATO's transformation has a significant impact on the European security architecture. The study of this process is of particular importance in the context of Russia's foreign policy aimed at strengthening its position in the security sphere in Eurasia.
- Fourthly, NATO activities enjoy the support of a significant part of the countries of North America and Europe, which testifies to the popularity and high role of NATO in the context of transatlantic relations. One can speak of interest in the activities of the organization in remote regions of the world. For example, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have declared their intention to develop cooperation with NATO and strive for membership in it, and other countries of the post-Soviet space participate in various NATO projects and missions.
- Fifth, at the present stage, there is a revival of U.S. interest in strengthening transatlantic ties, expressed in the initiative presented in 2013 by U.S. President Barack Obama to create an 'economic NATO', that is, a Transatlantic partnership in the sphere of trade and investment.
- Sixth, despite the complexity of the issues surrounding the relationship between Russia and NATO, there is potential for both cooperation and conflict. In the current circumstances, it is especially valuable to gain comprehensive knowledge about the nature and direction of the transformation processes that have affected NATO since the end of the Cold War, as well as the role of the United States in these processes.
- Seventh, an analysis of the American experience in implementing policies aimed at transforming NATO is of practical use to the leadership of all countries in the

world, which is faced with the task of activating the activities of their countries to strengthen their own national security.

The various chapters of this book examine the main concepts of NATO transformation and their implementation in U.S. foreign policy (Poast and Chinchilla 2023). Based on the purpose of the study, the authors set the following tasks: 1) Characterized the main approaches to the study of the policy of countries on the transformation of international institutions in the security sphere in order to determine the optimal approach and tools in the context of this study; 2) identified the general features of American policy towards NATO, which determined the formation of the main concepts of NATO transformation; 3) Classified American concepts of NATO transformation, tracing the evolution and comparing the content of these concepts with the content of the main NATO documents, identifying those provisions that were implemented in the policy of NATO enlargement; 4) Using comparisons, the main similarities and differences in the policies of different U.S. presidential administrations aimed at transforming NATO were identified.

NATO, within the framework of various chapters of this book, was considered as an organization created on the basis of an alliance treaty stipulating the joint reflection of a threat to the inviolability of borders and territorial integrity of one of the member states, individual and collective build-up of military potential by the participants, as well as holding consultations in the event of a threat against one of the states that signed the pact (van Hooft 2023). All this allows us to define NATO as a military and political alliance in the broad sense, aimed at mutual military assistance. The theory of alliances that developed during the Cold War had significant explanatory power in the process of interpreting the origins of the formation and principles of functioning of NATO during the period of broad confrontation (Moore 2023). In this regard, it seemed appropriate to consider alliances as a function of the balance of power.

The introduction of the concept of the balance of threats into the theory of alliances was a significant achievement that made it possible to take into account the role of various factors in the formation of allied strategies of states (Townsend 2023; Moller 2023). The end of the Cold War is considered as an event that identified a number of shortcomings of the theory of alliances. Firstly, the theory of alliances, formed within the framework of the realist paradigm, considered the functioning of alliances exclusively as a consequence of the policy of the state with the greatest national power, paying little attention to the problem of interaction of states within alliances. Secondly, in the traditional sense, the theory of alliances was based on the concept of national interest, understood in terms of forces. Thus, the analysis of the intrastate struggle on issues of determining threats to national security required borrowing a pluralistic model developed within the framework of the liberal paradigm. Thirdly, the theory of alliances could not offer an exhaustive explanation for the phenomenon of the preservation and strengthening of NATO against the background of the disappearance of the main enemy and the threat to the security of the majority of member countries.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was also considered as an example of an exclusive specialized international institution in the field of security. The use of a neo-institutional approach made it possible to reveal the importance of preserving and further transforming NATO for all participants of this institution as a way to reduce

transaction costs in the process of international cooperation, redirecting established practices of interaction to solving new problems in the field of ensuring security (von Hlatky and Fortmann 2023). The use of an intergovernmental approach, which views the transformation of an international institution as a series of agreements between its main participants, sovereign states, allows us to take into account the increased role of U.S. allies in the process of reforming the main international institutions after the end of the Cold War. However, the decisive role in the transformation process was assigned to actors who had the greatest traditional factors of national power and the ability to influence the agenda of international cooperation, who were able to offer developed ideas and concepts ahead of their partners.

In the context of modern hybrid wars, NATO is on the way to becoming a global international organization capable of confronting the challenges of international security of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Modern terrorist organizations, hybrid wars, the Second Karabakh full-scale war of Azerbaijan against Armenia and the war of Russia against Ukraine have significantly influenced NATO's strategic thinking from a political point of view, deciding that NATO should be ready to prevent, protect against terrorist attacks directed from abroad, where necessary. This means that NATO should help national authorities cope with the consequences of terrorist attacks. NATO should provide its assets and all possible means in order to support operations, including against terrorism, carried out in cooperation with the EU and other international organizations and coalitions.

In the book, the authors note that from a military point of view, NATO has a military concept of defense against terrorism, within the framework of which the military authorities of NATO are developing a separate concept of special operations taking into account the military power of Russia and China. Obviously, these measures not only justify the main goal of NATO, but once again confirm the global nature of its activities.

The effectiveness of the new concepts of humanitarian intervention and limited sovereignty is beyond doubt. In the case of NATO's territorial interregional expansion, the Alliance's influence on international relations as a whole is intended to complement the role of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and the EU. All fundamental decisions will then be made within the framework of a renewed and expanded NATO. If the Euro-Atlantic partnership should be rethought and adapted to new realities, then European integration is the optimal means of ensuring maximum stability and security for Europe. It provides certain conditions for security and stability, as well as renewed strategic relations with Russia and China.

### **Supplementary material**

The supplementary material for this article can be found at  
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### **Conflict of interests**

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### Ethical standards

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.

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