

NATO'S CHANGING PRIORITIES

Russia's invasion of Ukraine seems to have led, with very few exceptions, to greater cooperation among members of the Western alliance and brought the transatlantic partners closer to one another. As a result, NATO, which has undergone several changes since the end of the Cold War, has regained its key role as the cornerstone of the West's collective security interests. In its enhanced position, NATO also appears to be emerging as the champion of the liberal order as well as the universal values embraced by transatlantic partners. Yet, it may also be facing new challenges both from within, particularly in the case of a prolonged conflict in Europe, and from China, which is demonstrating increasing rivalry to the West.

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine appeared to have an immediate effect of increasing solidarity among the EU and NATO member states and thus of strengthening transatlantic security bonds in a way not seen since the significant crises of the Cold War. With very few exceptions, the transatlantic community rallied around Ukraine and quickly organized a pipeline of military hardware deliveries via Poland. The Western alliance was soon joined by Australia, Japan, and even the eternally neutral Switzerland to impose sanctions on Russia. As of 31 July 2022, 6,934 sanctions have been imposed on Russian persons and entities since the invasion of Ukraine—by the United States (1,475), Switzerland (1,130), UK (1,038), EU (891), Australia (846), and Japan (618).¹ This figure represents the highest number of sanctions imposed on any single country; it includes 5,385 individuals and 1,085 companies in addition to institutions. The number of sanctions is nearly doubled to 11,554 if earlier ones against Russia imposed in the wake of its annexation of Crimea in March 2014 are taken into account. How effective this plethora of sanctions may be taken up later.

Meanwhile, Washington put as much emphasis on closing the transatlantic divide as enhancing the Alliance's military capabilities in the face of Russian aggression. By the time the G7 Summit took place on 26–28 June 2022, three months into the war, the leaders would once again reaffirm their unity by saying that “As open democracies adhering to the rule of law, we are driven by shared values and bound by our commitment the rules-based multilateral order and to universal human rights.”² At its annual meeting on 29–30 June 2022, a “rejuvenated” NATO adopted a new Strategic Concept that, among others, called for significantly strengthening the Alliance's “deterrence and defense posture.”³

In these consecutive meetings, there was no trace of the friction, skepticism, national priorities, and their *sine qua non*, or the transactionalism that used to set the tone of Euro-American discussions, particularly of NATO summits, during the Trump administration. President Macron, who had declared NATO to be “braindead” in the autumn of 2019,⁴ now celebrated the summit as “unprecedented for Europe since the Second World War.”⁵ Said President Biden at the conclusion of the summit, “We

¹ “Live Monitoring of all Sanctions against Russia,” *Correctiv*, <https://correctiv.org/en/latest-stories/2022/03/01/sanctions-tracker-live-monitoring-of-all-sanctions-against-russia/>

² “G7 Leaders’ Communiqué,” G7 Germany 2022, Elmau, 28 June 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/57555/2022-06-28-leaders-communique-data.pdf>

³ “Madrid Summit Declaration: Issued by NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Madrid 29 June 2022,” *NATO*, 29 June 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_196951.htm

⁴ “Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead,” *The Economist*, 7 November 2019, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>

⁵ “NATO’s brittle show of unity,” *Financial Times*, 2–3 July 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/07fa9884-b539-4c9b-ac41-7f084774e586>

set down a marker of unity, determination, and deep capabilities of the democratic nations of the world to do what needs to be done,” echoing the European Council President Charles Michel’s reaffirmation at the G7 meeting of the “unwavering unity” of the West.⁶ In his concluding remarks Biden also said, “Putin thought he would break the Transatlantic alliance. He tried to weaken us. He expected our resolve to fracture. But he is getting exactly what he did not want.”⁷

“After the Cold War was over, NATO’s Strategic Concept underwent three changes in tandem with Europe’s changing strategic environment. The first one, adopted on 7 November 1991, took into account the waning of the Soviet threat, with the Soviet troops beginning to withdraw from Eastern Europe and the former USSR satellite states gaining their sovereignty.”

The jubilant tone of the leaders could hardly obscure the hyperbole their statements entailed: Did such a strong unity actually exist across the Western world even while such speeches were being made at the NATO summit? A more serious cause for concern was the possible effect on global geopolitics of a prolonged conflict in Ukraine. One significant change in NATO’s new Strategic Concept harkens back to the Cold War in some ways. Second is a major geopolitical change brought on by Russia’s energy export restrictions to Europe. Third is the degree to which a prolonged conflict may affect centrifugal forces within the Western alliance, given differing economic vulnerabilities and economic priorities among them. Fourth is what recent evidence may be considered as a guide to assess the effects of sanctions imposed on Russia. The following discussion will consider these four questions and their implications for transatlantic security.

NATO’s Changing Geopolitical Environment

Because Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is, above all, a security issue for the transatlantic community, it triggered an immediate response from NATO, which was able to formulate and adopt a new Strategic Concept within a short time span

⁶ Remarks by President Charles Michel before the G7 summit in Schloss Elmau, Germany, 26 June 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/26/remarks-by-president-charles-michel-before-the-g7-summit-in-schloss-elmau-germany/>

⁷ “NATO’s brittle show of unity,” *Financial Times*.

of four months. Conceived as a defensive alliance to provide collective security to its members, NATO was established in the Washington Treaty of 4 April 1949, which derived its authority from Article 51 of the UN Charter, which refers to the “inherent right of individual and collective self-defense” of the UN member states.⁸ With Greece and Türkiye joining three years later, NATO was extended into the Eastern Mediterranean (1952). With the establishment of the Baghdad Pact (1955: later renamed CENTO)⁹ and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO: 1954), NATO became the key link for the implementation of the U.S. containment policy to prevent the spread of communism. Championed by then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the containment policy can be said in retrospect to have served as a means for delimiting the arena for the projection of communist influence with a view to preventing conflict between the two rival powers of the bipolar world. The Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) was one case when the two powers came to the brink of war that was averted by the agreement between Moscow and Washington that the former would dismantle their weapons facilities and Cuba and the latter would refrain from invading that island. The example of the Cuban Missile Crisis would often be given in the context of Russia’s objections to NATO’s expansion in the context of Russia’s “near abroad.”

After the Cold War was over, NATO’s Strategic Concept underwent three changes in tandem with Europe’s changing strategic environment. The first one, adopted on 7 November 1991, took into account the waning of the Soviet threat, with the Soviet troops beginning to withdraw from Eastern Europe and the former USSR satellite states gaining their sovereignty. The document also mentioned, among other developments, the progress made in arms control and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, now OSCE) process. “The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO’s European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy,” can be taken as the key sentence of this document, which identifies future threats as those possibly arising from “adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from social and political difficulties.”¹⁰ As a result, the “Allies seek ... to enhance security and stability at the lowest possible level of forces consistent with the requirements of defense.”¹¹

⁸ “United Nations Charter (full text),” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

⁹ Also initially called the Middle Eastern Treaty Organization (METO), the Baghdad Pact was renamed the Central Treaty Organization after Iraq’s withdrawal in 1959.

¹⁰ “The Alliance’s New Strategic Concept (1991) agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome, November 7-8, 1991,” *NATO*, paragraph 9, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm#:~:text=The%20Alliance’s%20active%20pursuit%20of,European%20states%3B%20to%20help%20manage

¹¹ “The Alliance’s New Strategic Concept (1991) agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome, November 7-8, 1991,” paragraph 26. (Ibid),

“Türkiye, a NATO member since 1952 with the second largest standing army in NATO, a founding member of the Council of Europe, and a candidate for EU membership, is a regional power that has demonstrated significant divergence from the Alliance’s values, principles, and even security priorities over the past decade or more.”

The Alliance’s 1999 Strategic Concept builds essentially on the main observations and inferences of the preceding one, stating that the “dangers of the Cold War have given way to more promising, but also challenging prospects, to new opportunities and risks.”¹² The civil wars that took place during the intervening years provide a telling example of the kinds of potential conflicts that the 1991 Concept warned about in general terms as a potential threat facing Europe. The new key strategic perspective offered in the 1999 Concept was NATO expansion, but an inclusive one as described in the following passage:

NATO has played an essential part in strengthening Euro-Atlantic security since the end of the Cold War. Its growing political role; its increased political and military partnership, cooperation and dialogue with other states, including with Russia, Ukraine and Mediterranean Dialogue countries; its continuing openness to the accession of new members; its collaboration with other international organizations; its commitment, exemplified in the Balkans, to conflict prevention and crisis management, including through peace support operations: all reflect its determination to shape its security environment and enhance the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area.¹³ President Clinton actively supported NATO enlargement not only because Visegrad countries had expressed the desire as early as 1992 to join NATO but he did so also to prevent the Republicans from making NATO enlargement an issue on the eve of Clinton’s first midterm elections in 1994.

¹² “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999), approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C., April 24, 1999,” *NATO*, paragraph 3, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27433.htm#:~:text=At%20their%20Summit%20meeting%20in,-years%20of%20the%20Cold%20War

¹³ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999), approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C., April 24, 1999,” paragraph 12. *NATO*.

Despite opposition to NATO enlargement from hardliners in Russia, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin devised a *modus vivendi* regarding the accession process of the three Visegrad countries, which eventually joined the Alliance in 1997. Yeltsin did not threaten the three former Warsaw Pact countries for seeking membership in the Alliance; Clinton on his part had already formulated the Partnership for Peace to forestall the rapid accession of Eastern European countries while they agreed to promote cooperation between NATO and Russia by means of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. Despite the balancing act of the Clinton Administration to support NATO enlargement, on the one hand, and to initiate security cooperation with Russia, on the other, public opinion in Russia remained skeptical about the West's intentions and opposed NATO enlargement.

With George W. Bush as president, seven other Eastern European countries were invited to join NATO at the Alliance's 2002 Prague Summit; two years later, when those seven countries were admitted into the Alliance at the Istanbul Summit, Russia's then President Putin articulated his strong objection. The die was cast.

“The End of History” Repudiated

Unlike the preceding two, the third Strategic Concept, adopted on 19 November 2010 in Lisbon, is a much shorter business-like document that does not include any assessment of changes in the Alliance's geopolitical environment. However, it does include a section on the security environment and several paragraphs on cooperation and partnership, including specially with Russia, a “relationship... based on the goals, principles, and commitments of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Rome Declaration specially regarding the respect of *democratic principles, and the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity* of all states in the Euro-Atlantic area.”¹⁴

Two significant events that raised tensions between Russia and the West and reinforced the former's distrust of the latter were the so-called Rose and Orange Revolutions of 2004 in Georgia and Ukraine, respectively. In the case of Ukraine, invalidated rigged elections, serious cases of corruption, and continued challenges mounted against a pro-democracy president elected by a slim majority continued to cripple the political arena and prevent reform. To the contrary, the Rose Revolution in Georgia marked the end of the old communist leadership and ushered in a “pro-Western reformer” as president. The democratization support provided by Western NGOs and the U.S. government in both these countries confirmed Putin's suspicions

¹⁴ “Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept For the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, November 19-29, 2010,” *NATO*, <https://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf> (Emphasis added.)

of U.S. ulterior motives regarding the Russian Federation. The result was the Russia-Georgia War of 2008 during which Russian troops came within the firing distance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the lifeline of the Southern Corridor.¹⁵ The import of this warning shot does not seem to have made an adequately strong impression on the West, possibly because of the successive economic crises taking place then.

Another very serious warning shot was Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, an act of aggression that could have been easily foreseen as a rehearsal for its later invasion of Ukraine. By occupying Crimea, moreover, Russia contravened with impunity one of the cardinal rules of the post-Second World War European order that there would no longer be any changes to the existing borders in that continent. Although, as noted, a large number of sanctions were imposed on Russia then, they did not seem to have enough of a punitive bite.

NATO Transforming

The recent Strategic Concept, adopted in Madrid on 29 June 2022, directly addresses the security threats posed primarily by the "Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine."¹⁶ Russia's "brutal and unlawful invasion, repeated violations of international humanitarian law, and heinous attacks and atrocities" are blamed for having caused "unspeakable suffering and destruction." While the summit, as noted, agreed to increase substantially the number of High Readiness Forces, allocate greater amount of funds for defense, and modernize military equipment, it also projected global concerns by emphasizing shared values as well as promoting "good governance" and integrating "climate change, human security, and the Women Peace and Security Agenda across all our tasks."¹⁷ It also differs from NATO's approach to security during the Cold War in declaring an openness to constructive engagement with rivals such as the People's Republic of China and even in keeping lines of communication with Russia open. NATO, it could be argued, is emerging as an institution to sustain the West's liberal order and its values in addition to its original mission of providing collective security for the transatlantic community.

While the war rages in unprecedented ferocity in Ukraine (both Russia and the allies have been careful not to spill the conflict into neighboring territory for fear of precipitating a confrontation involving nuclear powers), hostilities have been

¹⁵ For the war itself, see Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010); for the background and neighborhood, Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, eds., *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁶ "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid, 29 June 2022," *NATO*, Preface,

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf

¹⁷ "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid, 29 June 2022," *NATO*, Preface.

escalating in the economic sphere. In response to the sanctions imposed on it, Russia was quick to take advantage of Europe's dependence on its energy resources, particularly natural gas. In 2021, total EU gas imports from Russia amounted to 155 bcm, representing 45 percent of its total imports and 40 percent of total consumption. Although plans were made to reduce EU dependence on Russian gas as soon as the war in Ukraine erupted, finding alternative sources at short notice proved to be difficult if not impossible given the large volumes involved. On March 8, 2022, the European Commission published an optimistic scenario according to which the EU could fully replace the Russian gas it currently consumes by means of a combination of measures, including importing gas from other sources, accelerating the energy transition, and improving efficiency and savings.¹⁸ The same week the International Energy Agency (IEA) published *A 10-Point Plan to Reduce the EU's Reliance on Russian Natural Gas*,¹⁹ which could lead to a reduction of nearly one-third of Russian gas imports.

Both these documents point to the fact that European dependence on Russian gas would continue, albeit in a decreasing proportion, until the end of the decade, given the demand for existing resources, accounting for a tight market, and limits to how fast energy efficiency and transition could be implemented. As a result, European gas prices increased to record levels (450 percent higher than they were at the end of July 2021), fueling inflation and diminishing prospects for economic growth in the euro area, for example, from 5.4 percent in 2021 to 2.6 percent in the current year.²⁰ Uncertainty with respect to Russian supplies, moreover, is more than likely to have further adverse effects on European markets, in particular on the German economy. Russia has reduced deliveries of pipeline gas to Europe several times, most recently by shutting off the Nord Stream 1 pipeline for scheduled maintenance, which ended on 21 July 2022; however, the gas flow was restored only at a fraction of its capacity after maintenance. Four days later, the flow was further reduced to 20 percent of the pipeline's capacity on the pretext of technical problems arising from sanctions that allegedly prevented the proper maintenance of compressors. It is true that Canada had placed sanctions on Russian pipelines and would not release a turbine sent there for maintenance until the German government secured its release. Standing in front of the repaired machine at a Siemens factory in Mulheim on 3 August 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz complained that Russians were not taking the delivery of

¹⁸ "EU unveils plan to reduce Russia energy dependency," *DW*, 8 March 2022,

<https://www.dw.com/en/eu-unveils-plan-to-reduce-russia-energy-dependency/a-61047997>

¹⁹ "A 10-Point Plan to Reduce the European Union's Reliance on Russian Natural Gas", *International Energy Agency*, 3 March 2022,

<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/1af70a5f-9059-47b4-a2dd-1b479918f3cb/A10-PointPlanToReduceTheEuropeanUnionsRelianceonRussianNaturalGas.pdf>

²⁰ "Gloomy and More Uncertain," *World Economic Outlook*, Update July 2022, *International Monetary Fund*,

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2022/07/26/world-economic-outlook-update-july-2022>

the turbine while continuing to blame sanctions for not being able to pump higher volumes of gas.²¹ This latest example of prevarication on Moscow's part raises the fear of a complete gas cutoff by Moscow, as a result of which mandatory energy rationing may have to be implemented not only in Germany but across the EU. By putting an end to the era of the reliable supply of affordable gas, Moscow has already dealt a serious blow to Germany's economic model based on high-tech, quality exports produced at competitive prices. Moreover, by keeping Europe on its toes about future gas supplies in a period of economic uncertainty, it may well be hoping to help increase public dissatisfaction with Europe's costly support of the war in Ukraine. A few critical comments can already be heard in this respect as well as questions from those with an anti-American position who question why Germany should follow the U.S. lead to invite enmity of their powerful neighbor.

On the other hand, interdependence remains to be an important factor in intra-EU dynamics even in the face of crises. A case in point is its neighbors' reaction to Germany's current energy crisis. Germany's current crisis stemming from enormously high dependence on Russian supplies is entirely of its own making. Against better judgment, Germany did not diversify its supply sources; it did not even build LNG import facilities, which it is now trying to quickly construct in a race against time. Despite the situation, this author has not witnessed any indication of *schadenfreude* among its neighbors about the plight of Europe's biggest economy. To the contrary, economic actors from the industrial economies of Europe have been mainly concerned that an economic slowdown in Germany would adversely affect the rest of the continent.

Centrifugal Forces within the Alliance

There are, on the other hand, states that do not fully share either the values of the Alliance or the policies that NATO and the EU follow in tandem. Each of such states may be able to detract from the coherence or effectiveness of the organization they belong. Hungary, for example, an EU and NATO member, has a special relationship with Russia and benefits from regularly delivered Russian gas and oil supplies. Furthermore, it has never criticized Russia but habitually expresses disagreement with the EU's policies.²² Hungary also significantly diverges from the Alliance's common values, as evidenced by Prime Minister Orbán's 23 July 2022 speech in which he denounced the mixing of European and non-European races, claiming that those societies that allowed the mixing of races could no longer [be called]

²¹ "Olaf Scholz says Russia blocking gas turbine delivery," *DW*, 3 August 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/olaf-scholz-says-russia-blocking-gas-turbine-delivery/a-62693090>

²² Amanda Coakley, "Putin's Trojan Horse Inside the European Union," *Foreign Policy* no. 245, 3 August 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/03/hungary-orban-russia-conservative-politics/>

nations.²³ As much as his nationalistic-populist stand was welcomed by the former U.S. President Trump, who hosted Orban at his New Jersey golf club, and as much as his racist approach to nationhood was received with enthusiastic cheers at the 2022 Conservative Political Action Conference in Texas, his “obsessive deference to the Kremlin” as “Putin’s Trojan horse in the EU” continues to baffle European leaders.²⁴

Türkiye, a NATO member since 1952 with the second largest standing army in NATO, a founding member of the Council of Europe, and a candidate for EU membership, is a regional power that has demonstrated significant divergence from the Alliance’s values, principles, and even security priorities over the past decade or more. Its preference to pursue at times an independent foreign policy has put Ankara at odds with its transatlantic allies, such as its purchase from Russia of the S-400 missile system, which resulted in Türkiye’s suspension from the F-35 program. One year after the delivery of the Russian missile system, on 14 December 2020, U.S.-imposed CAATSA sanctions on Türkiye led to a strange situation within the Alliance in which the leading member of sanctioned another important member. Although Türkiye has helped in allied efforts in the most recent conflict by providing effective armed drones to Ukraine and although it has recently played an important mediating role to assist, in cooperation with the UN, in the export of Ukrainian grains to world markets through the Turkish Straits, it has not imposed any sanctions on Russia. Other factors, such as Türkiye’s repeated threats to veto the NATO accession of Sweden and Finland, the recent agreement to pay for Russian energy imports in rubles, continuous disagreements with its NATO neighbor Greece to the extent of bringing them to the brink of war, among others, have caused strains between Ankara and Washington as well as the EU.

Questions have been raised about President Erdogan’s recent meetings with President Putin: first, on 19 July 2022, in Tehran, also with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi; and second, a bilateral meeting with Putin in Sochi only 17 days later as well as his statement upon his return from Sochi that he would participate, upon Putin’s invitation, in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting next September in Uzbekistan.

As the *Financial Times* reported, Western capitals are increasingly alarmed at the deepening ties between Türkiye’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin, raising the prospect of punitive retaliation against the NATO member if it

²³ Shaun Walker and Flora Garamvolgyi, “Viktor Orbán sparks outrage with attack on ‘race mixing’ in Europe,” *The Guardian*, 24 July 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/24/viktor-orban-against-race-mixing-europe-hungary>

²⁴ Coakley, “Putin’s Trojan Horse.”

helps Russia avoid sanctions. Six western officials told the Financial Times they were concerned about the pledge made by Turkish and Russian leaders to expand co-operation on trade and energy after the two had a four-hour meeting in Sochi on Friday.²⁵

Dissatisfaction brought on by the stalling economy, rising cost of living, and possibly, energy shortages, can be expected to swell the ranks of those opposed to the war and its consequences on the quality of life in Europe. Those individuals and groups might constitute a centrifugal force within NATO as well as the EU, as might member states such as Hungary and Türkiye following independent paths that are widely divergent from the key collective security concerns of NATO. How serious a threat would those centrifugal forces constitute to the coherence of the West, especially in the context of the current conflict in Europe and the danger of another one arising between China and the Western alliance?

In this respect, the course of the Russia-Ukraine war is of concern. NATO military experts, especially from the U.S. and UK, have presented and continue to present their assessments of Russian forces' weaknesses in strategy and command effectiveness. On the other hand, a significant number of highly respected, impartial experts have argued to the contrary, maintaining that the sanctions imposed on Russia had not made much difference and were not likely to detract from Russia's ability to continue its war against Ukraine.

A recently published comprehensive study by Yale University's Chief Executive Leadership Institute presents credible evidence that Western sanctions have had a "devastating impact on Russia." Prepared by a group of prominent Yale scholars supported by a large team of specialists, the study concludes that (i) "Russian imports have largely collapsed," leading to critical supply shortages; (ii) as a result, "Russia's domestic production has come to a complete standstill"; (iii) because foreign businesses are leaving, "Russia has lost companies representing 40 percent of its GDP"; (iv) Russia's position as a key "commodities exporter has irrevocably deteriorated; moreover, it faces "steep challenges" to shift the direction of "its non-fungible exports such as piped gas" to Asian destinations; (v) Russia is currently suffering from the worst performing domestic financial markets in the world while it is "cut off from international financial markets"; (vi) because of Putin's unsustainable fiscal and monetary interventions to counter the foregoing structural weaknesses, "the Kremlin's finances are in much, much more dire straits than conventionally understood." As a conclusion, the study bluntly states that "Looking ahead, there is

²⁵ Laura Pitel, Amy Kazmin, Alice Hancock, and James Politi, "Alarm mounts in western capitals over Turkey's deepening ties with Russia," *Financial Times*, 7 August 2022.

no path out of economic oblivion for Russia as long as the allied countries remain unified in maintaining and increasing sanctions pressure against Russia.”²⁶

Shortly after the release of the Yale study, former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder held a media interview during which he claimed that the Kremlin wanted a negotiated solution to the war in Ukraine. He said that he had been “in Moscow for talks with President Putin” in the last week of July (his visit was confirmed by the Kremlin) and stated that he thought the deal reached in Istanbul to allow the export of Ukrainian grains to the world markets could be “the first step towards talks on a cease-fire.”²⁷ Was this a message given to the world with the blessings of the Kremlin?

The rapidly unfolding events related to the relentless war in Ukraine rule out bringing the foregoing discussion to a customary conclusion. In lieu of such a conclusion, let us end by posing a related issue that merits further consideration. In the preceding discussion it was suggested that NATO’s response to the current challenges in Europe have on the one hand, strengthened the Alliance but, on the other, carried the danger of detracting from the support of the Alliance in case of a prolonged conflict. At present China is posing increasingly serious challenges to the Euro-Atlantic area. How might challenges from Asia affect the West’s security architecture in future? How might NATO relate to that expanded security structure, possibly of an extended Alliance?

²⁶ Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, et. al., “Business Retreats and Sanctions Are Crippling the Russian Economy: Measures of Current Economic Activity and Economic Outlook Point to Devastating Impact on Russia,” *SSRN*, August 2022, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4167193#

²⁷ “Germany’s Schröder touts possible Ukraine ceasefire, says he met Putin again,” *DW*, 3 August 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-schr%C3%B6der-touts-possible-ukraine-ceasefire-says-he-met-putin-again/a-62691249>