

WHERE DOES NATO'S ENLARGEMENT LEAD TO?

The aim of this article is to show from the perspective of offensive realism the implications of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement. These implications should be seen on multiple levels: (a) the security of the new members of the North Atlantic Alliance, (b) the USA and the cohesiveness of NATO, (c) Russia, (d) the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine, (e) the militarization of relations in Europe, and (c) the global international system. The war in Ukraine is forcing the U.S. to make compromises with Russia and China, and this calls into question NATO's continued 'open door' policy.

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According to the realist paradigm, political-military alliances are instruments of states' security policies and influence the redistribution of power in the international system. The United States, as the main victor of the Cold War that ended in the late 1980s and the leader of the Western world, undertook a policy of actively supporting democratic and market reforms in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This meant, in practice, pursuing the export of democracy, 'non-violent struggle' and 'subversion strategy,' as indicated by Prof. Gene Sharp.¹ At the same time, some of the post-communist countries, most advanced in democratic reforms and fearful of Russia's return to imperial policies, pushed hard to join NATO. After several years of hesitation, Washington decided on a policy of expanding NATO eastward. The first post-Cold War NATO enlargement in 1999 included Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, the second in 2004 included as many as seven countries in the Central European region, namely Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. With both enlargements, Russia protested strongly, but was too weak to prevent the process. Of particular concern to Moscow was the inclusion of the three post-Soviet Baltic republics in the North Atlantic Alliance. Later still, Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2016), North Macedonia (2020) and Finland (2023) were admitted to NATO.

The United States and its allies (from NATO and the European Union) are guided by an ideology of the primacy of liberal values and a belief in the imperative of their eastward expansion, disregarding Russia's vital security interests. They justify NATO's expansion policy with the need to expand the zone of peace and security, and support the sovereign right of each state to choose its international affiliation. The latter argument is even enshrined in OSCE documents. On the other hand, they do not respect another norm developed at the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul about the indivisibility of security, which means not strengthening one's own security at the expense of other states.

Russia, on the other hand, has expressed concern about its own security from the beginning of the NATO enlargement process, pointing out that NATO is 'walking up' to its borders, and that the U.S. surrounds Russia on all sides with a system of military bases in other countries. A superpower that pursues a policy of liberal hegemonism and expansionism 'forces' other countries to counter, as it were. Russia is therefore no exception, and by acting rationally it reacts negatively, as it is driven by concern for its core security interests. Jack Matlock or John Mearsheimer have often invoked a hypothetical situation asking how the United States would behave if, for

1) Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation* (Bangkok: Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma, 1994).

example, Russia expanded its influence and entered Mexico or China entered Canada with its own military bases. Thus, the U.S. argument about expanding the zone of peace through NATO expansion cannot be convincing to the leaders of countries concerned about their security, especially Russia, which the West heavily criticizes. For expanding NATO, according to the assumption of the theory of offensive realism, means expanding its power, and this makes it likely to be used against Russia, since the intentions of states, as Mearsheimer writes, cannot be guessed with 100 percent certainty. Every superpower, aims at its own survival, and its behavior is determined by three factors: fear, self-help, and power maximization.² Therefore, it is not enough for Russia for NATO to declare that it is defensive, especially since there are well-known examples of NATO intervening illegally or in excess of the UN Security Council's mandate against Yugoslavia in 1999 (the so-called Kosovo war) or in Libya in 2011.

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Finally, it cannot be ignored that U.S. military spending rose sharply after the Cold War, despite declaring until 2015 that the U.S. had no adversary in the form of any state. It is also worth mentioning that the U.S. is now spending significantly more on armaments than it did during the Cold War, when there was a real threat of a nuclear war with the USSR. According to reliable SIPRI data, the U.S. spent \$877 billion on armaments in 2022, or 39.15 percent of the entire world's spending (\$2.24 trillion), while Russia spent only \$86.4 billion (or 3.86 percent of the world's spending), and China spent \$292 billion (13.03 percent). U.S. military spending is greater than the next 11 countries (China, Russia, India, Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea, Italy and Australia). These expenditures are more than 10 times greater than Russia's, and if we add to them the expenditures of the then remaining 29 NATO members, an even greater disparity emerges – more than 14 times (\$1.22 trillion to \$86.4 billion). On top of this, since 2014 the U.S. has been forcing its allies to increase their arms spending and militarily strengthen the Alliance's eastern flank. It should be recalled that contrary to the 1990s agreements with Russia, the U.S. is expanding its bases and sending its troops to new NATO member countries.³

2) John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001): 32.

3) Josua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, “Deal or No Deal? The End of Cold War and the U.S. offer to limit NATO Expansion,” *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (April 2016): 7–44.

If all this is taken into account, including NATO's systematic move closer to Russia's borders and strong declarations about admitting Ukraine and Georgia to the alliance, Russia's concerns seem rational and justified. There is also no willingness on the part of the West to discuss Russia's emerging concerns and reorganize the European security architecture. In December 2021, the U.S. and NATO rejected Russia's proposals on this issue without hesitation. This means that the West as a whole intends to continue the policy of expanding its influence and structures, 'snatching' more Eastern European countries from Russia's influence, marginalizing this nuclear power on the international stage. U.S. President Joe Biden spoke about it many times at the beginning of Ukrainian war. American politics lacks an idea of what the world will be like after the end of this war. It would be naive to assume that Russia could be eliminated as a great power. Prominent American neorealists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt warn against such attempts.⁴ Besides, it is worth considering why President Biden's administration is striving so fiercely to defeat and marginalize Russia, when its main rival and adversary is the ever-strengthening China.

Consequences of NATO Expansion: For Europe

a) NATO enlargement is supposed to strengthen the security of the countries newly admitted to the Alliance. This is the perception of the granting of guarantees to them to provide assistance in case they become the object of aggression (Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty), the stationing of soldiers and military equipment of Western allies on NATO's eastern flank, new military bases and increased spending on armaments. Whether this creates sufficient guarantees for their security in the event of expected aggression from Russia is a matter of debate. It is possible to think that Russia, unprovoked, will not attack NATO countries, but it is possible that if war were to occur it could use nuclear weapons, and this already changes the situation, since a nuclear conflict would spell disaster for everyone, including the new Central European allies.

(b) The U.S. is trying to win new allies for itself and expand its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet area. Recently, they have been most anxious to draw Ukraine into NATO. This drive by Washington is bolstered by fears of an ongoing reconfiguration of the international order that weakens the U.S. international position. It does this because in this area it is possible, does not entail great costs, and even brings benefits (political and economic). Central and Eastern European societies, wanting to secure themselves from Russian domination, willingly submit to American domination, and are encouraged by the Western vision of prosperity and democracy. Not everyone understands that the way forward is through market reforms and integration with the

⁴ The Munk Debate: Russia Ukraine War, (Stephen Walt, John Measheimer, Michael McFaul, Radoslaw Sikorski). Toronto, 12 May 2022. @sikorskiradek. <https://mobile.twitter.com/i/broadcasts/1jMJgeOIPzkKL>

European Union, not NATO membership. This is especially true for Ukraine, which has squandered 30 years of its independence, has failed to implement market and democratic reforms, and its leaders who came to power in a coup in February 2014 suddenly set course to gain NATO membership and have led to the vassalization of their country against the U.S.

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(c) Strengthening the cohesiveness of the North Atlantic Alliance around the U.S. Disciplining allies with the Russian threat and expanding NATO, including the Balkan and Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden), is being done. The United States fears losing its hegemonic position. That's why it is strengthening asymmetrical ties with European allies, forcing them to increase spending on armaments, transferring weapons to militant Ukraine, and using pressure to apply economic sanctions against Russia, forcing them to give up imports of fossil fuels (oil and gas) from Russia. In this way, the U.S. has managed to increase the economic benefits for its own arms and energy sectors. That is, tradition has come to pass, on yet another war the U.S. is making a lucrative business. This is laced with the rhetoric of assisting a country defending itself against Russian aggression, supporting Ukraine's sovereign right to join NATO, and the EU.

(d) Incredible justification for NATO expansion. NATO's eastward expansion is justified by the need to expand the democratic zone of peace, security and even prosperity.⁵ These arguments, enshrined in the 1996 U.S. National Security Strategy, were intended to convince Congress and the U.S. public of NATO expansion. It seems that in the course of its practical implementation, successive Democratic and Republican administrations have come to believe these illusory platitudes and put them above the requirements of maintaining stability and international security. While the first round of NATO enlargement in 1999 may have been justified by this, since the three countries most advanced in democratic reforms (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary) were admitted to the Alliance, and in addition had settled relations with Russia opposing NATO expansion. In contrast, in the second round

5) Strobe Talbott, “Why NATO Should Grow,” New York Review of Books, 10 August 1995, 27-28.

implemented in 2004, three post-Soviet republics with serious dispute problems with Russia, including over the Russian minority in the territories of Estonia and Latvia, were admitted to the Alliance. That is, they disregarded not only Moscow's serious objection, but also the dispositions of Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which provides for the possibility of inviting, by unanimous consent, to the Treaty of another European state that is able (1) to implement the principles of this Treaty and (2) to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Ukraine did not fulfill both conditions in 2008 (when it was invited to NATO by the Bucharest Summit), nor does it meet now during the war with Russia. It is not a country with a stable democracy, as shown in the latest U.S. Department of State report on the state of human rights in 198 countries around the world. In the report, the worst situation in terms of respect for human rights is currently in Ukraine, as well as in China, Iran, Myanmar (Burma), South Sudan, Syria and Afghanistan.⁶ It cannot be explained by the fact that Ukraine is actually at war with Russia. The paradox of NATO's enlargement policy in the name of promoting democratic values is that it has led to war with Russia. However, it is impossible to justify that war serves to build democracy. An additional aspect that undermines the credibility of the arguments in favor of NATO's eastward expansion is the fact that Poland is one of its most ardent supporters, which has ceased to be a democratic state since 2015. In Poland, under the rule of the conservative-nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, there is an ostentatious violation of the rule of law, for which disciplinary proceedings are underway in the EU, also strongly protested against oppressive power by the Polish public.⁷ It is incomprehensible that the United States is not bothered by this. What matters above all is that Poland continues to support Ukraine and represent an anti-Russian orientation.

(e) Sense of threat by Russia and Russophobia. The aspirations of post-communist Central European countries to join NATO have mostly been justified by a sense of threat to their security by Russia. While these arguments can be considered legitimate in the case of Poland or the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), they can hardly be applied to Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro or North Macedonia. In these cases, the U.S. drive to gain a military and political presence in the Balkans was decisive. Fears of Russia are reinforced by successive U.S. administrations committed to expanding their sphere of influence in Europe and Asia. The Russophobia present in certain circles of public opinion in Central and Eastern Europe is exploited for this purpose. Russophobia, as contempt for Russia and Russians, was intensified when Vladimir Putin, a capable politician with a vision to strengthen Russia and its development, headed the Russian Federation from the beginning of the 21st

6) 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, Washington DC, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ukraine/>

7) For more see Ryszard Zieba, "Illiberalism and Nationalism in Poland's Politics." In: Ryszard Zieba (ed.), *Politics and Security of Central and Eastern Europe: Contemporary Challenges* (Cham: Springer, 2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16419-4_5

century. Remarkably, when Putin became Russian president in 2000, he declared his country's openness to cooperation with the West. He succeeded in establishing several years of partnership with the EU and NATO, which was not so easy after NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia, and Russia also joined the grand anti-terror coalition after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the U.S. The U.S. administration of President George W. Bush quickly undermined this promising cooperation by denouncing the ABM disarmament treaty and supporting the 'color revolutions' in the countries of the former USSR (Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, the Belarus trial). Then, too, the U.S led the second round of NATO enlargement, with the inclusion of the post-Soviet Baltic republics. A factor that made relations between Western countries and Russia more difficult was also Russia's pacification of the rebel republic in Chechnya (the Second Chechen War). The West openly sided with the Chechen fighters. Russophobia gained new breezes, after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and especially after Russia's aggression against Ukraine starting in February 2022. In this war, Russophobia was combined with propaganda aimed at demeaning the opponent as a very dangerous enemy and criminal and to destroy him. Groupthink syndrome began to prevail, making it impossible to objectively analyze and diagnose the ongoing war.⁸ Again, Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic republics, the United Kingdom and the United States became its main fighters.

(f) Militarization of relations in Europe. NATO's policy of eastward expansion has prompted countries newly admitted to the alliance to adapt their armed forces to NATO standards in order to ensure their compatibility and interoperability with allied forces. It was necessary to rearm their own armies and equip them with modern armament, most of which was purchased from the U.S. It turned out that the new allies were under great pressure from Washington. The sharp increase in arms spending came as a reaction by the allies to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its beginning to support Donbass separatism. This was recommended by the decisions of the NATO summits in Newport (September 2014) and Warsaw (June 2016). Then the allies began to implement a policy of increasing defense spending by 2 percent of GDP over the previous year. The frontrunner was Poland, which tried to implement similar arrangements on the basis of its own earlier decisions in 2001. In general, after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, the military spending of European countries steadily increased and in 2022 it was 13 percent higher than the previous year and more than 30 percent higher than in 2013.

At the same time, new NATO members have been vying for the redeployment of infrastructure (logistics) and troops – mainly U.S. – to the Alliance's eastern flank since their entry into the Alliance. Until 2021, the U.S. was cautious about these tasks,

8) Stephen M. Walt, "The Perpetually Irrational Ukraine Debate," Foreign Policy, 29 November 2022.

and the stay of its troops of the new Alliance member countries was a successive ‘rotation,’ as it sought to overtly not violate the May 1997 political commitments to Russia contained in the Founding Act on Relations and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. After Russia's open aggression against Ukraine began in 2022, there was a shift away from this cautious rearmament of NATO's eastern flank. Significant redeployments of U.S. troops, as well as those of the UK, Canada, Germany and France to countries bordering Russia and Ukraine were made. It was decided to change the nomenclature defining the presence of these forces in the host countries as ‘permanent,’ and logistics and some command structures were shifted to Poland and Romania. Once again, the primus in this militarization of its own country turned out to be Poland, which – to the delight of U.S. military commanders – declares to create the strongest army (300,000 soldiers) in Europe.

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This is served by successive large arms purchases (without a tender) in the U.S. and South Korea. At the same time, which turned out to be a surprise not only to Russia, but also to NATO countries, Ukraine learned the lessons of losing the war with Russia in 2014, made a significant strengthening of its own army, receiving armaments and training assistance, mainly from the U.S., the UK and Poland. In parallel, Russia, preparing to strike Ukraine, steadily increased military spending and deployed some 100,000 of its troops to the Ukrainian border in late 2021 and sent some of its armed forces to allied Belarus. In the spring of 2023, Russia suspended implementation of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) of 2010 and terminated the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). The militarization of relations in the eastern part of Europe has become a reality, accompanied by a setting of war propaganda the likes of which has not been seen in Europe since the apogee of the Cold War several decades ago.

(g) Russia's major invasion of Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, Russia launched an aggression against Ukraine, attacking the country from every border with it. From the outset, Russia has described its aggression as a ‘special operation’ aimed at eradicating Ukrainian nationalism and demilitarizing Ukraine; it has also made no secret of the fact that it was concerned with changing power in Ukraine. To the surprise not only of Russia, but also of observers in the West, the operation failed. More than a dozen months later, Ukraine continues to defend itself with unprecedented political, military, economic and humanitarian support from NATO and EU countries. In practice, the war has become a proxy war between Russia and NATO. This is a risk of this conflict turning into a third world war involving nuclear weapons.⁹

Consequences of NATO Expansion: For The Global International System

Contemporary scholars, mainly neorealists, emphasize the importance of the ongoing reconfiguration of the international order, in which two opposing tendencies clash. The first is to defend the hegemony of the United States formed after the end of the Cold War, supported by the West, mainly the United Kingdom, the European Union and a few U.S. allies from the East Asian (Japan, South Korea) and Pacific (Australia, New Zealand) regions. The second, on the other hand, is represented by the pretenders for co-determination of the fate of the world, namely Russia, China, India, Brazil and a few other countries of the non-Western South (Global South), who are taking steps to polycentrize the world. These actions are evident in outspoken criticism of U.S. and Western hegemony, the most notorious example of which was Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's speech at the Munich Security Policy Conference in February 2007. At the same time, the institutionalization of cooperation among the new emerging powers in the BRIC formula (Brazil, Russia, India, China) began, to which South Africa was admitted in 2011, forming BRICS. This anti-Western power already produced a larger GDP than the G7 in 2022 (31.6 versus 30.4 percent of global GDP, respectively). More countries are now interested in joining this grouping, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Argentina, Mexico, Türkiye, Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, Thailand. This process signifies the building of a new formula for cooperation among countries challenging the liberal international order, led by the U.S.

Expanding NATO is an effort to maintain U.S. hegemony. The spring of 2023 saw the expansion of this alliance to 31 participants, and Sweden can be expected to join soon. Such a large and powerful alliance is first and foremost a tool of U.S. security policy, as it ensures that the superpower controls an area from the western coasts of North

9) John J. Mearsheimer, “Playing with Fire in Ukraine: The Underappreciated Risks of Catastrophic Escalation,” *Foreign Affairs*, 17 August 2022.

America and most of Europe to the border with Russia. This means a vast sphere of influence and the ability to affect adjacent regions. Suffice it to mention NATO's participation in the war in Afghanistan since 2001 and the military intervention in Libya (2011).

Back in the 1990s, when preparations were being made for the first expansion to Central Europe, the idea of making NATO a global alliance was discussed. However, it was decided only to expand NATO's functions to include non-treaty crisis response operations, which until then could be carried out by the UN and regional organizations such as the OAU/African Union and the CSCE/OSCE. These so-called crisis management operations mainly initiated by the U.S. drew criticism from other countries (Russia, China) and even doubts from some European allies (France, Germany), and made new NATO members such as Poland fear that this undermined NATO's core treaty function of providing defense for member states. That's why President Barack Obama's administration sought to move away from President G.W. Bush's policy of treating NATO as a 'toolbox'. Therefore, the Lisbon Summit in 2010 reaffirmed the viability of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and agreed that crisis management operations would be limited to what was necessary and would be carried out jointly with NATO partners. Reality contradicted this agreement, as evidenced by NATO's intervention in Libya the following year.

During the war in Ukraine in 2022, NATO decided to take another step to broaden its spectrum of interest. At the Madrid summit on 29-30 June 2022, the leaders of NATO countries adopted a new strategic concept for the Alliance. They for the first time in the history of NATO referred to China in its strategic document, pointing to its "ambitions and coercive policies" which "challenge NATO's interests, security and values." Also NATO confirmed the continuation of the alliance's 'open-door' policy, strengthening its deterrence and defense potential, conflict prevention and management, and even actions to protect the climate. All these statements indicate the adoption of the American point of view by the allies, which confirms the thesis of neorealist researchers about the instrumental treatment of NATO by the USA and about NATO's transition to a new Cold War.

The protracted war in Ukraine is increasingly taking on the appearance of an armed confrontation between the West and Russia, which is politically and economically supported by China. This could lead either to its "Koreanization," i.e. a freeze and a new division in Europe, along the lines of the outcome of the unresolved Korean War (1950-53), or to an escalation with the risk of a major war between Russia and NATO. It is also possible that China will side with Russia, which poses a growing challenge to U.S. hegemony, and this pushes both superpowers, the U.S. and China, into the

so-called Thucydides trap.¹⁰ U.S. realists have no doubt that such a war will occur, and only the date when the U.S. will attack China is unknown. That is, the current situation in Ukraine may be just a prelude to a great hegemonic war, which will see a clash between the incumbent hegemon (the U.S.) and the pretender (China), with Russia on its side. There seems to be an awareness of such a prospect in the Chinese leadership. This may be confirmed by President Xi Jinping's words to Russian President Putin during his visit to Moscow (March 2023) about how the world does not know that changes are now being prepared that no one can imagine. That is, it can be assumed that the Russian-Ukrainian war may signal profound changes in the international order, which will see a clash between a weakening West and the pretenders to the management of world affairs. This is indicated by the behavior of most non-Western countries, which, while condemning the invasion of Russia, do not blame this superpower for causing the war, but the excessive enlargement of NATO, which threatened its security, which caused such an extreme reaction in the conditions of geopolitical competition.¹¹ This is a view close to that of leading neorealists.

The war in Ukraine, from the perspective of Russia and China, is expected to block, to halt further U.S. and NATO expansion. Western support for a belligerent Ukraine means upsetting the dynamic balance between the liberal West and the authoritarian East. The ongoing enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance to include Finland and perhaps Sweden not only further pushes Russia to an inferior position, but represents an imbalance of power, and this, as the neorealists reason, causes a rival to counter and increases the possibility of a major war in Europe. Expanding NATO when Russia is struggling to contain it in Ukraine is not only an anti-Russian step. It cannot be ruled out that the U.S. is also acting in this way with a view to preventing China from exploring the Arctic. Hence this pulling of Finland and Sweden away from neutrality. Today, the U.S. is also playing the Ukraine card to preserve its own hegemonic interests in the context of containing China.

The U.S. is facing an accelerating reconfiguration of the international order. It has become involved in the war in Ukraine, strongly supports the country, has reaped some economic benefits from the war, but sees no prospect of ending it without concessions from its protégé. There are signs that the United States would like to end the war already. In April 2023, even Democratic-linked U.S. experts suggested territorial concessions to Ukraine.¹² But carrying a reputation as an 'indomitable'

10) Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

11) Ziya Öniş, „The West Versus The Rest: The Russian Invasion of Ukraine and the Crisis of the ‘Post-Western’ Order,” *Transatlantic Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1 March 2023): 33-52. DOI: [10.58867/LWFFJ8049](https://doi.org/10.58867/LWFFJ8049)

12) Richard Haass & Charles Kupchan, “The West Needs a New Strategy in Ukraine: A Plan for Getting From the

defender, neither President Volodymyr Zelenski, nor President Putin, who has not achieved the goals of the unleashed war, are thinking of concessions. Where to look for a neutral mediator in this situation? Probably it is in U.S.-unfriendly China and the countries of the South.

Meanwhile, U.S. influence in the world is shrinking. Many factors have contributed to this, the loss of the U.S. intervention war in Iraq, Afghanistan, the decline of U.S. influence in Saudi Arabia, and finally the emergence of candidates from Asia, Africa and Latin America to join the BRICS. The liberal international order and U.S. hegemony are being openly contested. At the same time, the influence of its main competitor China is growing. There is growing interest in the Global Security Initiative announced in April 2022 by Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum. China promotes the idea of indivisible (inclusive) security, which criticizes the augmentation of its own security by states and military blocs, at the expense of the security of others, and rejects U.S. unilateralism. China's idea is that all states should respect the policy of balance. The U.S. was quick to criticize this concept. Thus, it can be seen that the U.S. is failing to maintain its dominance. They are unable to prevent the rise of China, defeat Russia at the hands of the Ukrainians, prevent the strengthening of the BRICS group and even other smaller emerging powers (Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Nigeria). A new international order is being born before our eyes, and opponents of the liberal international order are coming to the fore. The Ukrainian crisis is becoming a turning point where the future of the world may be decided.¹³ In this situation, the U.S. will have to make compromises with China and Russia.

Conclusions

An analysis of NATO's implemented eastward expansion policy leads to the following conclusions: (1) The post-Cold War West selfishly rejected the idea of the indivisibility of peace; (2) The enlargement of the liberal West by admitting former communist Central European countries to NATO gave them a delusional sense of security, and instead of strengthening European security, the stability of the global international system was undermined, and in the third decade of the 21st century, a war over Ukraine occurred and the threat of a global conflict (hegemonic war) arose; (3) The war in Ukraine, has caused clear divisions between the West and the rest of the world. Russia and China claim that the West is responsible for it, while the rest of the world believes that it was caused by the over-enlargement of NATO; (4) Since the first decade of the 21st century, the liberal international order has been challenged, and there has been a rejection of the hegemony of the United States and the West

Battlefield to the Negotiating Table,” Foreign Affairs, 13 April 2023.

13) Andrey Sushentsov (Interview with), "Dolgaya ukrainskaya igra Putina: pochemu Kremlin uveren chto budyet smeyatsya poslednim," Moskovskiy Komsomolets, 12 April 2023.

by Russia and its partners, i.e., China and the countries of the South; (5) There is an acceleration of the reconfiguration of the international order towards a polycentric order, which forces the U.S. to make compromises with Russia and China, including on Ukraine. This calls into question the continuation of NATO's 'open door' policy.