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Russian-NATO Relations: A Study in Cooperation and Conflict

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Abstract:
Russian relations with NATO have gone through stages that varied in nature. The first stage of that relationship witnessed a state of cooperation based on partnerships and bilateral treaties. However, this pattern of interactions in their relationship was not destined to continue, due to the increasing interests of NATO represented by its eastward expansion, which Russia considered an existential threat to it. The geopolitical changes represented by the accession of most Eastern European countries to NATO, especially after the end of the Cold War, have accelerated their relationship towards a new stage. What is the nature of that stage during which the two parties headed towards confrontation, which was represented by the Russian war on Ukraine? And what are the policies that the two sides adopted towards each other during this stage of the conflict? History was present in this study to review the depth of that relationship. It was necessary to analyze that relationship and describe how their relations transformed from a stage of cooperation to a stage of conflict, ending with the Russian war on Ukraine, which did not hide its desire to join NATO.

Keywords: Russian relations, NATO, cooperation, conflict.

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العلاقات الروسية وحلف الناتو: دراسة في التعاون والصراع

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الملخص:

مرت العلاقات الروسية مع حلف الناتو بمراحل تباينت في طبيعتها. فقد شهدت مرحلتها الاولى من تلك العلاقة حالة من التعاون المبنية على الشراكات والمعاهدات الثنائية. الا ان هذا النمط من التفاعلات في علاقتهما لم يكتب له الاستمرارية. بسبب تزايد مصالح الناتو المتمثلة بالتوسع شرقاً، والذي عدته روسيا بمثابة تهديداً وجوديا لها. أن التغيرات الجيوسياسية المتمثلة بانضمام اغلب دول اوربا الشرقية للناتو لاسيما بعد انتهاء الحرب الباردة، قد سرعت علاقتهما نحو مرحلة جديدة. فماهي طبيعة تلك المرحلة التي اتجه اليها الطرفان نحو المواجهة والتي تمثلت بالحرب الروسية على أوكرانيا، وما هي السياسات التي اعتمدها الجانبان تجاه بعضهما خلال هذه المرحلة من الصراع؟ لقد كان التاريخ حاضرا في هذه الدراسة ليستعرض عمق تلك العلاقة. وكان لابد من تحليلها ووصف الكيفية التي تحولت بها علاقاتهما من مرحلة التعاون الى مرحلة الصراع، لتنتهي بالحرب الروسية على أوكرانيا التي لم تخفي رغبتها للانضمام الى الناتو.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاقات الروسية، حلف الناتو، التعاون، الصراع.

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1. The introduction:

The lack of stability and steadiness is a characteristic of international relations. Hence, the relations between NATO and the Russian Federation have included various interactions, followed by multiple policies. It is natural for international relations to produce certain policies concerning these countries. Despite the fact that everyone realizes that the state of cooperation is more effective in achieving peace and stability, no party has refrained from entering into a state conflict when their interests are threatened. Therefore, the topic of the relations between NATO and Russia receives great attention and its importance stems from the importance of the parties involved in that relationship as well as the importance of the policies followed by the two parties towards each other. Accordingly, the problem of the study arises from the central question: What is the nature of the relations that NATO and the Russian Federation have experienced, and what are the policies that the two parties have adopted as reactions towards each other during the conflict phase? Our hypothesis for the current study is that NATO expansions are the real threat to its relations with Russia, and that both parties must take that relationship into account, since international peace and security could be threaten by any disregard of it.

2. Methodology:

The study adopts more than one methodology. We adopted the historical method to explore the nature of relations between Russia and NATO in the past. We also adopted the descriptive analysis method, which is based on describing the state of relations between the two parties and what policies affected it.

3. The nature of the cooperation stage in Russian relations with NATO

3.1 The Establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The Treaty establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was signed in April 1949 by (12) members (Denmark, France, Iceland, Canada, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States) (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2022). The purpose of the treaty was representation of the members' commitment to sharing the benefits of collective defense and enhancing cooperation between member states. This prompted many countries

seeking stability and security to join the organization. NATO adapts to the new challenges imposed by change, the most important of which are the strategic decisions taken during the Cold War to protect Western Europe from the influence and expansion of the Soviet Union (Patlán 2024). The purpose of establishing NATO was to achieve three integrated goals(Office of the Historian 2000):

First: Deterring the expansion of the Soviet Union.

Second: Preventing the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe.

Third: Encouraging European political integration.

However, the primary function of the alliance is to collectively defend Central and Western Europe against any attack by the Soviets.

One of the most important results of the negotiations held between the Soviet Union and the United States is that the latter gave assurances that it would not expand NATO eastward in exchange for the Soviet Union's withdrawal from East Germany. On this basis, Russian diplomats, including the Russian thinker "Alexander Lukin", accused successive American presidents of forgetting the promises made by the leaders to the President of the Soviet Union "Mikhail Gorbachev", taking into account the Soviet Union's need at that time for security represented by the survival of the Eastern European countries from becoming part of the Western alliance even if their governments changed in the future. It appears that these approvals by President Gorbachev, which were not written down formally but were merely promises, represented the “green light” for the United States of America to begin expanding the defense system (Sarotte 2014, 90-92). In the stage of the NATO’s establishment the priorities of the United States were the completion of the unification of Germany and its full membership in NATO, the continued presence of the allied forces in Germany even after the withdrawal of Soviet forces, and the NATO’s continued deployment of nuclear and conventional weapons even after the Cold War in 1991.

At the same time, the United States prohibited the establishment of any other organization "that could replace NATO as a guarantor of Western security and stability." This was in reference to preventing the Soviet Union from joining NATO. Gorbachev was forced to bow to Western preferences, as long as he received financial compensation. Especially since there were many crises within the collapsed Soviet Union, represented by a sharp rise in crime rates, the spread of anti-regime

demonstrations, the growth of separatist movements, and the deterioration of economic performance. Gorbachev would find it extremely difficult to address these internal problems without the American aid, which he received, without obtaining any official guarantees against NATO's eastward expansion. Thus, American officials succeeded in avoiding negotiations on the future of the alliance (Sarotte 2014, 95-96).

3.2 NATO Expansion

With the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev approved a comprehensive series of reforms that included the need to reduce the percentage allocated to defense spending and the openness towards arms control accompanied by a significant reduction in the number of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe, which represented the end of the threat of Soviet invasion of Europe. Therefore, NATO expansion was widely discussed during that period. In December 1996, the alliance announced an invitation to new members, despite the fear that NATO expansion eastward would threaten Russia and the possibilities of future cooperation between Russia and Western democracies. The main concern was the impact of expansion on Russia, which was confirmed by the March 1997 summit in Helsinki between US President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, after the two leaders had differing views concerning NATO expansion, yet they pledged to strengthen their consultations in the future, which actually happened when President Yeltsin signed the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," which established the Permanent Joint Council between the two. After Russia's concerns were somewhat subsided, NATO, once again, invited the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to join it in 1999 (Office of the Historian 2000).

Over the past 75 years, NATO has expanded dramatically, growing to 32 member states united in common cause in a military alliance and "collective defense," asserting their readiness and ability to meet political commitments and obligations (Newsweek 2024). Western promises have begun to contradict each other. Russian President Vladimir Putin's military actions have been explicit responses to the alliance's rules even after more than three decades (Sarotte 2014, 93-97). To this day, Russia still recalls the promises made to it by the West after

the collapse of the Soviet Union, which clearly stated that there was no desire for NATO to expand into Russian territory (Alhurra Net 2023). Table (1) shows the history of European countries joining NATO from its inception until now.

Table (1) shows the date of accession of countries as members of NATO

Country	Year	Country	Year	Country	Year
Italy	1949	Iceland	1949	Slovenia	2004
Belgium	1949	Greece	1952	Latvia	2004
France	1949	Turkey	1952	Lithuania	2004
Canada	1949	Germany	1955	Romania	2004
United States	1949	Spain	1982	Albania	2009
United Kingdom	1949	Hungary	1999	Croatia	2009
Denmark	1949	Czech Republic	1999	Montenegro	2017
Norway	1949	Poland	1999	North Macedonia	2020
Luxembourg	1949	Slovakia	2004	Finland	2023
Netherlands	1949	Bulgaria	2004	Sweden	2024
Portugal	1949	Estonia	2004	Members	32

Source: https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html

It is clear from Table (1) that there was no rapid accession by European countries to NATO during the sixties, seventies and even eighties, except for Spain. This explains to us that the policy of the United States during that period was characterized by rationality and taking into account the calculations of its balancer, the Soviet Union, which represented a brake and a controlling factor for the expansion of NATO and the increase in its members. We also conclude that the acceleration of European countries' accession to NATO after the end of the Cold War indicates the ambitions of the United States to include all countries surrounding Russia and to re-expand to ensure American interests near Russia. Accordingly, Russia today believes that it must be a strong country not allowing NATO to advance towards it and to stop the expansion operations towards its vital area, which represents its national security.

3.3 Russian Partnerships with NATO and Areas of Common Interest.

The year 2002 witnessed the greatest peak in rapprochement and cooperation between the two sides, with the signing of the "Rome" Declaration, which pertains to the relations between Russia and NATO, according to which a task force council was established to coordinate and develop common positions on key issues, in order to elevate the

relations between the two to a higher level in the future with the possibility of granting full membership (Al-Sourani 2024).
Russia has contributed to the NATO-led and UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by facilitating the transit of international security assistance through Russian territory, supported counterterrorism operations by deploying its ships in the Mediterranean to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa, supported NATO-led peace operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and participated in the Cooperative Airspace Initiative to develop a system for information exchange and to provide air traffic transparency and early notification of suspicious air activity to help prevent terrorist attacks such as the September 11 attacks. Cooperation has expanded to include industrial, research and defense technology cooperation between NATO and Russia, which began in January 2005. Russia has been involved in scientific cooperation through NATO's Science for Peace and Security (SPS) program since 1992(North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2024). NATO members see cooperation with Russia as having strategic importance because it contributes to creating a common space of peace, stability and security, and the alliance aspires to see a real strategic partnership with Russia (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2012 ,31). see Table (2).

Table (2) shows the development of Russian relations with NATO

Seq	Stages of cooperation and partnerships with NATO.	The goal of cooperation.	Year
1	Russia's accession to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council.	A program aimed at improving the alliance's relations with countries outside the bloc.	1991
2	Russia's sending of peacekeeping forces to support peace operations in the Western Balkans.	Partnership for Peace Program.	1994
3	Dialogue Forum of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.	Bringing together allies and partner countries in the Euro-Atlantic region.	1997
4	Establishment of the Permanent Joint Council between NATO and Russia (PJC).	as a forum for consultation and cooperation.	1997
5	Russia established a diplomatic mission to NATO.	to enhance bilateral dialogue.	1998
6	NATO opened an information office in Russia (NIO)	Facilitating regular contacts and cooperation.	2001

7	Rome Declaration on the establishment of the Joint Security Council.	To build consensus, cooperation, joint decision-making and joint action on common security issues.	2002
8	Military Liaison Mission (MLM).	Coordination and development of common positions on key issues.	2002
9	Allowing NATO to fly military units through Russia.	. Proposal of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov for practical cooperation.	2003
10	Framework Agreement for Joint Cooperation Russia and NATO.	Logistics,Counter-Terrorism, Search and Rescue at Sea (Submarines,Anti-Piracy), Ballistic Missile Defense, Exchanges of Military Activities. Developing a Common Understanding of Procedures for Responding to Nuclear Weapons Incidents.	2003
11	Participation in NATO Exercises	Three NATO-led Search and Rescue Exercises	2005

Source: Researcher's work based on publications and documentation on NATO's official website and at the link**: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm#response**

4. The nature of the policies followed by NATO in the conflict with Russia

When Russian-NATO relations entered the conflict phase, both sides adopted hostile policies towards each other, including the following:

4.1 Georgia and Ukraine Joining NATO

The idea of Ukraine joining NATO began to crystallize in 2008, when it was proposed during a meeting of the alliance's leaders held in the Romanian capital, Bucharest, that same year. This sparked Russia's criticism of NATO's expansionist ambitions, which it considered a threat to its national security. Ukraine's accession to the alliance represents a red line that cannot be crossed for Russia. This made NATO feel it difficult to include Ukraine in the alliance, as it saw the Russian concerns about it. US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated on the sidelines of the Bucharest summit that “accepting Ukraine into NATO now means that the alliance is at war with Russia.”(Alhurra Net 2023). France and Germany hinted that they feared this would provoke Russia’s hostility (Gray 2023). Thus, tensions in Russian-NATO relations began in 2008, due to the intention to expand eastward, which prompted Russia to issue warnings from its officials, such as the statement by the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, Yuri Baluyevsky, that

Russia would use military and other measures if Ukraine and Georgia joined NATO (Al-Sourani 2024).

"The membership of Georgia and Ukraine in NATO is a grave strategic mistake that will have serious consequences for security throughout Europe," said Alexander Grushko, Russia's deputy foreign minister. However, in May 2008 the European Union announced the Eastern Partnership initiative, a program aimed at promoting prosperity in countries like Ukraine and integrating them into the EU economy. Thus, the triple package of Western policies, including NATO enlargement, EU enlargement, and democracy promotion, added fuel to a fire waiting to ignite. It is not surprising that Russian leaders view this plan as hostile to their country's security. As for President Putin, he considered Ukraine's membership in NATO to mean its demise." This led him in August 2008 to include two breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in Georgia, keeping them weak, divided, and distant from NATO. Ukraine, a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia, has been told by Russian leaders that Russia will not tolerate such threats (Mearsheimer 2014, 79-82). And indeed, Russia annexed Crimea and entered eastern Ukraine in 2014, promoting the NATO to adopt a stance of full support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, suspending, as such, all forms of practical civil and military cooperation with Russia. At the beginning of the Russian war on Ukraine in February 2022, political dialogue with Russia was completely suspended, which meant the end of the idea of a strategic partnership with NATO. NATO is thus determined to constrain and confront Russia and counter its capabilities (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2022). Military and security cooperation between the United States and Ukraine has increased in response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Estimates indicate that Ukraine received tens of billions of dollars from the United States between 2014 and 2021, including weapons and training equipment for the army, combating cyber threats, and intelligence support to deter Russian threats through the “Ukrainian Security Assistance Initiative” (Abdel Shafi 2022). The NATO has also supported Ukraine politically, economically, militarily, and financially, and has been determined to support Ukraine in building a force capable of defeating and deterring

Russia more than ever before, as confirmed during the 2024 Washington Summit (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2022).

NATO believes that Russia's foreign policy and security developments, which pose a threat to NATO members, will continue to militarize Russian foreign policy even after the war in Ukraine, which makes the alliance's mission more important than ever (Fix and Keil 2022). The United States and its European allies bear most of the responsibility for the Ukrainian crisis. The root of the problem is NATO expansion, which is the central element in a larger strategy to pull Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. In recent years, Russian leaders have made it very clear that they will not stand idly by as NATO expands, signaling the transformation of their strategically important neighbor into a Western stronghold. The West has been moving behind Russia and threatening the core of its strategy. European leaders have made a grave mistake in trying to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia's border (Mearsheimer 2014, 77). The United States has urged many countries to support and protect Ukraine, and the alliance members have been under a huge economic burden to help Ukraine. Everyone pledged to defend all NATO territories to deter any potential aggression by Russia (Biden 2023), consequently allowing the alliance to play a major role in the ongoing war by providing economic and military aid to Ukraine (Newsweek 2024). Despite Russia's positions and warnings against NATO expansion, there are still many voices that are rushing for Ukraine to join the NATO. In May 2023, Henry Kissinger stated in an interview with The Economist that for the sake of European security, Ukraine must be accepted into NATO (RT 2024).

4.2 The Missile Shield

Russia's cessation of implementing the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty in 2007 marked the beginning of tension in the relationship between Russia and the NATO, which took on military dimensions, following the US intention to install interceptor missiles in each of Poland and the Czech Republic, which, on its turn, provoked the ire of Russian officials. After the events of the Orange Revolution against Russia in Georgia and Ukraine, supported by the West, the situation between Russia and NATO worsened, and Russian reactions began in a clear challenge to the West. This was represented by its attack on Georgia in August 2008. Russia seeks to prove itself and the strength

of its influence in its regional neighborhood, in an effort to prevent American influence, which was started by "Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that Russia will not allow unilateral American control over the world, exploiting the issue of fighting terrorism to implement the hegemony project." Russia links European and Western interventions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kosovo, to weaken its role in these regions that are important to its national security, with the situation in the Middle East, such as Syria, and the danger of Islamic extremist movements there (Zidane 2013, 236-237). The strategy defines a global vision that sees Russia as threatened by the West, whether the threat is manifested in color revolutions or a Western military stance against Russia. Therefore, Russia's goals in Ukraine are inevitably limited to foreign and security policy goals (Fix and Keil 2022).

Russia has strongly opposed the US announcement that it will deploy its new missile defense system in 2009, which can only be understood as an expansion of NATO and a real threat to Russia. This will eventually make it act aggressively toward its neighbors. NATO must therefore allow Georgia and Ukraine to contain Russia before it dominates its neighbors and threatens Western Europe (Mearsheimer 2014, 83-85). NATO has expressed concerns about Russia's behavior in withdrawing from many of its commitments, obligations, and treaties with NATO. NATO members have pledged to continue working closely together to confront the threats and challenges posed by Russia. As a result, relations between NATO and Russia have reached their lowest point since the Cold War (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2024). In contrast, Russia has been continuously modernizing its armed forces, especially after its successful military campaign in Georgia in 2008. The Russian military doctrine of 2014 reflects this evolution and the offensive nature of Russia's understanding of warfare, which seeks "decisive engagement and resolution of conflicts on terms favorable to Russia." Russia believes that these capabilities can be deployed in conventional contexts to hasten the end of the conflict, a scenario that worries many observers of the war in Ukraine (Fix and Keil 2022). The Russian war on Ukraine has put the issue of deterrence back at the heart of the security debate in Europe. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept identifies "deterrence and defense" as the alliance's primary missions (Stockholm Security Conference 2024). This will make the world far from peaceful and stable. The US policy

aims to make the international system based on its hegemony without accepting partners on international issues, suggesting that it will make the international institutions and Western members tools for controlling the world (Al-Hafi 2014, 32).

4.3 Economic Sanctions

Economic sanctions on Russia were the first response of Western countries to Russia's illegal behavior after it declared war on Ukraine. Sanctions are the preferred tool for dealing with threats to international peace and security and violations of international law. Sanctions on Russia have varied between institutional sanctions affiliated with the United Nations, others specific to companies, and independent sanctions imposed by countries on their own, such as the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland, and Norway (van den Herik and van Bergeijk 2023). Other sanctions were imposed to deprive the Russian war machine of resources. The allies continue to increase these sanctions to pressure Russia. The European Council (which includes all European member states of NATO) voted unanimously to establish an international compensation mechanism from frozen Russian assets to rebuild Ukraine and compensate its victims. The European Union also agreed to use the net revenues generated from frozen Russian assets in the European Union to support Ukraine, and the G7 agreed to benefit from the profits from frozen Russian assets and to guarantee a loan of approximately (50) billion dollars to Ukraine (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2024).

The European Union Council announced that the sanctions package it adopted aims to weaken Russia's ability to finance the war, without targeting Russian society. However, economic indicators have clearly affected the Russian economy. According to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Russian economy witnessed clear declines in 2022. It is also expected to be a continued decline in Russian GDP, according to the World Bank. The sanctions also targeted oil imports, which came into effect in December 2022, and limited Russian revenues. According to the International Energy Agency, Russian oil revenues fell by more than a quarter in January 2023, with the decline in February reaching more than 40%. The sanctions also affected the

Russian financial system in order to reduce the ability to finance the war. 300 billion euros of Russian Central Bank reserves were seized and frozen under sanctions in the European Union and other countries (European Council 2023). Although the United States took many economic measures against Russia, many countries worked to expand the scope of economic retaliation, especially trade sanctions on Russia. However, the response of global financial markets to the Russia-Ukraine war has been relatively subdued compared to other financial crises (e.g., Covid-19, 9/11, and other instances of wars or invasions) (Izzeldin et al.2023). Russia plays a central role in energy markets and is a major global economy. The Russian economy still enjoys a steady stream of revenues from oil, gas, and coal sales (Patlán 2024). Thus, Russia does not fear NATO and the West (Moens and Turdeanu 2018).

5. The nature of the policies followed by Russia in the conflict with NATO

5.1 Russian Energy Resources

The huge natural resources represented by energy resources (oil and gas) constitute an important factor in Russia's relations by influencing other countries. Through these essential resources that are important to countries, Russia imposes its return to the international arena. Additionally, it exerts pressure through the energy resource and means of supply to continue its influence on neighboring countries, which allows it practice a policy of selection based on its interests with those countries that depend on Russian energy resources (Zidane 2013, 242).

The situation began to change when the United States of America entered strongly in supporting social movements opposing Russia's policy, especially in Ukraine and Georgia, as they are concerned with the transit of Russian energy supplies to Europe. This constituted resentment and a wake-up call for Russia to the beginning of energy wars and conflict over borders and energy supplies. Russia became aware of the dangers of American and Western interventions, and sought to develop a new strategy to secure its exports without being controlled. The conflict has become apparent between Russia and the United States in Georgia, which is a transit country for Russian energy exports to Europe. The influence of the United States in this country increased by means of supporting a politically friendly regime, which contributed to the tension of the situation and the spread of political unrest, which Russia ended

with its military invasion in August 2008 of a large part of Georgian territory, accusing the West of supporting the Orange Revolution against it in Ukraine (Zidane 2013, 244). Many European countries also depend heavily on Russia for oil and gas imports, with import shares exceeding 75%. In a large part of Eastern Europe, imports vary between oil, natural gas and solid fuels, as well as basic commodities, including titanium, palladium, wheat and corn, and any disruptions in the supply of these commodities would keep prices high, which would intensify the financial burden on those who depend on these commodities (Patlán 2024).

The relationship between Russia and European countries is governed by the energy sector, as it constitutes the central pillar in their policies, which has made the energy sector one of the dimensions of national security for both (Ibrahim 2023, 253). The volume of energy imports from Russia to Europe in 2005 amounted to two-thirds of the total energy imports of European countries, representing (41%) of gas and (19.8%) of oil, which indicates the extent of Europe's dependence on Russian energy sources (Bin Khalifa 2014,93).

Table (3) shows the percentage of Russian energy imports to some European countries.

Table (3) Import ratio of Russian energy to some European countries

Country	Slovakia	Finland	Greece	Czech Republic	Austria	Hungary	Poland	Germany
Import ratio	100%	100%	86.8%	80.8%	73.4%	63%	50.2%	44.9%

Source: (de Haas 2009).

Energy is described as a tool of power, especially since it is significantly decreasing, which could represent a threat to importing countries, or the outbreak of armed conflicts (de Haas 2009). Thus, Russia seeks to use energy as an important pressure card in its relationship with importers of Russian energy resources, especially European countries (Bounab 2016,119). The awareness of the importance of Russian energy resources comes from the alliance’s statements that Russia’s refusal to export energy to Europe represents blackmail of European countries and a threat to global security and stability.

5.2 BRICS Bloc

The BRICS group was established in June 2009 in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. The bloc initially included five major countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) aiming to develop and increase their trade, cultural and political cooperation in order to achieve a new global

economic system capable of facing global economic challenges. The bloc includes countries whose strength has recently emerged on the international scene due to their capabilities and the progress of their economic developments at the international level, which represents a bloc of an international economic group of countries that reject international marginalization of their international status (Jamil 2024, 410). The BRICS countries are the strongest economies in the world, and data issued by the International Monetary Fund showed that the BRICS bloc's contribution to the global economy reached about (%31.5) by the end of 2022, while the contribution of the seven industrial powers reached about (%30.7), as the size of the BRICS economies reached about (44) trillion dollars by the end of 2022. Moreover, the BRICS group controls (17%) of world trade, according to data from the World Trade Organization. The BRICS summit is of international and regional interest due to its importance at the international level, given the size of the countries that have joined it and the international powers they constitute. This bloc has developed increasingly to find a more connected formula through its quest to establish a new global financial system. This means a collective desire to break free from the control of the dollar, and thus the question of issuing a new unified currency will be an element of strength added to the BRICS bloc. The features of its success have begun to become clear from its superiority over the Group of Seven industrialized economies in terms of the gross domestic product of the BRICS bloc (AL-Farouqi 2023, 64).

The bloc's cooperation was not limited to the economic aspect, but also reached the political aspect. The Syrian crisis and other issues demonstrated the level of coordination through China's standing with Russia repeatedly, and using its veto power several times against the Security Council. Several resolutions were issued for their common position on international issues, most notably the issue of combating terrorism, calling on the BRICS countries to unify their efforts in combating terrorism within the framework of the "International Counter-Terrorism Strategy" issued by the Security Council, in addition to their common positions on how to resolve international crises such as the Syrian file and the Iranian nuclear program (Abdul Sami 2018). At the 2014 summit, the BRICS bloc worked to establish a group of financial institutions, including the "New Development Bank" based in Shanghai,

China, and it also established the "Monetary Reserve Fund"; To support countries that are working to pay off their debts. Since January 2024, other countries have joined the bloc, namely the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia and Egypt, to become (10) members (Hamdani 2024). The BRICS group represents one of the most important geopolitical developments in the twenty-first century. Russia was considered the driving force behind the formation of the group, without which the BRICS group would never have met. The strength of BRICS represents an interest for Russia and its partners against global economic crises. Although most of the BRICS group's formats deal with the economy, there are those who believe that the BRICS group has developed and has now become an important and broad political base, as the developments and motives that led to its formation are increasing, allowing itself to gain a political identity, through its positions in confronting the West, and even in dealing with the international system in general (Salzman 2015, 3).

Map No. (1) shows the BRICS countries



The West believes that Russia hoped to use the BRICS group to increase its weight in the international system and that Russia's diplomacy in the BRICS group aimed at creating a "power multiplier" to increase the influence of Russia and the BRICS group on the international scene. Despite the sharp decline in Russian-Western relations after the conflict in Ukraine and Western sanctions on Russia, the BRICS group did not support or condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine, which creates a perception in the United States that it cannot strip Russia of its powerful

partners. The BRICS are very careful to emphasize that the group is not directed against any third party and is not an anti-Western bloc. They all use it as a means to amplify their voice in the international arena without directly challenging the dominant hegemon. BRICS also realizes that Western sanctions on Russia are not an attack on it, but they hate economic sanctions as a tool of international politics. Thus, Russia's bilateral relations with the BRICS countries individually provide a potential mitigation of the impact of Western sanctions. By creating a forum full of powerful emerging players who act as an "alternative" to Western-led informal international institutions, Russia has been able to achieve a better balance against Western hegemony (Salzman 2015, 5-7).

5.3 Russian Military Interventions

The goal of gaining international status is one of the most important goals of Russia's foreign policy. Russia considered the issue of military presence in areas that it deems important as the only means of achieving that status. Russia believes that once achieved, the international status will qualify it to be an important partner in international issues and to be able to modify the formula of the current unipolar international system, which Russia categorically rejects. It believes that Russian intervention in Libya, Syria, and other regions will qualify it to achieve its international status according to its vision.

Russia has been able to exploit the loopholes in Western positions and the weaknesses of American policy in a number of international crises (Borshchevskaya 2017). This has helped it to search for opportunities that would enable it to achieve its interests in these developments in the world (Nehme 2016, 142). Russia's roles in the Arab region, particularly in Libya and Syria, have varied between diplomatic negotiation and military intervention in order to ensure its presence in the Arab region. Strategic partnerships between Russia and Arab countries have followed, especially in military cooperation agreements and extending to cooperation protocols in the field of peaceful nuclear energy, weapons and very advanced military equipment (Zidane 2013, 236). The economic and military aspects represented the most important factors for Russia's return to Libya, which led to an increase in trade exchanges, arms deals and security cooperation in counter-terrorism (Samid 2017. 8). Libya is Russia's gateway to the African continent, so it does not consider severing its relations with Libya, as Russia is increasing its

trade dealings with African countries, with the volume of Russian exports reaching about (20) billion dollars by the year 2020 (Zakaria 2012). Russia has also worked to strengthen its position in the Mediterranean region from Syria to North Africa. These measures taken by Russia in the region represent its preferred tools to compete with the European Union and NATO on their southern flank (Pierini 2021). Russia has lost its previous contracts in Libya, which it has always worked to preserve. These losses are estimated at tens of billions of dollars, which included various military armament contracts that included aircraft, submarines, and S-300 missile systems (Borshchevskaya 2016). Syria has been the most prominent pillar for achieving the goals of Russian policy, that is, restoring its position in the international arena. Especially its permanent military base in the Syrian port of Tartus in the Mediterranean waters, which constitutes a forward operational station for the movements of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean, all of which represent opportunities for intervention in the considerations of achieving Russia's international position (Ibrahim 2023,225). China refuses to label Russia's military operations in Ukraine as an invasion, as it understands Russia's concerns on its borders. It abstained from voting against the resolution condemning those operations. India's position on those operations is neutral, as it does not want to isolate itself from Russia and China and rely on the West's inconsistent policies on many international issues.

Discussions:

The results of NATO relations with Russia showed that they went through two stages:

The first stage represented the relations between the Soviet Union and NATO. This stage witnessed a state of cooperation between the, which led to the establishment of many bilateral partnerships and treaties in the military and security fields aimed at maintaining international peace and security. This cooperation was characterized by creating extensive spaces to establish real strategic partnerships between them, building mutual trust and achieving common interests. This state of cooperation continued for more than three decades. However, it was not destined to continue, due to the increasing ambitions and the adoption of expansion policies and preference for individual interests, especially by NATO led by the United States, which paved the way for the beginning of a new

stage of relations between them represented by the advent of the second stage of relations, which is the stage of conflict.

The features of the stage of conflict began after most Eastern European countries rushed to join the NATO, in addition to the United States deployment of its missile system in those countries, which are in close proximity to Russia. This confirms the United States' determination to reach the closest point to the Russian borders, and this represents the credibility of Russian concerns and fears of NATO's expansion towards it. Despite US statements that the deployment of missiles is not directed against Russia but against threats from other countries, Russia has lost confidence following the false promises that the United States made to President Gorbachev at the end of the Cold War. We must understand Russian fears of expansion operations towards it. NATO's expansion was previously carried out at the expense of the weakness that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union. This confirms the United States' determination to reach the closest point to the Russian borders, and this represents the credibility of Russian concerns and fears of NATO's expansion towards it.

The request for membership by Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO was the spark for the beginning of the escalation phase. Russia considered Ukraine's accession to NATO as a threat to its national security. Therefore, the political elite in Russia today is determined to compensate for the phase of weakness that Russia went through after the end of the Cold War. The United States exploited the increasing expansion of the alliance to include most Eastern European countries. If Ukraine joins NATO, it will have completed the siege on Russia.

Many economic sanctions have been taken against Russia by Western countries, the United States and its allies, in order to pressure Russia to stop this war by Russia on Ukraine. Sanctions are tools of pressure in foreign policy, and these sanctions have had a great impact on Russia and the Russian citizen.

Russia’s warning against Ukraine joining the NATO were to no avail, prompting Russia to declare war on Ukraine in February 2022.

NATO countries have sought to provide unlimited support to Ukraine in order to prolong the war and achieve its victory over Russia. NATO has supplied Ukraine with many weapons and missiles that have struck deep inside Russia, which has angered Russia and threatened a harsh response

that will not only affect Ukraine, but most of the countries that supplied Ukraine with these weapons. The administration of US President Joe Biden has thrown its full weight behind Ukraine in the war. It seems that the orientations of this administration are heading towards a zero-sum equation in this conflict. Meaning that it wants to achieve everything and Russia must lose everything. This type of relationship will lead to the end of the state of peace in the world, especially since the countries that entered the conflict or support it are nuclear countries. Which makes mistakes and misjudgments of positions lead to a global catastrophe. The stage of conflict between NATO and Russia lacked the principle of rationality. Which must be present when the parties represent countries that possess advanced military capabilities and nuclear weapons capable of turning the parties into rubble. Although the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union adopted the principle of rationality without escalating positions and embarrassing the other party, in this conflict, we see that the US policy, led by US President Joe Biden, is far from the principle of rationality. This makes us count on the administration of the next US President Trump for his upcoming term, which he hopes will stop unlimited US support for Ukraine and end the Russian war on Ukraine. The US administration of President Joe Biden deliberately prolonged this war for several reasons.

1-This war represented a case of economic depletion of Russia, especially since Russia has begun to achieve large financial returns due to the rise in oil prices and the dependence of most European countries on Russian energy sources, which contributed to supporting and strengthening Russia's budget significantly.

2-This war makes European countries not consider breaking free from the control of the United States and that they will remain in need of it.

3-European countries support Ukraine against Russia because of their fears that Russia will follow a preferential policy when exporting energy resources to European countries. Most European countries are permanently dependent on Russian energy sources, which makes Russia lead the scene of dealing with international politics. This is something that the United States of America does not accept.

This war lacked negotiating diplomacy, which falls on the shoulders of international institutions to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, even if it was by major international parties. The world's position was weak towards its

humanitarian responsibility in resolving the ongoing conflict between Russia and NATO. Russia has adopted a smart policy to preserve its interests and position by spreading its presence in many regions and countries, such as Libya and Syria. This meant that a new understanding concerning the sharing of influence and achieving common interests can be reached between Russia and the United States. If Russia abandons its position of clinging to Syria, which represents an advanced base for it in the Mediterranean, then it can settle its issue with Ukraine. It seems that this is what actually happened after the political regime in Syria was overthrown. This prompted President Putin to declare that he is ready to establish joint relations with the new Syrian opposition, which seized power on December 8, 2024, based on achieving the interests of both countries

Conclusion:

We can describe NATO's relations with Russia as relations characterized by weak mutual trust between them, due to the departure from the principle of cooperation, bilateral partnerships and common interests capable of achieving peace, stability and security in the world, especially since both sides represent major and powerful countries and have great international weight in the international arena. NATO's policy, led by the United States, based on expanding eastward, has increased the complexity of relations between them and the fear of using prohibited weapons, especially in the Russian war with Ukraine, which represents a war of attrition for Russia, a rival of the United States and the countries of Europe, which the United States seeks to keep under its control. Therefore, we have reached the following conclusions:

- The stages of conflict between countries arise due to increasing ambitions and the pursuit for individual interests.
- NATO's departure from rationality by supporting the war against Russia without putting an end to it represents a major rift in Russia's relations with NATO and the West.
- NATO has not succeeded in building a continuous strategic partnership with Russia based on mutual trust.
- International institutions are criticized for not playing their neutral and diplomatic role in finding a solution to the Russian-Ukrainian

war, which indicates their complete and deliberate bias towards the policy of the West and the United States.

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