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**NATO**

# 2024 MNATO

NATO-UKRAINE COUNCIL  
BACKGROUND GUIDE

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- Ukraine ascension into the NATO framework
  - NATO military aid to Ukraine
  - NATO nuclear policy on the topic of Russia's nuclear escalation within the Ukraine War



## Introduction to the NATO Ukraine Council

The NATO-Ukraine Council is the joint body where Allies and Ukraine sit as equal participants to advance political dialogue, engagement, cooperation, and Ukraine's aspirations for membership in NATO. It provides for joint consultations, decision-making and activities. It also serves as a crisis consultation mechanism between NATO and Ukraine.

The NATO-Ukraine Council was launched at the 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius as part of a three-part package of support bringing Ukraine closer to NATO. The package also includes a multi-year programme of assistance to help Ukrainian armed forces become interoperable with Allied forces and a reaffirmation that Ukraine will become a member of NATO when allies agree, and conditions are met.

The change from Commission to Council in 2023 demonstrates the strengthening of political ties and Ukraine's increasing integration with NATO. In the Council format, Ukraine sits alongside all NATO member states as an equal participant.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NATO, 13 July 2023, "NATO-Ukraine Council." [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_217652.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_217652.htm).

## Topic A: Ukraine ascension into the NATO framework

### NATO Ascension

In 2008, NATO allies agreed at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine would become a member of NATO, noting that its next step would be to submit an application to the Membership Action Plan (MAP), a NATO program covering political, economic, defence, resource, security and legal reforms of aspirant countries. At the 2020 Vilnius Summit, the Allies reaffirmed that Ukraine would become a member of NATO when the Allies agreed on conditions being met. They removed the requirements for Ukraine to pursue a MAP, which will change Ukraine's membership path from a two-step process to a one-step process.<sup>2</sup> NATO's open-door policy implies that any European state is in a position to further the principles of the Washington Treaty and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic Area<sup>3</sup>. As such, Ukrainian ascension is widely accepted as an inevitable outcome by NATO.

NATO enlargement is grounded on the promotion of national self-determination. This reality is an issue which is close to the heart of Ukraine due to the recent events of the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, which started in February of 2022. This statement of the importance of sovereignty and national self-determination is a quintessential matter for the Ukrainian State. Article 15 of Ukraine's constitution, last amended in 2019, details that the protection of sovereignty and territorial independence of Ukraine and ensuring its economic and international security are the most critical functions of the State and a matter of concern for all Ukrainian people<sup>4</sup>. As well the 2019 amendment also added an excerpt into article 85 detailing that Ukraine includes determining the principle of internal and foreign policy, realizations of the strategic course of the State of acquiring full-fledged membership of Ukraine in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>5</sup> As such, it is clear to be seen that Ukraine has clear intentions to join NATO in the near future.

### The implication of Ukrainian ascension

Ukraine joining NATO will doubtless have many security implications for both NATO and its neighbours. Even if NATO expansion is not directed against Russia, as reaffirmed by NATO's Brussels 2018 Summit. It is doubtless that the Ukrainian ascension into the Alliance stands directly against Russian interests.<sup>6</sup> Since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the beginning of its aggression in eastern Ukraine in 2014, NATO has adopted a firm position in full support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.<sup>7</sup> This expression goes further with the reality of the Vilnius Summit in which NATO reaffirmed that Ukraine's future is with NATO. This reality goes completely against Russian interests, which, more than any other

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<sup>2</sup> NATO, 6 November 2023, "NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_192648.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_192648.htm).

<sup>3</sup> NATO, 3 August 2023. "Enlargement and Article 10," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49212.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49212.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Ukraine, 7 February 2019. "Constitution of Ukraine," p. 2. <https://www.refworld.org/pdffid/44a280124.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> NATO, 11 July 2018, "Brussels Summit Declaration," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm).

<sup>7</sup> NATO, 28 July 2013. "Relations with Ukraine," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm).

NATO hopeful, sees Ukrainian ascension to NATO as an existential threat. Putin explained in an address that he emphasized that Ukraine is not just a neighbouring country for Russia. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture, and spiritual space. These are our comrades, those dearest to us – not only colleagues, friends and people who once served together but also relatives, people bound by blood, by family ties.<sup>8</sup> Essentially, Ukrainian ascension within NATO will bring to a permanent halt any positive relations with Russia, and aligning the Alliance is a permanent position against Russian interests.

Of course, standing against Russia would grant Ukraine full access to NATO and the reality of Ukraine having full rights within the Alliance. Essentially, this means Ukraine will be protected from Russian aggression due to Article 5 of NATO declaring collective defence in the event of an attack upon a member state.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely because of this collective defence which Ukraine wishes to join NATO. However, there is the obvious issue of what would occur if Ukraine joined NATO if there was any ongoing conflict with Russia. Such a reality is one of many in which NATO states that they will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when the Allies agree that conditions are met.<sup>10</sup> It is from this reality that there arises discord between NATO and Ukraine in which Zelensky states that the Allies could all grant Kyiv's accession today if they wanted, but they won't because Ukraine is still defending itself against Russian invaders, and NATO membership would mean the Alliance would have to get directly involved.<sup>11</sup> As such, a clear implication for the ascension would be the strongest guarantee of Ukrainian sovereignty against Russia, a guarantee that NATO, despite its massive support for Ukraine, is not ready to grant at this moment.

A final implication of Ukraine's ascension in NATO's rejuvenation of becoming an alliance against Russia, despite previous statements such as the Brussels summit declaration stating otherwise. This reality is clearly indicated from the Vilnius summit, which details that peace in the Euro-Atlantic area has been shattered. The Russian Federation has violated the norms and principles that contribute to a stable and predictable European security order. The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to the Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>12</sup> The ascension of Ukraine into the Alliance then would be the continuation of NATO accepted a reality that is laid painfully bare. Once again, Russia is the most significant security concern for the European continent, and NATO must begin to introduce policies to strengthen its security position at the expense of those that threaten it.

## Conclusion

With the ongoing realities of the War in Ukraine, NATO's Article 5 remains the most critical aspect

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<sup>8</sup> Vladimir Putin, 21 February 2022, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation." <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>.

<sup>9</sup> NATO, 04 July, 2023, "Collective defence and Article 5." [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_110496.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm)

<sup>10</sup> NATO, 11 July, 2023. "Vilnius Summit Communique," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_217320.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Ward & Matt Berg, 7 November 2023, "Zelenskyy rages against conditions for joining NATO," *Politico*, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2023/07/11/zelenskyy-rages-against-conditions-for-joining-nato-00105673>

<sup>12</sup> NATO, 11 July, 2023. "Vilnius Summit Communique," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_217320.htm).

of the Alliance to guarantee security within the international system. While Ukraine continues to fight Russia to keep its sovereignty, NATO membership retains its position of being the final key that Ukraine can grab to guarantee its sovereignty and territorial indivisibility. However, an expansion of NATO into Ukraine with an Article 5 guarantee will come with negative geopolitical consequences in terms of NATO's relationship with Russia. By not moving into regions that Russia perceives as its sphere of influence, NATO brings to a close this short time in which Russia could be considered a partner to NATO and has now regained its position as the leading opposing figure to NATO allies. Ukraine's ascension to NATO will boost the NATO collective security umbrella and military hardware closer to Russia, but this will come at the expense of making Russia the villainous figure against NATO once again.

## Guiding Questions

- What would be the security implications of Ukraine joining NATO in defiance against Russia?
- How can NATO ensure broader security by joining Ukraine in the Alliance?
- How can NATO best provide a clear path of ascension to Ukraine?
- Does Ukraine's ascension to NATO require first a permanent peace with Ukraine, or can the Alliance take measures to integrate Ukraine before the war ends?
- What are the broader geopolitical implications of Ukraine joining the Alliance?

## Further Readings

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## Topic B: NATO Military Aid to Ukraine

### Introduction

NATO support for the Ukrainian military has been present for years, especially after the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea. Initiatives such as the CAPU (Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine) aimed to help the Ukrainian government improve its military capabilities.<sup>13</sup> Multiple NATO members provided military aid and training: for instance, the United Kingdom conducted Operation ORBITAL which trained nearly 20,000 Ukrainian troops.<sup>14</sup> Following Moscow's attack on Ukraine in February of 2022, the alliance has provided a significant amount of aid. Not only have NATO countries provided weapons, but they have also provided Ukraine with crucial items such as fuel, rations, medical supplies, humanitarian aid, and training for military forces.<sup>15</sup>

### Military aid to Ukraine to date

The main goal of this aid is to help Ukraine defend itself against the Russian invasion. To this end, significant amounts of weaponry have been provided to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The United States supplied thousands of Javelin anti-tank missiles to the Ukrainian military. Combined with other weapons such as the British NLAW, anti-tank missile launchers provided by NATO inflicted heavy losses on Russian armoured and mechanized forces.<sup>16</sup> These losses have been so significant that the Russian military has been forced to pull older, Soviet-era armoured vehicles from various storage facilities to equip their forces.<sup>17</sup> The weaponry is provided according to the needs of Ukraine and its military. Take the anti-tank weapons, for instance. It was clear that Ukraine would need a way to combat the vast amounts of Russian armour, so the provisioning of anti-tank weaponry made sense. The same was true for anti-aircraft systems such as NAMSAS and other similar weapons.<sup>18</sup> Again, many were supplied following the fall and winter of 2022, which saw the Russian military carry out a massive campaign of missile strikes against critical Ukrainian infrastructure such as bridges, power plants, and communications centres. Thousands of missiles and drones were launched against Ukraine, inflicting significant damage and destruction especially

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<sup>13</sup> NATO, 9 July 2016, "Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine," [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_09/20160920\\_160920-compreh-ass-package-ukraine-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_09/20160920_160920-compreh-ass-package-ukraine-en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Embassy of Ukraine to the UK, 1 May 2020, "Operation ORBITAL," <https://uk.mfa.gov.ua/en/partnership/881-ukrajina-velika-britanija/operaciya-orbital>

<sup>15</sup> NATO, 6 November 2023, "NATO's Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_192648.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_192648.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Washington Post, August 5 2022, "It's an Artillery War, but Ukraine Still Kills Tanks with Javelins," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/05/ukraine-war-javelins-russia-tanks/>

<sup>17</sup> Moscow Times, August 8, 2023, "Russia Pulls Thousands of Soviet-Era Military Vehicles," <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/08/russia-pulls-thousands-of-soviet-era-military-vehicles-from-major-storage-facility-a82088>

<sup>18</sup> Reuters, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. "Ukraine Receives First Delivery of NAMSAS air defence systems," <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/ukraine-receives-first-delivery-nasams-air-defence-systems-minister-2022-11-07/>

towards the Ukrainian energy and electricity sectors.<sup>19</sup> By the end of 2023, Russia had launched more than 10,000 projectiles at various targets throughout Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

In the same vein, artillery has also been a massive focus of aid, both in terms of shells and systems. Artillery has been central to the Russo-Ukrainian War, with both sides firing thousands of shells every day. The current war has seen a truly massive amount of artillery involvement. Ukraine has had a disadvantage in artillery for much of the war, at one point firing roughly 6000-7000 shells per day compared to Russia's 20,000-60,000.<sup>21</sup> NATO nations have put in significant efforts to provide Ukraine with artillery. As of the end of 2023, the Ukrainian military had received hundreds of guns and more than 2 million shells from the United States alone with many other NATO members.<sup>22</sup> This aid is intended to help Ukraine support its troops via direct artillery support along with counter-battery fire. A noteworthy piece of artillery aid has been the M142 Mobile Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS for short. The HIMARS consists of a large launcher mounted on a truck that can fire six missiles in quick succession. Crucially, the system has a range of 80 kilometers. Roughly 39 have been provided to the Ukrainian military, who have used it to attack Russian command centres, ammunition depots, and other fixed targets.<sup>23</sup>

Armoured vehicles have also been supplied in significant number to Ukraine, both to help replace losses and to equip newly raised formations. More than a thousand armoured personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles, and several hundred tanks were given to Ukraine (as of the end of April, 1,550 combat vehicles and 230 tanks).<sup>24</sup> The armour sent varies wildly. Most of the Ukrainian tank force consists of the Soviet-era T-72s. Several former Warsaw Pact NATO members such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and others sent hundreds of T-72s that they had in their own inventory. The United Kingdom provided their Challenger 2 while several European NATO members along with Canada supplied various versions of the German-built Leopard 2 and Leopard 1 tanks. Additionally, United States provided M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine.<sup>25</sup> Combat vehicles, which help for fire support and transporting infantry forces have been sent in large numbers. A wide variety of equipment has been sent to help Ukraine fend off the unjustified Russian invasion. While certainly helpful, there are many issues that need to be solved if NATO wants to continue successfully supporting Ukraine.

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<sup>19</sup> Kyiv Independent, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, "Power deficit still 'significant'", <https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-war-latest-power-deficit-still-significant-after-russia-launches-more-than-1-000-missiles-and-drones-at-ukrainian-energy-since-october/>

<sup>20</sup> Institute for the Study of War, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment", December 28, 2023, <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-28-2023>

<sup>21</sup> Business Insider, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Ukraine is firing up to 7,000 rounds a day", <https://www.businessinsider.com/ukraine-fires-7k-rounds-a-day-russia-fired-60k-early-in-2023-report-2023-9>

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Department of State, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. "U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine," <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine/#:~:text=Among%20their%20many%20contributions%20to,armored%20personnel%20carriers%20and%20Qinfantry>

<sup>23</sup> BBC, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. "Ukraine: What are Himars missiles and how are they changing the war?" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-62512681>

<sup>24</sup> Associated Press, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "NATO: Ukraine allies sent 1,550 combat vehicles, 230 tanks," <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-nato-china-8a901ab7f56b3c16ea71914c5c5e9ea6>

<sup>25</sup> BBC, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Ukraine weapons: What tanks and other equipment are countries giving?" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62002218>

## Existing challenges

While one cannot deny that a significant level of aid has been delivered to the Ukrainian military, the program has not been free of issues. Not all forms of aid have been given to Ukraine. A chief example is aerial aid in the form of fighter jets. At the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, the Ukrainian Air Force was severely outnumbered and outgunned by their Russian counterparts.<sup>26</sup> When one takes into consideration losses (both in combat and in accidents) along with a lack of domestic production, Ukrainian airpower has suffered over the course of the conflict. With that being said, the Ukrainians, recognizing their numerical disadvantage, have performed remarkably in terms of preserving their air force and supporting their ground forces to the best of their abilities.<sup>27</sup> Still, the numerical disadvantage has forced Kyiv to ask its NATO partners for fighter jets. So far, the alliance has been reluctant to send them. Some countries, such as Poland, Slovakia, and other ex-Warsaw Pact nations have sent MiG fighter jets to Ukraine as they await newer aircraft deliveries for their own air forces.<sup>28</sup> This is similar to the case of tanks, where Ukraine received a significant amount of ex-Soviet armour.

Unlike tanks, Ukraine has not received any modern NATO fighter jets such as the F-16 Falcon (which it has requested and is used by the US along with most NATO countries). There are several reasons as to why Kyiv would desire an aircraft such as the F-16. One is the aforementioned numerical argument, bolstering the numbers of Ukrainian combat aircraft and giving them greater ability to contest Russia in the air. Moreover, the radar on the F-16 would allow Ukrainian pilots to spot Russian aircraft at greater distances than with their current air fleet, though still at a shorter distance than the latest Russian aircraft such as the Su-35.<sup>29</sup>

For many months, NATO shot down the prospect of sending F-16s. A prime concern in the eyes of US planners is the prospect of escalation. Potential reaction from Russia is a significant factor in Allied decision-making. Indeed, Russian officials have stated that providing aircraft such as the F-16 would be seen as an escalation of the war.<sup>30</sup> Another concern in the eyes of NATO is the ability of Ukraine to maintain the F-16. Like many jets, the F-16 along with its contemporaries such as the F-15 were designed to fit into the technologically complex NATO military framework. Notably, the F-16 requires significantly more maintenance than the MiGs and Sukhois that Ukraine currently operates.<sup>31</sup> While concerns such as these are valid and should not be dismissed, critics of NATO's

<sup>26</sup> BBC, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Ukraine War: Jet Pilots talk about the air war with Russia," <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65461405>

<sup>27</sup> War on the Rocks, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, "IN DENIAL ABOUT DENIAL: WHY UKRAINE'S AIR SUCCESS SHOULD WORRY THE WEST," <https://warontherocks.com/2022/06/in-denial-about-denial-why-ukraines-air-success-should-worry-the-west/>

<sup>28</sup> Forbes, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, "Ukraine's Getting a bunch of MiG-29s from Poland and Slovakia. But What it Really Wants is F-16s," <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2023/04/03/ukraines-getting-a-bunch-of-mig-29s-from-poland-and-slovakia-but-what-it-really-wants-is-f-16s/?sh=4d717d841014>

<sup>29</sup> Reuters, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "The air war over Ukraine," <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/UKRAINE-CRISIS/FIGHTER-JETS/jnvwwqyylvw/>

<sup>30</sup> The Hill, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Russia warns supplying Ukraine with US-built F-16 fighter jets would escalate conflict," <https://thehill.com/policy/international/4036582-russia-warns-supplying-ukraine-with-us-built-f-16-fighter-jets-would-escalate-conflict/>

<sup>31</sup> CNN, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. "No 'silver bullet': Ukraine faces many challenges in getting the F-16 into combat," <https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/29/europe/ukraine-f-16-fighter-jets-intl/index.html>

delivery policy point out that these concerns were stated prior to the delivery of tanks and other important items, yet Ukraine has been able to use them to great effect.<sup>32</sup>

After months of extensive lobbying, the United States announced in mid-2023 that it would allow operators of the F-16 to transfer them into Ukrainian service. Consequently, several NATO countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark pledged to send the aircraft to Ukraine and to assist in the training of Ukrainian pilots in flying the F-16. Ukrainian pilots have been training on the F-16 platform in the US and other countries.<sup>33</sup> While this training will certainly take a significant amount of time and is not without challenges, these aircraft are likely to deliver a significant boost to the capabilities of the Ukrainian Air Force.

Another challenge facing NATO is the issue of stockpiles. The alliance transferred a massive amount of weapons and ammunition to Ukraine since the beginning of the invasion, helping the country blunt many of Russia's attacks.<sup>34</sup> While certainly effective, NATO has run into the issue of numbers. Many crucial weapons systems sent to Ukraine have been used so frequently that ammunition has run low. For instance, NATO stockpiles for the PATRIOT anti-aircraft platform, commonly used by Ukraine to intercept Russian missile attacks, have run dangerously low, prompting Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain to purchase 1,000 missiles to replenish stockpiles.<sup>35</sup>

While this is only one example, it does reflect a broader issue, which is that the current conflict has resulted in a truly astonishing expenditure of ammunition by both Russia and Ukraine. As mentioned earlier, Ukraine has generally been firing between 6000 and 7000 rounds of artillery per day.<sup>36</sup> While NATO has donated a vast amount of shells to the Ukrainian military, the alliance has generally struggled to increase production to either maintain their existing stockpiles or to continue sending shells to Ukraine. Before the war, factories in the United States produced roughly 14,000 155mm artillery shells per month. Production of ammunition in the United States had gradually declined since the end of the Cold War as the prospect of a large land-war in Europe faded. Many companies merged or disappeared, with 90% of US missiles originating from three sources.<sup>37</sup> While this consolidation was seen as helpful for reducing perceived waste and bloat, it has had the effect of dramatically reducing the United States' capability to produce ammunition over time. Not only does this negatively affect the ability of the US to support Ukraine, but it also has a negative impact

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<sup>32</sup> The Atlantic, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "America's Unconvincing Reasons for Denying F-16s to Ukraine," <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/05/ukraine-military-f-16-aircraft/674022/>

<sup>33</sup> Air Force Times, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Ukrainian pilots begin F-16 training in Arizona," <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2023/10/26/ukrainian-pilots-begin-f-16-training-in-arizona/>

<sup>34</sup> NATO, 6 November 2023, "NATO's Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_192648.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_192648.htm)

<sup>35</sup> Yahoo News, 3 January, 2024, "Nato to purchase 1,000 Patriot anti-aircraft missiles as stockpiles dwindle," [https://ca.news.yahoo.com/ukraine-russia-war-nato-purchase-150434110.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAA\\_AJGLAFOp0bBWMCSIRzqLGI5Hh2NT6pI0hrpuRbKg6QuYoJ8FFCcQrk8JnmXkyOwF8-AgWBAOq8BzJRZC7xbleVrHPeGH8aLtGsdwQURa7HUJkSHBvtEDZSyk2QRdVKFznAlx1xniPaiz2ad97I979yC1jlvu3dI5tUkGvY678Oi8](https://ca.news.yahoo.com/ukraine-russia-war-nato-purchase-150434110.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAA_AJGLAFOp0bBWMCSIRzqLGI5Hh2NT6pI0hrpuRbKg6QuYoJ8FFCcQrk8JnmXkyOwF8-AgWBAOq8BzJRZC7xbleVrHPeGH8aLtGsdwQURa7HUJkSHBvtEDZSyk2QRdVKFznAlx1xniPaiz2ad97I979yC1jlvu3dI5tUkGvY678Oi8)

<sup>36</sup> Business Insider, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "Ukraine is firing up to 7,000 rounds a day a fraction of the 60,000 shells Russia was firing earlier this year: report," <https://www.businessinsider.com/ukraine-fires-7k-rounds-a-day-russia-fired-60k-early-in-2023-report-2023-9>

<sup>37</sup> Wall Street Journal, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. "In the race to arm Ukraine, U.S. faces cracks in its manufacturing might," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/03/08/us-weapons-manufacturing-ukraine/>

on the US's overall military preparedness.

Similar problems exist amongst European NATO members, with governments on the continent running low on shells. Early in 2023, the European Union had pledged to provide the Ukrainian military with 1 million artillery shells by March of 2024, but is not on track to meet this target, with member states struggling to scale their industry for such a task. Most of the shells that EU member states provided to Ukraine came from the stockpiles of various militaries across the continent.<sup>38</sup> NATO members are putting in significant efforts to address these problems. The alliance is aiming to standardize shell production, with fragmentation seen as a significant problem. For instance, there are 14 different kinds of 155mm ammunition used by certain NATO members.<sup>39</sup> Standardization would help to increase output and rid the alliance of inefficiency in terms of production.

## Guiding Questions

- What kind of aid should NATO focus on delivering to Ukraine?
- Should there be limitations or quotas for aid for NATO members? If so, how should these be determined?
- How can aid be expedited? Is there an opportunity for NATO to form its own process to expedite aid for Ukraine?
- How can the alliance best bolster production of key weapons and ammunition that are crucial for the Ukrainian war effort? Should this effort include non-NATO nations?

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<sup>39</sup> Reuters, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, "NATO Urges common standards and curbs on protectionism to boost artillery output," <https://www.reuters.com/world/nato-urges-common-standards-curbs-protectionism-boost-artillery-output-2023-10-24/>

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## Topic C: NATO nuclear policy on the topic of Russia's nuclear escalation within the Ukraine War

### Introduction

One fundamental reality of the Ukraine War is the inherent power imbalance between a nuclear state and other states which have no access to nuclear weapons. It is precisely from this reality in which Putin has repeatedly declared his willingness to escalate the conflict by nuclear retaliation if NATO aid reaches a specific threshold. One example of this declaration by Putin stated that if Russia were defeated in Ukraine, it would result in a nuclear escalation and potentially nuclear war. This was in response to the West further sending weapons to aid Ukraine in winning a conventional war.<sup>40</sup> Also, there is a growing fear from the reality that no nuclear power has ever lost a protracted war that, along with Putin's nuclear sabre rattling, details nuclear escalation in the event of a successful counteroffensive. Such an attack may also not be caused by a nuclear missile but by a Russian attack on nuclear power plants such as the one located at Zaporizhzhia.<sup>41</sup> The question is then this: in the event of a Russian nuclear ascension, which in some manner appears more and more likely in Ukraine, what should be the position of NATO?

NATO allies, more specifically America, has already detailed in some manner potential responses in the event Putin backs up his sabre rattling. At the 2023 Vilnius Summit, Allies reiterated that NATO would take all the necessary steps to ensure the credibility, effectiveness, safety and security of nuclear deterrent missions. This includes modernizing NATO's nuclear capabilities and updating planning to increase the flexibility of the Alliance's nuclear forces while always exercising strong political control.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, despite policies, there exists no definitive response within the NATO framework and within U.S. policy of what would occur if Russia chose to escalate the conflict. Joe Biden has made clear that any use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine would be completely unacceptable. But his administration has remained publicly ambiguous about what those consequences would be.<sup>43</sup> As such, what NATO is left with is a situation in which Russia is portraying increasing nuclear rhetoric in times in which Ukraine has the upper hand in the war and the existence of no clear policies to mitigate that risk.

### Strategic nuclear policies of the Allies and Russia

What makes the reality within the Ukraine war concerning is Russia's nuclear policies, which have changed majorly from the no-first-use policies utilized by the Soviet Union. For Russia, it allows nuclear escalation in the case of even regional and local wars. Vladimir Putin developed Russia's nuclear weapon policy for this use in local wars when he was secretary of Russia's National Security

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<sup>40</sup> Guy Falconbridge and Felix Light, (19 January 2023), "Putin ally warns NATO of nuclear war if Russia is defeated in Ukraine", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-ally-medvedev-warns-nuclear-war-if-russia-defeated-ukraine-2023-01-19/>.

<sup>41</sup> Diane Francis, (21 June, 2023), "Putin's nuclear threats will escalate as Ukraine's counteroffensive unfolds", Atlantic Council, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-nuclear-threats-will-escalate-as-ukraines-counteroffensive-unfolds/>.

<sup>42</sup> NATO, (30 Nov 2023), "NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and forces," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50068.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm).

<sup>43</sup> Eric, Schlosser, (20 June, 2022), "What If Russia uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine," *The Atlantic* <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/06/russia-ukraine-nuclear-weapon-us-response/661315/>.

Staff. Russian military exercises have reportedly featured simulations of limited Russian nuclear strikes, which are characterized as a de-escalation of aggression. Essentially, in the event of a losing war, within Russian doctrine exists a concept of escalating the conflict using strategic nuclear strikes to bring an ultimate de-escalation of the conflict after the strike. It is difficult to fully understand Russian military doctrine, as in 2009, Russia announced it would classify its nuclear doctrine. But well-connected members of Russian journalists have reported that Russia has recognized for itself the right to the preventive employment of nuclear weapons should we be attacked by some military bloc. Of course, the military bloc refers to NATO and the potential for Russia to launch a nuclear strike in the event of NATO interference. It is currently not certain if this concept would apply exclusively to a war between the powers or if a proxy war, such as the event in Ukraine, would count as a determinant for nuclear retaliation.

In the American case for nuclear policy, which, of course, counts for the bulk of the nuclear capabilities of the Alliance, it is handled within a policy that allows first use. United States nuclear policy is formed with every new administration; nevertheless, regardless of the partisan nature of American foreign policy, the nuclear doctrines remain mostly the same, allowing the first use of nuclear strikes in the event that certain thresholds are met. These criteria detail the use of nuclear policy in the extreme event that critical American interests are threatened. Despite calls for America to document a no-first-use policy, which would see America only justifying the use of nuclear weapons in a retaliatory strike, all administrations have posed the debate between this policy and the allowance of a looser nuclear policy but have ultimately chosen to allow themselves the first use within a nuclear exchange. As such, when discussing a potential response to Russian nuclear response within Ukraine, the American nuclear doctrine as it has stood since the end of the Cold War allows the use of nuclear weapons first if core American interests are threatened.

NATO has a nuclear policy that differs from its member states. NATO, despite the objective of forming a world without nuclear weapons, recognized that in the reality of a nuclear-charged role, it maintains a nuclear policy. As such, NATO nuclear policy is based on the two public documents agreed upon by all Allies, which are currently the 2022 Strategic Concept and the 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review. The policy outlined in these documents is as follows: the fundamental principles of NATO's nuclear forces are for deterrence. Nuclear weapons are unique, and the circumstances under which NATO might have to use nuclear weapons are extremely remote. Furthermore, any employment of nuclear weapons against NATO would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict. Should the fundamental security of any NATO ally be threatened, NATO has the capabilities and resolve to impose costs on the adversary that would be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that any adversary could hope to achieve.

NATO's nuclear deterrence posture relies on the United States' nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe as well as on the capabilities and infrastructure provided by the allies concerned. As such, NATO's nuclear policy is only a last scenario used due to its ability to gravely shape the context of any conflict and the reality that NATO has far more options at its disposal to achieve its defensive objectives. However, NATO nuclear policy is complicated as the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom, France, and the United States each have a deterrent role. The separate centres of decision-making contribute to deterrence by complicating calculations of any potential adversaries. In other words, should an adversary decide to tack NATO, they must not only contend with NATO's decision-making but also a judgment about the decision-making from the

leaders of the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. As such, the framework in which NATO can utilize nuclear weapons is held by its policies noted above and the policies of its allies, such as the United States, noted previously.

## Moving forward

As the war goes on, there exists fundamentally, due to the potential of nuclear weapons, an ever-increasing risk of Russian leaders passing the threshold of nuclear weapons being usable in their minds. It is from this reality that even if the Ukraine war has drawn to a stalemate, any future escalation of the conflict would invariably bring the risk of nuclear war back to the discussion. It is precisely due to this reality that NATO needs to have some plan in place to tackle this objective and to ensure that not only our security in the face of nuclear escalation is tackled but also the security of Ukraine in the event of such an escalation.

## Guiding Questions:

- What Should NATO's response be to a Russian nuclear escalation within Ukraine?
- What should be the size of NATO's response? Should it entirely focus on Russian military hardware within Ukraine, targeting all Russian military installations, targeting Russian nuclear position, or even targeting a portion of Russia's military-industrial complex?
- Should NATO's response plan be public knowledge to Russia and the world, or should it be classified to continue strategic ambiguity on the topic?
- Should NATO respond in kind in the event of any Russian escalatory move? Or should I focus on only conventional responses and escalation, maintain its current course, or maybe even de-escalate and push for a settlement in the event of a Russian nuclear escalation?
- Is it even possible that Russia would escalate the war into a nuclear conflict? If so, what thresholds would have to be passed?

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