

From Winter War to Russia-Ukraine War: The Importance of Alliances for Russia's Nordic-Baltic Neighbors

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Abstract

The significance of having an alliance was defined in the Great War when weak European and strong countries decided to ally to fight the mighty power of the Central Powers. Afterward, fragile countries decided to join strong alliances to overcome threats from their neighbors. The Second World War was another example of being allied with strong countries to cope with threats from Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Japanese Empire. During the Winter War and Russia-Ukraine War, Finland, and Ukraine, respectively, resemble weak countries with limited military and economic capabilities taking on a dominant and belligerent force. Neorealism is one of the structural theories in International Relations, which states that states intend and follow the balance of power to ensure their security. Neorealism posits that security organizations and alliances are vital tools in the pursuit of balancing threats and ensuring national security. This research aims to highlight the importance of alliances with Russia's neighbors to avoid future conflicts with Russia. The main question of this research is why Russia's neighbors need to form or join alliances to hedge against Russia's aggression and assist member states in reducing the large amount of budget spent on military expenses. This research argues that Finland's position in 1939 and Ukraine's in 2022 are the consequence of self-reliance under an anarchic system without having an alliance and leading to final defeat or territory cession. This paper argues alliances can secure European countries and act as a shield from Russia's threats. This research will employ the explanatory method as its research method.

Keywords: Alliances, NATO, Neorealism, Russia-Ukraine War, Winter War.

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1. Introduction

A famous quote from Christopher Paolini is, "They may fight with us, but they don't fight for us" (Christopher Paolini Quote,2014). This quote reflects how no nation or state would sacrifice their resources and human resources to fight for other countries unless they can achieve mutual benefit. From the earliest days of civilization till now, joining or making alliances have been two inseparable elements of deterrence. The Great War and the Second World War are examples of forming or joining alliances to overcome the mighty threats of Central Powers and Axis forces. In the First World War, weak or less developed countries such as Serbia would resist and confront threats from Austro-Hungarian and German Empires by joining an alliance with Russian Empire and, later, Allied powers.

Meanwhile, in the Second World War, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxemburg regained their sovereignty by joining Allied forces. On the other hand, seeking neutrality and self-reliance in a chaotic and anarchistic system could lead to final defeat or territory cession. The Soviet Union in 1939 and Russia in 2022 are two forces that exploited the vague status of Finland and Ukraine to expand their territories and dictate their demands.

Joining security organizations or alliances are two features of Neorealism. Neorealism defines defensive alliances as the solution against adversaries under an anarchical system. States cannot solely consider central authority as the shield against other states. The capabilities of other states are a concern, and states want to ensure that no other states or grouping of states can change the balance of power and dominate them. To prevent this from happening and balancing power against those who perceive it as a threat, states can avoid disruption by mobilizing their resources (Internal Balancing) or by ensuring support from other states (External Balancing), which is called alliance (Hellmann and Wolf,1993:10). Threat is determined by the distribution of capabilities, geographic proximity, and political conflicts. Waltz states that the decision on alliance relations is mainly based on relative strength. He believes weak states will enhance and preserve their security by aligning with other weak states to prevent the domination of stronger states with superior capabilities (Waltz,2010:118). According to Stephen Walt and Glenn Snyder, alliance patterns are influenced by non-structural factors such as threat perception and contiguity. States are more

likely to balance against those states that they perceive as threatening, even if they are located in the same region. On the other hand, states intend to align with distant states without serious disputes or conflicts (Walt, 1988:281).

Another factor for the alliance pattern is cost and benefit. Neorealists focus on the impact of joining or making an alliance on their security by comparing the benefits of alliance to its costs. One example of the security benefits of alliance is reducing the probability of being attacked by greater strength (Snyder,1990:110). Neorealists assume the cost of being allied with others might increase the chance of dragging a state into war over an ally's interests that one does not share (Snyder,1990:113). Also, may constrain a state's foreign policies and military independence (Snyder,1990:110). Finally, the amount of threat imposed by an adversary could affect the cost and benefit calculation; in other words, an alliance's cohesion depends on the threat's scale (Snyder,1990:116). The greater the threat, the greater the alliance's cohesion (Snyder,1991:125). Conversely, an alliance's cohesion declines when an adversary's capabilities decline. Neorealists state that the alliance's unity will decrease when the scale of the threat from those adversaries who are assumed to be so ambitious is reduced. In addition, under Neorealism, alliances are argued to be less stable in a multipolar system than in a bipolar system (Grieco,1990:46).

Numerous studies have focused on the Winter war and the necessity of alliances for weak countries and Russia's neighbours. In their 2015 work, Nenyé et al. offered a comprehensive account of the Winter War, detailing its historical context and the factors that shaped the conflict. The authors also analyzed the challenges that Finland faced in securing foreign support during the war and its barriers to join alliances. Mojzes (2022) provides an insightful analysis of Russia's aggressive behavior towards Ukraine. The author traces the historical roots of this aggression and identifies the underlying reasons that have driven Russia's actions in the region. Goldgeier (2010) stated the benefits of joining NATO for Non-NATO members such as Article V (a threat to one member will be met collectively). Goldgeier (2010) explores the potential advantages of non-NATO members joining the alliance. The author highlights the importance of collective defense as

embodied in Article V of the NATO charter, which establishes that an attack against one member state will be regarded as an attack against all members. Lanoszka's (2016) work provides a detailed analysis of NATO's response to Russia's aggressive behavior. The author highlights Russia's willingness to employ hybrid tactics, including political subversion and efforts to foment unrest, to counter NATO's military capabilities. Also, In his 2020 work, Lanoszka argues that Russia may place greater faith in NATO's commitment to Article V than many of the alliance's member states. One of the key assumptions in this research is that NATO's expansion alone did not cause the Russian regime to adopt an anti-Western foreign policy orientation, become less democratic in its institutions, or become more nationalist in its domestic policies. Furthermore, in their 2019 study, Simons and et al. reviews the ongoing debate surrounding Sweden's potential membership in NATO. While Sweden has increased its cooperation with the alliance in recent years, there remains a divide within the country over whether to maintain its legacy of non-alignment or to join NATO in response to the perceived existential threat posed by Russia, which has historical roots. Suchoples (2022) examines the historical context and origins of Russia's perceived threats to Sweden and Finland. The author emphasizes the strategic importance of these two countries joining NATO, arguing that membership in the alliance is necessary for ensuring their security in the face of potential Russian aggression. Goldgeier and Shiffrinson (2020) assessed the expansion of NATO and highlighted that some NATO members intended to transform NATO from a collective defense organization of the Cold War era into a cooperative security institution aimed at preventing interstate tensions and conflicts. Nonetheless, this objective was confronted and ultimately undermined by the new Eastern European members of NATO, who, despite verbally acknowledging cooperative security, perceived NATO mostly as an insurance policy against Russia.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section will review the concept of Neorealism and two balancing power approaches such as internal and external balancing. Also, the Alliance concept with examples will be elaborated.

2-1. Neorealism and Balancing Power

According to Neorealism, the international system is anarchic, and there is no central authority above states to dominate them. Military capabilities are varied across space due to geographical distance and barriers. Geographical distance may affect great powers to lose their strength gradient over short and long ranges. During World War Two, Hitler's army could easily overrun continental Europe and dominate Great Britain in the battle of Britain across the channel. Meanwhile, the lack of strategic depth is one of Israel's risks. Its strategists fear that modern technology puts Israel's airfield and any target within the range of its Arab neighbors' aircrafts and missiles (Porter, 2015:21). Barrier is another factor affecting military capabilities. It can take many forms, including rivers, mountains, jungles, and cities. The primary distinction is between land and sea. States can build their military might more invasively over land than at sea (Levy and Thompson, 2010:13). Maritime space can function as a barrier or a highway depending on the capabilities of those who would cross it. The United States has seen water as both a carrier and a barrier. During the First World War, the United States could transport vast quantities of men and material across the Atlantic to deploy on the Western Front. However, during the Second World War, the United States had to dominate and destroy U-Boat wolf packs that threatened to cut Britain's maritime throat and starve it into submission (Patch, 2008:75).

Under this anarchic environment, states rely on their power, thus, resources should be allocated to boost military capability (Parent and Rosato, 2015:56). Great powers with rich resources seek to enhance their security by margining errors and buffering military superiority. Less powerful states try to minimize their military inferiority to balance their power. States that do not have as many resources as rich great powers engage in self-help but in attenuated and more diverse forms (Morgenthau, 1967:201). This condition will change if they convert to great powers and their relations with other great powers become fiercely rivalrous (Robert Gilpin, 2010:177-178).

Great powers seek their security in a self-help world. To achieve their protection, great powers utilize internal and external balancing methods. Internal balancing is the best option for great powers to minimize reliance

on others. In doing so, they increase their protection in the internal balancing frame by augmenting their armed forces and imitating others' successful military practices. On the other hand, great powers distrust external balancing due to their dependency on others (Parent and Rosato, 2015:54). Forming alliances (military commitments) to deter or defend them against common rivals is one of the external balancing ways for great powers (Walt,1987:12).

2-1-1.Internal Balancing: Arming, Imitation

States desire internal balancing due to genuine self-help (Mearsheimer and Alterman,2001:156). Geography and military capability are two significant threats to great powers, and they will react routinely, promptly, and proportionately to them (Christensen,1996:1950). Great powers consider internal balancing as a shield against anarchic systems and competitors. Arming is the first approach in the internal balancing concept to protect against competitors. From a neorealist perspective, great powers are willing to create or reduce margins of military superiority against rivals. Rivals in the same neighborhood can potentially utilize this approach to demoralize and hurt each other. However, from this perspective, it is expected that states with developed military capabilities cannot maintain this advantage for a long time. This can be implemented in land powers that are more threatened than sea powers. As such, they are likely to devote more effort to arming (Levy and Thompson,2010:19). Neorealism states that great powers will not tolerate a military advantage of their rivals and will counter the arming efforts of their peers within five years. It is important to note that there is a variation in the scale of great powers' efforts to reduce rivals' military advantages. Less powerful states work harder than their more powerful neighbors; land powers make more effort than sea powers, and sea powers apply themselves harder the closer they are to land powers (Parent and Rosato,2015:64).

Imitation is another internal balancing approach that great powers emulate from the successful military innovations of peer competitors and do so promptly (Goldman and Andres,1999:82). Imitation will be escalated when geography plays a key role. Proximate states are more likely to imitate than remote states; land powers are more likely to copy land-based innovations, and sea powers are more likely to copy sea-based innovations (Parent and Rosato,2015:64). In the late 1930s, Nazi Germany was the only power that

developed the most effective approach to armored warfare by merging tanks, radios, and aircraft with combined arms doctrine (Cohen,1996:46). Blitzkrieg allowed Germany to achieve tactical breakthroughs and demonstrate its revolutionary effects to capture France in mid-1940 (Goldman and Andres,1999:120). Therefore, this method was imitated by remaining great powers with great speed. The Soviet Union practiced this technique by 1942, and Britain and the United States caught up soon after opening fronts on the continent late in the war (Glantz and House, 1995:286; Johnson,2013:226).

2-1-2.External Balancing Alliance Behavior

Alliances and coalitions are fundamental elements within the framework of realism theories. In line with the balancing of power approach, the accumulation of power by one player is perceived to decrease the security of other security actors in the international arena. This concept has been extensively studied and applied by numerous neorealist scholars (Farhadi and et al.,2021:60). From the neorealist perspective, external balancing is said to be less desirable for great powers due to the reliability of others. Alliances can be elaborated on from two different points of view (Great Powers and the Weak States), but before that, the term alliances should be expanded. The Cambridge Dictionary defines an alliance as a group of countries, political parties, or people who have agreed to work together because of shared interests or aims (The Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). When two or more states conclude a treaty to compel all members to take specific actions in the event of war, this is an alliance. These commitments would be either engaging in war if one is attacked or keeping the entente (Morrow, 2000:63). Alliances should be detailed in military collaboration. Alliances distinguish themselves from all nonmilitary organizations, such as economic organizations, such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), to political groups, such as the British Commonwealth. Also, they include military cooperation against particular states, differentiating them from universal collective security organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. Finally, alliances are restricted to sovereign states, and non-governmental entities are not involved in alliances (Snyder, 1991:123). Alliances impose costs on their members due to the tradeoff between security and autonomy. Otherwise, states would form alliances without any costs (Morrow,2000:65). States ally to increase their security. It

has to be mentioned that an alliance should produce credible commitments to ensure its members that an ally or other members will come to a state's aid and increase its security at the cost of some of its ally's autonomy. The alliance should be mutual, so each member gains more security at the cost of their autonomy and commitment to other members (Lalman and Newman, 1991:247).

Alliances and alignments should be differentiated. Alignments are not written as a commitment and result from common interests among two or more states. Some examples include the United States and Israel's close relations over a long period as an alliance and the United States and Syria relations during the Persian Gulf War as an alignment. The difference between alignment and alliance is that states should not expect a continuous relationship and shared interests embodied in the relationship. Therefore, alignment should not be obliged by formal negotiation. However, an alliance includes a formal commitment between states wherein certain specific obligations are written out. Specifications and elaboration are required for alliances to determine the degree of shared interests regarding each other and outside of the alliance (Dingman,1979:251; Niou and Ordeshook,1990:1208).

2-1-2-1.Great Powers and Alliances

Great powers rarely desire external balancing. They consider it as a risky proposition when done so, and seldom respond to rival alliances because they suspect that the opponents' allies are also unreliable (Parent and Rosato,2015:80). External balancing for great powers can be defined as when two or more great powers sign an alliance treaty and the terms of that treaty commit them to common defenses against a peer competitor or great power coalition (Levy and Thompson,2010:28). Although great powers may establish alliances without the intention to follow through on their commitments or it is not necessarily a true reflection of signatories' thinking, alliances are the best indication of states coordinating their defense efforts (Leeds and et al.,2005:237).

2-1-2-2.Weak States and Alliances

Although weak states can achieve protection by mobilizing their internal forces, their relatively low strength limits their maneuverability. Undoubtedly, their internal strength would not be sufficient to withstand a confrontation with a great power or another weak state (or coalition of weak

states) supported by a great power. Weak states can take support from other countries through informal alliances or formal alliances. An informal alliance is not necessarily helpful for weak states. It is based on sharing common interests with partners (Russett,1963:97). Three types of formal alliances can be sorted as unequal bilateral (one formed between a weak state and a more powerful state, usually a great power), equal bilateral (states of more or less equal strength), and multilateral (includes other weak states as well as a great power or powers) (Nils Orvik,1960:100). For a limited goal or single issue. For example, an alliance of the Balkan states was created to divide the spoils of the European Ottoman Empire, and the Arab League was initiated to unite against Israel but not for any other purpose (Handel,2016:153).

Figure (1): Weak States Alliances Types

	Formal Alliances	Informal Support
With Other Weak States	The Little Entente; The Balkan League 1912;	Arab or African "Solidarity"
With a Great Power	NATO; Warsaw Pact; ANZUS; CENTO; SEATO	U.S.-South Korea 1950; France-Israel, 1956; USSR-Egypt, 1956

(Source: Handel,2016:121).

2-2.Benefits of Alliances

Forming or joining alliances has many advantages for weak states. First, weak states can reduce their defense costs. Joining alliances with stronger states that possess nuclear capabilities is much cheaper for weak states than building and maintaining their infrastructure, technological expertise, and weapons delivery systems. Hence, small and vulnerable states are attracted to alliances (Griffiths and et al.,2014:6). Some weak NATO states, such as Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Belgium, could offset their defensive efforts without fearing a decline in the credibility of their defenses (Handel, 2016:149). Second, alliances can provide economic benefits by increasing

trade, aid, and loans between partners (Griffiths and et al.,2014:6). Moreover, alliances can be helpful in maintaining hegemonic control over other partners. The United States entered into several bilateral alliances after the end of the Second World War to gain landing rights, access to ports, and the use of military facilities in strategically important locations around the borders of the Soviet Union (Griffiths and et al.,2014:7).

3. Research Method

This study employs an exploratory approach to investigate the importance of alliances for Russia's neighboring countries, taking into account the Winter War and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In addition, the research methodology relies on library research and the use of secondary data sources.

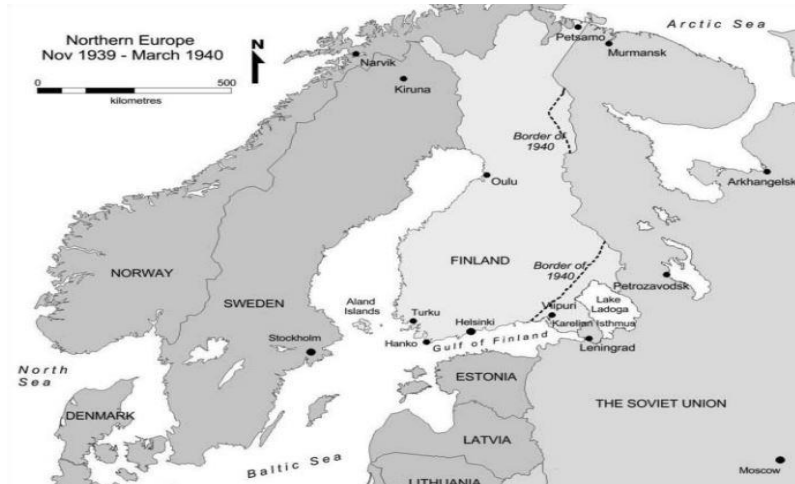
4. The Winter War of 1939 and the Russia-Ukraine War of 2022

In this section, the history and the consequences of the Winter War of 1939 will be reviewed. Also, the history and potential consequences of the Russia-Ukraine War will be discussed to support the three assumptions of this research:

4-1.The Winter War 1939

After the October Revolution, Lenin was furious at Finland's desire to repel any Soviet attack and their intention to join an alliance with Germany. These views were transferred to Joseph Stalin, who had risen to become the leader of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) by the end of the 1920s (Nenye and et al.,2015:43). In 1938, the Soviet consulate staff expressed its fears regarding the potential German invasion of the Soviet Union through Finland. They demanded that the Finnish government repel any German attacks and accept direct Soviet military intervention while doing so. Finland promised to defend its sovereignty and repel any invasion of foreign countries, but no agreement was reached. In 1939, the Soviets suggested a trade between the Soviet Union and Finland. Their offer turned into a suggestion of trading the Repola and Porajärvi areas lost in the Tartu Treaty of 1920 for the strategically critical outer islands on the Gulf of Finland (Nenye and et al.,2015:45).

Figure (2): The Soviet Demands in 1939



(Source: Rentola,2013:1092)

The reason Stalin was so greedy regarding his neighbors' territory was that Hitler agreed to leave Finland to its fate in the Soviet sphere. Also, three small Baltic republics agreed to cede military bases to the Soviet Union without any objections from Britain and France (Rentola,2013:1090). To prepare and initiate his invasion, Stalin had ordered the Red Army and Government to start a propaganda war, look for a casus belli for the invasion, and assemble troops along the border. Stalin's propaganda War included an order to call on the youth from all over Leningrad into service. "Visit Finland before Finland visits you," ran one propaganda slogan (Edwards,2006, n.d). Finally, Stalin found his reason for the invasion on the 26th of November, 1939. Following direct orders from Leningrad, one artillery battery from the Soviet 221st Artillery Regiment fired a salvo at their comrades in the village of Mainila in Russia. As this artillery battery was located north of the small Russian village, it appeared that the shells had come from Finland. This gave the Soviet Union an excuse to cut diplomatic ties with Finland and cast aside the mutual peace agreement. It was the casus belli Stalin needed (Nenye and et al.,2015:53).

Before the start of the invasion, the Soviet Union had superiority in warfare and infantries. Table (2) demonstrates the comparison between the Soviet Union and Finland:

Table (1): Comparison between the Soviet Union and Finland in Warfare and Infantries

Item	Finland	Soviet Union
Infantry	320,000	700,000
Tank	32	6,500
Aircraft	110	3,800

(Source: Antti Juutilainen & Koskimaa, 2005:84; Barnard & Krivosheev, 1997:63; Palokangas, 1999:299; Pekka, 1998:260; Peltonen, 1999:606; Trotter, 2002:187).

The Red Army underestimated the strength of the Finnish army and the harsh weather in November. Their plan included only the 20 divisions from Leningrad Military District, mainly reservists (Citino,2014:45; Reese, 2008:827). After a quick initial advance through Finnish defense lines, the Red Army began suffering heavy losses and were either ground to a halt against the camouflaged bunkers and anti-tank defenses of the Mannerheim Line or were surrounded and ambushed by invisible foes in the snowbound forests (Reese,2008:828). Nonetheless, The Red Army learned from its mistakes of 1939. It launched a new offensive in the spring of 1940 by taking advantage of its numerical strength, uniting its forces, and compelling Finland to fight a war of attrition that its small population could not withstand (Reese,2008:830).

In March 1940, the Moscow Peace Treaty was accepted. In this war, the number of civilian and military casualties was 24,918 dead and 43,557 wounded. The total losses for the Soviet Union have never been published, but the best estimates put them at well over 200,000 killed and a much larger number of wounded (Condon,1972:n.d). According to Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs, the total number of Soviet lives lost in the Winter War exceeded 1 million. He also noted that around 1,000 airplanes and 2,300 tanks had been destroyed (Khrushchev,1971:n.d).

Three lessons can be concluded from this war:

1- The Finnish Government did not join or form any alliances with its neighbors or great powers to protect Finland from Soviet invasion. The Finnish government did not believe a war with the Soviet Union would happen due to the peace treaties signed by the United States and Britain. Also, the non-aggression pact signed with the Soviets in 1934 had nearly five years left before it ran out (Nenye and et al.,2015:47). In 1939, the Finnish government was looking for a potential ally. Their first choice was Nazi Germany, but it turned out that according to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Finland was marked as the Soviet sphere of influence (Rentola, 2013:1090). Also, according to a Japanese military attaché in Moscow, the German intelligence chief Heinrich Himmler informed Finland's minister that Germany would not help Finland in the war against the Soviet Union, and Germany wanted to endure its agreement with the Soviet Union (Jonas, 2009:116). In addition, Finland sought to form a Scandinavian alliance to receive support from the sizeable Swedish Army. However, due to pressure from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on the question of mutually fortifying the island of Åland, Sweden made it clear that in future conflicts, its troops would remain inside its borders (Nenye and et al.,2015:47). Finally, the United States, Britain, and France could not fully support Finland due to the long routes from their ports to Sweden or Finland and their war with Nazi Germany in the Western Front. For example, some 12 Hawker Hurricane aircraft arrived just before the war ended (Nenye and et al.,2015:190).

2- The Finnish Government lost about 10 percent of the country's total pre-war surface area, and nearly 12 percent of the population had to be resettled from ceded lands in the Winter War (Nenye and et al.,2015:283). This invasion is one of the examples of a long history of the Soviet Union wanting to expand its territory and control more population. For example, the Soviet Union had been planning an invasion of Finland Since the Spring of 1936, but the final decision to launch the attack was not made before the end of October 1939 (Nenye and et al.,2015:51).

3- The Soviet Union did not manage to reduce casualties among its army in any invasion. There is a famous quote from Stalin about casualties and the importance of advancement, "In the Soviet army, it takes more courage to retreat than advance" (Medvedev,2011:311). This quote shows the value of a soldier's life or health under the Red Army Generals and leaders. Although

the Winter War took a heavy toll on the Soviet Union and the Red Army, they achieved their objectives in Winter War. Khrushchev later said that "all of us sensed in our victory a defeat by the Finns" (Citino,2014:50). On the other hand, the Soviet Union acquired more territory than it had initially sought in negotiations with Finland, including the naval bases in the Gulf of Finland and the land on the Karelian Isthmus, which was considered very important to Soviet national defense (Spring,1986:208).

4-2.The Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022

Ukraine was a cornerstone of the Soviet Union and it was the second most populous and powerful republic among the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union. This country was home to the Soviet Union's agricultural production, defense industries, and military, including the Black Sea Fleet and some of the nuclear arsenal. After its three decades of independence, Kyiv has struggled to balance its foreign relation and bridge deep internal divisions. In western parts of Ukraine, a nationalist Ukrainian-speaking population has been trying to integrate Ukraine with Europe. On the other hand, the primarily Russian-speaking community in the east has favored closer ties with Russia. Russia's interests in Ukraine are as follows:

1- Russian diaspora: Before the war, approximately eight million ethnic Russians lived in the east and south of Ukraine as of 2001, and the Russian government had the policy to protect them (Masters,2022). For example, when McDonald's officials clarified that there had never actually been a Russian-language option on the company's electronic menus in Ukraine, but customers were welcome to order in Russian if they preferred, the Russian Embassy responded to this by accusing the fast food giant of "excluding minority languages" (Matviyishyn,2020).

2- Trade and Energy: Russia used to be Ukraine's largest trading partner, and Russia has hoped to pull Ukraine into Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Also, Ukraine has been the hob of the Russian pipeline to pump its gas to Central and Eastern Europe customers for decades, and it pays billions of dollars per year in transit fees to Kyiv (Masters,2022).

3- Ukraine's Unique Location: Ukraine is located in a strategic place in Eastern Europe. It connects the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and southeastern Europe. It also provides a buffer from the instability of the Middle East. Finally, Russia's military footprint and ability to project hard

power have expanded significantly since the annexation of Crimea (Lanoszka,2022).

Although many experts argue that Russia's aggression towards Ukraine is due to NATO enlargement, the main reason for Russia's aggression comes from the Russian world concept. Russia and Ukraine have a common origin in "Kievan Rus." Putin has supported a revisionist history of the Russian state concept he calls "Russkiy mir." This concept claims that all Russians (including Ukrainians and Belarus), wherever, should live in a single Russian country (Mojzes,2022:3). Over almost two decades, Russia's rhetoric and actions have proof that the goal is beyond imposing neutrality on Ukraine (one of Russia's demands before the invasion) or even staving off further NATO expansion. Therefore, the larger objectives of Russia's aggression toward Ukraine and other NATO members would be re-establishing Russia's political and cultural hegemony over nations that Russia views as one with Russia and then following up by undoing the European rules-based order and security architecture established in the aftermath of the second world war (Popova and Shevel,2022).

In 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and started to arm and abet separatists in the Donbas region, Ukraine became a battleground between Russia and western countries. The Russian annexation of Crimea and the following air campaign over Syria surprised the world. The capabilities and efficiency of Russian weapons signaled to the world that Russia's phoenix is rising in the balance of global power (Renz,2018).

Figure (3): Ukraine Territory Map before Russian Invasion of Ukraine 2022

(Source: Masters, 2022)

Ukraine was similar to Finland during the Winter War because the Ukrainian government could not join or form any alliances to protect its territory. In 2008, Ukraine and Georgia officially requested to join the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) (YHIAH, 2008). However, due to the fear of potential Russian aggression, Ukrainians became more reluctant after the Russian army invaded Georgia. Also, Viktor Yanukovich rejected any intention for membership and promoted closer ties with Russia, even agreeing to allow Moscow to continue leasing a Black Sea naval port in Sevastopol (Wong and Jakes, 2022). However, due to the Russian invasion of Crimea and East Ukraine, the new government planned to join NATO (RFE/RL, 2014). On June 2021, NATO leaders at Brussels Summit reiterated their support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and the decision made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance with the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as an integral part of the process (NATO, 2021). Before any more progress could be made, Ukraine was invaded by Russia. One of the reasons for delaying Ukraine's membership was Germany, and many other NATO nations preferred to avoid battles with Russia due to the Russian obsession with Ukraine (Wong and Jakes, 2022).

On February 21, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed his nation with a bizarre and at times, unhinged speech laying out a long list of grievances as justification for the "special military operation" announced the following day to oppose against Anti-Russia Project. Russian people were told that Ukrainian and Belarusian identities are the product of foreign manipulation and that, today, the West is following in the footsteps of Russia's imperial rivals in using Ukraine (and Belarus) as part of an "anti-Russia project" (Mankoff,2022). Therefore, on February 24, 2022, to "de-Nazify" and "de-militarize" Ukraine, about two hundred thousand troops flowed into Ukrainian territory from the south (Crimea), east (Russia), and north (Belarus), in an attempt to seize major cities, including the capital Kyiv, and depose the government (Masters,2022).

Before a summary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is offered, a military comparison should be conducted to support research assumptions.

Table (2): The Comparison between Russian, Ukraine, Donetsk PR, and Luhansk PR Armed Forces before the Russian Invasion

Item	Russia	Ukraine	Donetsk PR	Luhansk PR
Active Military Personnel	900,000	250,000	20,000	14,000
Reservist	2,000,000	900,000	*	*
Combat Aircraft	1,330	125	*	*
Tank	3,300	1,000	*	*
Defense Budget	\$43.2Bn	\$4.32Bn	*	*

(Source: Richter, 2022:2; RUSSIAN NEWS AGENCY, 2021; the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 2021:209).

On the first day of the invasion, Russia invaded on four main fronts: Northern Front, Northeastern Front, Eastern Front, and Southern Front (Jones, 2022). Also, Russian Bombers and Missile forces attacked all military bases, airports, naval bases, and ports to dictate air superiority, pin down Ukrainian air defenses, and close Ukraine's airspace (Charpentreau, 2022).

Russia, however, has failed to achieve the main objective of this invasion which is overthrowing the Kyiv government in a military blitzkrieg operation. Also, The Russian armed forces could not seize and hold territory. These problems have led to the suspension or firing of several

senior military officials (Jones,2022). The main reason for Russia's failure is heavy assistance from foreign countries, mostly from the United States and NATO Members. According to August 2022 data, from January 24th to August 3, 2022, about 34 billion dollars of aid have been sent to Ukraine to defend it against Russian forces (Kiel Institute for IWF Kiel,2022). Most recently, the government of Canada announced that four Towed Howitzers, 39 Armoured Combat Support Vehicles, 4,500 M72 LAW Anti-Tank Weapons, and 390,000 meals were sent to Ukraine to assist Ukraine Armed Forces (Mitzer and Oliemans,2022).

The Human and Financial tolls of this conflict are incalculable. This conflict has already cost Ukraine at least \$113.5 billion, and the Ukraine government may need at least \$200 billion to rebuild the war's destruction (Yugas, 2022). Ukrainian civilians have paid a heavy toll in this war. The United Nations confirmed that 5,587 civilians were killed and 7,890 civilians were injured during this invasion (United Nations Human Rights,2022).

Military losses have been heavy on both sides. Although Russia and Ukraine have tried to hide their military casualties, western analysts believe both have sustained heavy losses. About 9,000 Ukrainians have been killed at the front so far, and according to military intelligence, 25,000 Russian military personnel have been killed and tens of thousands more wounded (Yugas, 2022; Залужний,2022). This invasion is still ongoing, and the number of casualties on both sides is expected to increase. Also, it is anticipated that both Russia and Ukraine will ask their allies to provide more weapons and equipment to reduce casualties and paralyze the enemy's counterattack. Finally, based on previous Russian Conflicts, the sanctions and military casualties will not cease Russia's invasion of Ukraine to revive the Soviet Union or expand Russian territory unless one of the great powers intervenes in this conflict or Russia could annex occupied territories.

5. Discussion

In this section, the importance of alliances for Russia's neighbors will be elaborated to defend the research assumptions. Three assumptions are final defeat or territory cession for states without any alliances; alliances can secure East European Countries, act as a shield from Russia's threats and reduce military expenditures in member states.

5-1.Final Defeat or Territory Cession for States without Any Alliances

Based on the neorealist theory, states are obliged to avoid predators and become victims at the hands of other states (Waltz,2010:113). States unable to defend themselves are vulnerable to conquest or destruction by others. For example, each state that lives under an anarchic system would face the highest possibility that another state will use force to harm or conquer it (Hoffmann and et al.,1990:12). As discussed in the previous section, both Finland and Ukraine did not join any alliances, and that is why they could protect their sovereignty.

Table (2) shows that Finnish soldiers were fighting superior forces in quantity, tanks, fighters, bombers, and artillery during the Winter War. Although Soviet soldiers paid a heavy price in this war, they captured about 9% of Finnish territory, and 12% of Finland's population was evacuated from occupied territories (Kirby,2006:215).

In February 2022, Russia controlled around 17,000 square miles of Ukrainian territory. This amount is equal to the size of New Jersey. As of September 2022, Russia has expanded its occupied territory in Ukraine almost threefold. Currently, Russia controls about 20% of Ukraine's land, or about 47,000 square miles (Hayda and et al.,2022). In September 2022, Russia announced that a referendum on annexing occupied territories of Ukraine would be organized. This so-called referendum will be held in occupied territories of Ukraine during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. On September 28, 2022, the Kremlin-installed governments of Kherson, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Donetsk declared victories in the so-called annexation referendums (Euronews,2022). Finally, Russia's president said he was ready to use nuclear weapons to defend Russian territory. This means that Russia is willing to ensure the annexation of four occupied oblasts from Ukraine by using nuclear weapons (BBC News,2022).

As a result, it can be concluded that weak states under an anarchic system are prone to be conquered or destroyed by great powers. Finland and Ukraine are two examples of weak states who could not form or join any alliances and lost their territory.

5-2. Alliances Can Secure Russia's Nordic-Baltic neighbors from Russia's threats

The notion of balance of power, which refers to the idea that nations generally form alliances to counter dominant rivals, has existed for

centuries. However, in actuality, countries often seek allies in reaction to perceived threats. While powerful countries can certainly be more menacing than weaker ones, their proximity and the perception of their intentions can be equally significant. Strong nations are often more concerning to their neighboring states, particularly when they seem prepared to use military force to alter the current situation (Walt,2023). Joining or forming alliances have benefits and costs. If the benefits of alliances are more significant than the costs, states will be intended to join alliances. The benefits are counted chiefly regarding increased security resulting from their partner's commitment. The benefits are alliances can be listed as follows:

- 1- Enhances deterrence of attack on oneself, and
- 2- Enhanced capability for defense against an attack on oneself (Snyder, 2007:43).

Alliances are the best tool to deter adversaries and reassure allies. Some democratic states, like the United States, are good allies due to the transparency of their institutions which make them more predictable and make their commitments stronger and more selective (Ikenberry,2019). Russia's aggressive behavior towards its neighbors such as Finland, Georgia, Sweden, Moldova, and Ukraine, has made them vulnerable (Van der Togt, 2017:18).

After the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, doubts about Moscow's revisionist goals were eliminated, and it led to a quick and widespread response. The situation in Ukraine is reminiscent of the past for many Finns, who recall the Soviet invasion of their country in 1939. Despite being outnumbered, the Finnish army fiercely resisted for over three months. In recent years, Sweden has also felt threatened by Russia, with reported airspace violations and a submarine incident in 2014. To counter this, Sweden returned its army to the strategically important Gotland island in 2016. Both Finland and Sweden possess valuable strategic assets in the Baltic Sea, including Swedish Gotland and the Finnish Åland Islands, which have been the target of Russian provocations. The lack of a convincing military presence in these areas is a major concern (Chatterjee,2022 and Friis,2017:114). The reaction of Sweden and Finland to Russia's invasion of Ukraine further supports the notion that states balance against threats rather than power. Despite previously maintaining a policy of neutrality, both countries sought NATO membership after the invasion, which had exposed

Russia's military weaknesses. Even though Russia was less powerful than the Soviet Union, Russia's willingness to use military force made Russia more menacing to these countries. As a result, Sweden and Finland sought the added protection of NATO membership to counter the perceived threat (Walt,2023). Also, Russia's military action in Ukraine has caused a reevaluation of Moldova's neutral position, with discussions about the possibility of pursuing formal alliances with other countries. However, a major obstacle to Moldova's integration with other nations is the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria, which is a separatist region situated within the country's borders (Lynch,2023). Therefore, it can be mentioned that Russia's recent aggression may serve as a catalyst for Moldova, Ukraine, Sweden, Georgia, and Finland to seek closer ties with NATO and potentially consider joining the alliance.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine highlights the importance of alliances in enhancing a country's ability to defend itself against aggression. The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the significance of partnerships and alliances. When the war broke out, Russia had a significant edge over Ukraine in terms of military power, as Moscow had more than five times the number of active-duty soldiers, along with a larger collection of weapons, armor, aircraft, and artillery. The conflict in Ukraine has demonstrated that a nation's military strength is no longer solely determined by its domestic production capacity, but rather its ability to obtain necessary resources from foreign sources. Even industrial powerhouses like Russia can no longer rely on their manufacturing capabilities, while smaller economies like Ukraine can find other means to acquire essential resources. In modern warfare, alliances and partnerships hold greater significance for smaller nations than their domestic factories. Therefore, the key to military success is not solely based on the size of the country's industry, but also on its ability to build strong international alliances. During the first year of the conflict, Ukraine's allies and partners, such as Canada, Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, provided security assistance amounting to tens of billions of dollars, which not only allowed Kyiv to resist the Russian aggression but also regain some of the territory that had been seized by Russia during the initial stages of the invasion (Cook,2023).

Additionally, alliances possess the ability to provide protection and deter any acts of aggression against their members by leveraging their robust military capabilities. NATO is one of the options for these countries looking to avoid Russia's conquest due to Article V. In 1949, Article V was defined as "an armed attack on one or more (alliance members) in Europe or North America would be considered an attack against them all" (Goldgeier, 2010:6). In this treaty, a threat to one member will be met collectively. NATO members will engender a collective response (Goldgeier,2010:7). Table (4) demonstrates the comparison of NATO and Russia's military strength.

Table (4):NATO and Russia's Military Strength

Item	Nato	Russia
Military Personnel	5.41M	1.35M
Armoured Units	144,000	60,000
Air Force	20,700	4,170
Naval Forces	2,049	605
Nuclear Weapons	6,065	6,255

(Source: Anglesey,2022)

Table (4) illustrates that NATO should be the first choice for Russia's members to deter Russian mighty armored warfare. One of the fears of non-NATO members is Russia's nuclear retaliation in the NATO-Russia Conflict. Although nuclear war may be remote, it cannot be discounted altogether. One of the reasons that Russia is willing to counter NATO members with hybrid tactics such as political subversion and efforts to foment unrest then nuclear tactics is that it does not wish to provoke a reaction that it cannot handle (Lanoszka,2016:185). It can be concluded that Russia may believe in NATO's Article V commitment more than NATO members do (Lanoszka,2020:466).

Alliances serve as a means to enable weaker states to repulse aggression, while also deterring potential aggression from stronger states. The Luxembourg government pursued neutrality in the Second World War, with 425 soldiers. Still, this country was invaded and captured by Nazi Germany on 10th of May, 1940 (Thomas,1991:15). Luxembourg joined the Allies on 10 May 1940 and was immediately awarded international recognition. Finally, allied soldiers liberated Luxembourg on September 10, 1944, and reconstructed by the Marshall Plan (The Government of The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,2020). Therefore, Luxembourg is one of the examples of a weak state that could recapture its territory by joining alliances.

5-3. Alliances as a Tool for Reducing Military Expenditures

Alliances have proven to be invaluable tools for member states in the Nordic-Baltic region and Eastern Europe to effectively address security challenges arising from their geographic location and relatively smaller size compared to their larger, more powerful neighbors. The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, for instance, have joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has enabled them to benefit from the collective security provided by the alliance. By joining NATO, these smaller states have been able to reduce their military expenditures and allocate resources to other vital areas of development such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, while still maintaining their security. Sweden presents an intriguing option to join NATO as a means to manage its military expenditures effectively. Positioned as an important neighbor of Russia, its strategic location near Russia's major oil and gas terminals, as well as being a crucial access point to the open seas and close to Russia's Baltic fleets base, underscores the significance of its security considerations (Peshghahifard and Arab,2011:55). Being one of the select countries capable of producing advanced military weapons, such as Saab Gripen fighters, Sweden has established a reliance on its indigenous weaponry to counter potential threats from Russia. Deploying fighter squadrons strategically to safeguard against any potential Russian threats, especially in the aftermath of the Ukraine War in 2022, has necessitated an increase in military expenditures. By embracing NATO membership, Sweden gains access to the collective resources and advanced weaponry of the alliance, empowering it to strengthen its defense capabilities and contribute significantly to regional security. This alignment with NATO offers the potential to curtail the long-term growth of military expenditures for Sweden, as the burden of defense can be shared collectively among member states. Furthermore, joining NATO opens up a unique opportunity for Sweden to expand its arms trade with other member nations, thereby stimulating its economy. The sale of advanced weapons produced within the country can be a source of economic growth and strength. The pattern of joining NATO to enhance defense capabilities and address security concerns can also be applied to Eastern European countries and smaller states in the region facing threats from Russia and its growing aggressions. In a similar vein, Moldova, a small state in Eastern Europe, has remained neutral for

many years but is grappling with security concerns posed by the presence of Russian troops in the breakaway region of Transnistria (Niknami,2021: 171). By joining an alliance such as NATO, Moldova could leverage the collective defense capabilities of the alliance to address these concerns and reduce military expenditures, as the alliance would be responsible for ensuring the country's security.

However, it is important to note that joining an alliance does not necessarily translate to an immediate reduction in military spending. Membership in an alliance comes with its own costs, including the obligation to contribute to the collective defense efforts of the alliance. Nevertheless, joining an alliance has been an effective tool for member states to enhance their collective security, reduce their military expenditures, and free up resources to invest in crucial areas of development. Moreover, member states within alliances are not required to spend large amounts of their budgets on military expenses as the burden is shared across the member states. This sharing of costs has made it easier for member states to allocate their resources to other vital areas of development, while still ensuring their security. Therefore, alliances have been particularly important for member states in Eastern Europe, which have often been vulnerable to security threats and have had limited resources to maintain a large military presence. In conclusion, alliances have proven to be an effective tool for member states in Nordic-Baltic region and Eastern Europe to address security challenges and allocate their resources more efficiently. Although membership in an alliance does not guarantee an immediate reduction in military expenditures, member states can benefit from collective security and sharing the burden of costs associated with maintaining a large military force. The reduced military expenditure, in turn, allows these states to allocate resources to other areas of development that are crucial for their growth and prosperity.

6. Conclusion

Alliances are crucial for weak states to balance power and defend against great powers. Russia has always intended to use the anarchic system and expand its territories and dictate its preferences to neighbors. It has been concluded that alliances can be an effective approach in international relations for weak states with poor economies and feeble armies to deter any aggression from strong states and protect sovereignties against great powers.

This research implemented the neorealist perspective in analyzing the Winter War of 1939 and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine of 2022 to validate the necessity of alliances with Russia's neighbors. This research reviewed Neorealism as the central methodology and explained that states under an anarchic system are willing to balance power by arming, Imitation and alliances. Thus, a poor economy and geographical location force state to balance power with their opponents by external balancing. This research also looked at the Winter War and the recent Ukraine War with the latest available data to conclude that Finland and Ukraine could not join any alliances before the Soviet Union's and Russia's aggression. Although these two countries could force Russia to pay a heavy price for their aggressiveness, they had to face territory cession (unless a new player or variable entered the Ukraine war to turn the tide of war which has not occurred). Furthermore, this research examined the two assumptions and found that without alliances, Russia's neighbors would face final defeat or territory cession due to the mighty capacity of the Russian Armed Forces a huge military expenses. Moreover, alliances can secure Russia's neighbors. For example, joining NATO is one of the choices for non-NATO countries in Europe due to its superiority over the Russian army in personnel, warfare, and military expenses. In addition, alliances have the potential to assist member states in reducing their military expenditures and allocating additional resources to essential sectors such as education and healthcare. Finally, this research stated that although Sweden, Finland, and Iran have a solid capacity to defend their territories, Russia's aggression for false reasons is inevitable in the future, and alliances can be their savior to keep their sovereignty.

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