# NATO’s strategic misjudgment of Russia risks triggering new regional conflicts



Concerns regarding Russia's intentions and the implications for NATO are intensifying among defence analysts, particularly in light of recent comments from Andrii Kovalenko, head of the Center for Countering Disinformation. In a statement on Telegram, Kovalenko warned that the Western alliance is making a significant error by not recognising Russia as an adversary. He suggested that this oversight could potentially set the stage for regional conflicts within the next four to six years—not solely centred on Ukraine.

Kovalenko contends that despite the wealth of analysis available from various American think tanks regarding Russian strategy, a fundamental misunderstanding persists among Western policymakers. They seem to overlook that Russia, under Putin's regime, operates not from a perspective of compromise or rationality, but rather from a profoundly entrenched belief in power and historical destiny. “His mentality is a fanatical belief in power, a historic mission, and the right to dominate,” Kovalenko elaborated, emphasising that traditional deterrent strategies, such as sanctions or diplomatic pressure, are unlikely to sway a regime that views negotiation as an opportunity to exploit perceived weakness.

This sentiment is echoed in the escalating unease among the Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Their defence ministers have openly expressed fears that Russia will expand its ambitions beyond Ukraine once a ceasefire is reached. Recent developments have only intensified these concerns; the Kremlin is reportedly ramping up military production and troop deployments along its border with these countries. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis has raised alarms over the potential for a Russian invasion, citing a long-standing threat that has only grown more pronounced amid the ongoing tensions.

The concerns of the Baltic countries reflect a broader consensus within NATO regarding the long-term threat posed by Russia. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte has recently pointed out that both the United States and its European allies recognise this reality, underscoring a unified stance in maintaining vigilance and collective defence measures in response to perceived aggression. This alignment is crucial, especially as European leaders grapple with defence spending and military readiness. The notion that NATO's capabilities must evolve to meet the challenges posed by Russian ambitions is gaining traction, with calls for substantial investment in European defence being made to avoid repeating the miscalculations of the past.

Furthermore, discussions surrounding strategic flexibility are entering the public discourse. In response to heightened security threats, the Baltic states and Poland have proposed withdrawing from the Ottawa Convention, which bans landmines, as a means to bolster their defensive posture. This move highlights the increasing urgency among NATO's eastern members to adapt their military strategies in light of a more aggressive Russian posture.

Amidst these developments, the recent shifts in the U.S. security strategy, particularly a perceived reduction in focus on European issues, add another layer of complexity to the situation. Analysts warn that if the West continues to cling to a flawed interpretation of Russia's intentions, the consequences could be dire, with potential conflicts arising not only in the Baltics but also involving other regional players, such as North Korea and Iran.

As tensions escalate, the imperative for a robust, united response from NATO becomes clearer. Only through a nuanced understanding of Russia's long-term ambitions and the acknowledgment of their nature as a formidable adversary can the alliance hope to navigate the precarious landscape of European security.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/nato-s-key-error-on-russia-flagged-by-center-1748686081.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-european-allies-agree-russia-is-long-term-threat-natos-rutte-says-2025-04-24/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/nato-s-key-error-on-russia-flagged-by-center-1748686081.html), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/aa2a46782a44bbf0c27424d2c8c97d5c), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/797e42e5-13ae-4e78-aac3-cc2033dfb8e8)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-european-allies-agree-russia-is-long-term-threat-natos-rutte-says-2025-04-24/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/f268359a-7347-4285-b646-4353f7d6a865), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/d2cd05b5a7bc3d98acbf123179e6b391)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/nato-s-key-error-on-russia-flagged-by-center-1748686081.html), [[7]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/07/11/on-nato-s-eastern-flank-on-the-russian-border-the-pre-war-era-has-begun_6680829_4.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/nato-s-key-error-on-russia-flagged-by-center-1748686081.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-european-allies-agree-russia-is-long-term-threat-natos-rutte-says-2025-04-24/> - NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte announced that the United States and its European allies unanimously recognise Russia as a long-term threat to NATO and the broader Euro-Atlantic region. This unified stance underscores NATO's continued vigilance and collective defence posture in response to perceived Russian aggression. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-european-allies-agree-russia-is-long-term-threat-natos-rutte-says-2025-04-24/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://apnews.com/article/aa2a46782a44bbf0c27424d2c8c97d5c> - Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda has expressed support for U.S. President Donald Trump's call for NATO countries to increase their defence spending to 5% of GDP to deter potential Russian aggression. Nausėda highlighted the need for NATO and the EU to protect the Baltic Sea's critical underwater infrastructure following a series of incidents damaging undersea cables and gas pipelines. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/aa2a46782a44bbf0c27424d2c8c97d5c?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/f268359a-7347-4285-b646-4353f7d6a865> - European leaders gathered at the Munich Security Conference grappling with threats from both an aggressive Russia and uncertainties from the US under Donald Trump. The article urges immediate, substantial investment in European defence to avoid repeating historical mistakes and ensure credible deterrence against Russian aggression. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/f268359a-7347-4285-b646-4353f7d6a865?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/797e42e5-13ae-4e78-aac3-cc2033dfb8e8> - The Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and Poland have proposed withdrawing from the Ottawa Convention, an international agreement banning landmines, in response to heightened security threats posed by Russia and Belarus. These countries argue that they need greater flexibility to defend NATO's vulnerable eastern flank amidst rising tensions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/797e42e5-13ae-4e78-aac3-cc2033dfb8e8?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://apnews.com/article/d2cd05b5a7bc3d98acbf123179e6b391> - NATO has been thrown into disarray after U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced that America's security priorities no longer primarily focus on Europe. This shift signifies a change in the U.S.'s role in European security, throwing the alliance's future into uncertainty. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/d2cd05b5a7bc3d98acbf123179e6b391?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/07/11/on-nato-s-eastern-flank-on-the-russian-border-the-pre-war-era-has-begun_6680829_4.html> - On NATO’s eastern flank, a significant military buildup has been occurring since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and intensified after the Ukraine war started in 2022. This buildup spans from Finland to Bulgaria, reinforcing NATO's readiness against potential Russian aggression. ([lemonde.fr](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/07/11/on-nato-s-eastern-flank-on-the-russian-border-the-pre-war-era-has-begun_6680829_4.html?utm_source=openai))