Discussing NATO's involvement in the Baltic states and other Russian neighboring nations

NATO

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Issue: Discussing NATO's involvement in the Baltic states and other Russian neighboring nations

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Introduction

When Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine on February 20th, 2014, it started a global spread of NATO presence in the Baltic States, and other Russian neighboring states. While NATO's involvement in these regions predates recent developments, it gained momentum when Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined the alliance in 2004. The organization concluded that since the end of the Cold War, enlargement would provide a unique opportunity to build and improve security in the Euro-Atlantic region. It also states they would encourage and support democratic reforms over military forces with the intent to foster cooperation, consultation and consensus-building agreements amongst members. Despite such claims, it's crucial to recognize the nature of NATO deployments in these regions. The treaty emphasizes that involvement is to be taken revocation or aggression, but rather deterring potential threats from non-NATO states.

In terms of recent goals and developments, tensions have risen globally due to current conflicts between NATO and Russia. In the endeavor to uphold global stability, cultivate diplomatic relations, avert conflicts, and address humanitarian concerns, the importance of discussing the means of such geopolitical information is vital. Diplomatic engagement is currently limited among the world's major powers, and the current state of relations between NATO and Russia is the most strained since the Cold War..

Definition of Key Terms

Annexation:

The action of a sovereign state getting hold of another country's territory forcefully to enlarge its own sovereignty. Generally, annexations are internationally established to be illegal by internal law.

Geopolitical:

The effects of Geography; primarily the influence of geographical factors due to politics, international relations and other strategic behavior amongst nations. These include a country's economic resources, borders and political landscape, and how these geographical factors influence the distribution, exercise and projection of power.

Enlargement:

The process of expanding the political influence/size of a territory, alliance, IGO, etc. This involved either addition of new members, expansion of borders and boundaries or broader ringing of objectives.

Encroachment:

The unauthorized intrusion or extension of a political body beyond established conditions, usually referred to another state's territory or rights. Encroachment involves intrusion of cultural factors, military presence or territorial claims from a sovereign nation onto another.

Ultimatums:

The final, uncompromising set of terms issued by one state to another usually met by a threat of severe consequences if the terms are not accepted or met within a specified period. They are often used in geopolitical contexts to assert authority and establish a firm position.
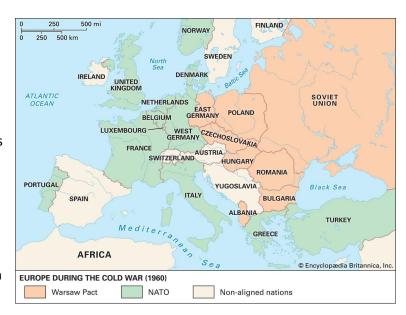
Satellite State:

Also known as a "puppet state", a political term that refers to a sovereign nation that is heavily controlled by a dominant state. These states typically maintain a degree of independence, such as government. Although foreign policy and military are usually dictated and influenced.

General Overview

Pre-NATO Involvement

The Baltic States, comprising Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, experienced Soviet occupation through a series of ultimatums and forced agreements. These set off a series of changes such as ideological assimilation, suppression of national identities, censorship, and the establishment of a political and economic system aligned with the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, in 1952, Turkey and Greece formally joined NATO, marking the treaty's first Eastern Europe expansion. Yet in 1954, the Soviet Union suggested it should join NATO to preserve peace in Europe. But NATO countries,

fearful that the Soviet Union's motive was to weaken the alliance because of its prior history, ultimately rejected this proposal. In a hasty response the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact, or also formally known as the "Treaty of Friendship", in May 1955 which was a collective defense treaty signed in Warsaw, Poland, between the Soviet Union and seven additional socialist republics of Central and Eastern Europe. The pact solidified the Soviet Union's influence and control over the Eastern Bloc countries, as they garnered control over

EUROPE DURING THE COLD WAR (1960)
Warsaw Pact   NATO   Non-aligned nations

the structure; member states were expected to align with Soviet foreign policy and adhere to socialist principles. Ideologically the Soviet Union arrogated the right to define socialism and communism; and acted as the "leader" of the global socialist movement. The eight nations that formed the Warsaw Pact committed to mutual defense in the event of an attack against any member, similar to NATO. The treaty emphasized principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of member countries, respect for national sovereignty, and political independence. Nevertheless, the governments of these member states were indirectly controlled by the Soviet Union, despite the formal commitment to these principles. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union underwent a period of upheaval due to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, which introduced a series of reforms aimed to address economic inefficiencies and allow for greater political openness. However, they inadvertently introduced forces that weakened the centralized control of the Soviet Union over its satellite states. The Baltic states witnessed a revival of national identity, sparking once again a growing desire for independence. And, other neighboring Warsaw Pact members including Hungary, Czechoslovakia (now known as Czechia, Bulgaria and Romania, experienced a series of expressing discontent with the treaty and the communist rule, looking to further increase their sovereignty. In September 1990, East Germany withdrew from the Warsaw Pact as part of its preparations for reunification with West Germany. In the same year, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland had refrained from participating in all military exercises associated with the Warsaw Pact. The formal dissolution of the Warsaw Pact took place in March and July 1991, coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Adhesion of NATO

On February 9th, 1990, former US Secretary of State James Baker and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev led a discussion on the status of a reunited Germany. The two men agreed that NATO would not extend past the territory of East Germany, a promise repeated by NATO's secretary general in a speech on May 17th that same year in Brussels. Although these promises were never formed as a treaty or a written oath, the turning point of NATO enlargement came much later, in 1995, at the request of the Eastern European countries. Russia sees the eastward expansion as a violation of these claims, contributing to the rising tensions. The state follows this by arguing that NATO expansion undermines the sovereignty of countries that join the alliance, suggesting that these nations are being drawn into a false sense of security that undermines their sovereignty. Although NATO assures that in order to maintain security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, these measures are necessary to deter any potential adversaries. In recent years, Western Allies have increased NATO's forward presence by creating multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. These initiatives include the deployment of tactical weapons aimed at safeguarding member states from potential missile threats. NATO has forged strategic partnerships with numerous nations worldwide, fostering collaboration in critical areas such as intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, and crisis management. Partnerships significantly contribute towards expanding NATO's global presence and influence. Whilst the Russian Federation was completely against the expansion and held onto the claims, NATO members argue that they signed a document addressed as the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997, through which they became partners and committed to guaranteeing peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area as well as the territorial integrity of all member states. As of now, NATO has 31 member countries, including 10 Eastern European countries- with the most recent being Finland; who joined in 2023.

Invasion of Ukraine (2022 - ONGOING)

Following current Russian president Vladimir Putin's announcement of a 'special military operation' on February 24th, 2022, regarding Ukraine, NATO expressed concerns and emphasized the importance of respecting international law, including the UN Charter's Article 51, which outlines the inherent right to self-defense. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 sparked NATO's suspension of multiple practical cooperation deals with Russia, and several member countries imposed sanctions in response. NATO had also deepened its partnership with Ukraine, aiding the nation through various assistance programs, including the provision of non-lethal aid and advisory support. The deep cultural, economic, and political bonds between Russia and Ukraine are central to the state's identity, echoing historical ties that resonate with the perceived threat Russia faces due to the expansion of NATO. This concern is also reflected in the Baltic states, which, since their

independence, have sought NATO membership as a means to solidify their sovereignty and security, viewed by Russia as a form of encroachment on its security and strategic interests. Ukraine's main military defense is entirely co-dependent on its Western allies and their resources, and many speculate on the personal gain earned by these states. Some argue the assistance from Western nations to Ukraine is yielding tangible military advantages. Ukraine receives crucial battlefield intelligence from its Western allies, reciprocating by providing valuable insights into the capabilities, effectiveness, and tactics employed by Russian forces, as well as the quality of their military equipment. NATO has also been actively involved in providing military assistance and training to Ukraine. This includes programs aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces, improving compliance with NATO forces, and strengthening defense institutions. NATO has deployed an enhanced forward presence in Eastern Europe, including the Baltic states, to reinforce its commitment to collective defense. This presence involves the rotational deployment of allied forces to demonstrate solidarity and provide a rapid response capability. NATO has also utilized its power through economic means, with many NATO member countries imposing heavy sanctions on Russia to attempt to foster a peaceful resolution. Russia has responded to NATO's involvement in the region with its own military and political measures, such as conducting military exercises, enhancing its defense capabilities, and other diplomatic efforts to facilitate the capture of Ukraine; they have seized portions of Belarusian territory, establishing a direct corridor for easier access to the capital. Belarus, bordering other Baltic nations such as Poland, Lithuania and Latvia is one of the few remaining states that hasn't aligned itself with NATO. Its territory serves extreme strategic importance for Russia- as it's the shortest route to access Ukraine. As of early 2024, Ukraine has still been unable to join NATO despite relations starting back in 1991. The state had applied for membership in 2008- but was rejected due to the former president Viktor Yanukovych, who intended to keep close ties with Russia. There are potential risks that come with Ukraine joining NATO as of now, one being due to Article 5 of the NATO treaty.

Timeline of Key Events

Date   **Event**

4th of April 1949   Establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty
Organization, signed by several Western nations to establish and agree on collective security against
the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

18th of February 1952   Turkey and Greece join NATO, being the first Eastern European countries to become an alliance since the formation. The establishment was part of a broader strategy to establish a unified front against the Soviet Union.

14h of May 1955   Establishment of the Warsaw Pact, formed by the Soviet Union and seven other Eastern Bloc states as a response to the establishment and expansion of NATO.

3rd of October 1990   Reunification of East and Western Germany, and obtained NATO membership.

1st of July 1991   The Warsaw Pact dissolved, after preparations for East Germany and West Germany reunification. Shortly follows the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

29th of March 2004   Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia join NATO, making it the treaty's largest wave of enlargement.

20th of February 2014   Russia overthrows the Crimean Peninsula, and annexes the region.

24th of February 2022   Russian President Vladimir Putin announces a "special military operation" on Ukraine to the state of Russia.

4th of April 2023   Finland joins NATO, giving NATO countries access to 1,350 kilometers of borders with Russia.

Major Parties Involved

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has expressed various concerns and objections regarding NATO's involvement nearing their borders in neighboring states. Russia views NATO's military presence and involvement in these regions as provocative and a threat to its national security. The alliance's

expansion, including the acceptance of former Soviet states and Warsaw Pact members such as Poland, Estonia and Latvia, is perceived by Russia as encroaching on its traditional sphere of influence. Tensions have escalated, with Russia criticizing NATO's activities and raising questions about the balance of power in the region.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance formed by Western states that collectively agreed upon their distribution of sovereignty to ensure a strong, stable military presence globally. The organization's core principle is collective defense; to ensure the security and stability of all nations loyal to the treaty; and as outlined in Article 5, an attack on one is an attack on all. This commitment shapes the organization's involvement in the security of all its member states, including those near Russia. As of April 4, 2023, NATO comprises 31 member states, reflecting on its nine rounds of enlargement since 1949.

United States of America (USA)

The United States plays a crucial role as a leading member of the alliance. Former U.S President Harry S. Truman was an established and vital contributor to the establishment of NATO; and pushed for it to prevent the spread of communism and ensure the security of Western Europe during the Cold War. The U.S. is actively involved in NATO's efforts to ensure security, stability, and collective defense in the Baltic states and other neighboring nations. The nation has historically been a strong advocate for NATO enlargement, supporting the inclusion of new member states, especially those in Eastern Europe. Although, one can argue that a focus on NATO expansion in Europe could divert attention and resources away from addressing global security challenges.

Ukraine

Ukraine, a country bordering Russia and having strong historic ties with the nation, had Crimea, part of its state annexed by Russia. Ukraine has long expressed aspiration for native membership, the desires rooted in the country's pursuit of security stability and alignment with Western institutions; however, NATO membership does involve a complex process and Ukraine's path has faced multiple challenges including geopolitical tensions between the West and Russia.

Belarus

After Breaking away from the crumbling Soviet Union in the 1990s, Belarus became increasingly aligned with Russia unlike its neighbors; and those bonds strengthened with Russia's

invasion of Ukraine. Current president Alexander Lukashenko has allowed Belarus to be used as grounds and base for Russian nuclear weapons. Belarus had allowed Russia to stage part of the annexation of Crimera from its territory; just 80 kilometers to the north of the Ukraine, and now resulted in the conquest for Ukraine's capital; Kyiv.

Finland

The most recent member and fast-tracked to joining NATO, although previously maintaining a policy of military non-alignment prior to the conflict. Due to the instability in northern Europe, the expansion of the treaty has caused Russia to strengthen its military capability in northwest Europe. Accession of Finland's borders is essential to the development of the conflict, due to its proximity to Russia.

Possible Solutions

Possible Resolutions of Territorial Disputes

Ensuring that solutions to this topic remain diplomatic are essential to fulfilling the UN's mission to maintain international peace and security, and preserve and protect human rights. By utilizing various diplomatic channels such as creating international forums to facilitate dialogue between NATO countries and Russia could help ensure and insinuate a form of common ground. Possible discussion to address specific territorial disputes, such as the status of Crimea. To effectively provide a solution, there must be a form of consensus between all nations to foster peace.

Arms Control and Agreements

Creating humanitarian corridors, akin to ongoing arms control talks between NATO and Russia, presents a viable strategy for mitigating escalating military tensions. Given the interdependence of the current situation on the potential for nuclear warfare, engaging in negotiations and establishing agreements to curtail armaments during conflicts becomes imperative. Such measures not only contribute to specific accords but also foster an environment conducive to broader agreements, fostering trust among nations. Against the backdrop of historical grievances and the influence of identity politics in heightening tensions, the avoidance of military actions emerges as a crucial means of resolving the tensions. This is to also ensure that NATO has only defensive measures, to prevent any further demonstrations of public uprise.

Sanctions and Economic Restrictions

As seen prior, many NATO countries have deployed various sanctions on Russia, condemning them for their actions on Ukraine, stating it has infringed on the country's sovereignty. However, Europe had been heavily dependent on Russia's energy reserves and resources, causing major complications and surges of inflation globally. Such considerations are not to be ignored; economic power is an important tool in the world of global politics. On the other hand, this would have to ensure viable reasoning, viable reporting and consensus between various member states.

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