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## NATO Enlargement: Poland, The Baltics, Ukraine and Georgia

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NATO ENLARGEMENT:  
POLAND, THE BALTICS, UKRAINE AND GEORGIA

By  
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## ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has enlarged several times to include a number of new countries. The first two case studies that are analyzed within this paper include key countries that were added in the 1999 and 2004 rounds of NATO enlargement: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The third case study takes a closer look at two countries, Ukraine and Georgia, that sought to become members of NATO but were denied Membership Action Plans (MAPs) because of Russian discontent and military intervention. It is questionable if Russia will use military force to disrupt the territorial sovereignty of future prospective NATO candidate countries. This paper aims to identify the trend between countries seeking NATO membership and Russian intervention within these countries. Poland joined NATO in 1999, and much to Moscow's dislike, NATO's borders expanded farther into Eastern Europe. The Baltic States, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, joined NATO in 2004, pushing the NATO border right against Russia's northwestern front. This gave western alliances the ability to host military operations through NATO on the Russian border. It is apparent that Moscow has done everything in its power to prevent more countries that share a border with Russia from joining NATO. Only three months after the Bucharest Summit in 2008, Russia invaded two territories in Georgia. After the pro-Russian president in Ukraine was ousted in 2014, Russia invaded Eastern Ukraine and annexed the Crimean Peninsula. In order to be offered a MAP, the candidate country must have complete sovereignty over its territory. By invading key points within both Georgia and Ukraine, Russia was delaying their ability to become members of the security alliance. It is apparent that there is a connection between increased NATO collaboration with countries that border Russia, and military action taken upon those countries by Russia.

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# INTRODUCTION TO NATO ENLARGEMENT AND RUSSIAN RESPONSE

## Thesis and Main Argument

The research question that I answer within this paper is: Why are relations between NATO and Russia degrading, and how can further conflict between potential candidate states and Russia be prevented? My argument is that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cannot continue on its path of enlargement if it aims to continue any working relationship with Russia. Expanding the membership of NATO to include Central European countries and the Baltic states alarmed Russia, and the possible addition of other countries, such as Ukraine and Georgia, is seen by Russia as a direct threat to their national security. Though NATO seeks to solve grander problems like international terrorism, it still serves a purpose in protecting its member states from outside threats. Within this paper, I intend to discuss both Poland and the Baltic States joining NATO, possible candidate countries receiving MAPs, and the realities that the international community will face with regard to further NATO enlargement.

My hypothesis is that if NATO continues on its path of complete European enlargement, there will be an increase of conflicts between Russia and potential NATO candidates. Russia sees further NATO expansion as a threat to its national security, and a malicious attempt to negate its influence in the surrounding regions. Even though if NATO conducted another round of enlargement, it would be difficult to do so based on an underlying factor: Russia's desire to remain a regional superpower. Some of the current countries that are being vetted for NATO membership are Georgia and Ukraine. These states would provide NATO with an enormous advantage in the region because of their geographic location, and shared borders with Russia. Though this may be the case, it is also in Russia's interest for these states to not become a part of

NATO. With these countries remaining non-member states of NATO, Russia is able to retain a high level of influence among them. In addition, Russia's goal of retaining its regional hegemon status would be made a reality if it were able to form a structure similar to the one it possessed before the fall of the Soviet Union; the Warsaw Pact. Within this paper, I will analyze the aforementioned aspects of Russia – NATO relations, and conclude with the possibilities of what the international order will look like, given NATO enlargement continues or halts.

The variables that are present within this situation are as follows. The independent variables of the enlargement process include candidate countries willingness to join the security alliance and NATO's intentions, regarding enlargement. Dependent variables in the situation include the Russia's reaction to the enlargement process based on geography and its relationship to the state, and the path that will be taken after the initial process to expand NATO is suggested. Within the body of this paper, I will identify several variables, connect their relationship with real world events, identify the possible outcomes of enlargement, and Russia's reaction to the potential enlargement process.

The relationships between the variables mentioned are not black and white, and often will become interconnected. Russia has grown aggravated by the enlargement process that NATO has been conducting since 1999. They feel cheated and threatened, as NATO first stood to serve as a counter weight to the Warsaw Pact. Though it serves to also combat global issues, such as international terrorism, it still acts as a security alliance that jeopardizes Russia's ability to exert influence in the surrounding regions. Throughout this paper, I will analyze the relationships between variables regarding Russia, NATO, and the international structure.

It's difficult to assess whether or not the relationship of each variable is positive or negative. Though for the most part, the relationship regarding NATO enlargement and diplomatic relations between NATO member states, potential candidates, and Russia, is a negative one. If NATO enlargement occurs against Russia's will, the state is bound to react poorly. This brings to light an interesting question: is NATO enlargement worth aggravating Russia?

### Topic Significance

This topic is particularly significant because of the rising tensions between NATO and Russia, the recent events that have transpired in Ukraine and Georgia, and the intention NATO has of expanding. NATO's enlargement process serves as a threat to Russia's foreign policy interests and in order to prevent future conflicts from occurring between NATO, candidate states, and Russia, the decision to continue or temporarily halt NATO expansion must be decided upon.

The theoretical importance of this topic relates to the possibility of future conflict occurring in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Asia. As seen in the past decade, Russia will act accordingly to preserve its interests in the surrounding regions. In order for Europe and the surrounding regions to remain secure, a decision regarding future enlargement processes must be made.

The policy importance of the topic stems directly from a desire to prevent future conflicts and the degradation of relations between NATO and Russia. The foreign policy initiative of enlargement directly effects NATO's relationship with Russia in either a positive or negative way. If the enlargement process continues, relations with Russia will degrade. If the enlargement

process is halted (with regard to states that border Russia), then relations with Russia will mostly likely elevate in a positive manner.

### Literature Review

The following includes the main points of articles that have been written about the topic at hand: Russia – NATO Relations. Within this literature review are articles from journals that contain information relevant to Poland, The Baltics, Ukraine, Georgia, Russia, the enlargement process of NATO, and factual information about NATO and Russia. This includes a look at the opinions and research done by other scholars with relation to the information I have collected to write this paper.

(1979) Poland's Preparation for World War Two<sup>1</sup>: Within this article, Peszke talks about Poland's preparation for World War Two. He discusses why Poland fought unlike any other country in Europe, and the historical relevance to fighting off foreign invaders. This journal is instrumental to gaining a background knowledge of Poland during the prewar era. In order to analyze the power dynamic between NATO, Poland, and Russia, it's necessary to first understand the pretext that Poland had to security alliances in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

(1995) Partnership for Peace and Beyond<sup>2</sup>: Borawski discusses NATO enlargement and the Partnership for Peace program within this article. Written in 1995, this work was made only a few years before the round of NATO enlargement with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. This document brings up interesting points about adding Central European countries into the security alliance, and expanding the Partnership for Peace program. This work specifically contains information within the PFP, such as the ability for countries to tailor the

program to their needs. The author also mentions that active participation in the Partnership for Peace will shape NATO expansionism for years to come.

(1995) Russian Opposition to NATO Expansion<sup>3</sup>: In this article, Lieven expands upon Russian concerns that revolve around NATO expansionism. An important piece of information within this work is Russia's expected response to including Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic within NATO. American diplomats assured Russia that including these countries into the security alliance would not be with malicious intent toward Russia. However, it is obvious that adding these countries directly threatens Russia's ability to remake a similar structure to that of the Soviet Union. This work will be used to back up the idea that NATO is a pivotal way for the United States to assert its influence in Eastern Europe.

(1995) The Folly of Rapid NATO Expansion<sup>4</sup>: Kamp discusses NATO expansionism and the negative attributes that can come from its occurrence within this article. While countries in Eastern Europe urge their membership status be expedited, the author raises several important questions about expansion eastward. These questions include points such as the possible grantee of security from aggravators, nuclear weapons dilemmas, and Russia's reaction to an eastward expansion. One of the main points of discussion in this piece is the implication of invoking Article 5. Are members of the alliance ready to assist in military combat and aid if a threat arises and affects a member state?

(1996) Reforming NATO<sup>5</sup>: The author, Kaiser, discusses the path that NATO will take for the years to come in this article. The aspects of deterrence are brought to light, mentioning the ability for NATO to combat potential post-Soviet aggression within Eastern Europe. In addition, this journal talks about the ability for NATO to promote democracy, act as a peace

stabilizer, and become a mechanism to establish a U.S. led international order. Kaiser also brings up the challenges that NATO will face, such as continued expansion and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Within this piece, information regarding the implications of expansion are touched upon. This journal was written before the wave of expansion that included Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and the insight the author provides for the consequences of adding those countries is invaluable.

(1998) Nattering NATO Negativism? Reasons Why Expansion May Be a Good Thing<sup>6</sup>: In this article, Ball touches upon very important topics that surround NATO and Central Europe. This section particularly highlights the positive contributions that NATO expansionism holds for European countries that could be threatened by an aggressive Russian foreign policy. The author argues that NATO expansionism could counter Russian revisionism, and could benefit non-NATO states. What the author means by this is that NATO expanding to include more European countries would deter Russia from rebuilding a multi-state empire similar to that of the Soviet Union. In addition, non-member states would benefit from expansionism, for instance Ukraine, because if Poland is a member of NATO, Russia would be less likely to outwardly provoke Ukraine militarily due to fears of Polish assistance (and thus NATO military assistance).

(1999) Poland — The Road to 1989<sup>7</sup>: Within in his article, Raymond discusses the difficulties that Poland had during its time in the Soviet Union, as well as its evolution from a member of the Soviet Union to a sovereign country. Raymond highlights the ways in which Poland received outside assistance, such as Radio Free Europe, and how the Polish population became increasingly nationalistic. The author does an incredible job of describing Poland's time in the Soviet Union, and the measures that were taken to transition into a capitalist country. This

journal will be particularly helpful to reference when I write the section within the first chapter about Poland's history and relationship with Europe after World War Two.

(2000) Reviewed Work: The Future of NATO<sup>8</sup>: Enlargement, Russia, and European Security by Charles-Philippe: In this article, Baev reviews David's "the Future of NATO: Enlargement, Russia, and European Security." This work primarily focuses on the debates on NATO enlargement, with regard to Western and Central European views. In addition, the work that the author is reviewing provides a powerful insight on the reasons Poland sought to join NATO.

(2002) Uneasy Expansion: NATO and Russia<sup>9</sup>: In this article, Franekova particularly discusses the implications of NATO expansionism with relation to including smaller Eastern European countries into the alliance. While the security alliance is concerned primarily with security and stability of countries that are not large enough to protect themselves, NATO tries primarily to concern itself with the collective security of Europe. This, however, implies that the NATO border will move closer to Russia's western border. This is especially seen with NATO's inclusion of the Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

(2004) Expansion of NATO: Russia's Dilemma<sup>10</sup>: This article discusses the importance of NATO in multiple spheres: It's involvement with creating a more secure Europe and its purpose in fighting threats such as terrorism. The author, Gidadhubli, brings up that NATO continued to be relevant in the sphere of combating terrorism and other avenues other than protecting countries from a more aggressive Russia, however Russia views NATO to be completely irrelevant if not to prevent the country from gaining regional influence. Gidahubli mentions that

NATO and Russia have conflicting views regarding expansionism, and the conflicting views could inevitably result in rising tensions.

(2010) NATO's Final Frontier: Why Russia Should Join NATO<sup>11</sup>: Kupchan discusses the necessity of finding a common ground between Russia and NATO. As written, Russia is an essential part of dealing with global problems such as counterterrorism, Iran's nuclear ambitions, energy security, the stabilization of Afghanistan, and energy security. The expansion of NATO makes Russia's placement within the international community more pressing. Russia outlined NATO as a primary external threat in their 2010 military doctrine. The U.S. continues to see and use NATO as a tool for power projection in Europe, however the European members see the military alliance as a tool to build a stable, peaceful, and unified Europe. The author lists five arguments as to why Russia should be integrated into NATO. The first being that Russia's inclusion would create collective security through integration. The second argument is that its inclusion would restore the transatlantic European link the U.S. needs as a partner, considering how slow the EU moves on matters of defense. The third argument is that Russia's inclusion would allow for a peaceful integration of Ukraine and Georgia, without a crisis in Moscow. The fourth argument is that Russia's inclusion would ensure the alliance's control of evolution in the Transatlantic space. The fifth argument is that Russia's inclusion would allow for the alliance to broaden its scope; the alliance would be able to expand its horizons past its own neighborhood. Though NATO would be running a strategic risk by including Russia, the security alliance runs a greater risk by not including the state.

(2010) The two-headed Russian eagle, European partner or outsider<sup>12</sup>: The author of this article, Lenzi, talks about the history of Russia's relations with NATO, and the interactions the

state has had with its neighbors (future NATO countries). The article portrays that the time has come for a triangular alliance between the U.S., mainland Europe, and Russia. This would essentially link Euro-American and Euro-Asian geopolitics, something that should have been a priority after World War 2 and, later, the Cold War. The author talks about how it is too ambitious to create a new alliance or structure. The alliance and relationship between Russia and NATO should be “a garden that’s supported, steadily tended, and grown organically through accumulation.

(2011) Multilateralism, Multipolarity, and Beyond<sup>13</sup>: A Menu of Russia’s Policy Strategies: Makarychev discusses the idea of a Multipolar and Unipolar system in relation to the East and West within this article. The multipolar approach of viewing the international community are in direct contradiction to the Western “collective unilateralism” view. This would include an all-encompassing security alliance (one that would include Russia in NATO). Though this sounds like a framework for the international community that could work, it would hardly result in the idea of equality of all participants in the international system. The author doesn’t address this point, but if Russia were to join NATO at this point, the state would be part of a much larger, Western led coalition, and would most likely be subordinate to Western dictation. As mentioned in a previous article discussed in this excerpt, the requirements and implications of joining NATO would need to be altered before Russia joins a Western led security alliance (completing a Transatlantic security alliance).

(2011) The U.S. Debate on NATO Nuclear Deterrence<sup>14</sup>: Yost directly addresses the nuclear stockpile within Europe, how it should be decreased (if at all), and the terms of which Russia will be involved with creating a denuclearized Europe within this article. It’s the long-

term policy that responsibility agreements, such as shared nuclear weapons, contribute to deterrence prevention and provide assurance to allies of U.S. commitments. It's from this stance that the U.S. should not make any strides to decrease the Nuclear Stockpile in Europe without an agreement from Russia providing reductions as well (with the appropriate level of transparency). There are counter arguments made that go on to discuss why the U.S. should reduce the stockpile regardless, but because of the topic, I'd like to address the bilateral stance that Russia and the U.S. should both reduce stockpiles respectively.

(2011) A Cool App for "Strategic Partnership" with Russia<sup>15</sup>: In this article, Horlohe wrote about a deal between Russia and France, effectively delivering two modern helicopter carriers to Russia in 2014. In addition, he talks about how two more warships were going to be constructed in Russia. Overall, the author discusses Russia's acquisition of new weaponry in a number of ways. France delivering helicopters to Russia was considered to be the biggest arms transfer between a NATO member state and Russia ever. Not only does this set a precedence for arms transactions between member states and Russia, but it also makes Russia more dependent on Western technology.

(2012) Signatures of Partnership for Peace Framework Document<sup>16</sup>: The information retrieved from this website is official NATO statistics that pertain to the Partnership for Peace program. On this web page, NATO provides a list of countries that have ratified the Partnership for Peace and lists the year that the respective country did so. Using this information to back up data about Poland's involvement with the Partnership for Peace is crucial when discussing the country's bilateral cooperation with NATO.

(2012) Europe as Seen from Russia<sup>17</sup>: Baranovsky writes about how Russia is concerned by the marginal position given to it in European politics within this article. The issue is that Russia views itself as a part of Europe, but is often marginalized by its relationship with the West. Both liberal and conservative Russians have different viewpoints as to how Russia should be seen in Europe and further integrated with other European countries. Though Russia has enough resources to be a self-sufficient power within Europe, the EU is Russia's largest trade partner. The author goes on to talk about how ordinary Russians are connected to center and western Europe. He asserts the aspect that ordinary Russians are most concerned with visas and travel to other European countries. That being said, further integration of Russia into Europe (possibly the EU or NATO) would allow visa free travel.

(2014) NATO Enlargement and Russia: Discerning Fact from Fiction<sup>18</sup>: In this work, Rühle discusses misconceptions that are often attributed to the relationship between NATO and Russia. With Russia's new aggression regarding NATO enlargement, NATO's reaction by halting the expansion process is seen as a temporary decision. Russia often expresses its discontent with the expansion because of the "broken promises" the west made that it wouldn't expand NATO past a unified Germany. Though said, there has never been binding contracts or documents that say NATO would not expand past these borders. The article goes on to say that Russia has never received a formal invitation to join NATO. These facts however continue to distract from the bigger and more important issue at hand: how to create a secure Europe without aggravating Russia in the process of enlargement.

(2015) NATO Enlargement and Russia: Myths and Realities<sup>19</sup>: In this work, Rühle discusses the realities of NATO enlargement with relation to Russia. Several points are made

within his work, however one that particularly stood out was the notion that Russia sees NATO expansion as a direct threat to its national security. Also, Rühle notes that Russia views NATO expansion into Eastern Europe as a “broken promise,” after the reunification of Germany. This work is an important source when referring to the actualities of NATO enlargement, and instead of answering standard questions about the process, this work brings up many new intricate and interesting questions that the reader is left to answer.

(2016) North European security after the Ukraine conflict<sup>20</sup>: Within this work, Atland discusses the outcome of the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia. Atland views the actions taken by Russia to be contentious, as the annexation is not legitimized by the entire international community. Reading this work has given me a better understanding of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the frame of reference NATO holds on the issue. Atland also discusses the awareness that Norway, and non-member states, Sweden and Finland, must now have with regard to Russia as their eastern neighbor. After the 2014 annexation of Crimea, it is obvious that NATO must reassess many aspects of its relationship with Russia.

#### Topic Relevance and Research Design

My writing about the topic will revolve around NATO enlargement and Russia’s response in the following ways. I intend on initially highlighting the Poland case study. I will describe how and why it joined NATO, and then eventually going into detail about the international reactions created by its entrance into the alliance. Next, I will highlight the case study of the Baltic States. Like the case study on Poland, I will describe how and why the Baltics joined NATO, and then go into detail on international reactions to their inclusion. Following suit, I will discuss Russia’s reaction to enlargement by highlighting both Georgia and Ukraine, and

the actions that have transpired there. After discussing both Georgia's and Ukraine's involvement with NATO and the actions taken against the two countries by Russia, I will conclude the paper with a number of comparable factors that tie the three case studies together.

## FIRST ROUND OF NATO ENLARGEMENT: POLAND

### Poland Pre-WWII

Poland had an incredibly unique position in the international community before and after World War II. The most notable, and in some regard comrisable, aspect of this country is its location within Europe. As one of the largest central European countries, Poland was placed in a difficult spot leading up to 1939. With the rising threat of foreign invaders, those in charge of the Polish government were forced to sign non-aggression treaties (one of which was in 1934), and normalized relations with Poland and Germany for an agreed upon 10 years. This brings to light an interesting aspect; what caused Poland to be a theater for conflict in the beginning of World War II? To answer this question, we must first analyze the politics and decisions of countries surrounding Poland at the time.

The Soviet Union had undergone drastic industrialization, and had taken on incredible amounts of political and economic change since the end of World War I. With a growing authoritarian government, the Soviet Union had set it's aims on expanding westward; increasing its influence and dominance over Eastern European states. Not only did this alarm the Polish government, but it also caused Poland to look for allies that would come to its aid, given an invasion were to occur. After their victory in 1920 against the Soviet Union, Poland entered a state of military stagnation and deflation, regarding original equipment made domestically. Poland was equipped with French World War I military equipment, making it difficult for Germany or the Soviet Union to take unilateral action against the state. Poland spent time developing their air force from the years 1925 – 1936 and enacted the six-year plan, which aimed to develop the military into a force that could defend against foreign invaders. The six-year plan,

however, was happening simultaneously when Hitler invaded the Rhine Province and openly denounced the stipulation of the Versailles treaty, limiting Germany's military. Poland had struggled for centuries to preserve its national identity; what it means to be Polish. In 1939, Smigly-Rydz, a Polish statesman and commander-in-chief, said this in an interview: "We have learnt from experience what it means to live without freedom, and we are ready to die rather than lose it again." As mentioned prior, the history of Poland is one in which people struggle to preserve their national identity and culture under an alien rule, and took every available opportunity to regain full independence<sup>21</sup>.

However, Poland's unique geography within Europe makes it difficult to preserve their full independence. Bordering two of the most powerful European countries in the 1930's, Poland was not left with many options other than siding with the Western European powers and preparing their military for combat. In 1939, Germany began setting its aims on invading Poland. Though Hitler was confident that the status quo would remain (Britain and France holding the notion of appeasement), he feared that the Soviet Union might come to Poland's aid, should Germany invade. That same year, Germany signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union (the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact), declaring that the two countries would remain in a state of non-combat with one another. However, a secret stipulation of this treaty divided Poland into an East and West portion, two halves that would be occupied by the Soviet Union and Germany respectively. With the German invasion finally occurring in early September, Poland was able to mobilize about a million soldiers to fight. However, the force of the Polish military was not able to fend off the force of Germany. The Polish armed forces hoped to hold out in Warsaw until an offensive could be staged against Germany in the west, however the Soviet Union invaded

Poland and the country fell. Once Poland's government and military leaders fled the state, Germany and the Soviet Union signed an agreement outlining the territory each country would occupy. Yet again in history, Poland was partitioned by more powerful foreign invaders.

### Poland Post-WWII

After World War II, Western Europe was in shambles and a bipolar system emerged. The two great powers left in the international community were the United States and the Soviet Union. With influence split down Central Europe, the Soviet Union was in complete control of Poland. The formation of the Warsaw pact was directly met with the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Poland was under the direct influence of a communist government<sup>22</sup>. This was simply the continuation of the Polish people's occupation of another foreign entity, one that did not represent the population within the state. Though an authoritarian, communist regime until the 1989 revolutions, Poland played a significant role (if not the most important part) in bringing about the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe (and in turn, the Soviet Union).

Poland was notorious for fostering intelligent classes of people who sought to bring about free thought and national culture into everyday life. During the Cold War, the west gave heavy support to Polish dissidents fighting for human rights and freedom within the Soviet Bloc. Programs such as 'Radio Free Europe' kept hope alive in communist countries during the Cold War and would consistently encourage change<sup>23</sup>. Lech Walesa, the Polish politician who founded Solidarity and would later become the state's first president, said this about Radio Free Europe: "The degree of the Radios' impact cannot even be described. Would there be earth without the sun?" Though Poland was under communist and military rule (martial law during the 1970s), the

Polish people never stopped fighting their oppressors and calling for change. During the early 1970s, Solidarity was founded; the first non-communist trade union within the Soviet Union. This was an incredible step in the direction of democracy because it allowed for a significant amount of interaction with non-communist countries. It can be referred to as the beginning of the end of communism, as Gorbachev began implementing policies such as Perestroika and Glasnot; reforms that increasingly liberalized Eastern European countries within the Warsaw Pact.

The west saw Poland as an opportunity to begin transitioning Eastern European countries into democracies. Continuing with the fall of communism in Poland and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Poland became a prime candidate for NATO membership. In 1999, the state became a full member, strengthening the west's grip on Europe, while simultaneously weakening the newly formed Russian Federation. Poland looked for the west's guidance during the 1990s, as the state sought to transition into a full democracy and become a full participating member of the international community. In the coming sections, Poland's acceptance into NATO will be analyzed, along with the international reaction of its entrance and the implications its membership implies.

#### Mutual Interest in Membership

Poland, at the continental cross roads of Europe, needed a guaranteed security alliance with more powerful countries if the state were to have any hope of remaining independent. Though after the Cold War, it seemed as though great strides of imperialism were coming to an end. While this may be true in many aspects, there isn't any reason why Poland shouldn't have looked for opportunities to remain sovereign and independent. The initial assumption was that NATO expansionism would remain as east as the newly reunified German state. However, after

several talks during the 1990s, Poland and other Eastern European countries quickly became the point of focus for additions to the collective security alliance. However, Poland is a particular case when discussing expanding the NATO sphere of influence. Geographically positioned in the center of Europe and bordering several countries that were a part of the Warsaw Pact, Poland holds many unique traits that give the west a strong foothold in Eastern Europe, given the state becomes allies with western countries. Not only is Poland a prime candidate in Europe to become a member of NATO, but the state benefits tremendously from the alliance as well. As a country that was, as mentioned before, occupied by foreign invaders for centuries, Poland revels at the idea of having a strong sense of security against its powerful neighbors. Both becoming stronger allies with western countries and gaining a more secure foothold as a sovereign country could be achieved through Poland joining NATO.

As mentioned before, NATO was an organization that gave Poland the opportunity to secure itself from outside invaders for one of the first times in history. There are a couple of factors that made NATO particularly appealing to the state. A major factor was the aspect of collective security. As a country located in Central Europe, Poland has several neighbors that possess incredibly strong military capabilities and have tried to invade in the past. Entering a collective security agreement with world powers, such as the United States, allows for Poland to focus less on defense, and more on internal issues<sup>24</sup>. In addition to that point, joining NATO allows for Poland to advance its military capabilities. When Poland was a member of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union stationed nuclear missiles and advanced weaponry within its borders. After the Pact dissolved, there were agreements in the early 2000s to remove all nuclear weapons from Poland. As a member of NATO (and based on its geography), Poland plays a

significant role regarding its possession of weaponry. Should countries that are not a part of NATO attack an Eastern European member state, Poland would be one of the first member states to retaliate. Even though being a member of NATO does not prevent a conflict from occurring, it deters potential conflicts because of the immense support member states receive from one another<sup>25</sup>. In addition, Poland joining NATO fosters a new set of connections with western countries. After Poland joined the alliance, there was an increase in trade between the country and other member states. This can be seen in a positive light; the more Poland and western countries become more inclusive regarding their relations, the more secure Poland becomes.

As for NATO, Poland was a prime candidate for membership due to several factors: geographic location, historical events, and national Polish tradition. The first factor, and arguably the most important, is Poland's position within Europe. Bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (all states that are not members of NATO), Poland has a unique place within Europe. All three of those Eastern European neighbors that were mentioned have increasingly moved away from becoming members of NATO. That being said, Poland's geographic position within Europe makes it one of the most important members of the alliance. Another factor is Poland's history with its more powerful neighbors. As mentioned before, Poland has a history of being invaded, occupied and partitioned by stronger military powers. As an alliance that exists to defend its members, NATO saw Poland as a prime candidate because the state wanted membership<sup>26</sup>. The last factor, taking some aspects of the previous factor, is the notion that Poland wants to be independent. Poland becoming a member of NATO allowed for the government to focus on creating the unique Polish identity, without having to worry about fending off invasions from more powerful countries.

### The Road to Membership

Yet with NATO membership comes constraints and obligations. There is more at work than simply a structure preventing war within the region (and globally). As a country that joins the collective security organization, there are certain steps taken to ensure the fluid transition from non-member state to member state. However, with the benefits that come from entering NATO, there are also concessions that must be made. Poland's entry into NATO was a warm reassurance that the organization was succeeding. Having had joined the alliance in 1999 (along with the Czech Republic and Hungary), Poland had already participated in several NATO agreements such as, but not limited to, the Partnership for Peace, the Individual Partnership Program and joint military exercises<sup>27</sup>. Within the first 10 years of the Warsaw Pact's dissolution, Poland had already invested in joint ventures with NATO and became a member state.

The first of the bilateral agreements between NATO and other European countries was the Partnership for Peace (PfP), launched in 1994. This program involved bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO. This allowed for partners to build relationships with NATO, while simultaneously choosing their own priorities for cooperation<sup>28</sup>. Levels of cooperation varied amongst states, normally including military training exercises, disaster planning and response, policy planning, and environmental issues. In Poland's case particularly, the state wanted to focus on pressing issues, given the political climate right after the fall of the Soviet Union and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Poland sought to emphasize the modernization of air defense and interoperability of command and control systems. Through the Partnership for Peace, the Polish government was able to have talks with

NATO regarding a full future membership<sup>29</sup>. Another agreement that is important to note is the Individual Partnership Program (IPP). In 1994, Poland became the first of the PfP countries to agree and participate in this program. Like the PfP, the IPP was an individual program centered at forging relations between NATO and non-member states through directed and tailored joint efforts. As mentioned before, Poland and NATO began to collaborate through military exercises and advancing Poland's air defense. Through the IPP, Poland was able to get more needs specific collaboration with NATO. Along with the initial programs spearheaded by NATO, becoming a member requires years of discussion and agreements prior to formally entering the alliance.

Regarding Poland's situation with joining NATO in the first round of enlargement, there were many roundtable discussions and meetings between the leadership of NATO and the government. However, after the first wave of enlargement, NATO created a set of guidelines that must be met by countries, prior to their admittance. A Membership Action Plan (MAP) is a set of criteria that the country needs to fulfill to show its process reforming several key sectors. These sectors include, but are not limited to, the military, foreign policy, domestic policy, and territorial disputes. MAP countries are required to upgrade their military to NATO standards and demonstrate that their forces are under democratic control. They are required to settle ethnic and religious disputes by peaceful means and demonstrate their commitment to human rights and rule of law. Countries must also ensure that any domestic legislation won't pose any obstacles in their cooperation with NATO. MAPs that are given to countries are created specifically for each state.

## Russia's Reaction to Poland's Membership with NATO

Poland's involvement with NATO made a serious impact on the international community, changing the security structure of many institutions and effecting the manner in which defensive security was treated in Europe. Poland's geographically strategic placement as a country gave NATO an advantage within Europe. As a past member of the Warsaw Pact, the necessity for Poland to become a more western country was evident. The state borders Ukraine and the Baltics, outlining the importance for NATO membership. This brings surfaces an incredibly pertinent question, though: What was Russia's reaction to Poland joining NATO in 1999? This question, in and of itself, is extremely complex and does not have a single answer (though there are tones that are common).

In the years leading to Poland's entry into NATO, Russia assumed that the United States spearheading NATO expansion was a foreign policy initiative directed at securing interests in Eastern Europe<sup>30</sup>. While this holds true to date (that NATO is an arm of the United States aimed at projecting influence in Eastern Europe), it's necessary to note that Russia felt a deep distrust for the United States during the 1990s. After coming out a victor in the Cold War, the United States was in the position to continue to look at various ways the state could assert influence in regions. That being said, it's obvious why Russia would oppose NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, as Russia no longer had a grip on its sphere of influence (i.e. Former Soviet states). Why would Russia have an issue with NATO expansion if the state no longer had hegemonic aspirations within the region? The answer to that question is given by asking the inverse: why does the west have any interest in Polish security if they are not threatened by Russia<sup>31</sup>? Those two questions raise possibly the most significant point of this entire chapter. The point is not that

the United States is concerned with Polish security. The issue that is raised from Poland joining NATO (in Russia's opinion) is that the United States, Russia's main contender for decades, is in charge of a major security alliance, whose borders are advancing towards Russia's western border. While the United States may care for the security, autonomy, and implementation of democracy in Poland, the state knew that Russia was in any place or position to begin reasserting itself as the dominant hegemon in the region. That being said, using the events of history as an alibi for expanding influence in Eastern Europe was a strategic step in the direction of regional hegemony for the United States. So, how did Russia react to Poland joining NATO? Well, Russia reacted poorly to NATO's first enlargement, but there was nothing of significance that could be done. Dating back to the "2+4" negotiations, Russia's government accepted that a reunified Germany would be within NATO. Though it was never officially recorded or written in any documentation, Russia was under the impression that NATO expansionism would not extend past the newly unified Germany. The fact that NATO expansionism was now going to extend to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary made Russia feel betrayed. Insulted and left with dismay, Russia now saw what was happening as a direct threat to their security within Eastern Europe. It's impossible to categorize the expansion of NATO as anything short of weakening Russian influence within the region<sup>32</sup>. With that being said, the decision to begin enlargement was a serious blow to the United States having any chance of developing a strategic partnership with Russia at that time.

## SECOND ROUND OF NATO ENLARGEMENT: THE BALTICS

### The Baltics Pre-WWII

The previous chapter included a brief account of Poland's history (before World War Two (WWII), after WWII, after the break of the Soviet Union, and its relationship with the international community (most notably with Russia and NATO). It was made apparent that Poland's geographic and historical significance were prime factors in both NATO and Russia's struggle for influence in the region. That being said, Poland was not the last country to play an important role in deciding influential authority in the region. After NATO's enlargement in 1999, the next round took place in 2004, consisting of Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and most notably, the Baltic states, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia<sup>33</sup>. The Baltics play an important part regarding NATO's influence in Eastern Europe, primarily because two of the three states border Russia. Though Poland had a significant role in extending NATO's influence into Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics push the security alliance's borders against the western most expanse of Russia's territory. This chapter will primarily analyze the following aspects of the Baltics. The first section will contain a brief history of the Baltic states before and after WWII, and their role in the international community after they became independent states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The next section will include the path that the Baltic states took to become members of NATO, why they did so, and reactions from the international community. With finalizing the chapter, the relationship, since their admittance into the security alliance in 2004, between the Baltics, NATO, and Russia will be analyzed.

The Baltic states have been a crossroads for conflict in several ways since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like Poland, the three countries have always experienced oppression and

occupation from more powerful neighbors. It wasn't until the 1920s, that the Baltics gained their independence from Czarist Russia and neighboring powers<sup>34</sup>. Though independent states were formed, the countries still suffered pressure from outside forces. For example, Lithuania was invaded by Poland in 1920, and relations between the two countries did not increase for most of the interwar period. The Baltic states experienced relative autonomy throughout the 1920s and 1930s, yet existed in constant awareness that invasion from a more powerful outside force could occur. It becomes apparent, when comparing Poland with the Baltics, that the two entities have similar characteristics that will inevitably lead them down the same path of joining NATO. Leading into the late 1930s, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia faced the end of their short lived independent states. The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939 divided Eastern European countries between Germany and the Soviet Union<sup>35</sup>. Within this agreement between the Nazis and the Soviets, the Baltic states were placed into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. In 1940, the Soviet Union invaded Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, installing pro-Soviet, communist governments in all three countries. During WWII, the Baltics were invaded by Nazi Germany when they broke the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. The populations of these states faced mass oppression, involving deportations, mass arrests, and executions.

### The Baltics Post-WWII

After WWII ended and German occupation ended, the allies agreed that the Baltics would be placed within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence once again. These states then became a part of the Soviet Union, and more so, a part of the Warsaw Pact. As stated in the previous chapter, the Warsaw Pact was a collective security alliance that directly countered NATO<sup>36</sup>. The

Baltic countries, like Poland, are historically prone to outside invasion by more powerful foreign invaders. This alliance did not assure the three states that they would be protected from further exploitation. Their involvement simply meant a continuation of their exploitation from outside forces. This fact further asserts the reasons that the Baltics inevitably sought to become members of NATO, a security alliance that could thwart historically oppressive invaders. Throughout the Cold War period, the Baltic states experienced sovietization, ranging from the collectivization of farms to the mass deportation of people within the Baltic population. While these states were occupied, diplomats from the previous governments of the Baltics resided within the United States, acting as liaisons and represented the legitimate concerns of the Baltic peoples<sup>37</sup>. Leading into the 1980s, massive protests and civil unrest took place in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. Most notably in 1989, a two-million-person human chain stretched from Tallinn to Vilnius<sup>38</sup>. This was to show the unity of the Baltic peoples; those that would rise up against and fight oppression. Amid the mass protests and discontent populations within the Baltics, the Soviet Union knew that losing control of the three states was inevitable<sup>39</sup>. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, recognizing Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as independent states. The last of the Soviet troops did not leave the Baltics until 1994, though<sup>40</sup>.

The Baltic states, now having recognized sovereignty and independence within the international community, aimed to become integral members of international organizations and security structures. Immediately after they regained their independence, the Baltic states joined the United Nations in 1991. This was done through a simple adoption through the general assembly<sup>41</sup>. More importantly, however, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia sought to become members of the European Union and NATO. Two organizations that are at forefront of European

integration, if the Baltics wanted to become more of European countries and to deviate from being under the direct influence of Russia, the three states had to quickly find the best paths to joining both NATO and the European Union. This being said, the European Union and NATO both wanted the Baltics to become members of their respective institutions. There are several reasons that NATO saw the Baltic states as increasingly valuable assets, and vice versa (the Baltics seeing NATO as a valuable asset). Viewed as nothing more than an integral part of the Soviet Union and Czarist Russia by the outside world, the Baltics development and integration into more European institutions changed their role in the international community<sup>42</sup>. The next sections will evaluate the paths by which the Baltics became members of NATO, the reasons that the three states were seen as valuable candidates for NATO, the main reasons that NATO was a security alliance that would fulfill the needs of the Baltics, and international reactions from the Baltic states admission into NATO.

### The Road to Membership

Though these three countries were not exactly in identical positions throughout their journey toward NATO membership, the problems they faced were particularly similar, and their struggles toward improving their economies, military structures, and national security were characterized by the same goal. Attempts of European integration for the Baltic states proved to be accepted with open arms. After Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia declared their independence, the three countries inherited devastated economies and military structures that were in poor quality<sup>43</sup>. Strides to improve their economies and military structures were almost immediate, in part because the Baltic states saw the necessities of active reforms as direct paths to NATO membership. After the 1999 round of enlargement, that incorporated the Czech Republic,

Hungary, and Poland, the Membership Action Plan (MAP) was launched (mentioned in the previous chapter). This program was designed to give aspiring member countries a pathway into NATO membership, as well as assistance to fulfill the requirements candidate states needed to meet<sup>44</sup>. A key component of each MAP given to the Baltics, with regard to the requirements states needed to meet, was the assurance that each state could contribute to the organization's defense and ensure territorial national sovereignty. The latter proved to be quite simple – Russia was not in any position to reclaim the Baltics via military intervention before their admittance in 2004. In addition, Russia saw its relationship with NATO as one that needed to be improved and fostered, not tarnished by acts of imperialism (this will be expanded upon later in the chapter). As for defense, all three countries decided on comprehensive plans with relation to their organization of their forces<sup>45</sup>. Using western institutions and NATO military structuring as a jumping off point, the Baltics organized defense configurations by developing capable land self-defense forces (through the use of training facilities, peace and wartime logistic systems, and updated equipment for land forces). The Baltic states saw the necessity to modernize their militaries and make them capable of training and operating with NATO forces<sup>46</sup>. As past members of the Partnership for Peace, NATO assisted the Baltic states with policy planning, disaster planning and response, and most notably, military-to-military cooperation. Mentioned previously in this chapter, the Baltics joined NATO in 2004. However, here were multiple factors that played a hand in their accession. Timing, being one factor, gave the Baltic countries a huge leg up on states such as Georgia and Ukraine. Although aspiring states such as Georgia and Ukraine were (and still are) in line for NATO membership, both states had not met minimum requirements to join the security alliance. The Baltic states were able to quickly turn to the West

and mirror democratic institutions, such as free elections and market economies<sup>47</sup>. Due to this factor, Latvia, Lithuania, and notably, Estonia, were able to more quickly meet the requirements outlined in their MAPs. Another factor that contributed to the Baltic states expedience with joining NATO, was the strategic positioning that NATO would gain if Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia became members. While these countries did all reform rather quickly, the interest that NATO had with sharing a border with Russia cannot go unnoticed. The next section will delve into the reasons that NATO was an ideal international organization for the Baltics, and why the Baltics were prime candidates for NATO.

#### Mutual Interest in Membership

There are several ways to view why NATO valued the Baltics as credible and necessary members for the security alliance. An initial, and more secondary reason, that the Baltics were prime candidate states for NATO was the fact that they were able to meet the requirements that NATO set to become members. Stemming from the reality that the Baltics saw NATO membership as a route into stability and ensured security from outside military threats, the three countries took it upon themselves to begin making reforms. Beginning second generation reforms included judicial and tax reform, budgetary and policymaking transparency, etc.; all necessary to move forward with democratic transitions<sup>48</sup>. This choice both modernized the Baltics and made offering the three countries a bid easier for NATO.

Mentioned in the previous chapter about Poland, geopolitics play an enormous role in shaping international security and influence. Estonia and Latvia lie on Russia's western border, and Lithuania bordering Belarus, making the three countries incredibly valuable partners for combating encroaching Russian influence in Eastern Europe. NATO was created to counter the

Warsaw Pact (as mentioned in the previous chapter). After its dissolution, the security alliance gathered the purpose of fighting international terrorism and protecting smaller, for the most part European, countries from foreign threats. It would only seem natural for the international organization to incorporate the Baltic states, seeing as they are three former soviet republics and act as a gateway into sharing a board with Russia. Similar to the first round of NATO enlargement, NATO was gaining countries that move its border farther east. Admitting the Baltics into NATO directly benefited the organization in two ways: Russia lost the ability/option of exerting military pressure on the Baltics and gave NATO the ability to build military bases in countries that share a border with Russia. The factor of the Baltic state's location now played an enormous role in NATO's geopolitical influence.

Continuing on the topic of the Baltics providing a better geostrategic positioning for NATO, the military presence that the west was now able to exert in Eastern Europe increased significantly. Surpassing the initial assistance that NATO and western countries provided to the Baltics prior to admission (regarding updating their military), the 2014 Wales Summit brought about the introduction of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP). This called for new deterrence measures and military procedures, broadly welcomed by the Baltic states<sup>49</sup>. A stipulation of the RAP features a 5000-strong Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) created within the NATO Response Force (NRF). Also, the air forces of more than 10 NATO states have been heavily involved in patrolling Baltic airspace since 2004. After the 2014 invasion of Crimea, the RAP and air patrol by allies was scaled up significantly. The Baltic states have made it apparent that they would prefer permanent military presences within their countries, as the RAP involves a "response" mechanism to threats, after they occur. It is interesting to note that one of the core

beliefs that Russia held about the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, is that there would be no military build-up along the Eastern European border. That would include military bases and permanent military personnel. However, the act does not prohibit the establishment of permanent NATO bases in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>50</sup>. Russia's involvement with the entirety of the Baltic inclusion will be touched upon later in this chapter, but for now, the comparison should be made between what Russia "thought" about the Founding Act of 1997 and NATO enlargement in general. Just as Russia was made an empty promise that NATO would not expand past a reunified Germany, the notion that there would be no permanent military buildup along Eastern Europe is also not true. On that note, Russia accused the United States of violating a peace treaty between Moscow and NATO, after the United States sent new military forces to the Baltic region<sup>51</sup>. This is due to the fact that Russia has been increasing its military presence along its western border with the Baltics. The result of both NATO and Russia militarizing their borders? a security dilemma.

#### Russia's Reaction to The Baltic States' Membership with NATO

So, what was Russia's reaction from the Baltics states joining NATO? Has Russia taken action against the Baltics since their admittance into the security alliance? Well, immediately prior to their accession, Russian leaders declared that Baltic entry into NATO was the metaphorical "line in the sand." Gennadii Selezev, speaker of the State Duma in Russia, told journalists that Baltic admission into NATO would require Russia to review its part in the Founding Act of 1997<sup>52</sup>. In attempts to persuade the Baltics from joining NATO, Yeltsin offered multiple security initiatives to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with the intention of creating mutual agreements that would follow in suit. This ended up failing and pushed the Baltics further

into talks of accession with NATO. It was obvious that Russia was going to do everything in its power to keep the Baltics in its sphere of influence. Evidence of this was shown by Russia's reluctance to withdraw troops from the Baltic states (after the collapse of the Soviet Union), a strong reluctance to give up control of military installations, attempts to retain control of a corridor to Kaliningrad through Lithuania, and a refusal to sign border agreements for a certain amount of time<sup>53</sup>. This was an important turning point for Russia, seeing as NATO expanded farther into Eastern Europe and against Russia's western border, directly against the wishes of Moscow. Remaining on the subject of Russia's reaction and response to Baltic NATO membership, Russia has indirectly attacked these three countries (as well as others) with the purpose of destabilization and misinformation.

In 2007, the Estonian government decided to remove a statue commemorating Soviet soldiers killed in WWII. This was condemned by the Kremlin, but the Estonian government went ahead with its removal regardless. After the decision was made, critical portions of Estonia's online media, banking, and government architecture were hit by a wave of digital attacks that crashed numerous websites. The 2007 operation also involved misinformation tactics (i.e. users were redirected to photos of soviet soldiers or fake news stories). These cyber techniques would be redefined in later years during Russia's attacks on Georgia and Ukraine<sup>54</sup>.

Russian armament along its western border with Estonia, Latvia and Belarus has occurred for some time now. However, Moscow planned to send over 100,000 troops and artillery to the western border in preparation for war games that are set to take place in 2017<sup>55</sup>. This is military build-up is not a response to sanctions placed on Russia by the west, but instead, a show of military might. This build up, provocative in nature, causes the Baltics (and NATO) to respond

with a mutual armoring on the borders of Estonia and Latvia. Since then, there has been serious discussion regarding NATO, the countries that will participate in future rounds of enlargement, and Russia's aggressive foreign policy against aspiring NATO members.

## RUSSIA'S RESPONSE TO NATO ENLARGEMENT:

### GEORGIA AND UKRAINE

#### Enlargement after 2004

As mentioned in the previous chapter, NATO has continued to perform enlargement processes that admit states, given they meet the criteria to join the security alliance. This has been met with much contention from Russia, as the state sees NATO enlargement as a direct threat to their national security, interests in surrounding regions, and foreign policy. Previous rounds of enlargement, chiefly in 2004 when seven countries (including the Baltic states) joined NATO, have made serious impacts regarding how Russia continued developing militarily and interacting with its neighbors. Whereas once Russia had full control over these states, the 2004 round of enlargement created an uncertainty within Moscow. With the Baltics becoming members of NATO, it became a reality that NATO forces and military facilities could place themselves on Russia's western border (shared with the Baltics). This prompted a series of responses and decisions by Russia regarding how to continue their foreign policy within the region. After the Baltics entered NATO, Russia's Security Council was called upon to consider deploying additional forces to regions bordering NATO members<sup>56</sup>. During that same time, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Aleksandr Yakovenko, said that "this expansion certainly touched upon Russia's political, military and economic interests and hence, Russia might have to change its already declared policy of unilaterally demilitarizing the zone around the Baltic states." The Baltic states' entrance to NATO could be attributed to several factors, one of which being their instilled historical fear of Soviet dominance in the region, and their desire to remain sovereign and autonomous. With the addition of these new members, the United States

had stated that Russia was not the “enemy.” This prompted Russia to adopt a resolution outlining the need for NATO to take into account Russia’s opinion on expanding to more Eastern European states. While NATO expansionism was still to occur, its transgression would happen regardless of Russia’s agreement. A large part of the reason Russia was adamantly against NATO’s expansion stems from the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. As contending security alliances, it was viable to have both. However, with the Warsaw Pact gone, Russia viewed the existence (and expansion) of NATO as both unnecessary and aggressive. The security alliance still existed, though, to serve as a vassal in combating other international issues aside from a Russian threat, such as terrorism (which Russia experienced as well). Russia still uncomfortable with the idea of bases being set up in the Baltics, Russian Defense Minister (at the time) Sergei Ivanov argued that Russia should have monitoring facilities set up at the bases to ensure that the arms of the NATO facilities pose no threat to Russia’s security. NATO officials denied any possibility of this becoming a reality, immediately dismantling any hope of a comfortable agreement being made between Russia and the security alliance. Continuing with several other disagreements, ranging from defense exercises to air surveillance flights, the accession of the Baltic states to NATO further strengthened its Anti-Russian make-up, according to Mikhail Margelov, the chairman of the Russian Federation for the Council International Relations Committee.

#### Two Prospective Candidate States

With the security alliance now comprising 29 member states, there are still several countries that are seen as primary candidates for NATO membership. Two of these countries are Ukraine and Georgia, located in Eastern Europe and Northwest Asia respectively. These two

countries provide strategic locations for NATO influence, partially because of their history and size, but most critically due to their shared border with Russia. It's no secret that Russia strongly opposes both of these countries becoming members of NATO, and in the past two decades Russia has made several campaigns to derail both Ukraine's and Georgia's acquisition of a membership action plan. It is critical for Russia to remain a primary influence of these two countries because of their geostrategic location, their past history with the federation, and the threat that is presented by the two states becoming NATO members. Both Ukraine and Georgia were part of the Soviet Union prior to its collapse in 1991, and hold unique, deep ties to Russia. Though there have been tremendous strides of collaboration (and possible integration) between NATO, Ukraine and Georgia, the last two decades have shown that their membership becoming a reality will be plagued with many difficulties, largely presented by Russia.

In part, the Ukrainian and Georgian paths for NATO membership are problematic for a variety of reasons. As stated before, their geography plays a significant part in why both NATO and Russia want the ability to project influence over the two countries<sup>57</sup>. Ukraine, located in Central Europe, plays a crucial role as a buffer state between Russia and NATO. After NATO enlarged in 2004 and gained the Baltic states, Russia was faced with a reality that NATO could have military authority along its north-western border. Russia knew, and still holds the notion, that if Ukraine were to become a member of NATO, the ability to exert influence into central Europe would drastically decrease. In addition, without influence over Ukraine, Russia loses the ability to be European superpower<sup>58</sup>. Significant portions of Russia's economy, such as natural gas sales, rely on positive relations with Ukraine. Those relations are prone to stress if Ukraine were to side with Russia's competitors. With regards to Georgia, it's geography is a very

important trait that makes the country an interest to both Russia and NATO. It's a country bordering Turkey (a NATO member state), Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. The fact that Georgia is not located in Europe, but still shares a border with Russia, is important. The ability for NATO to have bases located on the southern border of Russia is paramount to exerting a military influence in the region. With Georgia as a member state, NATO and Georgian military forces would be able to train and increase the interoperability of defense mechanisms<sup>59</sup>. On Russia's account, Georgia is a buffer state and an ally. The necessity for Georgia to remain as a non-member of NATO is crucial for Russia's ability to remain a major power in the region. Both Ukraine and Georgia are two states that have positive working relationships with NATO, however a timeframe for their membership is still a subject of discussion.

#### Case Study – Georgia

As a newly independent state from the Soviet Union, Georgia began under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia<sup>60</sup>. Similar to states that had been granted independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia's relationship with NATO began in 1992, when the state joined the NATO-run North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Only two years later, Georgia signed the Partnership for Peace (PfP). A program that included many other non-member states, the PfP allowed for Georgia to begin building a lasting relationship with NATO. Continuing on the path of mutual cooperation, Georgia signed their first Individual Partnership Plan in 1996 and opened official relations with NATO in 1998. In the early 2000's, the first joint military exercises between Georgia and NATO took place. These were the first steps toward a more in-depth integration between the two. Following on this trend of cooperation with the west, 2003 marked an important milestone for Georgia; the Rose Revolution. In short, this revolution marked the

ending of Soviet leadership in the country, and placed Georgia on a path of promoting western institutions, such as NATO. However, with all the mutual collaboration and effort to foster a positive relationship that would lead to membership, Georgia has not been offered a Membership Action Plan. Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty limits membership to countries within Europe<sup>61</sup>. While Turkey is not considered a European country, a portion of the state lies within continental Europe.

In April 2008, the NATO summit in Bucharest occurred. It was here that several countries, including the United States, called for Georgia to be allowed to join the Membership Action Plan (MAP). After the suggestion was met with opposition from Germany and France, the alliance decided not to offer Georgia a MAP because of the possibility it would anger Russia. That same month, the head of the Russian military, general Yuri Baluyevsky, stated that “Russia will take steps aimed at ensuring its interests along its borders and these will not only be military steps, but also steps of a different nature.” Those steps of a different nature consist of aims to halt Georgia’s integration into NATO. It was after the summit that the Russian president vowed to protect the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two unrecognized republics within Georgia that have a major Russian presence. Later that year, Georgia sent troops into South Ossetia to restore constitutional order, but this force met with a much larger Russian assault that extended to Abkhazia. Before the war in both regions, rallies were held in two cities, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, where people of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia appealed to the Russian government for recognition of their sovereignty<sup>62</sup>. Once Russia recognized both territories as sovereign states, Moscow had legitimate reasons to come to their aid. This made it more difficult for Georgia to quell any rebellions and in turn, keep territorial sovereignty.

This complicated both NATO – Russian relations, but also NATO – Georgian relations, as NATO had peacekeeping troops stationed in both regions. All that said, the war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia placed Georgia farther away from obtaining NATO membership<sup>63</sup>. In 2009, NATO stated that they would pledge to provide their assistance and support for Georgia’s reform efforts and its recognized territorial integrity. The most recent development between Georgia and NATO was a “substantive package” of cooperation measures implemented by NATO in 2014. This included defense capacity building, training, and enhanced interoperability opportunities for Georgia<sup>64</sup>. The situation between Georgia, Russia, and NATO is unique because of the vital role geography comprises when discussing NATO membership. It’s evident that Russia will, to the best of its ability, stop Georgia from obtaining a MAP and joining NATO through military and diplomatic means.

#### Case Study – Ukraine

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine gained its independence and became a sovereign state. Similar to Georgia, Ukraine officially began relations with NATO in 1994, when the state joined the Partnership for Peace program. There were multiple levels of cooperation and partnership leading into the 2000s, such as the creation of a NATO-Ukraine commission in 1997, and the Ukrainian president Kuchma’s declaration in 2002 that Ukraine wanted to join NATO. However, during this presidency, relations between the United States and Ukraine soured due to several scandals that erupted (one of which involving the transfer of a sophisticated Ukrainian defense system to Iraq)<sup>65</sup>. In 2004, the Orange Revolution occurred and replaced Kuchama’s government with Yushchenko, a prominent supporter of Ukraine becoming a member of NATO. Following suit, the 2008 Bucharest summit resulted in Ukraine not obtaining a Membership

Action Plan for various reasons. Both France and Germany disagreed with the potential decision to offer Ukraine a MAP because of their need to reform internally (meeting the standards of a NATO member), and the impact that offering Ukraine a MAP would have on NATO – Russia relations. The Yanukovich presidency marked an interesting time period with regard to Ukraine and NATO. The administration held the belief that Ukraine’s cooperation with NATO was sufficient and that the country did not need to press joining NATO with urgency<sup>66</sup>. During this presidency, Ukraine declared its status as a non-aligned state and passed a bill that excluded the goal of further expediting Ukraine’s membership in NATO, but continued cooperation programs with NATO (this included training Ukrainian troops and participating in peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and Iraq). Following suit, the Ukrainian president chose to side with Russia yet again regarding an oil deal that would effectively reduce the cost of oil, supplied by Russia, to Ukraine by about 33%<sup>67</sup>. This deal also involved a \$15 billion-dollar buyout of Ukrainian government bonds provided by Russia to Ukraine, opposing the European Union’s offer of close to \$1 billion dollars. This deal was made amid massive protests in Ukraine that urged more pro-European Union integration. Although this deal between Ukraine and Russia was not connected to NATO directly, the president’s pro-Russian integration decision making continued to affect the relationship between Ukraine and western countries, effectively making NATO-Ukrainian relations more difficult to establish. It wasn’t until the Euromaidan in 2014 that Yanukovich fled from Ukraine amid massive protests, stemming from Ukrainian dissatisfaction with corruption and a lack of European integration, that Ukraine elected a pro-western government. That same year, Ukraine set obtaining NATO membership as a priority<sup>68</sup>.

Though Ukraine became a pro-west leaning country in 2014, Russia expressed its extreme dissatisfaction with the sudden shift. Russia sees Ukraine as an important ally that divides NATO's border with Russia's, creating a buffer on the vast expanse of Russia's western territory. It was made public in 2008, after the Bucharest summit, that Russia would target its missiles at Ukraine if it joins NATO and accepts the deployment of a missile defense shield<sup>69</sup>. In addition, Vladimir Putin asserted that if Ukraine joined NATO, Russia could contend their integration by annexing the Ukrainian East and Crimea. Leading into 2014 with the removal of the pro-Russian president Yanukovich, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, as well as began military operations in Ukraine's eastern territories. This was only after Ukraine elected an increasingly pro-west president, who called for further Ukrainian – NATO integration. Eastern Ukraine has a large population of ethnic Russians. It's important to note that this population supports further integration between Russia and Ukraine. The ideological divisions between Eastern Ukraine and Western Ukraine contribute to the reasons Russia was able to justify its annexation of Crimea and involvement within Ukraine's borders. Regarding current efforts taken by Ukraine to become a part of NATO, once Ukraine meets and fulfills the standards to join the security alliance, the state will hold a referendum to decide if the population would like to move further with NATO membership.

#### NATO Membership and Russian Intervention

Taking a closer look into this situation, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is surprisingly similar to that of the war in South Ossetia. Both conflicts ensued because of Russia's fear that the state was losing its influential grip on Ukraine and Georgia to NATO. It was made apparent by member states, such as Germany and France, that the risk of inviting Ukraine and

Georgia to join NATO was not worth provoking Russia. The possibility of these two countries becoming full members of NATO was drastically hindered following the conflicts that occurred with Russia in Crimea and South Ossetia, seeing as they no longer met the NATO standards of possessing complete sovereignty over their territory. Could the conflicts between Russia, Ukraine and Georgia depict that the reasonable limits of NATO expansion have been reached<sup>70</sup>? It's become apparent that NATO must decide between a positive relationship with Russia or its desired expansion, including Ukraine and Georgia, two states that share a strategic border with Russia.

The idea of Ukraine and Georgia becoming members of NATO is contingent on several factors. First and foremost, NATO seeks to only add states that meet the criteria and standards that are put forth and outlined in Membership Action Plans. An important stipulation of these MAPs dictate that the state must have a concrete grip on their territorial sovereignty. That being said, Russia's aim is to sustain conflicts within Ukraine and Georgia, preventing the two countries from joining NATO or the European Union<sup>71</sup>. It was seen in 2008, with the Russian – Georgian war in South Ossetia, and in 2014, with the annexation of Crimea, that membership for both Ukraine and Georgia raises a high risk of aggravating Russia and creating military conflict. Russia's modernization and advancement of its military in the past two decades has placed western nations and NATO in a difficult position with regard to enlarging NATO. After carefully assessing the viability of including both states into the security alliance, it's evident that future conflict could further erupt in Eastern Europe and North-West Asia if NATO continues its goal of creating a unified Europe under the security alliance.

Comparative Factors Case Studies	Meeting the standards to obtain a MAP	Mutual interest in membership: NATO and states	Russian reaction to membership/ possible accession	Russian aggression
Poland	Poland met the requirements to obtain a MAP rather quickly after the fall of the Soviet Union.	Poland sought to protect itself from foreign aggressors through NATO membership. NATO expanding into central Europe was key in demonstrating territorial influence.	Russia viewed Poland's accession into NATO as an insult. There was an unspoken agreement that NATO borders would not expand past a reunified Germany.	Poland has not experienced Russian military aggression. The country has, however, experienced Russian misinformation campaigns.
The Baltics	The Baltic states suffered economically and militarily after the fall of the Soviet Union, but were able to democratize quicker than expected.	The Baltic states saw NATO membership as a key resource in keeping Russia from making military advances (Article 5). NATO viewed Baltic accession as a way to share a border with Russia.	Russia saw Baltic membership in NATO as a direct threat to their national security. With a Western military alliance on the northwestern border, Russia has increased their military presence along the shared border with Latvia and Estonia.	The Baltic states have witnessed a large Russian military presence along the eastern borders of Latvia and Estonia. This is due to their membership with NATO.
Ukraine and Georgia	Ukraine and Georgia are two countries that are heavily influenced by Russia. They currently do not meet the necessary requirements due to territorial instability and Article 10.	Both Ukraine and Georgia want to become members of NATO. However, in order to prevent Russian aggression, those countries have not been offered MAPs.	Moscow has made it apparent that they would not allow Ukraine and Georgia to become members of NATO. Either through military action (which has been seen) or other means, their membership in the security alliance is where Russia draws the line.	Ukraine and Georgia have experienced Russian military aggression due to their geographic nature and increased collaboration with NATO.

Table 1. Comparative factors between the three case studies.

## CONCLUSION

Over the past two decades, NATO enlargement has shifted the tide of European power dynamics within the international community. The cases studies that I've analyzed in this paper show a direct correlation between NATO expanding into Eastern Europe and an increase in Russian antagonism. Though there are other countries that have an extensive working relationship with NATO, the case studies that I've used proved to be the most descriptive with answering the research question, stated at the beginning. The chart above depicts a few of the factors that apply to all three of the case studies I've written about in this paper. Comparing Poland, the Baltic states, and Ukraine and Georgia with these factors yields for a more summarized understanding of their connection to NATO and Russia.

### Poland

The first case study that I analyzed, Poland, became a sovereign country after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This country, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary, was involved in the first round of NATO enlargement in 1999. Due to Poland's rapid democratization and stable economy, this country was able to obtain a MAP and begin its integration into NATO rather quickly. Compared to other countries that were seeking NATO membership at the time, Poland was a particularly important player in Central Europe due to its geostrategic positioning. Poland's hasty accession into NATO paved the road ahead for countries such as the Baltic states to be next in line for membership.

Regarding both the interests of Poland and NATO, membership within the security alliance suited Poland's needs and advanced the goals of NATO. As stated earlier in my paper, Poland was under the direct influence of Russia for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the break-up

of the Soviet Union, it was in Poland's best interest to become a member of NATO in order to prevent future Russian bellicosity. As a country that sought to retain its sovereignty, the best option was to side with the West. The leadership of NATO was interested in expanding more into Central Europe. Russian imperialism and aggression in the 20<sup>th</sup> century enveloped all of Eastern Europe and most of Central Europe. With the Warsaw Pact dissolved, and Russia forced to retreat from Central Europe, it was in NATO's best interest to expand eastward, pushing its border of collective security closer to Russia.

Russia's reaction to NATO enlargement into Central Europe was met with contention. As stated earlier in this paper, there was an unspoken agreement that NATO membership would not expand past a reunified Germany, further into Eastern Europe. As the first round of enlargement progressed, there were major changes that had to be made regarding Russia's foreign policy. One of which, was that Russia, soon after, viewed NATO enlargement as a direct threat to national security. Facing the reality that a key geostrategic country in Central Europe was now a member of a Western lead security alliance, Russia made it clear that there would be repercussions if eastward expansion continued.

Since becoming a member of NATO, Poland has not experienced direct Russian belligerence. Unlike the Baltic states, Georgia and Ukraine, Poland has not been threatened by Russian military action, or fallen victim to cyberattacks. The only Russian retaliation that Poland has experienced from joining NATO is small misinformation campaigns, and government interference. Russian lead misinformation campaigns are prevalent in most countries that cannot be directly influenced by Russia and are allied with Western institutions (like NATO). Poland has had pro-Russian officials enter positions of power, such as in the Ministry of Defense. These

actions taken by Russia against Poland, however, are not as significant as those taken against the Baltics, Georgia and Ukraine.

### The Baltic States

The second case study that was analyzed within this paper, the Baltic States, became sovereign countries after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The second round of enlargement (since the reunification of Germany) included Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and of course, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The Baltic States were able to receive MAPs rather quickly, as they democratized shortly after the break of the Soviet Union. The only factor that was theoretically able to hinder the chances of the three countries receiving MAPs was Russia's reaction.

Regarding both the interests of the Baltic States and NATO, both parties stood to benefit from membership. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were all part of the Soviet Union prior to its collapse. In searching for avenues to maintain their territorial sovereignty, NATO membership presented itself to be the greatest asset. As members of a collective security alliance, the Baltics would have the authority to invoke Article 5 (i.e. calling on the other members of NATO to assist) if militarily provoked. This is arguably the most important reason for NATO membership, when discussing smaller Eastern European countries. If Russia were to take military action on any three of the Baltic countries, they would be able to call upon other members for assistance. Regarding NATO's interest in adding the Baltics to the security alliance, doing so pushes its borders against Russia's western front. Latvia and Estonia share a border with Russia in the northwest. Once members of NATO, Latvia and Estonia would be able to build western lead military bases on land that connects with Russia.

Russia's reaction to the Baltic States joining NATO was extremely negative. The Baltic States accession into the security alliance was perceived by as a direct threat to national security. Not only were the Baltic states now out of Russia's sphere of influence, but the United States and Western European countries were now able to build NATO military bases in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. The connecting of both NATO and Russian borders was seen by Moscow as a complete overstepping of boundaries and unequal.

In response, Russia has taken several actions over the past decade. In 2007, Estonia experienced a large scale cyberattack from Russia that disabled crucial banking systems and government websites. Instead, when Estonians tried to visit certain government websites, they would be redirected to pro-Russian propaganda. Cyber warfare is one of the many tools that Russia uses in misinformation campaigns. This was extraordinarily powerful because it disrupted an entire economy, making the cyberattack more impactful than a mere propaganda wave. In recent years, Russia has begun building a large military presence of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, artillery, and tanks on its northwestern border with Estonia and Latvia. This is directly in response to NATO building military installations and running drills within the Baltic states. This type of military buildup inevitably causes a security dilemma, and a further escalation of tensions.

#### Georgia and Ukraine

The third case study analyzed within this paper was Georgia and Ukraine. These two countries have always been, and continue to be, under direct influence from Russia. Due to several factors, both countries have not yet received MAPs. At the Bucharest Summit in 2008, NATO was considering offering Georgia and Ukraine MAPs, however the notion was contested

by several Western European countries. In an effort to not provoke Russia, the two countries had to wait more time before they received a course for membership. Though Ukraine and Georgia may not have received their MAPs for several reasons, the first and foremost factor considered was Russia's possible response.

Regarding a mutual interest of membership between NATO, Georgia and Ukraine, membership would be extremely beneficial for all parties involved. If Georgia and Ukraine were to become members of NATO, they would no longer have to fear military action from Russia. Though the threat would always be present, the response to Russian military intervention would be countered by Article 5 and in turn, the full force of NATO. Like the Baltics and other small European countries that do not have the resources to fend off Russia's military, Georgia and Ukraine would benefit tremendously from the security alliance aspect. NATO also stands to benefit greatly from Georgia and Ukraine joining the alliance, specifically because of the shared border with Russia. NATO's border would then comprise most of Russia's western front, as well as a stretch of land on the south.

Russia's reaction to the possibility of Georgia and Ukraine joining the alliance was made apparent through military action. In 2008, Russia invaded regions in Georgia. In 2014, Russia invaded eastern Ukraine and annexed the Crimean Peninsula. Through these military invasions and land grabs, Russia destabilized the territorial sovereignty of both Georgia and Ukraine. A key and necessary aspect of NATO membership states that in order to receive a MAP, a country must have complete territorial sovereignty over its borders. Through invading both Ukraine and Georgia, Russia ensured that these two countries will not be applicable to receive a MAP in the foreseeable future.

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