

NATO Membership Action Plans: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

A Monograph

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2018

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 24-05-2018		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUL 2017 - MAY 2018	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE NATO Membership Action Plans: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Christopher L. Gilluly				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Advanced Military Studies Program, School of Advanced Military Studies				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT The 1999 creation of the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as an operationalization of Article 10 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty enabled greater understanding to future aspirant nations of the requirements to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The MAP is designed to be a catalyst for reforms along Western liberal institutionalism and liberal ideology. In the "Good Case" of the Baltic nations, in the post-Cold War 1990s and 2000s, the MAP enabled a smooth transition from USSR societal constructs to accession into the NATO alliance. Comparatively, in the 2000s and 2010s, the "Bad and Ugly Cases" of both Georgia and Ukraine experienced significant challenges to making the a break from Russian orbit to join Western institutions. Accession to NATO requires political will and reforms, both of which take time. Time served as the most critical factor that enabled a post-Cold War weakened Russia to react to the new international order and design a new operational approach to halt NATO expansion in its "near-abroad" and reassert itself to an international audience as a revanchist "Great Power."					
15. SUBJECT TERMS North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia; Baltic Nations; Ukraine; Georgia; International Relations Theory; European Union; Policy, Strategy, Operational Approach					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			MAJ Christopher L. Gilluly
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	38	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)

Monograph Approval Page

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Monograph Title: NATO Membership Action Plans: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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Abstract

NATO Membership Action Plans: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, by MAJ Christopher L. Gilluly, US Army, 48 pages.

In 1999 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took efforts to formalize the accession process for countries that aspire to join the alliance. This formalization of Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty became known as the Membership Action Plan (MAP). On an individual case basis, NATO offered MAPs at its biannual summits, often after solicitation by potential members. Once offered a MAP, NATO carefully monitored the reform process internal to the aspirant member to ensure that the potential member conformed to western liberal institutionalist ideals. Throughout the post-Cold War 1990s, Article 10, and its MAP criteria served as a catalyst rather than an impediment to bringing newly reformed countries into western alignment along democratic and free-market ideals. The reform process takes time, an element that Russia needed to regain its footing in the post-Cold War era to regain Great Power status in the international community.

This monograph explores the dawn of the MAP era in NATO and its application to contemporary aspirant countries, both successful and unsuccessful. Successful NATO membership found expression in the case of the Vilnius group, formed by the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in only two years from the start of the process. Contrasting the success of the Baltics was the utter failure in Georgia and Ukraine. This failure exemplified how Russian realism blunted the efforts of western liberal institutionalism and its expansion through NATO. The brief shooting war between Georgia and Russia in 2008 demonstrated Russian belief that NATO would not get involved and succeeded in halting NATO expansion in her near abroad.

Flush with success in Georgia, six years later, Russia once more gambled that western institutions would not resort to war over a nation seeking membership in NATO and the goal of a western political and economic alignment. In 2014, in the midst of the political revolution in Ukraine, Russia demonstrated that it would not tolerate such a loss of influence and security deemed vital to its national security. With the advantage of a decade of strategic reform and greater regional hegemonic power, Russia seized the Crimean Peninsula in a *fait accompli*, before western institutions could respond; once more halting NATO expansion in the near abroad.

Thus, the Russians demonstrated their ability to thwart NATO expansion, using the time afforded by the very tool that NATO and its members deemed essential to the political and economic reform of potential member states.

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Acknowledgements

Were it not for the patience of my wife, and family editor, Elizabeth and coaching by my monograph advisor, Dr. Steve Lauer, this research project would have been more challenging. Additionally, thank you to Dr. Robert Davis of the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies faculty and Dr. Nikolas K. Gvosdev of the US Navy War College for providing much-needed research direction at the beginning of the project. Finally, thank you to MAJ Christopher M. Alexander, US Army, for the thorough final draft review and editorial advice.

Acronyms

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Ascendancy Agreement
GTEP	Georgia Train and Equip Program
GUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova
IPAP	Individual Partnership Action Plan
PfP	Partnership for Peace
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OEEC	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic
WEU	Western European Union

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Section I. Introduction

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States of America. The Government of the United States of America will inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.

—Article 10, North Atlantic Treaty April 4th, 1949

From the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, the alliance grew and expanded over time through a series of accessions across a variety of European states. Through these accessions, NATO became a more integrated pan-European institution. Integration provided for a more secure Europe, reducing the likelihood of future conflict among its member states, limiting the chance of another World War starting in Europe. The post-World War II tensions between western powers and the Soviet Union led to an increasing coalescence of Western Europe militarily, diplomatically, and economically as a counter to the Soviet threat.

Throughout the history of NATO during the Cold War (1949-1990), the gradual expansion of NATO and integration of European states into supranational institutions helped shape a stable bi-polar balance of power in the world, albeit with nuclear Armageddon on everyone's mind. As shown in Figure 1, following the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States and NATO sought further integration and expansion. The first step of this integration involved unifying West and East Germany. The weak economic situation in East Germany and other eastern bloc countries brought new challenges to the integration process that significantly hindered the expansion, cohesion, and coalescing of the NATO alliance as it grew. These challenges led NATO to create a Membership Action Plan (MAP) as an addition to the existing North Atlantic Treaty Article 10 open door membership policy. As noted in the opening quote, Article 10 describes how non-member states may join NATO, and outlines

NATO's open-door policy. NATO member states can vote to approve the acceptance of any non-member state if the vote is unanimous; thus far approving 29 nations across Europe and North America.

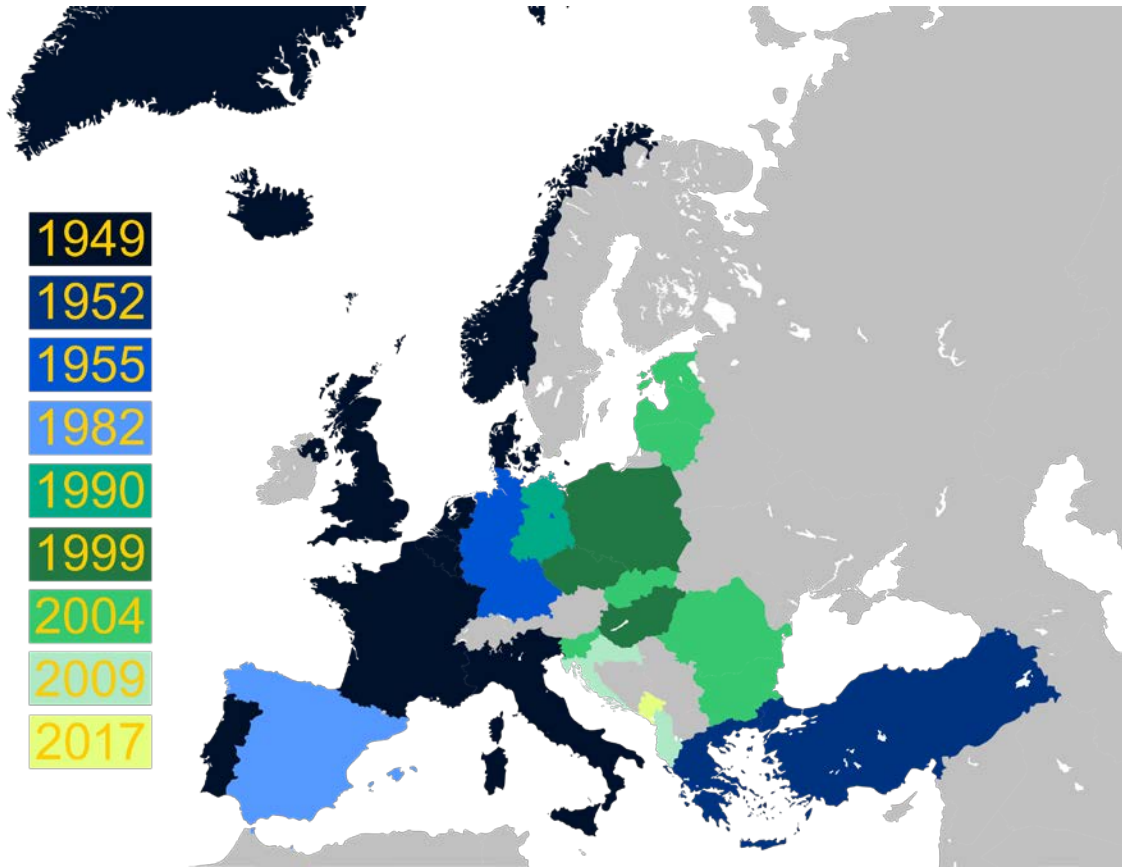


Figure 1. NATO Expansion over time, 29 nations as of 2017. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO ON THE MAP," accessed February 24, 2018, <https://www.nato.int/nato-on-the-map/>. Map recreated from information published on the interactive NATO website. Specific accession dates gathered from the "NATO Members" layer and clicking on the individual countries.

Following the accession of East Germany (through German reunification) in 1990 and the admission of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999, NATO reevaluated its admission policies and incorporated them into the MAP.¹ The major tenets of the MAP include five specific measures for states to achieve before NATO allows an accession vote:

¹ Bruce Russett and Allan C. Stam, "Courting Disaster: An Expanded NATO vs. Russia and China," *Political Science Quarterly* 113 (Fall 1998): 381.

- Willingness to settle international, ethnic or external territorial disputes by peaceful means, commitment to the rule of law and human rights, and democratic control of armed forces
- Ability to contribute to the organization's defense and missions
- Devotion of sufficient resources to armed forces to be able to meet the commitments of membership
- Security of sensitive information, and safeguards ensuring it
- Compatibility of domestic legislation with NATO cooperation²

By detailing out specific criteria, NATO intended to formalize the accession process to ensure successful integration and alignment with NATO principles and western liberal democratic ideals. This new process enabled the rapid expansion of NATO from 2004 to 2017 with the accession of ten former Soviet republics into the alliance with plans in place to access many others.³ Russia vociferously opposed any expansion into former Soviet space, seeing it as a direct security threat to its “near-abroad”; fearing an ideological shift to the west both culturally and economically, significantly contributing to Russian paranoia.⁴ As shown in Figure 2 compared to Figure 1 in the preceding section, current member states along the Baltic Sea and the aspiring member states of Georgia and Ukraine along the Black Sea were firmly within the old Russian Empire’s territory at its zenith in 1897. Russian fear of encroachment, encirclement, and violation of its territorial integrity has a historical bent that may resonate strongly with the domestic audience in Russia.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Membership Action Plan (MAP),” approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council on April 24, 1999, last modified July 27, 2012, accessed September 4, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27444.htm.

³ Steven Pifer, “Ukraine, Georgia and MAP – Time for Plan B,” Brookings, October 29, 2008, accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/ukraine-georgia-and-map-time-for-plan-b/>.

⁴ Anatol Lieven, “Russian Opposition to NATO Expansion,” *The World Today* 51, no. 10 (1995): 196–99.



Figure 2. Russian Empire Zenith 1897 overlaying modern boundaries. Center for Geographic Analysis, Harvard World Map, Imperia: Mapping the Russian Empire, accessed December 5, 2017, <https://worldmap.harvard.edu/maps/russianempire>.

In the realm of unintended consequences while seeking greater integration and prosperity in Europe, NATO's creation of the MAP to formalize the North Atlantic Treaty's Article 10 in 1999 gave Russia both time and conditions to halt NATO expansion in the so-called near abroad, thereby achieving its post-Cold War policy aim. To explore the link between NATO policy aims and the successful Russian strategy to counter those aims, this monograph analyzes case studies of the individual MAP processes in the Russian near abroad of the Baltic Vilnius Group, Georgia, and Ukraine to identify Russian strategy and postulate NATO counterstrategies.

Before the adoption of the MAP process (the operationalizing of Article 10) to determine viable candidates for accession, NATO admitted the former Warsaw Pact countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria without significant Russian interference. After the MAP policy enactment, seven more nations, including the Baltics and other eastern European countries in the

Russian near abroad successfully joined NATO despite Russian interference. Within this context, how is it that Ukraine and Georgia failed to gain membership?

An evaluation of the Ukrainian and Georgian case studies, as compared to the Baltics, in the post-MAP policy environment through the international relations lens of realism vice liberal democratic idealism permeates both Russian and NATO strategy since the Cold War. The pattern of Russian self-interest drives its interference and exploitation of other sovereign countries' NATO accession efforts. A study of the NATO MAP policy's development and purpose will elucidate the political reasoning, based principally on the theoretical lens of liberal institutionalism, behind its expansion policies. Equally, a study of Russian actions and counteractions to the NATO policies in its near abroad will inform the understanding of Russian political reasoning, through the theoretical lens of realism, for its actions. Based on the established pattern of NATO idealism and Russian realism, the monograph describes how the MAP process gave Russia the time and space it needed to achieve its policy aim of halting NATO expansion in its near abroad. The Georgia and Ukraine case studies offer poignant examples of Russian strategic realism succeeding over NATO idealism, where Russian gain is NATO's loss. The Baltic case study provides examples of NATO idealism trumping Russian realism. All cases serve to inform future policy decisions for NATO expansion.

For the development of this monograph, primary sources were used whenever possible to describe the strategic context for NATO, the USSR, Warsaw Pact, and Russia. Challenges exist in studying a contemporary geopolitical strategic problem, but this analysis derives Russian policy and military strategy using open source material. Source material from Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh's *Russian Foreign Policy: Interest, Vectors, and Sectors* provide the base for a

broad examination of Russian foreign policy in Georgia.⁵ Robert Legvold's *Return to Cold War* provides the base for examination of Russian foreign policy regarding the conflict with Ukraine.⁶ Those sources, serving as a foundation, are augmented by numerous citations from volumes of academic analysis on NATO's founding, expansionist policies, and policy-strategy dialogs between NATO and its members.

In addition to contemporary sources, historical literature focusing on the post-World War II peace, and the emergence of the bipolar world of the original Cold War, serve to inform Russian contemporary foreign policy approaches. In Melvyn Leffler's *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, the author describes the era of Soviet thought, actions, and beliefs from 1945-1952 as matching and primarily reactionary to Western Europe or United States policy.⁷ Additionally, the dualistic role of foreign policy decisions between NATO and Russia today is reflective of the foreign policy settlements of the original cold warriors explored in detail in Marc Trachtenberg's *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945-1963*.⁸ Trachtenberg explores the institutional hardening of NATO as a response to the USSR policy, and the USSR's relative ambivalence to NATO construction as long as it achieved critical foreign policy goals.

For methodology, this monograph proceeds chronologically, and with three case studies, to establish the strategic context before the successful NATO accession of the Baltic countries and the Russian wars with Georgia and Ukraine. The strategic context includes a brief history of

⁵ Nikolas K Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Los Angeles: SAGE/CQ Press, 2014), xiii–12.

⁶ Robert Legvold, *Return to Cold War* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2016), 1–9.

⁷ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 1–24.

⁸ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), i–33.

NATO, its espoused purpose, and the policy environment following the end of the Cold War. Additionally, the strategic context section will explore the NATO-Russian dialog following the Cold War, describing the back and forth policy dialog between the two major powers and the interpretations or misinterpretations of intent. With the context set, the subsequent sections of the monograph provide a detailed case study exploration of how the chosen international relations strategy, idealism or realism, coupled with the problem of time, allowed the individual MAP processes to succeed in the Baltics, and fail in Georgia and Ukraine.

Realism in international relations is a school of thought to understand the actions of states in international politics. As one of the “founding fathers” of the realist theory of international politics, Hans Morgenthau artfully described his realist theory in *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*.⁹ Morgenthau, harkening back to Thucydides’ “fear, honor, and interest” realism during the Peloponnesian War, writing in the post-WWII era, argues that states, like humans, are inherently rational actors. These actors make decisions in their self-interest and that those interests based upon power politics, i.e., the goal of every political interaction is to gain or maintain power compared to the other political entity. The idealist school of thought for international relations runs in direct contrast to realism. Contemporary neoliberalism, as a form of idealism, refers to the school of thought that believes that states gain power through cooperation and the establishment of common norms and institutions. As a founder of the neoliberal school of thought, Robert Keohane, along with Lisa Martin, argue in their essay “The Promise of Institutional Theory” that states cooperate by distributing sovereignty, information, and wealth amongst the institutional members to gain greater prosperity and peace.¹⁰

⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed., rev (New York: Knopf, 1978), 3–15.

¹⁰ Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 39.

An analysis of the MAP process in the Russian near abroad viewed through the realism and idealism lenses reveals the foreign policy steps taken by Russia to achieve its political aim of a non-aligned near abroad. NATO and Russian actions to undermine each other's policies are both successful and unsuccessful depending on the case with mixed results for both sides in the near-abroad countries. First chronologically, the monograph discusses the policy actions in the Baltics that led to the successful accession to NATO in 2004 of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Second, the monograph explores policy decisions in Georgia that led to the 2008 conflict. Finally, the monograph analyzes the policy decisions in Ukraine that led to the 2014 conflict. These case studies illuminate policy missteps by both sides and provide an understanding of what went wrong and how to prevent future geopolitical strategic mistakes with Russia. The monograph concludes with a final analysis of current Russian strategy and explores future options for NATO expansion and conflict prevention in the Russian near-abroad.

Section II. Strategic Context

Birth of the Alliance

Looking at the history of Europe, Great Power struggles, shifting alliances, and a millennium of conflict can inform one's understanding of Russian interests, patterns of action, and its relationship with European powers. As John Lewis Gaddis writes in his seminal work, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, a historian must manipulate "time, space, and scale...the particularization of generalization..." to focus his work and contribute to academia.¹¹ To that end, for strategic context, this section focuses on the end of World War II and the signing of the Washington Treaty in 1949 to the initial round of NATO expansion in 1952 and 1955. Particular emphasis on the signatory countries' actions and policies and the USSR/Russian

¹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* Oxford Univ. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 129.

reaction to those policies establish the foundation and serve as the logical beginning for a study of NATO and USSR/Russian policy formation.

In their collection of essays on the formation of NATO, *NATO: The Founding of the Atlantic Alliance and the Integration of Europe*, Francis Howard Heller and John R. Gillingham note that NATO was:

designed by its signatories to restore stability to a war-torn and impoverished continent, the pact (and the institutions built upon it) provided a capstone to the new pattern of diplomatic relationships in the West that, in the decade after World War II, gradually emerged in outline, expanded and grew in tensile strength, then fused and hardened into an enduring if imperfect structure.¹²

NATO gained its footing as a functioning organization in 1951 with the creation of political and military leadership structures. The Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) under the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) served as its military component. The North Atlantic Council (NAC) formed the political body to provide purpose and direction to the military alliance.

Significant to NATO's founding is the active involvement of the United States shifting away from a century and a half of non-involvement in European affairs. For the first time in history, Europeans chose to follow the United States and followed its direction and policy. At its birth, founding members within Western Europe explained NATO's purpose as "to keep the Soviets out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."¹³ Foremost in the North Atlantic Treaty is the United States commitment to Article 5, where

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert

¹² Francis Howard Heller and John Gillingham, eds., *NATO: The Founding of the Atlantic Alliance and the Integration of Europe*. The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute Series on Diplomatic and Economic History 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.¹⁴

Critical to future peace and stability in the post-WW II environment, the United States and European allies subordinated national interest to a liberal ideal of collective defense and collective military decision making.

The rise of Soviet power and its entrance into the atomic age in 1949 coupled with waning European colonial powers placed the United States and the USSR in dominant positions in the emerging bi-polar world. Western Europe, fractured by two wars with Germany sought to regain its footing and find ways to prevent a future revived Reich. The leading reason for the foundation of NATO was to provide the United States a means for continued political investment in Europe, anticipating that greater unification and partnership could prevent future costly militarization and conflict internally to Western Europe and externally with the USSR.¹⁵

As the alliance began to take shape with the United States as the leading voice, NATO exerted political pressure on its allies to reshape the world order. Revisiting Figure 1, one sees the alliance taking shape in Europe's post-World War II era. From 1945-1949, the Netherlands shifted away from neutrality and dissolved its colonial holdings, and the British stepped back from empire and shifted to a commonwealth system seeking a "special relationship" with the United States. The French, ever eager to regain control of their colonial holdings and gain a leading voice in the alliance, attempted overtures to the USSR/Russia to exert political pressure on the United States before finally joining as an original signatory in 1949. The United States sought integration with former enemies by encouraging an alliance with Italy in 1949.

Additionally, with an eye towards the Mediterranean Sea becoming a NATO lake and containing the USSR/Russia's Black Sea Fleet along NATO's southern flank, NATO invited Greece and

¹⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty," last modified March 21, 2016, accessed September 4, 2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

¹⁵ Heller and Gillingham, *NATO: The Founding of the Atlantic Alliance and the Integration of Europe*, 13.

Turkey to join the alliance in 1952. Finally, as a reaction to the beginning of the Cold War, and its first battles on the Korean Peninsula, the United States sought the rearmament of West Germany with its invitation to the alliance in 1955.¹⁶

Early US Secretaries of State, Dean Acheson and George C. Marshall believed that through greater integration and the creation of supranational institutions, the prevention of conflict or civil war in Europe served as a precursor to stability in other parts of the world.¹⁷ The application of Marshall Plan money and influence and the creation of supranational institutions like the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), the Western European Union (WEU), the Council of Europe, and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) ultimately led to the formation of the European Union (EU) and the Eurozone.¹⁸ These new organizations stimulated the integration of Europe into the loose “United States of Europe” concept seen today.

Meanwhile, on the other side of Europe, after World War II a powerful Soviet Russia sought to retain its power and position in the world following the end of the conflict. From 1945-1955, during NATO’s formative years, Russia extended its influence as a counterweight to Western Europe’s growing integration. In response to the war with Germany in 1941, USSR/Russia experienced a tremendous amount of industrial growth that transformed the USSR/Russia into a rising superpower.¹⁹ With this newfound power, USSR/Russia adopted a foreign policy to support the spread of Marxist-Leninist socialism based on the Soviet Communist model throughout the world. The USSR/Russia initially focused on areas where the Soviet Army had halted at the end of World War II. Stalin declared that “whoever occupied

¹⁶ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 495–518.

¹⁷ Heller and Gillingham, *NATO: The Founding of the Atlantic Alliance and the Integration of Europe*, 130.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁹ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 19.

territory also imposes his social system.”²⁰ With the ideological spread of Soviet socialism came an increasing amount of integration among eastern European countries ultimately forming into union with the USSR/Russia as the Warsaw Pact among socialist republics in Europe and Eurasia in direct counter to NATO. Foreign policy remained ideologically driven, focused on the spread of communism until the collapse of the USSR in 1991.²¹

Death of the Cold War – NATO Relevance

On a small neutral nation in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, the United States and the USSR met for the Malta Summit in December 1989, only a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany. This meeting between US President George H.W. Bush and USSR Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was by many accounts the beginning of the end of the Cold War. The definitive end of the Cold War came with the unification of East and West Germany a year later in 1990.²² In the midst of the softening of relations between the United States and USSR/Russia, the crumbling of the Iron Curtain enabled a revolutionary movement to take hold within the USSR/Russia and Warsaw Pact nations.²³

Throughout the latter half of the 1980s until the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe countries gained increasing amounts of independence and self-determination. Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania broke away from the Warsaw Pact and gained political independence from the USSR/Russia early in the process. Additionally, new countries emerged by breaking away from the USSR/Russia, in the form of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia in the Caucus Region; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in Eurasia; and Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova in the Russian

²⁰ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²² Legvold, *Return to Cold War*, 74–75.

²³ *Ibid.*, 79–83.

near-abroad. Finally, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania regained independence, returning to their post-World War I sovereignty.²⁴

Through second and third order effects from the breakup, further political revolutions in Albania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia created even more new states in the former Soviet space in 1992. Yugoslavia divided into Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Serbia; Czechoslovakia fractured into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Finally, as explored in detail in the next section, this fractured environment continues, as seen with the creation of Kosovo out of Serbia in 2008 and many other border disputes or separatist movements within the former Soviet space. To date, 29 new nations arose out of the former USSR/Russia and Warsaw Pact thus significantly altering the European world order and setting the stage for future conflict in Europe throughout the 1990s to today.²⁵

Into the Void – NATO Post-Cold War Policy

NATO strategy in the post-Cold War era was adrift. With the sudden, unexpected collapse of the USSR/Russia and the end of a bi-polar world, NATO and the United States struggled to find a new *raison d'être* in Europe as the sole superpower. Many different camps emerged to tackle the new problem. Some believed that the need for NATO had run its course, which the new “peace dividend” allowing for a natural return to national, vice supranational, interest in Europe. With the creation of 29 new countries in the former Soviet sphere of influence, others believed that NATO served to further economic integration to enhance peace on the continent and enable expansion into future markets. Eastern Europe needed both a security and an economic incentive to substantially integrate with the West. Additionally, within the NATO expansion camp, some scholars and NATO strategists believed that, with the new “peace

²⁴ Matt Rosenberg, “Independence or Birthday for Every Country,” ThoughtCo, accessed March 6, 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/independence-birthday-for-every-country-1435141>.

²⁵ Ibid.

dividend,” NATO should export security to create a more stable world. Much like the United States in the 20th Century, exporting security could enhance Europe’s role throughout the world, encourage stability abroad, and open new markets in an increasingly globalized world.²⁶

After a short debate in 1991, and due to increasing instability in the former Soviet space, a new military doctrine for operations short of war, focused on war prevention and stability, induced NATO to adopt a peacekeeping and peace enforcement footing throughout Europe. NATO adopted a new strategic concept that favored mobile rapid reaction forces capable of the new operational approach to security in Europe.²⁷ Focus shifted from linear defense and deterrence against the USSR to one of political outreach, peacekeeping, and humanitarian aid. With this new strategic focus, NATO member states began to rapidly reduce their conventional military footing in Europe. Concurrent with the reduction in forces, new conflicts in Europe festered in the former Soviet space.

As its first real test, in 1993-94, the Bosnia crisis, due to the chaotic breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, served as a rallying cry for NATO member states.²⁸ European nations could not allow wars to occur on their continent, even if “out-of-area” (not within NATO territory). NATO’s hard-earned strategic command and control mechanisms, born out of four decades of Cold War, were the most effective tools available to organize military forces to tamp down security challenges throughout Europe and NATO’s “near-abroad.” Additionally, with years of development in basing rights, pre-position stocks, and access, NATO possessed the most mature and flexible security organization in the world to respond to emerging threats across the globe.²⁹

²⁶ Trevor Taylor, “Cashing in the Dividend – Quietly,” *The World Today* 52, no. 6 (1996): 150–51.

²⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “The Alliance’s New Strategic Concept,” approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, November 7-8, 1991, last modified August 26, 2010, accessed September 4, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm?

²⁸ S. Victor Papacosma and Mary Ann Heiss, eds., *NATO in the Post-Cold War Era: Does It Have a Future?* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Politically speaking, NATO remained conflicted. With the rapidly decreasing availability of military forces among member states, NATO's policy toward operating further afield with peacekeeping forces became out of step with its capabilities. NATO's military structure reorganized along "combined joint task force" (CJTF) lines to increase flexibility and command and control for crisis management. Additionally, NATO policy in 1994 to open dialog with countries in the former Soviet space created the need for the "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) as a bridge toward military cooperation, enhanced diplomatic discussions, and possible future membership, without constraining current members with new Article 5 security guarantees.³⁰ The path to NATO expansion opened in 1994, and expansion was then a real possibility for NATO in the former Warsaw Pact areas.³¹

Along with the PfP policies, NATO heads of state pushed for greater integration with other European supranational organizations like the European Union (EU) and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) – renamed the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1997.³² Without a legitimate threat to peace on the European continent, European NATO member states sought avenues for diplomacy, economic integration, and security assurances outside of the NATO structure. The EU and OSCE provided those structures while also enabling non-NATO members from neutral states like Austria and the Scandinavian countries, as well as former Warsaw Pact countries, and those that appeared on the breakup of the former Soviet Union, including Russia itself to have a greater voice on European issues. Though not as mature as NATO, those other supranational European institutions provided more integration and the backdrop to future NATO expansion in the late 1990s.

³⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Partnership for Peace: Framework Document," approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council on January 10-11, 1994, last modified October 30, 2009, accessed September 4, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24469.htm.

³¹ Papacosma and Heiss, *NATO in the Post-Cold War Era: Does It Have a Future?* 87.

³² "Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: Guidelines on an OSCE Document-Charter on European Security," *International Legal Materials* 37, no. 3 (1998): 693–99.

NATO expansion after the fall of the Berlin Wall is arguably the primary reason for security challenges in Europe today. Growing out of overtures from the PfP program, NATO developed principles for NATO enlargement in 1994 with a series of policy meetings that culminated with the “Study on NATO Enlargement” released in September 1995, signaling the “rules of the road” to gain membership in NATO.³³ The study made clear that certain criteria would be crucial to inviting a state into the NATO collective security membership. Those criteria included four essential conditions: 1) division of authority in government articulated in public law, 2) parliamentary oversight of military through control of the defense budget, 3) peacetime government oversight of the General Staffs and military commanders through civilian defense ministries, and 4) restoration of military prestige, trustworthiness and accountability for the armed forces to be effective.³⁴ Primarily, if countries from the former Soviet sphere achieved democratic ideals through a detailed reform process, then they might qualify for membership. With proper reforms, NATO could comfortably prepare for the accession of its former enemies. Through its stated policies, NATO and the United States effectively coerced Eastern Europe countries to reform before gaining entry to the “European Community.” NATO enlargement policy met its first test with the former Warsaw Pact countries of Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary.³⁵

Ignoring East Germany, as its accession into NATO was the result of its 1990 absorption by West Germany, in 1999 NATO approved the ascension of former Warsaw Pact countries, “taking over” former Soviet territory for the first time since the end of the Cold War.³⁶ After the first round of expansion, largely pushed by the United States, a “whole and free” Europe in

³³ Jeffrey Simon, *NATO Enlargement and Central Europe: A Study in Civil-Military Relations* (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific Press, 2002), 22-23.

³⁴ Simon, *NATO Enlargement and Central Europe: A Study in Civil-Military Relations*, 26–28.

³⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Membership Action Plan (MAP).”

³⁶ F. Stephen Larrabee, *NATO’s Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2003), 1.

permanent alliance with the United States became the foreign policy vision for the newly independent states of Central and Eastern Europe.³⁷ Strong alliances throughout Europe assured the United States that it would have viable security partners to join its coalitions outside of Europe in shaping the new world order and creating a more stable security environment for the world economy to grow.³⁸ Russia fought NATO enlargement into its former sphere, preferring those newly independent countries to serve as de facto buffer states between the two former belligerents.³⁹ Russia grudgingly accepted the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997, enabling independent countries to freely join supranational institutions unhindered by threats of force by their neighbors.⁴⁰

Following round one of expansion, NATO postured for round two by declaring the principles of the MAP in 1999 and formally inviting seven more former Soviet bloc nations into the organization at the 2002 Prague Summit.⁴¹ With the MAP policy articulated, aspirant countries throughout Europe understood the requirements necessary to join NATO and enjoy the benefits of security and economic integration. Additionally, through the MAP, NATO and the United States effectively dangled the carrot of membership to entice democratic reforms throughout Eastern Europe. In 2004, the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined NATO along with their fellow former Soviet bloc brothers in Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and

³⁷ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 1.

³⁸ James Dobbins, Richard H. Solomon, Michael S. Chase, Ryan Henry, F. Stephen Larrabee, Robert J. Lempert, Andrew M. Liepman, Jeffrey Martini, David Ochmanek, and Howard J. Shatz. "Europe." In *Choices for America in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 85–92.

³⁹ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 3.

⁴⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France," approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council on May 27, 1997, last modified October 12, 2009, accessed January 14, 2018. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm?selectedLocale=en.

⁴¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Prague Summit Declaration" approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Prague, Czech Republic on November 21, 2002, last modified May 6, 2014, accessed January 14, 2018. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19552.htm?

Slovenia.⁴² Significant to the second round of expansion is the fact that it positioned NATO directly on the Russian border in the Baltics and signaled to future aspirants in Ukraine and Georgia that integration with European institutions could occur with limited challenges from Russia.

Into the Void – Russian Post-Cold War Policy

Like a prize fighter on the losing end of a long boxing match trying to avoid a knockout, Russian policy positions lurched around to find new footing in the 1990s. Starting with the Malta Summit between George H.W. Bush and Mikael Gorbachev in 1989, and the thaw between the United States and the USSR/Russia, “the beginning of a long road to a lasting, peaceful era” sprang forth on the continent of Europe.⁴³ Coming out of the talks, and seeking better relations, Gorbachev believed that if Soviet expansionist policies ended and the former republics of the Soviet Union gained more independence to choose political and economic systems, that the United States would not seek to expand into the Soviet sphere of influence.⁴⁴

With these new beliefs, less than two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia lost years of consolidated military, economic, and geopolitical power. Without the usual structure provided by the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, Russia lost integration with its neighbors that had enabled military reach and greater economic strength. With the dissolution of the USSR and the breakup of the Warsaw Pact, Russia lost nearly as much ground as during World War II Germany’s Operation Barbarossa.⁴⁵ On December 25, 1991, with a diminished Russia recognized as the successor state to the USSR, the United States would no longer see its former competitor as

⁴² Larrabee, *NATO’s Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 44.

⁴³ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 78.

⁴⁴ William C. Wohlforth, “Realism and the End of the Cold War,” *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 123.

⁴⁵ Legvold, *Return to Cold War*, 83–84.

an equal partner on the international stage, but merely a participant on it.⁴⁶ With the new Russian relationship emerging, so too did a new leader, Boris Yeltsin.

Under Yeltsin, Russian foreign policy toward NATO and the United States made its most dramatic shift; now seeking to become allies with its former NATO adversaries and enjoy the new “peace dividend” under Wilsonian ideals of liberal democracy.⁴⁷ With an arm extended to the West and its institutions, Yeltsin sought an equal partnership with the United States and continued recognition as a world power. Taking hold of this new opportunity to nurse the nascent Russian democracy with aid and counsel, the Clinton administration insisted that Russia join the United States worldview and policy preferences. Diverging economic fates complicated the new relationship dynamic, with the United States economic power rapidly waxing and the Russian power waning. As Russian bread lines and inflation grew, the partnership shifted from one of equality to one of dependency, with the United States increasingly “interfering” with Russian domestic politics and policies.⁴⁸ Culminating the Yeltsin-Clinton 1990s that had begun with such promise, the United States and NATO forced Russia to endure its greatest embarrassment by enlarging NATO into former Soviet space and then confronting Russia directly over the Kosovo conflict in 1999.⁴⁹ Russian domestic audiences viewed this era in Russo-American relations as an era of humiliation for Russia, with Vladimir Putin describing it as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.”⁵⁰

Despite United States asymmetry with Russia throughout the 1990s, Russia did continue to push foreign policy to keep regional power and influence. In the immediate aftermath of the

⁴⁶ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 79.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Michael McFaul, “Getting Russia Right,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 117 (1999): 61.

⁴⁹ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 83–84.

⁵⁰ Katie Sanders, Punditfact, “Did Vladimir Putin call the breakup of the USSR ‘the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century?’,” March 6, 2014, accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2014/mar/06/john-bolton/did-vladimir-putin-call-breakup-ussr-greatest-geop/>.

USSR shattering, Russia tried to will its way to maintaining power by adopting new multinational institutions to exert influence. Instead of the USSR, now a connection through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and its offshoot Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) would keep former Soviet nations in the Russian security sphere.⁵¹ Along with CIS for integration, Russia promoted the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a collective security organization for all nations, both East and West, to discuss security concerns and support diplomatic dialog without encouraging alignment with Western institutions like NATO and the EU. The OSCE, like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), is a diplomatic forum where Russia retains veto power, whereas NATO keeps Russia as merely an observer without a policy role. Russia actively sought the merging of NATO and the OSCE in the post-Cold War era, but efforts to that end quickly failed as the United States wielded ever more power in the world.⁵²

After NATO's Kosovo intervention in 1999, Russia moved away from the OSCE as a viable forum to exert foreign policy aims and pushed to promote the CSTO as a counter to NATO in the Eurasian space. Additionally, recent measures like the 2014 Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) gave Russia greater economic influence and integration with many of its former USSR partners.⁵³ Throughout the 1990s, Russia increasingly failed to convince its former USSR and Warsaw Pact allies to remain within its orbit as the pull of those countries to a Western proved to be too great a temptation. In the 2000s, and decisively as of 2004, Russia under Putin seemed to have shifted away from European integration to a Eurasian focus, while still fomenting frozen conflicts in its non-NATO near abroad in Ukraine, Moldova, and the Caucasus countries to maintain buffer zones with the West.

⁵¹ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 183–184.

⁵² Mark Webber, Stuart Croft, Jolyon Howorth, Terry Terriff, and Elke Krahnmann, "The Governance of European Security." *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 21–22.

⁵³ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 193.

Section III. NATO MAP – The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

In the post-Cold War years of the 1990s, significant strategic dissonance in both the West and East set in motion many of the conflicts seen today. A battle between idealist and realist points of view, NATO and Russian foreign policy during that era served to foster cooperation at times with significant moves toward a more peaceful Europe, while at other times appeared to ratchet up the potential for conflict and a disordered world. This section describes the successes and failures of the MAP methodology vis-à-vis Russian resistance to NATO expansion through a lens of time and international relations realism and idealism theories.

The accession of the former USSR Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia serve as examples of challenged, but overall successful, strategies of former Soviet republics joining NATO. Similarly, the failed accession of former USSR Black Sea states Ukraine and Georgia serve as comparative examples of challenged, and failed strategies to join NATO. In all of the above cases, Russia actively resisted the alignment of its former Soviet republic with the West, but with only limited success.

The Good – The Baltic Way

Symbolically, and historically, before the Baltic states officially broke away from the USSR at the end of the Cold War. In August 1989, on the 50th anniversary of the World War II-era Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR that coerced the Baltic states to relinquish sovereignty to the USSR, the Baltic nations sought to rejoin the international community of sovereign states. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia formed a human chain of more than two million people that stretched across the three countries and showed their intentions to become independent states.⁵⁴ By September 1991, all three states regained their independence and struck out to find new partners in the West. Looking to integrate with both NATO for

⁵⁴ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 212.

security and the EU economically, the Baltic state's efforts influenced the new policies evolving in Western Europe.

Starting with outreach to the EU, the Baltic states extricated themselves from the USSR, the CIS, and finally Russian influence through a series of economic measures, ultimately entering into a Free Trade Agreement in 1993 that paved the way to Western alignment.⁵⁵ At the same time, with prudent “carrot-and-stick” diplomacy, the EU encouraged democratic and economic reforms through its Copenhagen Criteria.⁵⁶ As a result of the USSR breakup, many native Russians suddenly found themselves on the “wrong” side of new borders. Russia sought protections and human rights guarantees for the Russian minorities spread across the near-abroad former USSR states. The Copenhagen Criteria allowed the EU to exert leverage that forced the Baltic states to reform. Copenhagen Criteria, passed by the European Council on June 22, 1993, and adopted by the European Union, established the framework for relations between the EU and the countries of eastern and central Europe. Specific focuses on democratic reforms, human rights, and market economies formed the basis for future membership.⁵⁷ These measures hushed Russian complaints or took the wind out of their sails in the eyes of the international community. With the economic reforms and a Western alignment taking root, security cooperation became a reality.

Concurrent with the EU membership drive, the PfP created the mechanism for security cooperation and increased diplomacy between NATO and the Baltic states. In this environment, groups of nations formed coalitions to correspond and negotiate with the western institutions. The Visegrad group formed in 1991 among the former Warsaw Pact nations of Poland,

⁵⁵ Janne Haaland Matlary, “Much Ado about Little: The EU and Human Security,” *International Affairs* 84, no. 1 (2008): 138.

⁵⁶ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 213.

⁵⁷ European Union Law, “Accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria),” accessed January 14, 2018, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen.html

Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, with all but Slovakia acceding into NATO in 1999.⁵⁸ Later, in 2000, the Baltic states joined other central and eastern Europe countries in the Vilnius Group, modeled after the successes of the Visegrad Group to push for NATO integration; joining officially in 2004 along with the remaining Visegrad non-member, Slovakia.⁵⁹ After only two years, and embracing new policies following the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, NATO offered MAPs to the Vilnius Group in 2002.⁶⁰ The United States officially maintained that the Soviet Union illegally annexed the Baltics after World War II. By seeking NATO enlargement, the United States pushed for a “whole and free” Europe full of NATO member states that offered basing rights, equipment staging, and greater partnership for coalition operations in “out of area” conflict zones across the world.⁶¹

In offering MAPs to the Baltic states in 2002, NATO and the United States tempered some of their reform expectations. As former members of the USSR, the Baltic states never had to worry about their security; military forces and traditions within those states were largely absent throughout the Cold War, and they now found themselves having to create security forces from scratch. Recalling that MAP criteria require each state to “devote sufficient resources” and “contribute to NATO’s defense and missions,” traditionally read as “the 2% GDP rule” and the ability to defend one’s state internally, NATO understood that the Baltic states as members would be challenged to attain that standard. Each state could field a brigade-size force of around 4,000 soldiers each.⁶² NATO, for its part, adjusted expectations and ignored parts of the MAP when politically convenient. Instead of meeting the prescribed reforms, NATO supported integration

⁵⁸ George Kolankiewicz, “Consensus and Competition in the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union,” *International Affairs* 70, no. 3 (1994): 483.

⁵⁹ Larrabee, *NATO’s Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 44.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶¹ Mark Kramer, “NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement,” *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2002): 738.

⁶² Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 215.

with the Baltics by encouraging specialization in the fields of cyber defense/warfare, ordinance disposal, and expeditionary warfare. Adjusting the rheostat to meet the specific conditions in the Baltics, NATO doubled down on its Article 5 security guarantee by buying into new partners that failed to meet the MAP criteria and expanding its alliance onto former Russian territory. The Baltic states may never be able to counter an all-out war with their Russian neighbor, but being a part of NATO gave them the peace of mind to continue to develop and reform along Western democratic lines.⁶³

As NATO encouraged reform in the Baltics parallel to the EU's efforts, Russia did not sit idle. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s before their accession to NATO in 2004, Russia tried to undermine integration efforts through diplomatic, economic, and information levers of national power. Starting with exaggerating the plight of Russian minority citizens within the Baltic states, brought upon by internal challenges to the emerging democracies, Russia sought to foment disputes along ethnic lines and border problems.⁶⁴ Later, Russian use of economic leverage with gas and oil exports, pushed by its oligarchs, undermined the Baltic economic strength and ability to align with the EU.⁶⁵ Additionally, threatening military exercises on land and sea near the Baltic states territory, including the deployment of 18 nuclear-armed SS21 missiles, served to intimidate those countries from alignment strategies.⁶⁶ Many of those actions merely served to harden the Baltic state reform efforts and push them closer to the West and NATO.

In the end, Russia fought for its interests in the Baltic region, but despite its realist approach, Russia was not willing to break its relationship with the West over NATO expansion in

⁶³ Patrick Martin, The Globe and Mail, "Russia's 'collision course' with NATO: Your guide to the new Cold War," July 8, 2016, accessed December 14, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/russias-collision-course-with-nato-your-guide-to-the-new-cold-war/article30819878/>.

⁶⁴ Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement," 742.

⁶⁵ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 71.

⁶⁶ Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement," 734.

the region.⁶⁷ Russian economic interest and access to Western markets drove their decision not to fight vehemently for the Baltic sphere.⁶⁸ The fight increasingly focused on democratic reforms, human rights, and access to markets; Russian realism prevented overt conflict in the region. As for NATO's role in the accession of the Baltic states, its idealist approach, encouraging political and economic reforms enhanced the security for all of Europe and served as an example of strong alignment with Western institutions. From an idealist point of view and the liberal institutionalism school of thought, NATO encouraged future MAP accessions modeled after the Baltics. Unique to the Baltics MAP was the time allotted, in a short two-year timespan, from 2002 to 2004 NATO offered and then accepted the Baltic nations into the organization. Previous accessions had taken nearly a decade for reforms to take place. However, in the Baltics, NATO accepted a "good enough" MAP and willingly brought the countries into the fold despite their failing to fully meet all reform requirements in the MAP criteria. Similar in many ways to the Baltic MAP process, our next case studies, Georgia and Ukraine, met significant difficulty throughout their alignment process as the battle between Russian realism and NATO idealism continued.

The Bad – Georgia on Russia's Mind – Frozen Conflict

The Georgia-Russian relationship goes back over 200 years from the present day with a union between the two countries in 1801. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Soviet revolution in 1917, Lenin offered that ethnic groups forming independent countries within the former empire should be free to rule their people. Georgia and the Caucus region experienced a brief period of chaotic sovereignty until 1922, when, after a Soviet invasion, they joined the USSR.⁶⁹ With Stalin himself a native Georgian, any illusion of independence from Russia ended in the 1920s.

⁶⁷ Kramer, "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement," 734.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 160.

After an extended period of Soviet rule in the USSR, in 1991 Georgia became an independent state once more and almost immediately sought to break away from Russian influence. Many former USSR member states joined Russia's new CIS in the aftermath of 1991, but Georgia fought the alignment until joining in 1993, after a coup and much ethnic violence in separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁷⁰ Conflict with Russia in the post-USSR era has remained at a constant low boil to the present day. Russian domestic audiences enjoy the periodic saber-rattling of what Mikhail Filippov called "diversionary wars."⁷¹

The Georgian geopolitical relationship with Russia and the West changed throughout the second half of the 1990s under Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze attempted to settle territorial disputes and break away from Russian influence after taking power. Actively seeking military assistance from the United States, while also working to form international coalitions of former USSR states like Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (forming the GUAM forum), Georgia pushed to break away from Russian hegemonic influence by balancing with former Soviet states in the Black Sea and Caucasus.⁷² Starting in 1994, Georgia joined the PFP, working towards greater interaction with the west.⁷³ In 2003, during what became known as the "Rose Revolution," Mikheil Saakashvili, a more Western-leaning leader, swept Shevardnadze from power and replaced him. The United States happily embraced the new leader, including presidential level engagement in the subsequent years to encourage movement towards NATO membership.

⁷⁰ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 164.

⁷¹ Mikhail Filippov, "Diversionary Role of the Georgia-Russia Conflict: International Constraints and Domestic Appeal," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 10 (2009): 1828.

⁷² Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 170.

⁷³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Signatures of Partnership for Peace Framework Document," updated January 10, 2012, accessed January 23, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_82584.htm.

Deeply influenced by the idealist United States, NATO complicated Georgia's move toward Western alignment by encouraging change too rapidly in a post-revolution 2004 strategic environment. Fresh off successes in the Baltics, NATO quickly offered an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) in October 2004 and "Intensified Dialogue" in September 2006.⁷⁴ Compared to the Baltics, Georgia's Western alignment was fundamentally more complicated. With a long history of territorial disputes within its borders, Georgia continued to have border problems with Russia. Georgia failed to properly manage the conflict with its Russian backed separatists' regimes in the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Contrary to the diplomatic measures taken by Russia in the Baltics, hard fighting that included ethnic cleansing and forced migration from separatist regions in the early 1990s were fresh in the minds of Georgian leaders.⁷⁵

Russia initially sought to use the separatist's movements, and their potential resolution, as a diplomatic lever to exert pressure on Georgia to retain non-alignment or Russian aligned status. As Western alignment continued to be a focus of the Georgian government, Russia adjusted its strategy. Seizing the precedent set by Western Europe's recognition of Kosovo as an independent state, Russia placed more emphasis on the "independence," but Russian aligned, of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁷⁶ A weak and broken Georgia along the Russian southern flank allowed for better influence and integration with the Middle East and a buffer state against NATO member Turkey.⁷⁷ In reaction to Russian backed separatists in Georgia, the United States doubled down on military aid to Georgia, forming the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP). Both Russia

⁷⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Individual Partnership Action Plans," updated January 9, 2017, accessed January 23, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49290.htm.

⁷⁵ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 175.

⁷⁶ Daniel Warner, "Moving Borders: Russia's Creative Entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO)," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 39, no. 2 (2014): 95.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

and the United States fought for influence by giving military assistance and training to its respective Georgian partners throughout 2007 and 2008.⁷⁸

A sea change event occurred at the Bucharest NATO Summit in April 2008, with the United States and Poland sponsoring a Georgian MAP.⁷⁹ NATO announced that Georgia and Ukraine would be future members and that increased dialogue and monitoring of reforms would continue with a goal of a formal progress assessment in December 2008.⁸⁰ US President George W. Bush went on to argue for both Ukraine and Georgia to align with NATO because “NATO is a force that encourages reforms and modernization...enlargement will have a positive influence in a region with a harsh history.”⁸¹ With Georgian territory still fragmented and with the United States presumably solidly on Georgia’s side, Saakashvili sought as a part of NATO reforms to fight to force the separatist regions to rejoin Georgian sovereign territory and the rule of law.⁸² Georgia attempted to resolve one of the key issues blocking accession into NATO by using military force to incorporate the separatist region properly into Georgian territory. The short but hot conflict over the territory unexpectedly saw the Russians enter the war on the side of the separatists with hundreds of “volunteers” and the United States and NATO sitting the conflict out.⁸³ Following a strategy of *realpolitik*, Russia employed joint military forces to intervene on the side of its South Ossetian ally. Russia eventually expanded the conflict to all of Georgia and

⁷⁸ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 176–177.

⁷⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council on April 3, 2008, last modified May 8, 2014, accessed September 4, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization Bucharest Summit, Press Center, News Release, “George W. Bush: The Bucharest Summit will be one ‘marked by success’,” April 2008, accessed 23 January, 2018, http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/doc_130.html

⁸² Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 177.

⁸³ Roy Allison, “Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace',” *International Affairs* 84, no. 6 (2008): 1147.

reasserted itself as a regional superpower.⁸⁴ Over a period of less than a month, Russian forces defeated Georgian forces and went about a “peace coercion” to “demilitarize” Georgia to prevent it from future military action.⁸⁵

From international coalitions in the West like NATO and the EU to more regional blocs like the GUAM, Western institutions failed to act against Russia over Georgia. The West did not see the Georgia-Russia conflict as worth the cost. Realism trumped liberal idealism in this case. Russia’s strategy and operational approach of fomenting separatist movements (then backing them with military force) in the countries that aspire to NATO accession effectively ended the MAP process for Georgia. Maintaining a “frozen conflict” with separatist allies was a low-cost alternative to prevent NATO expansion while also maintaining favorable economic conditions for the Russian commodity market in the near-abroad. By signaling support to Georgia at the April 2008 Bucharest Summit, and explicitly noting that December 2008 would be the formal review of reform progress, NATO effectively sealed Georgia’s fate. As compared to the quick reform and accession process in the Baltics, the time required for reforms (PfP in 1994, to IPAP in 2004, and Intensified Dialogue in 2008), gave Russia the opportunity to design an operational approach to change the strategic balance in the region and halt NATO expansion.

The Ugly – Ukraine and the Hot War

Compared to the Baltics and Georgia, Ukraine is more of a latecomer to the Western alignment and NATO partnership. With much stronger historical ties to Russia, Ukraine’s ability to slide out of Russia’s orbit was challenging and fraught with missteps. As a vast agricultural and geopolitically important country in the Black Sea region, Ukraine proved to be too important

⁸⁴ Allison, “Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace',” 1152.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

to Russia interest.⁸⁶ The region rapidly turned into a war zone in 2014 after a period of internal political struggle around the shift between Eastern and Western alignment.

Like Georgia, Ukraine has a long history with Russia. In the late 1800s, Crimea became a part of Russia under Catherine the Great. Parts of the country existed in both the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the West and the Russian Empire to the East before World War I. Historical ethnic division between the East and West of Ukraine and the strategic location of the Crimea laid the foundation for recent conflict.⁸⁷ Moreover, the Crimean War of 1853-1856 saw the geopolitical struggle between east and west on the Crimean Peninsula long before the current conflict.

Ukraine became independent following the Soviet breakup, but compared to either the Baltic states or Georgia, it aligned closely with Russia through the CIS. It was in Russia's best interest to maintain close ties with independent Ukraine; agreements, both economic and militarily, formed the basis of their relationship in the Cold War era.⁸⁸ In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, former USSR nuclear weapons in Ukraine became a diplomatic issue that saw the United States and Russia come together for an agreement known as the "Budapest Memorandum." This diplomatic agreement assured the political sovereignty and security of Ukraine from military and economic aggression in exchange for denuclearizing.⁸⁹ Ukraine's history informs its dualistic nature and alignment struggles. With large populations in both eastern and western political camps and internal economic challenges, any alignment with the West is complicated. Russia preferred a non-aligned but economically weak Ukraine; whereas the

⁸⁶ John Edwin Mroz and Oleksandr Pavliuk, "Ukraine: Europe's Linchpin," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 3 (1996): 52–62, 52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁸ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 90.

⁸⁹ Mykola Riabchuk, "Ukraine's Nuclear Nostalgia," *World Policy Journal* 26, no. 4 (2009): 104.

Ukrainian people, though culturally similar to Russians, continued to be drawn to economic integration and prosperity promised by the West.

Crimea experienced waves of Russian separatist movements throughout the 1990s without any direct Russian intervention, mainly because Russia had to deal with its separatist issues in Chechnya.⁹⁰ Economic disparity and poor governance throughout Ukraine hardened the Russian majority in Crimea and eastern Ukraine toward Russophile policies. Before the open hostilities of today, in 1997, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership improved relations between the two countries and settled long-term leases for the port of Sevastopol for Russia's Black Sea Fleet.⁹¹ With growing positive relations in the 1990s, Russia sought to gain Ukraine as a partner much like it enjoyed in Belarus, with close ties to all elements of national power.⁹² However, Ukraine kept its independent streak and vacillated between East and West alignment, seeking closer economic ties with the West and the EU.⁹³

Ever pushing to achieve a balance between East and West, Ukraine became the first member of CIS to join the PFP in 1997 and actively participated in NATO exercises.⁹⁴ Following the example of other central European successes, including the Baltics, Ukraine applied for NATO membership in 2002.⁹⁵ Furthermore, after the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11th, 2001 many in the United States and NATO were encouraged by the emerging anti-terrorism partnership with Russia. Stronger relationships with Russia encouraged the

⁹⁰ Mroz and Pavliuk, "Ukraine: Europe's Linchpin," 52.

⁹¹ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 96.

⁹² Mroz and Pavliuk, "Ukraine: Europe's Linchpin," 61.

⁹³ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 98.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Prague Summit Declaration." Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Prague, Czech Republic on November 21, 2002. Last modified May 6, 2014. Accessed January 14, 2018. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19552.htm?

alignment of Ukraine and its sizeable Russian population with the West.⁹⁶ Alignment with Western institutions came at a cost. Reforms required by both the EU and NATO proved to be difficult for Ukraine to overcome in the short term and allowed more time for Russia to grow its regional influence. With the passage of time, the dynamic between Russia and the West on regional alignment and institutionalism changed. In a wave of color revolutions throughout the former USSR in 2004, Ukraine experienced the “Orange Revolution” that brought Viktor Yushchenko to power and a stronger push for NATO alignment.

Ukraine, like Georgia following its 2004 revolution, enjoyed closer engagement and ties with Western institutions. The Ukrainian people still endured poor governance and economic conditions throughout the change in alignment; without reform, the people of Ukraine would continue to vacillate. With more Western involvement, Ukraine continued to reform, but at a slow pace. NATO and EU membership would not come quickly. The clock kept ticking. Throughout the years of reform, Ukraine had a front row seat to the Georgian War with Russia in 2008. In 2010, a Russophile returned to power after the Ukrainians perceived a lack of interest by the West compared to the Russians demonstrated intent to use force towards its interest. Viktor Yanukovich shifted the country once more away from Western alignment to a more neutral stance; attempting to “play nice” with both sides, maintaining its partnership with NATO, continuing to reform economically, and solving issues with the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea in exchange for gas discounts.⁹⁷

Another vacillation followed by another revolution. The Eura Maidan Revolution in February 2014 started in response to Yanukovich pulling out of negotiations for the European Union Ascendancy Agreement (EUAA) in November 2013 under pressure from Russia. Russia using economic and political pressure knew that it had to keep Ukraine out of the EU to maintain

⁹⁶ Larrabee, *NATO's Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, 104.

⁹⁷ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 179.

its influence. The EUAA would have aligned Ukraine with the West. As a staunchly independent, but weak nation, Ukraine vacillated between the EU in the West and Russia in the East to elicit the best possible political or economic outcome for the country.⁹⁸ Russia had pushed Ukraine to join the EAEU as a counter to the EU and counted on its membership as a part of Putin's Eurasian vision.⁹⁹ The people of Ukraine (but not necessarily Crimea or the eastern provinces) favored the West for economic and political ties because of the perception that there were more economic opportunities with strong ties with the West. Ukrainians exist in a challenging environment; corrupt oligarchical governance keeps that nation on the brink of failure and rarely stand for the needs of the people.¹⁰⁰ Part of the EUAA would have ensured that the Ukrainian government would make changes to meet the criteria for full integration into the EU and the economic benefits that go along with it. Throughout the political posturing and constant revolutions of the past decade, the Crimean and eastern provinces remained disenfranchised.

Russia, reading the geopolitical tea leaves from its experience in Georgia six years earlier, once more took a realist approach and seized the opportunity to annex Crimea into its territory. Like Georgia, Ukraine lost its strategic bet that the idealistic West and its grand institutions would come out in support of its needs while it completed the reforms necessary for full membership in western institutions. With a significant military presence in Crimea and a supportive Russian ethnic population, the seizure became a *fait accompli* before Western institutions could respond with sufficient force or political will.¹⁰¹ Flush with success once more, Putin took it a step further and fomented new breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine, forcing a hot war that continues today.¹⁰² Ukrainians, politically divided once more, are now looking back at

⁹⁸ Legvold, *Return to Cold War*, 114.

⁹⁹ Gvosdev and Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors*, 193.

¹⁰⁰ Mroz and Pavliuk, "Ukraine: Europe's Linchpin," 53.

¹⁰¹ Legvold, *Return to Cold War*, 116.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 117.

the actions taken by both the EU/NATO and Russia with a sense of betrayal. Betrayed by the West for its lack of will to enforce the international agreements in the Budapest Memorandum that should have guaranteed political and economic protections. Betrayed by Russia, its cultural ally, and natural geopolitical partner, by fomenting a war on its territory and destroying any goodwill with the Ukrainian people.

Once more, as in the Georgia case, in comparison with the Baltics case, the time required to complete the necessary reforms (PfP in 1994, Annual National Program 2009) dictated by the western institutions of the EU and NATO gave Russia the opportunity and time to develop a successful operational approach to halt the near-abroad country of Ukraine from aligning with the west. Platitudes from the west continue in the new strategic environment today, but without the awarding of a MAP to Ukraine. Currently, despite continued political overtures by Ukraine to NATO and demonstrations of adherence to reforms, Ukraine lacks the diplomatic structures required to achieve full alignment with the west. Indeed, internal political support for western alignment has only increased (69% as of June 2017, compared with only 28% in 2012 under Yanukovich) in reaction to Russian aggression; with Ukrainian President Poroshenko recently stating a MAP reform goal of 2020.¹⁰³ Western institutions seem to lack the will to allow integration, and Russia continues to take advantage of the time involved for Ukraine to achieve institutional reforms. An accession for Ukraine, under its current international border and frozen conflict, will not likely gain approval from NATO member states for fear of instantly invoking Article 5 commitment.

Section IV. Conclusion: Dueling *fait accompli* Strategies

¹⁰³ Pavel Polityuk, and Natalia Zinets, *Reuters*, #World News, “Pledging reforms by 2020, Ukraine seeks route into NATO,” July 10, 2017, accessed January 23, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-nato/pledging-reforms-by-2020-ukraine-seeks-route-into-nato-idUSKBN19V12V>.

NATO's creation of the MAP to formalize the North Atlantic Treaty's Article 10 in 1999 exemplified the liberal institutionalism approach to international relations. This reform expected a gradual conversion of the former Soviet states to Western democratic values over time without significant interference from Russia. Ever the realist, Russia, for its part, made the geopolitical decisions based on its interests and capabilities. Reform succeeded in the earlier cases of the Baltics, and NATO applied the same method with apparent early success in Georgia and Ukraine. However, the reforms enabled Russia the time and space to develop a new operational approach to halt NATO expansion in its near abroad.

The first round of enlargement in the pre-MAP environment of the post-Cold War era saw former Warsaw Pact nations Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic join after many years of debate centered on political and economic reform in those states. NATO's focus on reform in these earlier cases set the foundation for the formalization of the MAP as the way ahead for all future members.

In the "Good Case" of the Baltics Vilnius Group, NATO used the momentum gained from its successful enlargement only a few years earlier to develop a moderate approach to reform and risk management that allowed for the rapid accession of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in only two years from 2002-2004. The United States and NATO anticipated Russia as a responsible partner and potential future ally in the post-9/11 strategic environment even as NATO expanded into Russia's near-abroad area of influence. Russian realism drove their interest in the Baltics. The Russians worked with western institutions and the newly independent Baltic states to develop diplomatic solutions that focused primarily on economics and human rights protections for Russian citizens. A non-aligned Baltics in the near abroad was likely more in line with purely Russian realism. In the post-9/11 period of Russian cooperation with the United States and

NATO, the rapid acceptance of the Baltic nations into the NATO alliance with reforms considered “good enough” became a *fait accompli* against Russian interest.

Conversely, in the “Bad and Ugly Cases” of Georgia and Ukraine, NATO liberal institutionalism drove reforms that took quite long and involved more complicated security situations. Compared to the Baltics, both Georgia and Ukraine had long histories of being a part of Russia proper. Russian interest in both countries drove it to make the realist choice, to gamble on the use of military force, and to bet that Western liberal institutionalist organizations would not intervene. Recovering from what Putin called “the greatest political travesty of the 20th century,” Russia looked to regain its standing as a Great Power, at least regionally.

In both Georgia and Ukraine, mixed internal political will coupled with internal security challenges made full adoption of NATO reforms challenging and gave Russia the time it needed to reassert itself on the international stage. NATO should expect that Russia will act more forcefully in its interest and prepared for military intervention on its perceived territory, specifically the Baltics or any other region that used to be a part of the Russia Empire under the Czars. For the cases of Georgia and Ukraine, based on current conditions, inclusion in NATO as formal alliance members in the near future is not likely due to internal security challenges and the continued ambiguity of Russian military actions in the near abroad. Deniability of action enables Russia to achieve its near abroad strategy while continuing to engage with the West on other matters of national interest. For any possible negotiated settlement and political reset between Russia and the West to take hold, the recognition of the Russian *fait accompli* in the Georgian and Ukrainian separatist regions and the formation of new national borders may be required.

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