

Effects of NATO on US Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Analyzes the changing role of NATO in shaping the foreign policy of the United States, exploring its influence on international organizations and the country's ongoing evolution in matters of security, diplomacy, trade relations, and prosperity. The essay highlights the growing tensions between the United States and the Russian Federation, with a focus on ideological and democratic differences, NATO expansion, and the use of military force, raising concerns about the erosion of diplomatic engagement and the principles of international law.

NATO influence on US foreign policy

From a crucial component of a national strategy to the influence of international organizations, the foreign policy of the United States has always been a subject of constant evolution, but what role has NATO played in this ever-changing landscape? Foreign policy most obviously is security and diplomacy-orientated, yet foreign policy also includes trade relations, the way we respond to internal and external issues, and ensuring prosperity. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization or more commonly known as NATO established in 1949, aims to create a more united front to tackle security and humanitarian issues. Although every country has its foreign policy, the United States has seemingly maintained the same two values; Isolationism worrying about one's own country, and interventionism, or interfering with other countries to ensure peaceful resolutions to problems. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization seeks a new meaning for interventionism in the United States foreign policy. The continued operation and the original establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have had numerous impacts on the foreign policy of the United States.

When it comes to the topic of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United States and the former United Soviet Socialist Republics or the present-day Russian Federation immediately come to mind. The raging feud recently between the two superpowers stems from ideological and democratic values and principle differences. These differences have existed since the end of the Second World War, and continue to cause demographic problems today. This raging feud paints a clear and significant change in foreign policy between the two countries.

Russia views NATO as not only a security threat, but that “NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe” (Putin) but instead infringes on Russian interests and power, and with the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the later the USSR, NATO is now seen as a much bigger threat than ever. President Putin and other “Russian officials expressed their strong opposition to NATO enlargement” (Rumer & Sokolsky) for decades. Even before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the idea of NATO expansion has been a disconcerted thought for the Russian or former Soviet Republic. As Russian leaders oppose the spread of NATO into bordering countries, the United States leaders reaffirm their “sacred commitment” to “defend literally every inch of NATO — every inch of NATO”, hoping to “keep [their] alliance strong and to further deter aggression” (Biden). Yet it is important to note that the original alliance has evolved into not only a military alliance against a demographically different power, but into a “transatlantic community based on shared values” (Frydrych, 7). “NATO has originally comprised twelve members; United States, France, United Kingdom, Denmark, Canada, Italy, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Belgium, but is now comprised of over thirty different countries. These members have become a “community is most fundamentally based on the liberal values and norms shared by its member”, and “the adherence to common values is the most important reason why NATO has admitted nations from Central and South East Europe” (Frydrych, 7). The alliance is a shared commitment to democracy supporting the ideals of “justice, democracy, stability, economic collaboration and well-being”, and its open to members within the trans-Atlantic region on their application (Frydrych, 9). America already being in NATO and by far one of the most powerful and influential countries in the alliance; the addition of more members and constant challenging

of the ideals of the Russian Federation in the public forum, rise tensions to a point of boiling over. With new security issues for Russia and the rising tensions between both nations, foreign policy becomes a topic that is too complicated and difficult to understand..

NATO has been a hot topic when it comes to its relations with the Russian Federation; this feud between the NATO countries and Russia has forced the United States to use its military force within the areas. The United States is known for its de-escalation and diplomatic abilities, yet, it seems to lose its diplomatic edge when it comes to issues pertaining to NATO. As NATO expansion continues, European countries allow new member states to form under their watch; As relations with the Russian Federation sour and tensions raise and escalate to unprecedented levels since the cold war. Though not completely ignored by NATO as “enlargement [was] the second-most important issue on the agenda” during the Bucharest Summit, which they reaffirmed that they would continue to accept countries based on set criteria, anding its “open door policy” (Frydrych, 20). Russia viewed these continued attempts of expansion as a direct threat to its security and interests, as it sees NATO's presence on its borders as a potential challenge to its military capabilities. With these new threats at play for the Russian Federation, it allies its troops along the borders of Former Soviet Countries and is involved in multiple conflicts with Ukraine and Georgia. In response to Russia's actions, the U.S. and NATO have taken many steps to deter Russian aggression and reassure their NATO allies in the region. Such as “NATO increased its military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance” and “creat[ed] four multinational battalion-size battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States respectively”. In 2023 the Russian

Federation announced its unprecedented and unprovoked war against Ukraine, turning a lot of heads across Europe. Even though the large escalation “Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Allies reinforced the existing battlegroups and agreed to establish four more multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. This has brought the total number of multinational battlegroups to eight, effectively doubled the number of troops on the ground, and extended NATO’s forward presence along the Alliance’s eastern flank – from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.”. The era of de-escalation and diplomatic engagement with foreign leaders appears to be eroding, as the United States not only appears to disregard Russia's perspectives on geopolitical issues but also challenges them through the use of military force. Instead of the prior US policy of engaging in diplomatic discussions and trying to bring peaceful resolutions to problems, the United States is taking this seemingly new approach to intimidate and coerce other countries into submission. This approach is reflected in the United States' recent deployment of military forces and equipment to various regions, such as the Middle East and Eastern Europe. This approach risks exacerbating tensions and perpetuating a cycle of conflict but also undermines the principles of international law and the norms of peaceful conflict resolution.

Although military aggression is an addition to United States policy, the idea of containment is not. America's use of the Containment Theory, or containing a country/ideology to a specific area is in no way a new strategy. Containment was used effectively in the Cold War and is primarily responsible for the outcome we see today. This policy involved supporting countries seen as aligned with the US and implementing measures to limit the influence of

communist nations. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has played a significant role in the United States' modern containment policies. As “NATO remains the foundation of our collective defence and the essential forum for security consultations and decisions among Allies” it “continue to strive for peace, security, and stability in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area” by using the basic foundations of containment theory (NATO). Since 2014, the U.S. has imposed a series of economic sanctions on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea and involvement in the conflict in Ukraine. These sanctions have had a significant impact on the Russian economy, and are seen as a way of pressuring Russia to change its behavior without direct military intervention. Also, NATO allies have also contributed to this method of containing Russia, also including their own sanctions and supporting countries that are at odds with Russia, such as Ukraine and Georgia. This strategy is extremely efficient at not only deterring countries from supporting the Russian Federation but also ensuring that the Russian Federation doesn't make any significant improvement to its power over Europe. Although containment within itself can have serious and severe consequences. Closing a country to foreign trade, suffocating it of anything it might need, may lead to further military intervention caused by an information bubble, as seen with North Korea, or during the Cuban missile crisis. Although the continuation of containment can still be seen as the NATO allies inducing strict economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and military support for countries involved with the Russian Federation.

As we advance in time, the United States foreign policy of Containment and increased military intervention should be expected. The United States has long seen itself as the protector of democracy and a guarantor of the security and well-being of its allies. This policy is reflected

in the country's continued efforts to maintain its military presence in various parts of the world, including regions where there are ongoing conflicts and security threats. Containment is a strategy that is not only effective but has been in play for a long period of time. As for military intervention, although it is unwanted and feared, it is also seen as needed and truly to protect democracy as we know it. Yet as “the expansion of NATO extends its military interests, enlarges its responsibilities and increases its burdens. Not only do new members require NATO’s protection, they also heighten its concern over destabilizing events near their borders”, ensuring the long-lasting prosperity and protection of its countries. This is particularly important for countries that have a history of political instability or border disputes with their neighbors. To not only ensure that they stay stable, and free of harm but to ensure that the country stays in working order and is driven by a desire to prevent the emergence of spheres of influence. Critics argue that it can lead to unintended consequences and have negative long-term effects. Nonetheless, the US remains committed to protecting its interests and those of its allies by using a variety of strategies, including containment and military intervention, as necessary.

As we review the actions and course of the United States Foreign policy and the swing of Influence between Russia, we can see this multifaceted array of events that can in no way explain every current tension, and in no way attribute blame to any single party. The military intervention, and both the aggression of NATO & the Russian Federation leave lasting marks on United States foreign policy. As situations ripened, the cornerstones of all of our policies come into the swift picture. We cannot ignore that Russian-NATO relations are at the highest tension which

has ever been seen before since the cold war, and as military intervention is on the rise, and containment comes back into play stronger than ever, it's easy to question a modern cold war.

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