Navigating the Post-Cold War Disorder: Examining NATO Enlargement and Nuclear Proliferation

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ABSTRACT

The transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world order following the Cold War has profoundly affected international security. This article examines the implications from the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), focusing on NATO's enlargement and nuclear proliferation. Such developments have strained post-Cold War relations and increased global security concerns. The hypothesis suggests that the end of the USSR has significantly impacted international stability. It asserts that NATO's expansion in the Liberal International Order (LIO) has contributed to tensions with the Russian Federation, leading to an adversarial relationship. Nuclear proliferation, exploiting the dissolved bipolar structure, has complicated arms control negotiations and intensified the risk of nuclear conflict. This research paper highlights the West's failure to recognize Russia's security interests and hegemonic pursuits. Using the framework of the LIO, it examines the principles of cooperation, democracy, and multilateralism, offering a lens to address the complex challenges and work toward a future characterized by security and collaboration. By shedding light on the interplay between nuclear proliferation, NATO's enlargement, and the LIO, it underscores the importance of addressing the security concerns of all nations and fostering a cooperative and reliable future.

Introduction

The hypothesis of this article asserts that the end of the USSR has contributed to substantial implications for international security. It theorizes that NATO's enlargement in the context of the LIO has sparked tensions with the Russian Federation while simultaneously, nuclear proliferation has heightened the risk of nuclear conflict. The hypothesis is considered in the larger picture that the Western countries did not appropriately attend to the security needs of former Eastern Bloc countries. They arguably failed to recognize Russia's security concerns by pursuing a hegemonic doctrine. This research paper explores how the end of the USSR gave rise to a new environment that aggravated the fragility of Western security, where two significant consequences ensued: nuclear proliferation and NATO's enlargement.

Literature Review

Since the dissolution of the USSR, the longstanding division between the Western and Eastern Blocs has evolved into an intricate and contentious landscape (Kramer, 2011). Regime changes in the former Warsaw Pact states exposed a growing rift, with several nations seeking to strengthen their ties with an ill-prepared NATO (Marten, 2017). As a result, Russia began to feel increasingly alienated and mistrustful toward the Western powers and the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. During the Yugoslav War, NATO underwent a transformative process, molding the organization into the entity it has become today. Following the Cold War, NATO had two main objectives. First, as an organization adapting to a new security environment, it aimed to

promote Western ideals such as freedom, democracy, integration, and stability for the common defense. Second, it sought to build relationships with Central and Eastern European (CEE) states, fostering friendships and spreading Western ideologies (McCausland, 2012). NATO's formal reaffirmation of its defensive purpose reflects its commitment to non-aggression (Behnke, 2013). This review examines the changing security dynamics following the end of the USSR and the implications for NATO and nuclear proliferation. It explores the arguments put forth by scholars regarding the continued necessity of NATO in the post-Cold War era. Lastly, it focuses on prominent themes and ideas in the literature on foreign policy in the immediate post-Cold War period, shedding light on the ongoing relevance and importance of NATO in a shifting global landscape. Theorists of social constructivism emphasizing deficient notions of power, space, and identity, contend that NATO's continued existence exposes the flaws and fallacies of traditional realist accounts of international politics (Behnke, 2013). Amid the tumultuous changes post-1991, NATO grappled with its purpose in the new security landscape (Sayers, 2011). NATO's identity as a democratic security community leads to enlargement and progressive growth, suggesting that NATO's relevance lies in its ability to integrate security interests with a collective identity (Behnke, 2013).

Characterized by capitalist economies, the Western liberal economic order argues that states pursue openness for domestic welfare. To successfully navigate the post-Cold War era, it is crucial to rejuvenate structural liberalism as a guiding principle for policymaking within the Western order, a consideration in the larger LIO (Kundnani, 2017). A comprehensive understanding of the LIO is essential in analyzing NATO's enlargement and nuclear proliferation. Originating after WWII and gaining traction during the Cold War, the LIO fosters stability, cooperation, and prosperity through institutions such as the UN, WTO, and NATO. It prioritizes cooperative relations among Western liberal democracies, achieved through the practice of co-binding via mutually constraining institutions, reducing the risks of anarchy and the need for balancing. The inclination of Central European nations to align with the liberal order goes beyond ideology, incorporating deep-rooted security concerns shaped by the manipulative influence of the Soviet Union, as exemplified by the case of Ukraine. In July 1990, NATO declared the end of the Cold War and issued the London Declaration, signifying a new security environment where the alliance and former Pact states were no longer adversaries. Previously coerced by the USSR to adopt a communist stance, countries including Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic had the opportunity to embrace new directions (Cox, 1990). This engagement provided a forum for CEE states to argue for further economic and military expansion by emphasizing the West's responsibility based on its ideals (Joenniemi, 1990). NATO's role in spreading Western ideologies and its recognition of the West in the making signify its ongoing influence and relevance (Behnke, 2013).

NATO Durability

The advent of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 was only one more event to add to all of NATO's past troubles. Several decades prior, in 1956, Egypt participated in the renationalization of the Suez Canal, and during the 1980s, Cruise and Pershing's missiles were deployed to Europe (Dempsey, 2016). The main justification for NATO's enlargement was to safeguard Eastern and Central European countries from potential Russian aggression. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO realigned itself, welcomed new members, and expanded its reach closer to Russia in response to the Yugoslav fallout. The post-USSR instability and the collapse of Yugoslavia made dismantling NATO impractical. However, the failure to prevent Yugoslavia's violent disintegration raised concerns about NATO's effectiveness. On the other hand, the Alliance's involvement in the 1990 Gulf War showcased its ability to pursue multilateral solutions and cooperate with the UN, solidifying its relevance and adaptability (Burton, 2018).

Several influential scholars and policymakers such as Senator Sam Nunn, journalist Thomas Friedman, academic Michael Mandelbaum, Vladimir Posner, and George Kennan, a visionary leader in foreign policy, expressed concerns about the risks of antagonizing Russia, hindering arms reduction talks, undermining Russian

democracy, and straining international relations (Burton, 2018). Prominent commentator Sherle Schwenniger opposed NATO's enlargement, arguing that it would contradict the goal of reducing U.S. military and financial commitments, potentially provoking Russia. Conversely, Anthony Lake, Richard Holbrooke, and Zbigniew Brzezinski supported enlargement, with Strobe Talbott emphasizing NATO's role as a deterrent against Russian aggression. The convergence of liberal and realist justifications further bolstered the expansion, and the moral obligation to assist neighbors suffering from totalitarian rule, championed by leaders including Walesa and Havel, propelled NATO's momentum and garnered support (Burton, 2018). NATO's enlargement strategy aimed at engaging Eastern European countries in formulating their own security policies while making efforts to address Russia's concerns through diplomacy, institutional developments, and agreements. Eventually, their expansion policy was ratified, adding Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to NATO (Mandelbaum, 1995). The success of the strategy relied on political leadership, domestic and international influences, institutional frameworks, and NATO's commitment to democratic values, reconciliation, and stability. Liberal and realist narratives contribute to understanding NATO's post-Cold War resilience, shaped by liberal principles, strategic considerations, shared interests, and historical factors.

In 2014, NATO refocused on collective defense due to two significant threats. Russia's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine shifted NATO's attention to security challenges in the east. Mearsheimer argued Russia's threat to NATO is uncertain without eastward expansion, emphasizing the importance of assessing the threat and NATO's response. To address mounting threats to civilians in Libya, NATO commissioned Operation Unified Protector. NATO enforced an arms embargo and maintained a no-fly zone. NATO's Libya operation revealed successes and ongoing challenges for the organization, highlighting the complexity of addressing security threats in a changing world (Kuperman, 2013).

New World Disorder

Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, discussions about the future of NATO were expected to arise (Frydrych, 2008). Surprisingly, the size of NATO became the most intense and prolonged subject of debate, which was not anticipated. The Clinton administration's initiative, the Partnership for Peace, aimed at establishing relationships and strengthening the states of the Warsaw Pact; political and military arrangements, including consultations, education, training, and exercises helped modernize the states, with the goal of modernizing their military establishments and providing reassurance while minimizing potential negative responses from Russia (Haass, 1997).

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union faced ongoing tensions as they vied for global dominance as major world powers. NATO was established to ensure US and Western interests in democratic regions of Europe, while the USSR formed the Warsaw Pact in response. However, with the impending demise of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact dissolved on July 1, 1991. As the relationship between US President Reagan and USSR President Gorbachev had fostered a peaceful coexistence, Gorbachev introduced Perestroika and Glasnost, which aimed to liberalize the Soviet system by having the economy serve the citizens' interests over the states. He expressed his willingness to accept political changes in Eastern Europe and the downfall of Communist governments (Gill, 2013). In other words, Gorbachev did not dispute the former countries of the Eastern Bloc looking toward their own trajectories (Duffield, 1994).

Previously, NATO's primary responsibility was safeguarding security against the communist threat, but the end of the Cold War meant the absence of its main adversary, the Soviet Union. As highlighted by Lepgold, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, NATO's leadership made efforts to adjust by forging diplomatic and military connections with previous members of the Warsaw Pact alliance (Lepgold, 1998). They also emphasized that NATO's ability to handle peace operations was a crucial reason for its continued existence. Even though NATO has managed to endure, it has faced numerous challenges including its involvement in the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia (McCalla, 1996). However, its continued relevance has not been solely reliant

on peace operations, as it has not replaced its traditional functions of nuclear protection, conventional defense, and the provision of a security community to its members. As a preliminary observation, it is worth noting that neither the United Nations nor NATO was able to effectively halt the ongoing conflict in the remaining parts of Yugoslavia. In May 1992, the European Conference on Yugoslavia failed due to stubbornness, deceit, and hypocrisy among the conflicting parties (Nambiar, 1994). NATO saw an opportunity to redefine its role, while the United Nations, was engaged in peacekeeping operations in Yugoslavia and Kampuchea. The first official commitment of the United Nations Protection Force to Bosnia-Herzegovina came in June 1992, with an expanded mandate approved by the Security Council in September 1992. Responding to the dire situation in Bosnia, Western European and US governments faced pressures to act. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Command Headquarters was established in Kiseljak, drawing its initial staff from an existing NATO organizational headquarters. NATO's resources allowed for the regular deployment of Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft to monitor compliance with flight bans. Before NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia, 2,500 individuals had perished in the ongoing civil war in Kosovo, and 10,000 Albanian civilians had been killed by Serbians. NATO's primary purpose to protect the Albanian Kosovars was achieved, but the war had devastating consequences (Mandelbaum, 1999).

Since 1991, Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic implemented a policy of ethnic cleansing, and according to Madeleine Albright, he was a bully who would only retreat under pressure. Contrary to NATO's predictions, Milosevic refused to back down, resulting in immense suffering for the people of the Balkans. The tragedy of this avoidable miscalculation produced significant strife, with the West deflecting accusations, despite NATO initiating the war (Mandelbaum, 1999). Even after the signing of the Dayton Agreements on December 14, 1995, ethnic cleansing continued, particularly within Kosovo (Bildt, 2015) (Leurdijk, 1997). The NATO air campaign against Yugoslavia concluded on May 7, 1999, with the bombing of the Chinese embassy, incorrectly identified as the headquarters of the Yugoslav Bureau of Federal Supply and Procurement. While the swift execution led to the expulsion of the Serbian military, the embassy bombing overshadowed the humanitarian goal. NATO miscalculated the war's duration, underestimated Serbian forces, and failed to consider the inevitable consequences of their Intervention. NATO's primary concern in the conflict was to grant sovereignty to Kosovo, yet the war in Yugoslavia marked a modern framework on the intervention in sovereign states to protect universal values. Despite the Clinton Administration's claims of operating defensively and allowing Russia to voice concerns in European affairs, NATO had initiated a war in a sovereign state that had not provoked any NATO member. Russia was opposed to the war but was unable to prevent it, leading to a complex situation with the potential for further Balkan conflicts (Mandelbaum, 1999) (McCalla, 1996).

Adaptability of NATO Strategy

Various factors influenced NATO's strategy, including a reluctance to match the manpower of the totalitarian USSR. Despite the evolution of NATO's perception of the threat, their understanding of the Communist system was largely grounded in Cold War-era perspectives and remained relatively unchanged. The establishment of NATO in April 1949 coincided with a period in which U.S. cooperation in NATO was crucial for the successful reconstruction of European economies (Kaplan, 2019). After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as victorious powers. As the USSR rebuilt its war-torn nation, Western European countries grew increasingly worried about the broader communist threat. NATO originated from the Brussels Pact alliance, with allies acknowledging the necessity of American leadership. Article 5 in NATO, which considers an attack against one member as an attack against all, developed from Article 4 of the Brussels Pact, which mandated military and other aid in the event of an attack. This outdated doctrine limited their ability to fully comprehend the complex dynamics and transformations within the Communist countries. The Eastern Bloc countries interested in democracy have embraced the LIO, while Russia and Belarus have not. Other meta-strategic factors resulted in NATO's perception of the threat shifting within certain boundaries. Yet, they continued to

view the Soviet Union as a threat, recognizing the importance of preparing for any potential contingencies (Heuser, 1995).

Nuclear Proliferation Link: NATO Faces Challenging Developments for Non-Proliferation Control

The problems of adapting strategy to rapidly changing security environments became obvious with the question of nuclear proliferation. The query has consistently been raised: "Can a military alliance such as NATO, which has never played a formal part either in the negotiation or in the implementation of any arms-control agreements, claim to have any role in nuclear arms control and non-proliferation?" (Nuti, 2021). Nuclear proliferation post-1991 is a consequence of the bipolar order; between 1952–53, NATO's strategy shifted toward nuclear deterrence, brought about by the rearmament plan of February 1952, the armistice marking the end of the Korean War, and President Truman's decision to develop a fusion weapon. President Eisenhower had to maintain a policy of containment toward the USSR while upholding US economic prowess.

John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, asserted nuclear weapons were a central element in US strategy. In response, NATO adapted to this new reality with the approval of Document MC 48 in December 1954, granting them the privilege of using thermonuclear weapons from the start of a conflict. Mark Trachtenberg notes how the newly proposed approach encompasses both tactical and strategic elements. However, NATO faced obstacles in maintaining the credibility of US extended deterrence, particularly in the wake of the USSR's demonstration of conventional military capabilities and nuclear weapons program that undermined US capabilities. European allies found themselves facing the dilemma of lacking defense from the US in the event of Soviet aggression. Attaining nuclear status became crucial for influencing the Alliance's decision-making process, either through a national deterrent or participating in a multilateral framework that shared control over the American nuclear system (Nuti, 2021).

In the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration questioned the US strategy of massive retaliation as past events in Cuba, Berlin, and China highlighted the risks of an unrestrained arms race and nuclear proliferation. The US and USSR instead aimed to strengthen arms control and non-proliferation through the 1963 Test Ban Treaty (*Nuclear Test Ban Treaty | JFK Library*, n.d.) (*Test Ban Treaty (1963) | National Archives*, n.d.). The Johnson administration concluded that nuclear sharing with allies and non-proliferation with the USSR were virtually incompatible. The US focused on establishing the Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), two organizations that would incorporate consultations with their European allies (*NATO - Topic: Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)*, 2022). Despite the US retaining control over nuclear weapons in Western Europe's territory, their allies reluctantly agreed to the Planning Group and Defense Affairs Committee on the condition of being granted full membership. The shift from the doctrine of massive retaliation toward conventional arms build-up was represented by the Johnson administration's success in negotiating the NPG with the Soviets and the consultation prospect with allies (Nuti, 2021).

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) prohibited Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) from providing Non-Nuclear Weapons States (NNWS) with weapons. The NPT was specifically tailored to address the concerns of the European Allies through Articles III and VI, which entrusted the International Atomic Energy Agency with verification procedures and committed nuclear weapons states to halt the arms race and pursue international disarmament (Nuti, 2021).

Experts argue that while the Alliance was not directly engaged in the negotiations that shaped the global nuclear order, member states certainly exhibited influence through the NPG, Council, and Defense Planning Committee. The US spearheaded NATO, and when they entered into the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks for a treaty in 1969, Nixon made sure to carry out a full round of consultation discourse with the Europeans before resuming negotiations with the USSR. Between 1992, NATO modernized by reducing its nuclear arsenal and balancing strategic needs in short-range nuclear forces and arms control progress through the Intermediate-

Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. With the removal of certain missile capabilities, NATO had to adapt its deterrence strategies to compensate for the loss of an entire category of weaponry (Yost, 2009). The decision on short-range nuclear forces was part of the wider Comprehensive Concept for Arms Control and Disarmament and aimed to preserve deterrence capabilities. In May 1990, the Bush administration unilaterally canceled new weapon deployments and artillery modernization, demonstrating the Alliance's adaptability. The NPG acknowledged the need to reassess sub-strategic nuclear forces in July and proposed a shift away from viewing former Warsaw Pact states as adversaries, further illustrating NATO's shifting focus toward European stabilization.

Results

The end of the Cold War was a period wrought with perils, and several profound implications emerged from nuclear proliferation. While the NPT had long been regarded as a robust wall against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, its effectiveness was eroded. One of the complications that emerged was the secret development of a nuclear weapon by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which touted the act of peaceful nuclear activities (Krause, 2007). This revelation shook the international community and underscored the challenges faced in maintaining the integrity of the NPT. Within the context of global nuclear disarmament, scholars such as Hedley Bull voiced that complete disarmament was essential for achieving international justice. He emphasized the need for trust and advocated for the revival of cooperative sensibility and good judgment in order to breathe new life into the international nuclear order (Ruzicka and Wheeler, 2010).

Henry Kissinger highlighted that a robust international order required consensus on the nature of a just arrangement (Walker, 2007). This cooperative approach was necessary to address the challenges posed by countries like North Korea and Iran, both of which continued to present roadblocks to non-proliferation efforts (Ruzicka and Wheeler, 2010). Critics rightly pointed out that the Bush administration's unilateral approach toward arms control only further hindered progress that could have been made. Balancing the pursuit of peaceful nuclear energy through the NPT to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons remained a complex puzzle, one that requires sustained international efforts and a shared commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament (Krause, 2007).

Realist theory has long guided the study of international relations, focusing on the security dilemma where states' security actions lead to tensions and decreased overall security. It examines trust, cooperation, and competition dynamics among states in an anarchic international system. As John J. Mearsheimer, a prominent theorist of realism, explained, hyper-globalization, characterized by reduced trade and investment barriers, led to negative consequences within the liberal world. These economic troubles translated into political challenges, eroding support for the liberal order. Moreover, hyper-globalization facilitated the rise of other powerful nations, such as China, and contributed to the end of the unipolar era (Mearsheimer, 2019). This global shift coincided with observable setbacks in the nuclear order, such as the collapse of the compromise solution with North Korea and revelations of Iran's enrichment activities.

In 2000, Iran claimed its nuclear program was peaceful, providing a roadmap to the UN in 2003 and supporting Syria's proposal to remove Weapons of Mass Destruction. However, suspicions arose as Iran acquired fissile materials and planned to build a heavy water reactor. By 2008, UN sanctions under Resolution 1803 were imposed, and by 2012, Iran successfully produced their first nuclear fuel rod, a testament to their clandestine developments (*Timeline of Iran's Nuclear Activities*, 2021). A similar timeline occurred with US-North Korea relations as by 2002, President Bush labeled North Korea, Iraq, and Iran as an axis of evil. North Korea disclosed a covert uranium enrichment program, violating agreements and announcing the reactivation of a nuclear plant. In January 2003, North Korea boldly withdrew from the NPT ("Analysis | A Timeline of North Korea's Five Nuclear Tests and How the U.S. Has Responded," 2021). The bilateral arms-control process between Russia and the US also became more volatile, with the US withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile

(ABM) Treaty and introducing missile-defense capabilities (Nuti, 2021). The ABM Treaty, originating from the Cold War era in 1972, was established as a means to eliminate anti-ballistic missiles and promote arms control. However, by 2000, it became evident that the arms control endeavors between the United States and Russia were reaching a deadlock. The US's growing interest in anti-missile defense research led to Russian reservations regarding the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-II), ultimately fostering animosity between the two nations. NATO cautiously maintained the need for secure nuclear forces and called for dialogue with Russia on renewed nuclear issues, which aimed to facilitate further reductions and eventual elimination of the sub-strategic nuclear weapons (Nuti, 2021).

Discussion

Regarding NATO's enlargement, there was a stark difference between the opinions of U.S. officials and Russian advocates. Less than a year after launching the Partnership for Peace, the Clinton administration introduced the objective of expanding NATO without significant debate or public preparation, with motivations to fulfill the desires of central European leaders for closer ties with the West and embark on a new and impactful foreign policy endeavor (Haass, 1997). At the outset of his presidency, President George W. Bush openly expressed his firm endorsement of Ukraine's aspirations to become a part of the Alliance. This stance posed a potential diplomatic clash with Russia, even as the administration aimed to reach an agreement with Vladimir Putin regarding American missile defenses in Europe. France and Germany, two robust NATO allies, conveyed their reluctance to support Ukraine's inclusion, citing concerns that it could needlessly provoke Russia, despite President Bush's vigorous advocacy for such a progression (Myers, 2008).

Nuclear Proliferation: Nuclear Developments

Since 1949 the Atlantic Alliance has relied on the U.S. commitment to employing nuclear weapons if required, especially in response to the USSR's advancement in nuclear capabilities, with the primary objective of bolstering Europe's defense for 33 years. During the 1960s–70s, NATO aimed to bolster European defense and unit, but limitations in US defense measures in Europe raised concerns about security, setting the stage for subsequent developments in the 1980s (Bundy et al., 1982). NATO was initially encouraged to refrain from use of nuclear weapons, meaning they would commit to not deploying or utilizing nuclear weapons, even in the event of a defeat by the Warsaw Pact states. Supporters of this policy believed it would have practical significance; however, both NATO and the US maintained a doctrine of massive nuclear retaliation until 1967 (Mearsheimer, 1984). Following the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, Kennedy and Johnson emphasized increasing conventional forces rather than deploying nuclear weapons. As NATO aimed to reduce the Warsaw Pact's advantage in conventional forces, arms control negotiations, known as the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks, began in the early 1970s between NATO and the USSR.

Historically, the reliance of US partners on nuclear strategy decisions has remained a persistent factor, crucial for comprehending the intrinsic strains between states. This encompasses instances such as the US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's opposition to NATO's strategy of overwhelming retaliation in the early 1960s and concerns about US-Soviet arms control undermining the security of Western Europe in the 1970s (Frühling & O'Neil, 2021). The Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty of 1972 sought to prevent the development of extensive anti-missile defenses that could undermine nuclear deterrence. Limits of the treaty pursued maintenance in balance of power and discouragement of first-strike capabilities (*The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty at a Glance | Arms Control Association*, 2020). Within NATO, work continues today as partners endeavor to strike a balance between fears of abandonment, entrapment, and shared threat. Although President Biden reaffirmed the US's unwavering commitment to leadership at the Munich Security Conference in 2021, there remains a substantial path to traverse in formulating viable and universally embraced political-military

strategies for the era of intense rivalry in the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions, both for the US and its allies.

Despite the advocacy put forth by supporters of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Treaty, the nuclear arrangements within the Alliance continue to be of utmost significance in preserving unity (Casey-Maslen, 2018). According to Alexander Mattelaer, NATO has established itself as a coalition, with its arrangement for sharing nuclear capabilities serving as a primary means to bolster political coherence within the Alliance (Frühling & O'Neil, 2021). Therefore, understanding obstacles related to deterrence and escalation is an essential component in examining nuclear proliferation. The assumption that NNWS are eager to leave the NPT is misguided. Rather the challenge is to maintain the belief that nuclear weapons are vital for their security, which encourages other nations to pursue their own nuclear deterrents and undermines the treaty (Ruzicka and Wheeler, 2010).

Reaching agreements on nuclear arms reduction, such as START, can enhance trust and bring the NWS closer together through efforts like constraints on missile defenses, limitations on conventional weapons, and strengthened regulations on the militarization of space (Ruzicka and Wheeler, 2010). While trust can be built among the NWS, establishing a trusting relationship with non-signatories is challenging. The options include non-signatories giving up their nuclear weapons and joining the NPT, amending the treaty to allow their entry as recognized NWS (which contradicts its normative basis), or creating exceptions that incorporate their interests without undermining the existing relationships between NPT signatories.

Preventing the emergence of new 'virtual' nuclear powers requires states to refrain from exercising their full entitlement to proliferation-sensitive fuel-cycle capabilities under Article IV of the NPT. International controls over the fuel cycle are crucial, but the NNWS critical of the failure of NWS to disarm may not accept constraints without proof of good faith. States that already possess 'virtual' nuclear weapons may resist relinquishing control over the fuel cycle, seeing it as insurance against adversaries and non-proliferation failures (Walker, 2007). An ideal of global zero raises questions about whether non-nuclear states accept a nuclear order that perpetuates their diminished status. 'Nuclear equity' poses a significant barrier to agreement (Walker, 2007). Possible approaches to continuing non-proliferation efforts include adopting multinational facilities worldwide or strengthening trust between NWS and NNWS. The notion that nuclear weapons may be vital for security has been disproven by the well-regarded 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Following the end of the Cold War, Ukraine had the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, a formidable asset in defense of their country. Choosing sovereignty, Ukraine relinquished its Soviet-era nuclear weapons in exchange for security and territorial integrity guarantees from other countries, including the US, UK, and France (Kane & Kühn, 2018). The case of Ukraine highlights the diminishing effectiveness of negative security guarantees in recent times, prompting discussions about whether nations like North Korea would consider surrendering their nuclear weapons after recognizing the negative security guarantees they face.

Western vs. Russian Perspectives

Understanding the role an enlarged NATO enlargement played in the Ukraine crisis is crucial, considering the history of tensions between NATO and Russia. Following the fall of communism in Europe, Western leaders lacked a clear plan to guide the region through the uncertainty that followed. Amidst the chaos, Russia came to believe that NATO had explicitly promised not to expand eastward. Russia saw it as a betrayal and a threat, while Western leaders argued for stability and blamed Russia's unwillingness to cooperate. There is evidence to support Russia's claim, including assurances given during negotiations to reunify Germany. However, the West argues that any supposed promise was limited to East Germany and not codified in a treaty. NATO also emphasizes that a commitment to refrain from enlargement would violate countries' right to choose their own

alliances (Wolff, 2015). Regardless of the facts Russia firmly asserts that NATO offered a gentlemen's agreement in 1990, and the violation of this agreement molded Russia's view of the West as an adversary (Wolff, 2015) (Perlmutter & Carpenter, 1998).

Supporters of Western interests believed NATO's enlargement would aid former communist countries and address Western security concerns. Tensions resurfaced due to political changes in Russia and the post-9/11 strategic environment. The conflict escalated with Russian opposition to NATO's eastward expansion, seen in the war with Georgia and the Ukrainian crisis. The differing worldviews of Russia and the West, based on geopolitics and liberal values, made cooperation challenging (Wolff, 2015). NATO's options for its enlargement policy were to discard, maintain, or recast it. Discarding it would improve relations with Russia but weaken the Alliance's influence. Maintaining the current policy provokes hostility and fails to make Russia a reliable partner. Recasting the policy involves prioritizing strategic benefits, focusing on countries enhancing Alliance security, and countering Russian influence in the Balkans. While some officials downplayed NATO's military contributions, the organization remained focused on protecting its member states in the event of an attack or conflict, despite its political nature during the post-Cold War era (Wolff, 2015).

Russia's foreign policy has evolved since 1991, moving from a pro-Western stance to asserting itself as an independent global power. By 2018, Russia faced new challenges in a changing world and recognized the need for a more efficient foreign policy that combined past achievements with internal growth and development. Two scenarios emerged: one where Russia adapts to the changing circumstances and maintains its independence, and another where it becomes more dependent on China. Despite the latter scenario, Russia would retain its sovereignty and play a significant role as an intermediary between the US and China (Karaganov, 2021). NATO expansion played a crucial role in shaping Russia's foreign policy. The rejection of integration offered by the West and NATO's expansionist actions led Russia to question Western intentions. This marked a decline in Russia's desire for westernization and a shift toward restoring its power and independence. The second stage of Russia's foreign policy involved consolidating domestic governance and responding to Western-supported events, such as the coup in Kiev, and the backing rebels in Donbas.

New Developments

Examining the post-Cold War consequences of nuclear proliferation and NATO enlargement in the context of the 2022 Ukraine invasion and North Korea's nuclear proliferation can provide valuable insights into the complexities and challenges of international security. The Ukraine invasion in 2022 highlighted the vulnerability of countries in Eastern Europe and the potential consequences of unchecked Russian aggression (Fix & Keil, 2022). By examining the events leading up to the invasion and the response from NATO and the international community, policymakers and scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of collective defense alliances like NATO in deterring aggression and maintaining regional stability (Mearsheimer, 2014) (Safranchuk, 2022). Furthermore, North Korea's nuclear proliferation presents a unique case study of the consequences of a state that proliferates against the widespread consensus of the international community. The pursuit of nuclear weapons by North Korea has posed significant challenges to regional and global security, with its provocative actions and disregard for international norms (Hamre et al., 2023). Studying the repercussions of North Korea's nuclear program can shed light on the complexities of nonproliferation efforts and the effectiveness of multifaceted strategies in deterring nuclear threats. Examining these two distinct cases in tandem may provide a broader perspective on the consequences of nuclear proliferation and the expansion of military alliances. In addition, maintaining a robust non-proliferation regime becomes increasingly challenging in an order in which the LIO has presumably failed. The LIO offers a global governance framework to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation through cooperation, norms, and institutions (Deudney & Ikenberry, 1999). However, emerging geopolitical dynamics, competing interests, and the complexities of balancing security and disarmament goals pose substantial challenges to sustaining the effectiveness and relevance of the non-proliferation regime within

the LIO. By analyzing the historical, political, and strategic dimensions of these events, policymakers could make more informed decisions and develop effective strategies to address the challenges posed by nuclear proliferation and regional conflicts.

Conclusion

The transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world order following the Cold War has had multifaceted consequences. Notably, it has led to increased nuclear proliferation as countries capitalized on the dissolved bipolar structure. This proliferation raises global security concerns and highlights the challenges of managing the spread of nuclear capabilities. Concurrently, NATO's expansion aimed to promote stability in the former Eastern Bloc and prevent conflicts by extending its influence and security guarantees to Eastern European states. While driven by a genuine desire for security and cooperation, this expansion strained post-Cold War relations with Russia and heightened tensions. Understanding these ongoing consequences within the framework of the LIO helps comprehend motivations and implications. The LIO's principles of cooperation, democracy, and multilateralism provide a lens for addressing complex challenges and working toward a peaceful future.

Acknowledgments

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