NATO ENLARGEMENT AND RUSSIAN AGGRESSIVE POSTURING

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ABSTRACT

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the world has been engaged in a new dynamic of power politics as the newly reformed Russian Federation attempts to establish its identity in Europe. As a regional power Russia is accused of forcing its will on former satellite states through military posturing and aggression as seen in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine. This study discusses issues directly related to NATO expansion into former Soviet-bloc states and the Russian Federation's response to these actions. A qualitative research model combined with a case study approach to thoroughly analysis all available relevant data related to the Russian Federations military and political movements was used. The findings are: (1) NATO offers of expansion into former Soviet-bloc states eroded the foundation of the NATO-Russian –Founding act of 1997, (2) United States and European military expansion into states surrounding the Russian Federation has caused a security dilemma and (3) Russian is reacting militarily to protect itself in line with Defensive Structural Realist principals. This study adds context to discussions regarding how to deal diplomatically with the Russian Federation regarding European security.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the international community has been engaged in a novel dynamic of power policymaking as the newly formed Russian Federation attempted to found its new identity in Europe. As a regional power the Russia Federation is accused of compelling its will on the former satellite states through military posturing and aggression as seen in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine. Many Western powers to include the United Kingdom and the United States have declared that Russia's actions, however, are nothing more than an colonialist policy by the Russian Federation and that Vladimir Putin is bent on causing disruption to a Pax Europaea that has existed since the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The Russian Federation, however, touts that it is merely responding to what it observes as a failed Western promise that North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would not enlarge to the East and the West encircling Russia with its allies thus threatening Russian national security interests and resulting in a security dilemma. The opportunity exists to thoroughly analyze the underlying causes of the destabilization and correct behaviors which could lead to full-scale conflict in the region.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Researches have struggled to determine the root causes of Russian aggression in Europe in recent years focusing mainly on Russia but failing to look towards other possible causes that may have precipitated these actions by the Russian Federation. This thesis will focus its research on NATO expansion to Eastern European. This is important in that it delves into a critical analysis of the United States and European behaviors that may be the catalyst for standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine.

Research Question: Have NATO offers of expansion to Eastern European states impacted Russian national security decisions over the last ten years?

Hypothesis: The Russian Federation would quell its incursions into Ukraine and destabilizing efforts against the West if NATO ceased its attempts to expand its membership to former Soviet-bloc states.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to understand the motivates and consequences of a continued NATO expansion into former Soviet-bloc states. The direct effect of such actions by NATO has had ramifications for Russian Federation national security policy which has been observed through the military conflicts in the Ukraine and Crimean regions. A continued destabilization of this region has severe ramifications for Europe as it ultimately results in a security dilemma occurring and full-scale combatant actions involving NATO and Russia.

Research Method and Variables

Qualitative research is a scientific research technique that seeks answers to a question through the use of collecting evidence to determine findings that were not pre-determined in advance (Williams 2013). The approach taken during this research process was a qualitative research combined with a case study approach through the analysis of documents to collect all available relevant data to examine patterns and themes related to the decision making process of the Russian Federation related to its military and political movements since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 and the offers of membership by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to former soviet-bloc states post the 1997 NATO Russian Founding Act. All available sources of government documents to include Russian Federation historical military data, North Atlantic Treaty Organization military data and treaties, and documents and publicly available statements

associated with the decision-making processes of international leaders related to actions taken by the Russian Federation, NATO, the United States and Europe.

The research will focus on the dependent variable: Russian military aggression (e.g., Incursions into Europe and the military buildup of the Arctic) while simultaneously analyzing the independent variables: NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states, United States military build-up in Europe, the Ukrainian alliance with the West, and the United States and European Union foreign policy. It is believed by comparing the dependent against the independent variables the hypotheses presented will be proven.

Limitations

Limitations to the research arise in part due to the limitations of access to government documents in the United States, European Union, and the Russian Federation related to the internal decisions making the process of domestic and foreign national security policy. Although many internal documents are classified, enough historical documentation exists that can provide a significant view of the intentions of the state actors. Additionally, statistical data to include but not limited to military budgets and military force increases is available to further the research process to challenge the hypothesis presented effectively.

Summary

The following chapters will address the ongoing debate of why the Russian Federation has engaged in an aggressive posture against the West and specifically the United States, NATO, and its former Soviet-bloc satellite states. The main driving concern of which is the destabilization of Europe and a return to Cold War politics. Chapter 2 will focus on the current research literature and the four related sub-topics. The sub-topics will include a direct focus on Russia's fight against democracy; its imperial ambitions; a place denied on the international

stage; and European missile defense systems. These sub-topics will provide insight into the current theoretical research being conducted on the hypothesis and research question.

Chapter 3 will focus on the research methods incorporated as qualitative analysis of data using content analysis of historical documents and case studies. A qualitative case study approach was selected to collect and analyze data for comparison against the theories that are currently being debated as they relate to the specific research topic. Research will include the theoretical framework of defensive-structural realism to explore the several issues facing the international community's ability to explain the root causes of Russian aggression in Europe in recent years.

Chapter 4 is intended to discuss the research findings and analytical arguments utilizing the research methodology outlined in the previous chapters. This chapter further intends to comprehend how and why the NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states have impacted Russian national security decisions over the last ten years. Furthermore, this chapter intends to show specifically that Russian actions in the Ukraine and the Arctic are not due to Russian imperialist goals as is the popular opinion, but are in line with the standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine which states that in the international order a states conduct is determined by the threats they perceive and that states estimate these threats posed by other states by the nature of their relative power.

Chapter 5 will take the research findings and analytical arguments from the previous chapter and utilizing the research methodology outlined show the direct correlation between NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states and the impact on Russian national security decisions over the last ten years. Furthermore, this chapter intends to show specifically that Russian actions in the Ukraine and the Arctic are not due to Russian imperialist goals as is

the popular opinion in current research, but are in line with the standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine which states that in the international order a states conduct is determined by the threats they perceive and that states estimate these threats posed by other states by the nature of their relative power

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

It is essential to create a set of measures to examine the conduct of NATO enlargement into Eastern Europe as well as the Russian Federation's foreign policy decisions and to measure the relationship between them. A review of the existing literature established a set of four criteria that incorporated the current scholarly opinions used to evaluate and examine the Russian military involvement and buildup along its borders with Europe. These four scholarly arguments include if the Russian Federation is merely fighting a democratic framework in its former territories is the Russian Federation under the direction of President Vladimir Putin engaging in a policy program of imperial ambitions to regain territory misplaced during the breakup of the Soviet-Union in 1991, is the Russian Federation engaging in antagonistic practices against the West because it has not been taken seriously by Europe or the United States in international affairs, and is the Russian Federation merely acting out due to European missile defense programs. The literature review summarizes these four criteria and offers a brief narrative of each as well as the use of the author's analytical framework in the examination of NATO expansion and Russian military intervention from 1991 to present. All four arguments are compelling and provide an in-depth look into what researchers believe are the underlying causes of Russian aggression against the United States and Europe, but all focus primarily on Russia and Vladimir Putin as the catalyst of such events as the Crimean invasion or ongoing campaigns in the Ukraine without taking into consideration the historical failures by the United States and Europe towards the Russian Federation that have a direct correlation with Russian national security decisions over the last ten years. A continued destabilization of this region which has

severe ramifications for Europe as it ultimately results in a security dilemma occurring and full-scale combatant actions involving NATO and Russia

A Fight for Democracy

The first argument to deliberate is that the Russian Federation is simply fighting the democratic framework of the Western world. Advocates of this argument cite that Russia annexed Crimea and supported revolutionary military action in the Ukraine only after Viktor F. Yanukovych, the pro-Russian Ukrainian President, was ousted by pro-democratic campaigners who wished to be closer to the West and the European Union. The argument drives on that it is then professed Vladimir Putin is endeavoring to quell state democratic establishments using military force and terrorization. It is true President Vladimir Putin's developing policies toward Ukraine started after Putin considered the February 2014 ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to be unlawful, and claimed it to be a Western-orchestrated regime change (Gershman 2015). Research further points to a speech given by Vladimir Putin to a joint session of the Russian parliament on March 18, 2014, following the annexation of Crimea. During this speech, Putin used obviously ethnic separatist terms to explain and justify his foreign policy moves, calling Crimea "primordial Russian land" alluding to an anti-democratic push by the United States which was enveloping Eastern Europe (Arutunyan 2007).

This is a compelling argument; however, it can be argued that Russian foreign policy to "fight democracy" was merely determined by the security concerns it was facing by NATO enlargement. In fact a hypothesis that Putin's reaction to the possible expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to include Ukraine and the post-Cold War NATO enlargement process which started in the mid-1990s was to blame was quickly countered as nonconforming views of this argument point out that after the fall of the Soviet-Union in 1991,

Russia was looking to the West to assist in rebuilding its economy in line with Western capitalism and to restructure its political systems in a pro-democratic fashion. Researcher's further point to the 2011 United States Department of Defense National Military Strategy of the United States of America which called for a closer relationship with Russia consisting of cooperation in the fight against terrorism whereas Russia redefined its national strategy calling the United States and NATO its biggest threat implying that Russia has and always will be the aggressor (Ratliff, 2005). Researchers close their argument stating that Moscow clearly believes that the Cold War continues and that more is needed to deter further Russian aggression and ensure that the territorial integrity of the Ukraine and Georgia regain their full sovereignty.

In divergence to these two arguments in early 1995, senior State Department and Department of Defense personnel discussed with members of the Clinton Administration about its insufficient foreign policy objectives towards supporting the Russian Federation even though Russia was actively seeking to establish constructive ambassadorial relations with the West. This position, however, can be debunked even further by the United States Army War College whose study on the Russian strategy in Eastern Europe opposes its own findings. First the study opinions that the Russian viewpoint is that the West is acting confrontationally by turning Russia's associates into adversaries because of pro-democracy movements supported by the United States, but then later in the same study cites Russian infiltrations into Georgia and Crimea were a direct result of NATO enlargement. This deliberation is still not settled as many academics point to inconsistent evidence when concluding their findings and thus needs further examination by researchers.

Imperial Ambitions

The second argument which is gaining acceptance by academic scholars is that the Russian Federation under the direction of President Vladimir Putin is engaged in a policy agenda of imperial ambitions to recuperate territory lost during the breakup of the Soviet-Union in 1991. One of the foremost advocates of this argument is Stephen J. Blank who bases his argument on the accumulation of Russian military forces neighboring its borders with Poland and the occupation of Crimea from the Ukraine in 2014. Mr. Blank advances his argument by citing that Russia has endangered the Baltic and Nordic states with military action and has strengthened its military overflights and submarine reconnaissance (Blank 2015). Similarly, Moscow pursues bases in Latin America from which it can threaten the US and its allies. In addition to Cuba, it may be talking to Argentina and Nicaragua as well. Academics observed that Moscow not only sought the use of ports for its ships but also installations for the replenishing of its long-range bombers to threaten the United States and continue its imposing reach around the globe (Blank 2015)

In divergence, Tomas Valasek who contends it is not an imperial ambition that is powering the passion of Russian foreign policy but the lack of importance that Russia is being afforded by Western powers concerning its place in European politics challenges the imperial ambitions argument. Explicitly, Valasek points out that after the events of September 11, 2001, Russia was one of the first overseas forces to reach out to the United States and offer its commitment to the War on Terror, which ultimately led to a NATO-Russian association in 2002. However, post the 2002 NATO-Russian agreement, policy modifications by NATO and the United States have come into conflict with Russian security positions. Valasek points out one principal reason of tension between Russia, and the West is a policy disagreement over the Russian-Chechnya affair in 1994. Explicitly, Valasek specifies the struggle between the United

States and Russia concerning Russia's battle with terrorists in Chechnya and the United States involvement in Afghanistan was the cause for a United States foreign policy shift towards Russia and the accusation that Russia was only engaged in imperialist doctrine by assaulting its neighbors. Aleksandr V. Rogovoy, of the Strategic Studies Institute, highlights that given the massiveness of the Russian state and length of its land borders, it would be impossible to defend its homeland without the positioning of Russian ground forces to its border regions adding validity to Valasek's declarations. Thus questioning further the theory that Russia is involved in imperialism rather than just a national security policy of defense from what it distinguishes as aggression from its neighbor.

Russian policy towards other post-Soviet states in terms of reintegration and building any new sort of union was rather passive for most of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, the relations deteriorated somewhat, and Russia began to speak frequently of its status as a great power and of its own position, which differed from the West (United States Department of State 2014). Russia's relations with post-Soviet countries in the region remained at the level of the early 1990s. In the late 2000s—early 2010s, competition between Russia and the EU/US for the 'New Eastern Europe' reached the level of integration projects—the EP and the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU) (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2008). Post-Soviet countries found it increasingly difficult to maintain a balance in relations with Moscow and Brussels/Washington. In addition, the competing parties exerted pressure on these countries to cause them to take their side, thus drawing these countries into the orbit of their influence through economic institutions. Russia declared itself a guarantor of peace and stability in regions of the former Soviet Union (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2008). In 1992, the Collective Security Treaty was signed. Its members stated that they would not enter into military alliances or participate in any groups

of states or actions directed against other parties to the Treaty. Russia failed to preserve a single security space with other post-Soviet countries in the military sphere. In addition, Russia's military actions undermined the authority of the CIS, which Georgia left in 2009. Nevertheless, through the examples of Georgia and Ukraine, Russia showed the limits of NATO's enlargement and made it clear that its eastward expansion with reliance on anti-Russian regimes that came to power in coups would never be accepted.

A Place Denied

Jonathan Haslam whose argument is that Russia is engaging in antagonistic practices against the West because it has not been taken seriously by Europe or the United States puts the third theory that is currently in debate forth. Haslam hypothesizes that Russia is infuriated because it has not been regarded the same since the downfall of the Soviet-Union in 1991 and that to recuperate its "place at the table" it will use acts of aggression and implied threats of violence against its neighbors to accomplish its goal (The Heritage Foundation 2015). However, challenges to this theory point out that the Russian Federation has taken satisfactory steps since the collapse of the Soviet-Union to partner with democratic states such as the United States in areas to counter Islamic extremism as well as supporting the United States with its War on Terror, so it is improbable Russia is being ignored (Rawlinson and Macaskill 2016).

Theodore P. Gerber further points out that it is not necessarily that the Russian Federation does not have a place at the table but that the United States has endeavored to disaffect and disrepute Russia on the worldwide stage. Gerber highlights that Vladimir Putin and the Russian government receive high marks from the Russian populace for foreign policy enterprises whereas the United States does not (McGwire 2008). Geber further counters the argument by Haslam demonstrating that public opinion of Russian foreign policy initiatives has been on the rise

outside of the Western opinion polls that fail to take into consideration these views. Although there is some actuality to the argument by Haslam, it again is merely a consequence of the overall stimulus, which has caused Russian foreign policy to change destructively towards the West from 1991 to present (McGwire 2008). Several key mechanisms of which include the failure of the United States and Western associates to sufficiently assist and incorporate the Russian economy into a Western capitalist arrangement and further encroachment by NATO into areas which are of a security concern to the stability of the Russian Federation. Both of these reasons were not factored into the overall deductions made by both Haslam and Gerber, so the discussion continues.

There is an effort on his part to bring Russians together on a series of domestic and foreign policy activities that exalt Russian nationalism. Predominantly as he had grown weaker in terms of his acceptance, which before the Crimea event was certainly what the trend was showing. Russia, in comprehensive conjunction with the first objective, wants to generate its own sphere of influence with the former Soviet states. Ukraine has been the focus of this. Mr. Putin has continuously been captivated with making Russia “the bi-polar” with the United States in running the world.

European Missile Defense

The fourth and concluding argument offered in this thesis that is presently being discussed deals with the European missile defense and the Russian response to it. Proponents of the concept cite that when then United States President Barack Obama canceled his planned meeting with the Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin, it was because of a lack of development between the two states on missile defense. Proponents further cite President Putin’s “vehement” oppositions to the strategic deployment of the United States missile defense

systems to Europe and that Russia assured “a response” if it happened as the main reasons Russia is acting aggressively in Europe (United States Army War College 2015). Andrew Monaghan further writes that the European missile defense system can hypothetically counter a small portion of the Russian nuclear deterrence, which has strategic consequences for the Russian Federation and has forced them to take an belligerent stance against its neighbors.

Critics of the European missile debate point out that although the conversation of European missile defense did not legitimately begin until 2013 under Barack Obama, European defense has been an ongoing problem that started with the Soviet-Union in the early 1980s with the Strategic Defense Initiative. Kimitaka Matsuzatu contends that Russia’s antagonism and succeeding annexation of Crimea had nothing to do with European missile defense but was a direct consequence of collaboration between Crimean leaders and the Kremlin. Matsuzatu takes this a step further by highlighting pressures between Macedonians, headed by Anatoly Mogilev, and the Crimean leaders, which according to Matsuzatu resulted in the takeover of the Macedonian political faction by the Crimean’s who then asked for Russian involvement (Shiffrinspn 2016). Although Monaghan points out a valid concern for Russia, it does not incorporate the entirety of the state of affairs as a whole as the European missile system is simply a component in the total initiating factor, which began in 1991 and has continued to present day that of the NATO policy of enlargement into former Soviet satellite states. Matsuzatu also only highlights one noteworthy part of the overall Russian military intervention in Europe and suffers the same fate as the other theories failing to recognize that Russian involvement in Crimea was simply part of a systemic failure in NATO’s policy of expansionism.

Summary

Researchers engaged in the current debate of Russian aggression in Europe have focused primarily on Russia's fight against democracy; its imperial ambitions; a place denied on the international stage; and European missile defense systems. However, the research has failed to overlook the plausibility that Russia is merely acting in accordance with established Realist theory principals as it relates to an expanding NATO alliance in its own backyard. Taking this hypothesis into account, and expounding on the current research available this paper will provide creditable and substantial evidence to prove Russian aggression is based on the Realist paradigm and not due to merely selfish aggressiveness as currently believed and debated in research.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology used to answer the research question and to test the hypothesis incorporating a qualitative analysis of data using content analysis of historical documents and case studies. A qualitative case study approach was selected to collect and analyze data for comparison against the theories that are currently being debated as they relate to the specific research topic. Research included the theoretical framework of defensive-structural realism to explore the several issues facing the international community's ability to explain the root causes of Russian aggression in Europe in recent years. This chapter discusses the methodology used, research framework, the data collection methods, and a summary of the analysis and methods used as part of the research processes.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

The research methods incorporated a qualitative analysis of data using content analysis of historical documents and case studies. A qualitative case study approach was selected to collect and analyze data for comparison against the theories that are currently being debated as they relate to the specific research topic. Research included the theoretical framework of defensive-structural realism to explore the several issues facing the international community's ability to explain the root causes of Russian aggression in Europe in recent years. This chapter discusses the methodology used, research framework, the data collection methods, and a summary of the analysis and methods used as part of the research processes.

Methodology

Qualitative research is a scientific research technique that seeks answers to a question through the use of collecting evidence to determine findings that were not pre-determined in advance (Williams 2013). The approach taken during this research process was a qualitative research combined with a case study approach through the analysis of documents to collect all available relevant data to examine patterns and themes related to the decision making process of the Russian Federation related to its military and political movements since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 and the offers of membership by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to former soviet-bloc states post the 1997 NATO Russian Founding Act. All available sources of government documents to include Russian Federation historical military data, North Atlantic Treaty Organization military data and treaties, and documents and publicly available statements associated with the decision-making processes of international leaders related to actions taken by the Russian Federation, NATO, the United States and Europe.

Research Framework

The study's theoretical framework incorporated realist theory with a specific concentration on defensive-structural realism, while conducting a comparative research method to analyze previously conducted research data with recent results as to the actions of the Russian Federation and its employment of state military forces in Crimea, the Ukraine, and its ongoing reestablishment of forces in the Arctic. Realist theory and defensive-structural realism are identified as the foundational theoretical framework used to examine data related to security studies. Specifically, realist theory as it relates to security studies examines the three main precepts of fear, power, and anarchy which have been identified as the explanations for conflict and war which have set a baseline for scholars' expectations. The realist theory and defensive-structural realism applied to the Russian Federation's movements post the 1997 NATO-Russian Founding Act will examine how past and current actions by NATO, The United States, and international members of Europe will predict how the system has acted and will continue to act moving forward. Additionally, applying this research framework to the ongoing crisis will further allow researchers to grasp root causes of Russian behavior and allow for international leaders to affect a desired outcome in the future.

Realism is generally dated to publication of Edward Hallett Carr in his 1939 paper *The Twenty Years Crisis*. According to the founding principles of realism, because states are in a continuous struggle to increase their capabilities, the absence of the international equivalent of a state's government, it allows for a permissive condition to exist that gives human appetites free rein (Williams 2013). This is a critical concept that can be applied to the study of how and why governments act in the absence of an international check and balance system that an international government would afford. In this case, the Russian Federation, the United States, its European

partners, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has a lack of international enforcement authority outside of its own preconceived notions of fairness and equality and this are free to operate in accordance with their own set of expectations and goals. Thus, individual states operating in the international realm are free to act singularly or in concert with those states which share a common security interest at the time of a specific actionable decision. Realism, therefore, is a proper research framework to conduct a case study comparing and contrasting the various decisions made by the actors which resulted in a specific result.

Defensive structural realism, similar to realist theory focusing on the notion that states seek security in an anarchic international system, However, defensive structural realism has three main differences than those of the traditional realist theory which are beneficial to the research being conducted. First, defensive structural realism relies solely on the rational choice of the actor as opposed to multiple micro foundations. Second, defensive structural realism adds the offense-defense variable which takes into consideration a variety of factors that would make the conquest of a state harder or easier (Williams 2013). For instance, the prevailing technologies of a state over its advisory or geographical circumstances may favor one states actions over that of another. A comparison being that of the Russian Federation which may see the geographical circumstances of an increased NATO presence at its periphery as threatening to their national security interests whereas NATO may view the offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states as merely a way to increase NATO funding and partnership. Because of these views it may not take much balancing to offset a nation states behavior. Third, because states are expected to support the status quo, balancing is an appropriate response to threatening concentrations of power. As a result, offense-defense balancing that occurs in the international realm means that states balance through the use of military force until a balance results which is normally achieved

through the forming of alliances. Therefore, defensive structural realism is an appropriate and applicable theory for the examination of the relationship between NATO and The United States. This further transcends into the relationship between the Russian Federation and its posturing with NATO, the Ukraine, and the United States as a state's conduct is determined by the threats they perceive and the power of others is merely one element in a state's calculations (Williams 2013).

Testing the hypothesis was accomplished by analyzing data from previously conducted research data with recent results as to the actions of the Russian Federation and its employment of state military forces in Crimea, the Ukraine, and its ongoing reestablishment of forces in the Arctic to include government papers, internal memorandums, and studies to determine how NATO offers of expansion to former Soviet-bloc states affected the Russian Federation's internal troop increases and military incursions into the Ukraine and Arctic regions. The data exposed issues with the agreements made under the 1997 NATO Russia Pact as it specifically related to expansion by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the requirements of consulting the Russian Federation prior to engaging in operations which fell within their purview of Russian national security interests. Without a complete understanding of the complex issues outlined within the agreements of NATO and Russia, a determination cannot be made whether NATO expansion is a direct result of Russian aggressive posturing in the Ukraine and Arctic regions. The research question, hypothesis, and variables are:

Research Question: How have NATO offers of expansion to Eastern European states impacted Russian national security decisions over the last ten years?

Hypothesis: If Realism is to be taken into account for the actions of Russia, then the Russian Federation would quell its incursions into Ukraine and destabilizing efforts against the West if NATO ceased its attempts to expand its membership to former Soviet-bloc states.

Dependent Variables: Russian military aggression (e.g., Incursions into Europe and the military buildup of the Arctic).

Independent Variables: North Atlantic Treaty Organization offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states, United States military build-up in Europe, the Ukrainian alliance with the West, and the United States and European Union foreign policy.

Data Collection Methods:

The research methodology for this study will be primarily focused on a qualitative case study approach. A case study method includes data collection and analysis within the context of phenomenon and the ability to capture complexities of real-life situations so that the phenomenon can be studied in greater levels of depth which provided a better opportunity to effectively investigate the hypothesis. This examination will focus on the differences and similarities collected from All available sources of government documents to include Russian Federation historical military data, North Atlantic Treaty Organization military data and treaties, and documents and publicly available statements associated with the decision-making processes of international leaders related to actions taken by the Russian Federation, NATO, the United States and Europe. The variables which include Russian military aggression, North Atlantic Treaty Organization offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states, United States military build-up in Europe, the Ukrainian alliance with the West, and the United States and European Union foreign policy, will be extracted and interpreted from the various data sources and affiliated with realist theory and defensive structural realism because of its structure and ability to assess obtained content. The author uses aspects of realist theory to frame his argument by providing specific examples of how defensive structural realism has resulted in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization making long-term strategies and failure of the organization to assess how these strategies would impact Russian Federation national security objectives in the

region. By comparing and analyzing these types of data with the recent actions taken by the Russian Federation and North Atlantic Treaty Organization will identify if NATO changing practices and incorporation the Russian Federation as an equal partner in the security of Europe will achieve a common goal.

Summary

A collection of data obtained from government documents to include Russian Federation historical military data, North Atlantic Treaty Organization military data and treaties, and documents and publicly available statements associated with the decision-making processes of international leaders related to actions taken by the Russian Federation, NATO, the United States and Europe identified a similar conclusions on the decision making process of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's effects on Russian aggression in Europe. Obtaining information through case study analysis enabled the researcher to compare its relevance to theoretical frameworks, including realist theory and the defensive structural realist approach. Many studies explored Russian aggression, yet failed to specifically apply realist theory to the actions of NATO expansion in Europe to test the validity of their findings. This qualitative case study will pursue to fill the research gap by applying the two different theoretical frameworks of realist theory and defensive structural realism to content data analysis. The following chapter will identify the results of the collection and analysis of data, answers the research question, and tests the hypothesis presented.

Chapter 4 will present research findings and analysis obtained from the quantitative research process which combined a case study approach through the analysis of documents to collect all available relevant data to examine patterns and themes related to the decision making process of the Russian Federation related to its military and political movements since the

collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 and the offers of membership by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to former soviet-bloc states post the 1997 NATO Russian Founding Act.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Overview

This chapter is intended to discuss the research findings and analytical arguments utilizing the research methodology outlined in the previous chapters. This chapter further intends to comprehend how and why the NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states have impacted Russian national security decisions over the last ten years. Furthermore, this chapter intends to show specifically that Russian actions in the Ukraine and the Arctic are not due to Russian imperialist goals as is the popular opinion, but are in line with the standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine which states that in the international order a states conduct is determined by the threats they perceive and that states estimate these threats posed by other states by the nature of their relative power (Holbrooke 1995).

NATO Membership and Expansion

The official North Atlantic Treaty Organizations stated objective is to enhance security in Europe and that it is officially accepted that there is no Russian threat to the states located in the Central and East European region (McGwire and Clarke 2008). With that being said NATO members mutually agree that the security of Europe requires the integration of the former Soviet Union to include Russia to achieve a stable security system (Holbrook 1995). In 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev was given top-level-assurances by Western powers, that NATO would not enlarge and that there would be a non-aligned buffer zone between NATO's eastern border and Russia. In 1991, Russia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and Partnership for Peace Program setting the stage for NATO-Russian cooperation (McGwire and Clarke 2008). In 1997, the NATO-Russia Founding Act was instituted formulating the basis of the relationship with Russia shortly followed by the NATO-Russian Council in 2002, which was supposed to serve as

a forum for consultation on security issues and cooperation (NATO 2016). However, despite the assurances that NATO would not expand, in 1991, NATO began “dialogue” with the Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia and they also were invited to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which is the first step in the process to gain full membership in NATO (NATO 2016). This action by NATO was taken a step further in 1997 when the Ukraine signed the Distinctive Partnership Charter establishing the NATO-Ukraine Commission for forward cooperation. On July 8, 1997, NATO then invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join the alliance in April 1999 and indicated the door to membership would remain open to others in the Baltic republics (McGwire and Clarke 2008).

In 1998, NATO entered the Baltic Republic of Kosovo to end violence and halt what it described as a humanitarian disaster but failed to consult the Russian Federation which began the gradual disintegration of NATO-Russian relations. In 2008, NATO suspended the NATO-Russian Council due to what was described as “disproportionate military action in Georgia,” and in 2014, the NATO-Russian Council was indefinitely suspended due to Russian actions in the Ukraine (NATO 2016). Since the collapse of the NATO-Russian Council, NATO has been significantly increasing its troop presence in Eastern Europe. NATO has increased its troop strength to at least 40,000 military personnel which is up from the 13,000 2015 troop levels (The Heritage Foundation 2015). This is in conjunction with the additional 800 United Kingdom troops and two Royal Air Force Typhoon jets that have also deployed to the border (The Heritage Foundation 2015). In addition to troop increases, NATO has also increased its military hardware presence in Eastern Europe by deploying Challenger 2 tanks, Warrior armored infantry transport vehicles, and hand-held Desert Hawk drones (The Heritage Foundation 2015).

NATO allies' continue to voice their concerns about Russia's destabilizing actions and policies in which they described as provocative military activities near NATO's borders stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea; irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military posture and underlying posture; the risks posed by its military intervention and support for the regime in Syria; and the nerve agent attack in the United Kingdom in March 2018, a clear breach of international norms (NATO 2019). On 1 February 2019, the North Atlantic Council issued a statement supporting the United States decision to suspend its obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in response to Russia's material breach of the Treaty (NATO 2019). NATO has responded to this perceived changed security environment by enhancing its deterrence and defense posture, while remaining open to dialogue. The Alliance does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia (NATO 2019).

United States and European Foreign Policy

A review conducted of United States and European foreign policy related to the Russian Federation determined that the consensus from the international community is that although Russia has been very active since the early 1990s, the United States and Europe entered the game late, and have been largely unable to formulate a coherent strategy toward the small states situated between Black and Caspian Seas (Siroky et al. 2017). Although this may be the consensus of the international community the United States and Europe have taken their foreign policy initiatives to aggravate the already delicate relationship between Russia, NATO, the United States, and European Union. This intentional aggravation was evident during the Russian-Georgian War and has not gone unnoticed by the Russian Federation. In response to an increased US involvement in the region, which coincides with Georgia becoming more proactively eastern

in its foreign policy, Russia has also intensified efforts to reestablish its influence (Siroky et al. 2017). After the Georgian Government of President Mikheil Saakashvili proclaimed that integration into NATO and EU was the ultimate objective of Georgia's foreign policy, Russia pushed back, using economic sanctions and direct military action in 2008 (Siroky et al. 2017).

The current scholarly position is that the Kremlin follows a two-pronged strategic approach of bolstering friendly regimes and subverting unfriendly regimes in order to achieve managed stability and managed instability in its zone of influence (Siroky et al 2017). The Russian Federation, however, is not the only state to utilize such tactics to strengthen their self-proclaimed spheres of influence. The United States and the European Union foreign policy also reward and punishes regimes in post-Communist Europe, but largely using political pressure. Accordingly, former-Soviet states have to deliver on democratic and economic foreign policy initiatives as outlined by current presidential administration and enforced through the State Department or respective foreign offices. Pressure is placed on former Soviet-bloc states to reject Russian Federation offers of cooperation while preferential treatment is given toward those states which favor the United States and Georgia reforms in order to receive rewards tied to accession and deeper integration to the EU and NATO (Brown 2015). Although Russia has sought to block these Western incentives, and to counterbalance the sticks through their own foreign policy objectives, Georgia, Poland, Czech Republic, and most recently the Ukraine are one of several post-Soviet "battleground" states in which these methods can be seen in action as Russia and the West vie for influence (Brown 2015).

Foreign policy directives by the United States and other Western states are based perceived notions of Russian influence within a specific region. One such influence based study by the United States found that attitudes toward the role of government influenced attitudes

toward the EU (Ratliff 2006). This was interpreted that post-Socialist states have a recent history of strong governmental paternalism, and this tradition is perceived to be alive and well in Putin's Russia (Ratliff 2006). Because of this inherent belief it was assumed that attitudes more in line with government paternalism should be positively correlated with pro-Russian attitudes (Ratliff 2006). Secondly, the study concluded that nostalgia among citizens for the days of communist rule longing for the "glory" days of the more paternalistic, Russian-dominated Georgia are likely to prefer a more paternalistic style of government today, and to express a desire for closer ties with Russia (Ratliff 2006). Because of this view, the United States and European Union formulated their foreign policy to challenge Russian paternalistic views in former Soviet-bloc states rather than a cooperative policy of friendship and understanding. This ongoing foreign policy of challenging paternalistic views of citizens against the Russian Federation has lead the Russian Federation to be fearful of pre-Cold War military aspirations by the United States to remove Russia as a global force as opposed to utilizing the Russian Federation as a partner for global security.

United States Military Buildup in Europe

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, tensions between the United States and the reformed Russian Federation have steadily increased. In 1993, the United States indicated that it would be open to becoming a vigorous European pillar within the NATO alliance starting the watershed of sour relations between Russia and the United States. This relationship continued to take a negative turn with the 1996 Berlin-Brussels agreement and again with the 1999 Berlin-Plus agreement where the United States supported the European Union's efforts to draw upon NATO for its own peacekeeping operations (United States Army War College 2015). In 2002, at the Prague NATO summit, the United States supported the "open-door" initiative to allow more

Soviet-bloc states to gain membership in to NATO thus solidifying the United States as a permanent European power in the region. The United States presence in Europe, however, is not merely political in allowing the authorization for new members into NATO, but has also served as the modernizing force by integrating its European Command Structures thorough revamping its European strategy and commands (United States Army War College 2015).

The United States has refocused its post-Cold War strategies to a “Europe whole and free” initiative with a focus on building an overarching framework to build European security institutions through an 11-step process all the while alienating Russian security concerns (United States Army War College 2015). To achieve this policy in Europe, the United States supports the move forward of European integration with the potential of the European Union engaging in responsibilities beyond the containment of Europe with military force without the assistance of NATO (United States Army War College 2015). At the crux of this European realignment, the United States has provided political incentives for modernizing indigenous military forces to modernize to be interoperable with the more rapidly modernizing U.S. military forces (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). This action by the United States is based, according to official press releases, due to the actions of the Russian Federation in Crimea in 2014. To counter this Russian aggression in Europe, the United States has agreed and outlined plans for a complex web of small eastern outposts, forces on rotation, regular war games, and warehoused equipment ready for a rapid-response force that includes air, maritime, and special operations units of up to 40,000 personnel (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). This increase in force to challenge the Russian Federation is in addition to 11 United States conventional force bases and the 5 U.S. bases with nuclear missiles already in the European theater ranging from Germany to Turkey effectively surrounding the European boarder with the Russian Federation (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 United States, NATO, and Russian Military Bases; *Source:* Data from Reuters 2016.

Russian Military Deployments

A review was conducted of significant Russian military operations after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during the building stages of its relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian armed forces failed to adapt to the new realities of a post-Cold War world. Severe spending cuts left the Russian Federation military under-equipped, poorly trained and ill-prepared to respond to new challenges that were to come in the years following 1991. In 1994, after joining NATO's Partnership for Peace, the Russian Federation launched a two-year campaign in Chechnya to recapture the breakaway state, which ended up in Chechnya receiving greater autonomy for itself (European Parliament 2015). In 1998, although there was no military action to counter the

policy, Russia formerly condemned the actions of NATO for its involvement in the Balkans, which lead to tensions developing between the two parties. Successive military reforms to transform the military into a more professional and mobile force ran into entrenched resistance from the military establishment and made little headway until the appointment of Anatoliy Serdyukov as Defense Minister in 2007 (European Parliament 2015). In 2008, the Russian Federation invaded Georgia after Georgian troops attacked separatist forces in South Ossetia. The conflict in Georgia eventually led to Russian troops driving back the Georgian forces with South Ossetia and Abkhazia eventually being recognized as independent states. The 'New Look' reforms undertaken by Antoluy Serdyukov were intended to address the weaknesses highlighted in the 2008 Georgian war, leading to a substantially restructured, streamlined and more combat-ready military. This Russian action caused tensions between NATO and Russia, which ultimately led to the first suspension of the NATO-Russian Council in 2002 but these reforms put in place by Serdyukov have been kept in place by Serdyukov's successor Sergei Shoigu.

In 2014, after Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled to Moscow, Russian forces entered and annexed the Crimean Peninsula from the Ukraine. This event had a dramatic effect on Russian relations with the West, which ultimately lead to sanctions, and Russia being suspended from the G-8 group of industrialized countries. The Russian Federation further involved itself in the Ukrainian crisis by allowing special operations forces to enter the state and assist Russian separatist groups. In addition to military activity in the Ukraine, the Russian Federation begins amassing large amounts of military equipment and troops on its border with Poland and Lithuania as part of a military exercise. Since 2014, the Russian Federation has reinforced its Baltic Fleet base with two additional warships and nuclear capable Iskander-M

missiles. In Moldova, the Russian Federation has increased its troop presence to 1,500 soldiers in addition to its presence in Georgia and Armenia, which have risen to 3,000 and 5,000. The Russian Federation cites these troop increases as necessary to combat what it considers a threat from NATO and the West who are also amassing additional forces near the Russian border. Specifically, it is cited that Russia feels the West has repeatedly been the aggressor and cannot be trusted and blames the NATO offers of membership to expand their borders as the key reasons the crisis in the Ukraine and Georgia occurred. In terms of military hardware, years of underspending have left the military with obsolete equipment, much of it dating from Soviet times (European Parliament 2015). The Russian armed forces are now in the middle of a major spending program with a target to have the same level of modern weapons as NATO countries by 2020 (European Parliament 2015). There have already been major deliveries of new equipment to all the armed forces and these are set to continue over the next few years (European Parliament 2015). However, European Union reviews of the Russian armed forces shows that there is still a lot of catching up to do given that funding and the defense industry's production capacity are limited, it is unlikely that the rearmament target will be met (European Parliament 2015).

Arctic Developments

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States and other Western countries mutually agreed to assist the rebuilding Russian Federation through economic assistance and by bringing Russia closer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As part of this rebuilding process, Russia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and Partnership for Peace Program in 1991, which laid the foundation of cooperation between the West and Russia (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2016). Part of the founding agreement between the two

parties was assurances that NATO would not expand its membership to former Soviet Eastern Bloc states, however, in 1991 shortly after the establishment of the Partnership for Peace, NATO began talks with Georgia, Belarus, and the Ukraine, which were subsequently invited to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. The invitation offered by NATO to these former Soviet interests to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council was a first step requirement needed to gain full membership in the alliance and a violation of the agreement against NATO expansion expressed to the Russian Federation. In 1997, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Ukraine, which is an economic and strategic state for the Russian Federation, signed the Distinctive Partnership Charter establishing the NATO-Ukraine Commission (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2016). On July 8, 1997, NATO tested the line even further when it invited the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to join the alliance as well and officially leaving the door open for other Baltic republics to join NATO.

Although the Russian Federation officially protested this expansionist policy by NATO, in 2002 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia formed the NATO-Russian Council to establish an additional forum of consultation regarding security issues that both parties faced (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2016). However, in 1998 the disintegration of Western cooperation with the Russian Federation occurred when NATO entered the Baltic Republic of Kosovo on a self-described humanitarian disaster mission but failed to consult the Russian Federation prior to initiating the action in violation of the agreed upon stipulations of cooperation. In 2008, the Russian Federation engaged in military actions inside Georgia in response to accusations by the Georgian Government, that Russia had shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle inside their territory and a buildup of Georgian troops. Subsequently that same year NATO then suspended the NATO-Russian Council due to what it described as a

disproportionate military action in Georgia and indefinitely suspended the Council in 2014 due to Russian actions in the Ukraine (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2016).

The collapse of effective communication between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has resulted in increased aggressive posturing by the alliance. Since the indefinite suspension of the NATO-Russian Council, NATO has increased its military presence in Eastern Europe to 40,000 military personnel, which is a dramatic increase from its 2015 levels of only 13,000 in the same region (The Heritage Foundation 2015). In addition, NATO has increased its military hardware in the region as well through the deployment of numerous Warrior armored infantry support vehicles, Royal Air Force Typhoon jets, Challenger 2 tanks, and the hand-held Desert Hawk drones all designed to agitate the situation between Russia and NATO (Rawlinson and MacAskill 2016).

As a result, since 2014, the Russian Federation has taken its own steps to reinforce its positions in Europe and expansion into the Arctic region. A United States Army War College study conducted in 2015 entitled “Project 1704: Analysis of Russian Strategy in Eastern Europe, an Appropriate U.S. Response, and the Implications for U.S. Landpower,” cited that recent Russian actions regarding their military buildup and incursions into the Ukraine and Arctic region are a direct result of NATO offers to expand its membership to Georgia and the Ukraine (U.S. Army War College 2015). As a result, Russia has increased its troop mobilizations in Moldova to 1,500 in addition to the Georgian and Armenia troop deployments of 5,000 soldiers (Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces). Russia has also reinforced its Baltic Fleet with nuclear capable warships carrying Iskandar-M missiles (Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces). Additionally, since 2014, the Russian Federation has been expanding its military footprint in the Arctic to strategic Cold War levels. Although the Russian Federation touts its expansion in the region is to

gain a foothold on natural resources or to protect shipping routes, many of them are in locations that do not support this function. One such base, Alakurtti, is the home of the 80th Motor Rifle Brigade, but it cannot service the Northern Sea Route as claimed (Reevell 2017). Another base located at Franz Josef Land, which is a chain of island between the Barents and Kara seas houses approximately 150 military personnel and an air defense contingent ((Reevell 2017).

Russian Historical Military Expenditure Trends

During the Cold War, the Soviet military was proportionate in size with the country's status as a superpower, potentially capable of defeating the United States (European Parliament 2015). In addition to five million men in active service, the armed forces had a further 20 million reserves, 5 which could be mobilized in the event of a global conflict (European Parliament 2015). The military Russian military in 1991 had only 20 of the army's 132 divisions that were 70% staffed, the remainder being kept either at reduced strength (50% staffed) or skeleton strength (10-20% staffed), and 6 to be completed with reserve staff should mass mobilization become necessary (Boltenkov et. al 2008). After the end of the Cold War, the risk of a global conflict receded and was replaced by the new challenge of smaller scale, but more rapidly unfolding, regional conflicts, such as those observed in Chechnya and Georgia. The mass mobilization system inherited from Soviet times was now not only redundant, but actually hindered an effective response by the Russian Federation (Boltnekov et al. 2008). This resulted in a lack of battle-ready formations with many having to be cobbled together using troops from different parts of the country who had not previously trained together thus creating a gap in unit cohesion. After the end of the second Chechnya war in 1999, only 55000 of the total Russian military force of 1.4 million was combat ready (Boltnekov et al. 2008)

Figure 4.2 Russian Military Expenditures 1988 to 2012; Source: Rudn Journal of Political Science.

Obsolete military weaponry inherited from the post-Soviet era combined with inefficient spending on upgraded military hardware furthermore left the Russian military forces severely depleted and underequipped for military confrontation. Estimates of conventional Russian military forces showed that between 2000 and 2004 only 15 tanks out of 23000 remained operational (Boltnekov et al. 2008). Additionally, the Russian Air Force failed to acquire any new aircraft between 1995 and 2008 (Boltnekov et al. 2008). A 2008 study conducted by the Russian Ministry of Defense highlighted that the tail fins of two MiG-29 fighters were so corroded that they disintegrated in mid-flight, causing the planes to crash (Boltnekov et al. 2008). A Russian Federation State Armaments Program for 2007-2015 set a target of modernizing weapons systems by 2025, however; only 2% of equipment was replaced under the program per year, making weapons systems becoming obsolete faster than they could be replaced (Boltnekov et al. 2008). According to a 2006 estimate, only 20% of Russian military hardware was 'modern', compared to over 70% in NATO armed forces (Figure 4.2) (European Parliament 2015).

Russian military personnel is categorized in to two groups to include officers and “kontraktniki” (contracted military personnel) who are bound to contract for a three year period. In 2012 the Russian Federation in an attempt to increase its military corps to approximately 350,000 personnel (Boltnekov et al. 2008). This goal by the Russian Federation to have a fully professional military appears to be unrealistic. This is due in part to demographic constraints, due to shrinkage of the relevant age group based on the current age pyramid, the number of 18-year old’s will only start to grow significantly in 2020 (Boltnekov et al. 2008). Additionally, since military salaries were raised in 2012, they have been eroded by rampant inflation as the starting salary is now just two-thirds of the national average, and may not be sufficiently competitive to attract educated personnel in a labor market which remains tight (Boltnekov et al. 2008). To make matters worse for the Russian military the planned indexation of 5.5% for military salaries 2020 has been suspended as part of a general pay freeze for government employees (Boltnekov et al. 2008). The difficulties in recruiting professionals, translates into a total shortfall of over 150 500, nearly one-fifth of the 2011 Defense Ministry target of 921 00067 for the combined armed forces. This has translated to the fact that the Russian armed forces are now the smallest they have been in living memory (European Parliament 2015).

Summary

This chapter discussed the research findings and analytical arguments utilizing the research methodology outlined in the previous chapters. The chapter discussed the NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states, United States and European views on Russia as it related to their overall participation in European security, United States and European military facilities related to the Russian boarder and their area of influence, as well as Russian military

expenditures from the collapsed of the Soviet Union to 2002 and how Russia has reacted to the encroachment of their borders.

Chapter 5 will take the research findings and analytical arguments from the previous chapter and utilizing the research methodology outlined show the direct correlation between NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states and the impact on Russian national security decisions over the last ten years. Furthermore, this chapter intends to show specifically that Russian actions in the Ukraine and the Arctic are not due to Russian imperialist goals as is the popular opinion in current research, but are in line with the standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine which states that in the international order a states conduct is determined by the threats they perceive and that states estimate these threats posed by other states by the nature of their relative power

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This chapter will take the research findings and analytical arguments from the previous chapter and utilizing the research methodology outlined show the direct correlation between NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states and the impact on Russian national security decisions over the last ten years. Furthermore, this chapter intends to show specifically that Russian actions in the Ukraine and the Arctic are not due to Russian imperialist goals as is the popular opinion in current research, but are in line with the standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine which states that in the international order a states conduct is

determined by the threats they perceive and that states estimate these threats posed by other states by the nature of their relative power

Synopsis of the Thesis

The purpose of this study was to understand the motivates and consequences of a continued NATO expansion into former Soviet-bloc states and the direct effect of such actions by NATO that have ramifications for Russian Federation national security policy. Researches have struggled to determine the root causes of Russian aggression in Europe in recent years focusing mainly on Russia but failing to look towards other possible causes that may have precipitated these actions by the Russian Federation. This thesis focused its research on NATO expansion to Eastern European. This is important in that it delves into a critical analysis of the United States and European behaviors that may be the catalyst for standard behaviors as defined in Realist theory doctrine. Have NATO offers of expansion to Eastern European states impacted Russian national security decisions over the last ten years and if so would the Russian Federation would quell its incursions into Ukraine and destabilizing efforts against the West if NATO ceased its attempts to expand its membership to former Soviet-bloc states? The direct results of such expansion action by NATO have been observed in recent times through the military conflicts in the Ukraine and Crimean regions by the Russian Federation and a continued destabilization of this region has severe ramifications for Europe as it ultimately results in a security dilemma occurring and full-scale combatant actions involving NATO and Russia.

The research focused on the dependent variable: Russian military aggression (e.g., Incursions into Europe and the military buildup of the Arctic) while simultaneously analyzing the independent variables: NATO offers of membership to former Soviet-bloc states, United States military build-up in Europe, the Ukrainian alliance with the West, and the United States

and European Union foreign policy. Limitations to the research arose due to the limitations of access to government documents in the United States, European Union, and the Russian Federation related to the internal decisions making the process of domestic and foreign national security policy due to internal classification levels, however; enough historical documentation existed that provided a significant view of the intentions of the state actors.

It was essential to establish a set of criteria to analyze the conduct of NATO expansion into Eastern Europe as well as the Russian Federation's foreign policy decisions and to measure the correlation between them. A review of the available literature established a set of four criteria that encompassed the current scholarly arguments used to evaluate and examine the Russian military intervention and buildup along its borders with Europe. These four scholarly arguments included if the Russian Federation is merely fighting a democratic framework in its former territories is the Russian Federation under the direction of President Vladimir Putin engaging in a policy agenda of imperial ambitions to regain territory lost during the breakup of the Soviet-Union in 1991, is the Russian Federation engaging in hostile practices against the West because it has not been taken seriously by Europe or the United States in international affairs, and is the Russian Federation merely acting out due to European missile defense programs. All four arguments were compelling and provided an in-depth look into what researchers believed are the underlying causes of Russian aggression against the United States and Europe, but all focused primarily on Russia and Vladimir Putin as the catalyst of such events as the Crimean invasion or ongoing campaigns in the Ukraine without taking into consideration the historical failures by the United States and Europe towards the Russian Federation that have a direct correlation with Russian national security decisions over the last ten years.

The research methods incorporated for this study used a qualitative analysis of data using content analysis of historical documents and case studies. Research included the theoretical framework of defensive-structural realism to explore the several issues facing the international community's ability to explain the root causes of Russian aggression in Europe in recent years. The approach taken during this research process was a qualitative research combined with a case study approach through the analysis of documents to collect all available relevant data to examine patterns and themes related to the decision making process of the Russian Federation related to its military and political movements since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 and the offers of membership by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to former soviet-bloc states post the 1997 NATO Russian Founding Act. All available sources of government documents to include Russian Federation historical military data, North Atlantic Treaty Organization military data and treaties, and documents and publicly available statements associated with the decision-making processes of international leaders related to actions taken by the Russian Federation, NATO, the United States and Europe.

Testing the hypothesis was accomplished by analyzing data from previously conduct research data with recent results as to the actions of the Russian Federation and its employment of state military forces in Crimea, the Ukraine, and its ongoing reestablishment of forces in the Arctic to include government papers, internal memorandums, and studies to determine how NATO offers of expansion to former Soviet-bloc states affected the Russian Federations internal troop increases and military incursions into the Ukraine and Arctic regions. The data exposed issues with the agreements made under the 1997 NATO Russia Pact as it specifically related to expansion by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the requirements of consulting the

Russian Federation prior to engaging in operations which fell within their purview of Russian national security interests

Summary of Findings

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the fledgling Russian Federation under the direction of then President Boris Yeltsin, looked towards the United States and Western states to assist in its rebuilding process and to be brought closer to Western systems such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Promises and partnerships were made to include Russian membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the NATO-Russian Council which promised that Russia would be consulted regarding former Eastern bloc states prior to NATO involvement and that NATO would not expand into these areas in which Russia had a viable vested interest. This unfortunately was short lived when NATO entered into discussion of membership with the Ukraine and several other former Eastern bloc states knowing that they held a strategic interest for the Russian Federation. This resulted in an indefinite suspension of the NATO-Russian Council after Russia, feeling threatened by the expansionist policies of NATO and the West, engaged in a Georgian conflict and annexed Crimea from the Ukraine.

The Russian Federation entered into these two conflicts not to engage the West into another Cold War, but to stop the West and NATO from strategically surrounding the Russian Federation from what it perceived as an old adversary reneging on promises of peace and cooperation. One could make the argument that had Russia partnered with Mexico and Canada to establish a new military partnership and that offensive and defensive military equipment was placed on their respective borders of the United States, that the United States would act in kind to what the Russian Federation has done through its perceived interventions in Georgia and the Ukraine. From a strategic standpoint, Russia was left with no other option but to invade Georgia

and assist in the destabilization and annexation of the Ukraine and Crimea before they become members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and were covered under Article 5 of the treaty.

Defensive Structural Realism states that the anarchic nature of the international system is subsequently responsible for the aggressive state behavior in international politics. No finer example of this theory holds truer than what is being observed by the Russian Federation in response to the movements of NATO, the United States, and other Western countries. As a result of such Western policies, the Russian Federation has had to take both offensive and defensive steps to counter the Western chess movements which has resulted in the offensive posturing of Russian strategic military forces in the Arctic region. As more and more policies which place the Russian Federation at a strategic disadvantage continued, Russia pursued to exploit more areas similar to the Arctic in an attempt to circumvent the West and protect its citizens from a perceived threat of violence.

In 1991, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization officially established relations with the Russian Federation through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council later to be known as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2015). This council was formed to engage in cooperation between NATO member states and former Soviet-Bloc members on a range of security and political issues. The Russian Federation further continued its relationship with NATO in 1997 when both NATO and the Russian Federation engaged in a mutual compact for cooperation and security in the European Theater and through the NATO-Russian Council in 2002 which was supposed to serve as a conduit for direct consultation between NATO and Russia on current security issues (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 1997). This initiative between NATO and the Russian Federation was intended to promote transparency

between the alliance and Russia by engaging in joint exercises as well as two jointly manned missile defense centers (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2016).

Unfortunately, this partnership between NATO and the Russian Federation appears to be merely have been a guise to relax Russian regional, national security interests while the Western States moved to increase their military presence in areas of concern to include the Balkans, the Ukraine, and Caucus region. To accomplish this NATO formed the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council which was supposed to be used as a forum to consult Russia on specific security related issues (Aybet, Morre, and Freedman 2010, 131). Unfortunately, NATO members to include the United States would “precook” specific agenda items among themselves without consulting the Russian Federation and kept items “off the agenda” to purposely circumvent Russia from being involved which occurred during the Kosovo crisis in 1989 and aggravated the relationship between Western states and the Russian Federation (Aybet, Morre, and Freedman 2010, 132).

The proof that Western state circumvention leads to a reclusion of the Russian Federation is evident from the onset of Vladimir Putin taking his initial office in 1999. In 2000, in an attempt to reestablish the Russian Federation as a great power, Putin engaged a policy of economic development and cooperation instead of power through a military buildup or show of force (Lyne 2015, 3). Putin wished to diversify the economy through modernization by reducing its dependence on natural resource exports (Lyne 2015, 5). It was the feeling of Putin’s administration that a competitive market economy through a law-based democratic society would be key to integrate closely with the advanced Western states (Lyne 2015, 8). Even though tensions had risen due to the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s circumvention of Russia and bombing campaign in Yugoslavia, Putin continued to seek a policy of partnership and

integration with the West (Lyne 2015, 5). Also, there did not appear to be any conflict of interests between Russia and its view of near abroad states gaining closer relations with the West citing in 2004 that “*The expansion of the European Union should not just bring us closer geographically, but also economically and spiritually*” (Lyne 2015,7).

The attitude of the Russian Federation and its policies, however, began to change dramatically as NATO began soliciting three Baltic states to join the alliance (Lyne 2015, 7). The Western alliance had already begun implementation to incorporate Bulgaria, Romanian, and Slovakia into the NATO fold, however, again the Russian Federation although concerned about incursion into its area of security interest remained optimistic as Putin himself stated that if continued cooperation of development with NATO continued with consideration for Russian security interests it could consider broader participation with the Alliance (Lyne 2015, 7). The policy peddle, however, officially began to sway when the Bush Administration in 2002 withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and planned deployments of missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic which was in contrast to agreements made between NATO and the Russian Federation during previous agreements (Lyne 2015, 8).

The final slope towards a change in posture by the Russian Federation came when a political representative of the Chechens, Ahmed Zakayev, was able to travel freely in the West after a series of terrorist attacks in 2004 which killed over 300 hostages which included a large amount of school children (Lyne 2015, 9). The result was Russia accusing the West of supporting their efforts to deal with the terrorist threat which resulted in an aggressive stance by Russia towards the West. Additionally, issues arose during the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine where it was believed the United States and other Western leaders were attempting to remove

Russian influence over it which resulted in the abandonment of Putin's policy of partnership with NATO and the United States (Lyne 2015, 10).

During the process of bringing the Russian Federation "closer" to NATO, NATO members mutually agree that the security of Europe requires the integration of the former Soviet Union to include Russia to achieve a stable security system (Holbrook 1995). This, however, appears to have been set aside by NATO members because in 1991, NATO began "dialogue" with the Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia and they also were invited to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, which is the first step in the process to gain full membership in NATO (NATO 2016). This action by NATO was taken a step further in 1997 when the Ukraine signed the Distinctive Partnership Charter establishing the NATO-Ukraine Commission for forward cooperation. On July 8, 1997, NATO then invited Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join the alliance in April 1999 and indicated the door to membership would remain open to others in the Baltic republics all the while knowing this would agitate the Russian Federation as they were not counseled on the offers of membership which was a specified understanding between NATO and Russia as outlined in the NATO-Russian Council of 2002 which was supposed to serve as a conduit for direct consultation between NATO and Russia on current security issues and to promote transparency between the alliance and Russia (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 1997).

The United States and its European Union foreign partners have also instituted a reward and punishes regimes in post-Communist Europe, but largely using political pressure on former-Soviet states to deliver on democratic and economic foreign policy initiatives as outlined by the current presidential administration and enforced through the State Department or respective foreign offices which has further alienated the Russian Federation. Pressure by the United States

and it's proxies is placed on former Soviet-bloc states to reject Russian Federation offers of cooperation while preferential treatment is given toward those states which favor the United States and Georgia reforms in order to receive rewards tied to accession and deeper integration to the EU and NATO (Brown 2015). Although Russia has sought to block these Western incentives, and to counterbalance the sticks through their own foreign policy objectives, Georgia, Poland, Czech Republic, and most recently the Ukraine are one of several post-Soviet "battleground" states in which these methods can be seen in action as Russia and the West vie for influence (Brown 2015).

The current scholarly position is that the Kremlin follows a two-pronged strategic approach of bolstering friendly regimes and subverting unfriendly regimes in order to achieve managed stability and managed instability in its zone of influence (Siroky et al 2017). Although it is factual that Russia also engages in similar activity, it's a direct response to an increased US involvement in the region, which coincides with Georgia becoming more proactively eastern in its foreign policy (Siroky et al. 2017). In fact After the Georgian Government of President Mikheil Saakashvili proclaimed that integration into NATO and EU was the ultimate objective of Georgia's foreign policy, only then did Russia push back, using economic sanctions and direct military action in 2008.

The United States has refocused its post-Cold War strategies to a "Europe whole and free" initiative with a focus on building an overarching framework to build European security institutions through an 11-step process all the while alienating Russian security concerns (Library of Congress n.d). To achieve this policy in Europe, the United States supports the move forward of European integration with the potential of the European Union engaging in responsibilities beyond the containment of Europe with military force without the assistance of

NATO (United States Army War College 2015). At the crux of this European realignment, the United States has provided political incentives for modernizing indigenous military forces to modernize to be interoperable with the more rapidly modernizing U.S. military forces (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). This action by the United States is based, according to official press releases, due to the actions of the Russian Federation in Crimea in 2014. To counter this Russian aggression in Europe, the United States has agreed and outlined plans for a complex web of small eastern outposts, forces on rotation, regular war games, and warehoused equipment ready for a rapid-response force that includes air, maritime, and special operations units of up to 40,000 personnel (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). This increase in force to challenge the Russian Federation is in addition to 11 United States conventional force bases and the 5 U.S. bases with nuclear missiles already in the European theater ranging from Germany to Turkey effectively surrounding the European boarder with the Russian Federation (The White House 2001).

In 2008, NATO suspended the NATO-Russian Council due to what was described as “disproportionate military action in Georgia,” and in 2014, the NATO-Russian Council was indefinitely suspended due to Russian actions in the Ukraine (NATO 2016). However, a review of significant Russian military operations after the collapse of the Soviet Union and during the building stages of its relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, shows that Russia engaged in severe spending cuts left the Russian Federation military under-equipped, poorly trained and ill-prepared to respond to new challenges that were to come in the years following 1991. Successive military reforms to transform the military into a more professional and mobile force ran into entrenched resistance from the Russian military establishment and made little headway until the appointment of Anatoliy Serdyukov as Defense Minister in 2007 (European Parliament 2015). Although NATO continues to taut their repose to Russia is a direct result of

Russian aggressiveness with its boarder states, the facts fail to substantiate this claim in that the evidence supports that NATO is the catalyst for the Russian reaction.

In 2002, at the Prague NATO summit, the United States supported the “open-door” initiate to allow more Soviet-bloc states to gain membership in to NATO thus solidifying the United States as a permanent European power in the region serving as the modernizing force in the region by integrating its European Command Structures thorough revamping its European strategy and commands (United States Army War College 2015). The United States has refocused its strategies with a focus on building an overarching framework to build European security institutions through an 11-step process all the while alienating Russian security concerns (United States Army War College 2015). The United States supports European integration with the potential of the European Union engaging in responsibilities beyond the containment of Europe with military force without the assistance of NATO (United States Army War College 2015). The United States has provided political incentives for modernizing indigenious military forces to modernize to be interoperable with the more rapidly modernizing U.S. military forces (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). Additionally, the United States has agreed and outlined plans for a complex web of small eastern outposts, forces on rotation, regular war games, and warehoused equipment ready for a rapid-response force that includes air, maritime, and special operations units of up to 40,000 personnel (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). This increase in force to challenge the Russian Federation is in addition to 11 United States conventional force bases and the 5 U.S. bases with nuclear missiles already in the European theater ranging from Germany to Turkey effectively surrounding the European boarder with the Russian Federation (The White House 2001).

In contrast, the Russian Federation estimates of conventional Russian military forces showed that between 2000 and 2004 only 15 tanks out of 23000 remained operational (Boltnekov et al. 2008). Additionally, the Russian Air Force failed to acquire any new aircraft between 1995 and 2008 and a 2008 study conducted by the Russian Ministry of Defense highlighted that the tail fins of two MiG-29 fighters were so corroded that they disintegrated in mid-flight, causing the planes to crash (Boltnekov et al. 2008). Additionally, a Russian Federation State Armaments Program for 2007-2015 which set a target of modernizing weapons systems by 2025, however; failed as only 2% of equipment was replaced under the program per year, making weapons systems obsolete faster than they could be replaced (Boltnekov et al. 2008). According to a 2006 estimate, only 20% of Russian military hardware was 'modern', compared to over 70% with the NATO armed forces (The Heritage Foundation. 2015). To make matters worse for the Russian military the planned indexation of 5.5% for military salaries 2020 has been suspended as part of a general pay freeze for government employees (Boltnekov et al. 2008). The difficulties in recruiting professionals, translates into a total shortfall of over 150 500, nearly one-fifth of the 2011 Defense Ministry target of 921 00067 for the combined armed forces. This has translated to the fact that the Russian armed forces are now the smallest they have been in living memory (European Parliament 2015). NATO and the United States, however, continue to base their expansion and deployment actions on what they call and aggressive Russian Federation bent on imperialism even though the evidence fails to support this conclusion (European Parliament 2015).

Realist theory and defensive-structural realism specify that the three main precepts of a state actors actions are fear, power, and anarchy. Comparing these three precepts individually to NATO actions and Russian reactions clearly shows that Russia is merely acting within the

boundaries of established theory as a direct result of NATO actions. First, NATO reneged on the promises outlined in the NATO-Russia agreement by failing to consult with Russia prior to making security actions within their purview of responsibility even though NATO members mutually agree that the security of Europe requires the integration of the former Soviet Union to include Russia to achieve a stable security system. Secondly, The United States has refocused its post-Cold War strategies to a “Europe whole and free” initiative with a focus on building an overarching framework to build European security institutions through an 11-step process all the while alienating Russian security concerns. Thirdly, the United States and NATO have agreed and outlined plans for a complex web of small eastern outposts, forces on rotation, regular war games, and warehoused equipment ready for a rapid-response force that includes air, maritime, and special operations units of up to 40,000 personnel effectively encircling the security boundaries of the Russian Federation, even though both NATO and the United States acknowledge that the fact that the Russian armed forces are now the smallest they have been in living memory (European Parliament 2015). Based solely on the data provided it can be reasonably concluded that Russian military actions in Europe and the arctic are merely a defensive response to offset the military calculations of NATO and the United States and not based on imperialist ambitions as is the common opinion among researchers.

The documents reviewed as part of the research show a direct correlation between NATO offers of membership to the former satellite states of the old Soviet Union and Russian the current military buildup in Eastern Europe. Specifically, that variables were measured to determine the validity of impact against one another as it related to both variables specific movements during the period of 1991 to present. Based on the comparative case study, it was determined that NATO’s extension of the membership process to Georgia, Ukraine, and Belarus,

after Russia was assured there would be no NATO expansion was the catalyst to the current situation. Additional factors such as the failure of NATO to engage Russia in consultation status as outlined in the NATO-Russian Council agreement before NATO engaged in military operations in the Balkans continued the cycle of distrust, which fed, into the first precept.

Future Research

These results of the research serve as a tool for international relations and national security practitioners for the development of future foreign policy positions in dealing with the Russian Federation. Specifically, it provides them the foundation to understand the dynamics of Russian military posturing as a result of external influences that they perceive as a direct threat to their national security interests. It is important to consider the variables presented in this study as outliers to the overall stability of the European theater. The research selected for study began in 1991 and continued into early 2014 to determine what strategic decisions were made between the United States and NATO that had a direct result on the decision-making process of the Russian Federation. Since 2014, much has changed and continued to evolve in international relations especially involving the international parties that were scrutinized to include the ongoing military campaign between Russia and the Ukraine itself and further development of strategic plans by NATO, European Union, and the United States to contain the Russian Federation at its door step.

By taking into consideration the data presented, and the basic understanding of international relations principals, practitioners can develop strategic plans to de-escalate the growing tensions in Europe to prevent future calamity. Further research needs to be conducted in the areas of Arctic expansion for military purposes between both the United States, Canada, and Russia Federation with particular emphasis on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea which prohibits certain actions in the Arctic region. Additionally, further research should be conducted on diplomatic efforts and the relationship between the United States and Russian Federation which pre-dates the American Revolutionary War so that parties can develop alternative ways of ensuring the safety and security of their areas of influence.

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