

NATO, Russia, and Europe's Chessboard: How Mutual Distrust Will Lead to Conflict

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Introduction & Thesis Excerpt

Russia intervened in Ukraine and annexed Crimea in 2014. Russia's behavior towards Ukraine is just a small component of a much larger regional maneuver to push NATO away. Its strategy included hybrid warfare as a way to weaken US-led NATO expansion. Like in Ukraine, Russia is escalating its presence in the Baltics, as a response to what it believes is NATO expansionism. In turn, NATO members saw Russia's actions as expansionist, which encouraged the US to take a tougher stance. Both actors use the spiral model and believe that the other is expansionist and not a security seeker. This paper will argue that the cause of this conflict is a buildup of overwhelming tension between the two security seeking states. Furthermore, this paper will address each actor's major actions and highlight how they brought further mistrust and improper signaling. Under the status quo, it is very likely that there will be an armed conflict in the Baltic region. A possible solution to this dispute is de-militarization by both NATO and Russia, where NATO forces will withdraw from the Baltic States, and Russia will have to remove its military assets from its Kaliningrad Oblast.



EXPANSION OF NATO

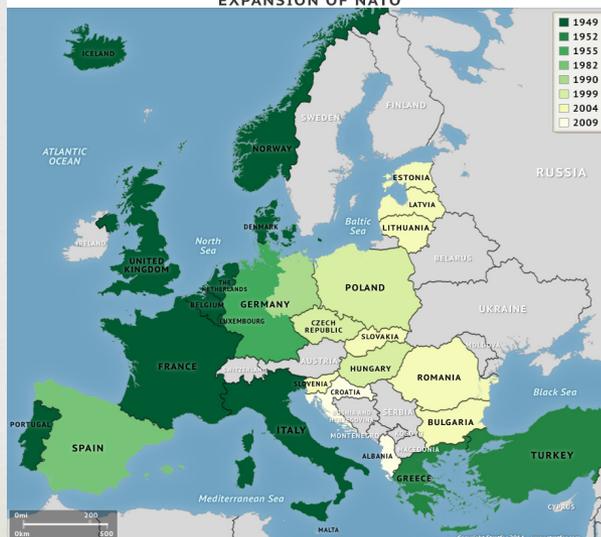
“Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it” – John J. Mearsheimer

Solution

1. The United States needs to reaffirm its commitment to NATO.
2. Reinforce standards for NATO membership
3. Suspend the addition of new NATO members
4. Mutual disarmament in the Baltic region

Key Terms

- **Spiral Model:** Assumes that all states are security seeking. Through fear, states build up arms out of fear that the other is expansionist.
- **Deterrence Model:** Assumes that all states are expansionist. As such, a strong posture and deterrence is needed.
- **Brinkmanship:** The practice of pursuing dangerous actions to show resolve.
- **Sunk Costs:** Spending funds on military to show resolve.
- **Information problem:** States have an incentive to lie. This makes it difficult for states to determine other nations' resolve and capabilities.
- **Costly Signaling:** Sending signals to other states that clearly show that your state is not expansionist, but security seeking.



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