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NATO Did Not Fail in the Russian and Ukraine Invasion

Political Science Final Paper

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In the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO has not failed in their mechanisms of preserving stability and peace. NATO strategically made sure members of NATO were not included in the war. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was a wakeup call to the world. Not being from those countries, as citizens we didn't comprehend why there was an invasion. The United Nations News reported that millions are displaced, and thousands are dead since February 24, 2022. UN News claims that "The long-term impact of this war in Ukraine will be felt for generations" (Turk qtd. United Nations News 1). It is devastating to hear the impacts of war, and it is continuing today. On the other hand, the media was questioning why the war started. One stood out, this was Russia's fear of NATO expanding too close to Russian borders. This has become a popular theory among the media, and I argue that this isn't the case. I argue that NATO has been an important mechanism for promoting stability and interstate peace with its strong alliance with the west. NATO did not fail in the Russian and Ukraine invasion because of their founding principles, their aid to Ukraine, and using the bargaining model. Therefore, we can begin in analyzing NATO's founding principles.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO was created in 1949 with 12 founding members. The founding members are Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States

(NATO 1). The defense military alliance was formed through three purposes. NATO states that “In fact, the Alliance’s creation was part of a broader effort to serve three purposes: deterring Soviet Expansionism, forbidding the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent, and encouraging European political integration.”

(NATO 1). From 1949 to present times, it was appealing for various European countries to join NATO through these principles. In addition, another important aspect many countries were incentivized to join is Article 5. When Article 5 is triggered, if a NATO member is being attacked every other member in the alliance will act and assist the attacked ally (NATO 1). Only NATO members can benefit from Article 5. Through these founding principles and objectives, we can see how clear that the benefits of NATO revolve under whether you are a member of them. This leads you to wonder, can non-members still be a part of NATO to a certain degree? The answer is yes; they can be considered an aspiring member or partners. Through a process managed by NATO, countries must undergo certain criteria outlined in 1995 NATO Enlargement project (NATO 1). The aspiring members are invited to participate in MAP (Membership Action Plan). In summary, through MAPS you must settle international disputes peacefully, establish democratic control of their armed forces, collective defense and preserving peace and security and sharing responsibilities, costs and benefits with other members (NATO 1). Examples of aspiring members are Georgia and Ukraine. Leading us to analyze, what is Ukraine and NATO’s relationship with one another?

Ukraine and NATO’s relationship began in the 1990s through becoming partner countries with one another. Ukraine does not have membership with NATO, but it does cooperate closely with them. This tells us that Ukraine is unable to get the benefits of NATO regarding Article 5. In doing so, Ukraine has still expressed interest in joining NATO. In the BBC they claim that in

2008 former NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg told President Zelensky that Ukraine can join NATO for “long-term” until the war has ended (BBC 1). While in 2008, we would have never anticipated the full extent of the war, NATO has made sure to be clear on their position with Ukraine. Extending the conversation one step further, the BBC states Russia’s position on the matter. BBC claims that, “Russia has consistently opposed the idea of Ukraine becoming a member, fearing it would bring NATO forces too close in its borders.” (BBC 1). Given that Russia opposes Ukraine becoming a member, one would assume this is the reason why Russia had the full-scale invasion. To answer this, we need to look further into Russia’s view of NATO. While on an outside perspective it seems clear Russia’s opposition to NATO with their first established objectives. As mentioned before, one of the principles indicated that they were formed to stop Soviet Union expansionism. Within that context, Ukraine was a pillar to the Soviet Union before it collapsed during the Cold war. This can be said for another aspiring member of NATO being Georgia who was also a part of the Soviet Union. These two countries, trying to join NATO it almost seems natural for Russia to not like NATO. The Council on Foreign Relations indicates that Russian leaders have long been wary of NATO expansion and their fears grew in the late 2000s with intent to admit Georgia and Ukraine in the future. This suggests that because of Ukraine’s historical ties to Russia, joining NATO would be considered a “red line” (Masters 1). Can this truly correlate to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine? I argue that this doesn’t mean that this was the cause for the full-scale invasion. This is because this was not Russia’s reason to invade Ukraine, their objective is to bring back the Soviet Union. Firstly, Peter Dickinson from Atlantic Council states that “indeed, in the fourteen months since the two Nordic nations first announced their intention to join the Alliance, Moscow has done almost nothing to protest or obstruct their process, despite having a vast array of military, cyber,

economic, informational, and diplomatic tools at its disposal. If Putin genuinely believed the NATO alliance posed a security threat to the Russia Federation, he would at the very least have increased Russian Military presence close to the Finnish border. Instead, Russia reportedly reduced its troop deployments in the region by approximately 80%. These are obviously not the actions of a nation under siege.” (Dickinson 1). Russia is a large military power; we must look at the past and know that Russia is willing to shut down countries that interfere in their agendas. Why wouldn’t they do the same with NATO? Russia has military force and strong allies to involve NATO in their war affairs, but this indicates that they are just not interested. Russia’s true agenda is revisionism of the Soviet Union. Andrew A. Michta from Atlantic Council argues that “In short, it was not the West’s aggressive pursuit of an anti-Russian agenda, but rather the weakness and lack of strategic clarity it communicated at every turn post-Cold War that encouraged Moscow’s revisionism. It was not the West’s alleged geostrategic assertiveness, but its timidity each time Putin used military power to occupy territory—first in Georgia in 2008, then in Ukraine in 2014, in Syria in 2015, and finally in Ukraine for the second time in 2022—that set the stage for the unfolding tragedy in Eastern Europe.”(Michta 1). This indicates Russia’s past in invading various countries that were part of the Soviet Union. Leading towards the idea that Russia is invading Ukraine for their revisionism ideologies. Indicating that Russia did not invade Ukraine for the purposes of them joining NATO it is because of their idealized vision of having the Soviet Union together. Although, this is the case NATO has continuously given aid to Ukraine.

As of now, NATO is supporting Ukraine through various forms of aid. NATO members have collectively sent 99% of all military aid to Ukraine (NATO 1). Since Ukraine is NATO’s partner, they made a Comprehensive Assistance Package or CAPS for Ukraine to strengthen

their power against Russia. NATO directly states, “practical support to Ukraine. It covers two main areas of work: Urgently needed, non-lethal military assistance based on Ukraine’s requests for support, and longer-term capacity-building projects designed to assist Ukraine with its reforms in the defence and security sector and post-war recovery.” (NATO 1). CAPs have been established since the illegal annexation of Crimea, but since the full-scale invasion CAP was strengthened in power. (NATO 1). Even with CAPS, The United States Department of Defense has provided \$12.1 billion assistance to Ukraine under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI). (U.S. Department of State 2025). Another US assistance to Ukraine is the Biden administration to surge military support to Ukraine during Biden's term, totaling to \$66.5 billion. (Mills 2025). NATO members have been continuously supporting Ukraine that seems to be never ending since 2014 in reference to CAPS. Even with being partners and not a member, NATO has shown trying to consolidate stability even in a war and not be a part of it to not trigger Article 5 with Russia. These aids that are being given to Ukraine are in creating stability for Ukraine and helping an aspiring member. On the other hand, NATO allies and partners have imposed unprecedented costs on Russia. To help reduce war machine resources and put pressure on Moscow. NATO claims, “President Putin’s decision to attack Ukraine is a terrible strategic mistake, for which Russia will pay a heavy price, both economically and politically, for many years to come.” (NATO 1). As a whole, this leads us to believe that NATO is arguably attempting to do everything they can to aid Ukraine. I argue that this is the best that NATO can do without involving them to actively participate in the war. This is because it may result in a bloodier fight that can take the lives of many. Needless to say, NATO allies and partners has made the collective decision to fully support Ukraine in this war through aid that shouldn’t be forgotten.

When looking back at what makes up NATO, we can see they did not fail in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine was never a member of NATO to receive the benefits of Article 5. Even so, we can see it has promoted stability and interstate peace to the best of their best abilities. For stability NATO has made sure Ukraine is stable to fight against Russia, a well-known superpower. By giving them resources as we have explained before. CAPS began helping Ukraine in 2014 and has done so ever since. This leads us to the connection within the bargaining model of war. This model is a visual representation that can describe State A and State B and the possible outcome of war within these two states (Lecture 2 April 7). In this case the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and Russia we can see them as opposing ends, as two different states. With this model we can see a possible deal, expected outcome of war, costs of war, and bargaining range. (Lecture 2 April 7). When applying this model, we can see without NATO that the bargaining model outcome would lead towards Russia. Russia has more resources, and military power compared to Ukraine. Leaving Russia to have a favorable outcome of war compared to Ukraine. This may be the case, but we also must evaluate when alliances are involved. NATO is partners with Ukraine, so aid that is received, is actively having a better bargaining outcome that is favorable for Ukraine. In April 14 class 5, we can see that when having alliances, it can shape the bargaining interactions for a state to have a better outcome in war. This seems to be the case in this real-world scenario that we see unfold. While Ukraine doesn't have Article 5, they do receive aid from NATO allies and NATO initiatives. From this model that we learned we can see that stability is provided for Ukraine for them to have a better outcome in war with Russia. While this necessarily doesn't mean that Ukraine will win the war but have a better outcome for them. For interstate peace, NATO fulfills this mechanism through not engaging fully with Ukraine. Interstate peace refers to the peace within different states. One

can argue that because NATO members are not actively fighting this war with Ukraine, that NATO has achieved interstate peace among its members. An argumentation that you can make is how can you achieve interstate peace through the founding principles of NATO? As established before, NATO's reason for creation was to deter expansion of the Soviet Union. In order to have security and peace for Europe and have western presence. Therefore, NATO is actively trying to engage with interstate peace through means of aid to Ukraine and fulfilling their objective that was the reason for NATO's formation. Therefore, NATO has been promoting stability and interstate peace in the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In conclusion, NATO has not failed in promoting stability and interstate peace within the Ukraine and Russia war. We viewed NATO founding principles and what NATO entails as an alliance. Then we looked at NATO relationships with Ukraine on how it is not a NATO member but is a NATO partner and an aspiring member. From NATO's relationship with Ukraine, we tried to understand Russia's view of NATO through NATO's expansionism frightening Russia and being too close to their borders. This action did not lead to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine but their own agendas of expansion to revive the Soviet Union. We also see today NATO allies fully giving aid to Ukraine from funding and weaponry. Not actively triggering Article 5 but knowing that Ukraine needs help and its relationship status with NATO. This all ties together with what we learned in our Political Science class thus far. The idea of the bargaining model of war and how it is cross applied to this war that we see in the media is still happening. The bargaining model helps visualize how much war costs, and a possible outcome of this war. NATO is actively supporting and through the model and is helping Ukraine have better outcomes within the war. This is something to have to actively recognize and understand why NATO hasn't fully committed to making Ukraine a member of NATO. It would make NATO members

be a part of the war and can make it worse for everyone. We must look at the underlying issues regarding the history of these two countries to understand their reason for conflict and particularly why Russia decided to have a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. We must come to understand that NATO cannot be at fault in not stopping and being involved in this bloody war that is active now. All because NATO is not actively engaged in the war does it mean they failed with Ukraine. I argue that because they went this route, they have done more in this war than other international organizations today.

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