



ROLE OF NATO IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Dr.Ramesh Kumar

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh.

Abstract

On February 24, 2022, Moscow began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine following military exercises close to the borders. It had previously denied having a such aim. It had been charging Kyiv and the West with inciting Ukraine to escalate the crisis in the Donbas by taking biased sides. Two draught accords published in mid-December 2021 made it plain what it sought to achieve: stopping the future eastward expansion of NATO and getting legally enforceable commitments to that effect. It does this by referring to the 1990s accords between NATO and Russia. Moscow expressed concern that, in particular, Ukraine's membership in NATO would jeopardise Russian security and the US-Russian strategic balance. Although the US and NATO had shown a desire to have a conversation on arms control issues, they were not willing to change the tenets of the European security system. Moscow refused to accept this and turned to force. It disregarded the potential to start a new conversation as a way to defuse the crisis and regain military predictability through weapons control without compromising ideals. The paper's main objective is to discuss the role of NATO in the Russian-Ukraine conflict and find the reasons for the conflict. Mainly secondary sources are being used in this research paper.

Keywords: *War, Military, Invasion, Security, Alliance, Aggression.*

Introduction

NATO has strongly condemned Russia's aggression in Ukraine, calling it "the greatest security threat in a generation." The alliance demands that Russia immediately cease hostilities, withdraw all its troops from Ukraine, and work toward a diplomatic settlement. NATO has stated unequivocally that it will not send troops to Ukraine, which is not a NATO member, nor will it impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine to avoid a confrontation with Russia. The majority of arrangements for the transfer of arms and supplies to Ukraine (by individual NATO Allies) and the imposition of unprecedented sanctions are made outside of the NATO framework. NATO's deterrent posture has significantly improved, with significant troop and equipment deployments to the alliance's eastern flank to deter future Russian aggression and reassure its Allies.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): An Overview

NATO is a multinational organisation that provides its members with a forum in which they can discuss any issue that concerns them and make decisions regarding political and military matters that affect their safety level. No member state is required to meet the fundamental national security goals it has set for itself using resources only from within the country. The sense of safety that members experience is shared by all, contributing to the continuity of life in the Euro-Atlantic region. The primary objective of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is to preserve, through political and military means, the sovereignty and safety of its member states. When it was first established, the primary purpose of NATO was to develop a "collective defence." According to Article 5 of the Treaty on North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an attack on one member by another is considered an attack on all members. Currently, thirty countries are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Table 1. Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).



Country	NATO Membership Year
Norway Belgium Iceland Portugal Canada Italy Denmark Luxembourg Montene	1949
Greece	1952
Spain	1982
Czech Republic Hungary Poland	1999
Lithuania Slovenia Estonia Latvia Slovakia Bulgaria Romania	2004
Albania Croatia Albania	2009

Functions of NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an international organisation dedicated to fostering democracy, protecting human rights, protecting individual liberties, and upholding the rule of law in Europe. If crises and conflicts spread beyond the boundaries of the Allies, this objective may be jeopardised. The alliance also contributes to peace and stability in the world by forming partnerships and participating in activities that manage crises. The primary function of NATO is to assist its members in defending their respective national borders. However, it also steps in when necessary to handle crises, bring calm to post-conflict situations, and offer assistance with reconstruction. It does this to represent its values elsewhere in the world. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) serves as the transatlantic link that connects the security of Europe and North America. It continues to play an important role as the foundation for implementing the Alliance strategy. It provides the highest degree of direction on the political and military measures employed to achieve these goals, and it does so comprehensively.



What makes Ukraine desire to join NATO?

There is a possibility that eastern and western Ukraine are roughly divided, with the former being associated more closely with Russia and the latter being linked with the European Union. Insurgents that Russia backs have taken control of a significant portion of the territory east of Ukraine. Russia has officially acknowledged that the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk are separate regions. The Russian army is enormous, whereas the Ukrainian army only accounts for a small portion of that total. Russia's military spending is approximately one hundred times higher than that of Ukraine. Ukraine is unquestionably going up against an army that it is not capable of defeating on its own. As a result, it must support an organisation such as NATO, which provides its member states with a defence alliance.

NATO's role in the Ukraine crisis?

Russian aggression against Ukraine will exacerbate already tense relations between NATO and Russia. Russia and the West have rekindled their cold war. Although Vladimir Putin is primarily to blame for these recent developments, NATO's arrogant and tone-deaf behaviour toward Russia in recent months is also to blame. For more than 25 years, supporters of a realistic and restrained US foreign policy have warned against expanding the world's most powerful military alliance to include another significant state. The conflict in Ukraine demonstrates unequivocally that it did not. Even if Russia hadn't viewed NATO as a threat, expanding it to the east still would have been difficult. To implement even the simplest of these plans would take the alliance to the very doorstep of the former Soviet Union. The alliance could effectively encircle the Russian Federation under certain circumstances. Written at a time when recommendations for enlargement were only hypothetical in New York and Washington foreign policy seminars, "Beyond NATO: Staying Out of Europe's Wars" makes several salient points. The primary defence was that it would unnecessarily provoke Russia. Bill Clinton's administration made the fateful decision to lobby for the admission of some ex-Warsaw Pact nations to NATO the year before, but few people knew about it at the time. Soon after, the US Senate supported the administration's proposal to encourage Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Members figured to join in what would be a series of subsequent surges.

Even the first phase sparked outrage and condemnation in Russia. Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his compatriots were fiercely opposed to expansion, viewing it as a ploy for exploiting their vulnerability and pushing Europe's dividing line to the east, leaving them isolated," Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, writes in her biography. Understanding the Russian mindset is critical in this case. Many Russians regard NATO as a Cold War relic and a fundamentally hostile force toward their country. They wonder why the West hasn't followed suit, even though their military alliance, the Warsaw Pact, has been disbanded. It was a great question, and neither the Clinton administration nor its predecessors could provide the most plausible answer. In a May 1998 New York Times interview, George Kennan, the United States Cold War containment strategy's founder, predicted the effects of the Senate's approval of NATO's initial round of enlargement. Kennan believes a new cold war is just getting started. It's difficult to conclude that the Russians' sense of aggression evolved and influenced their policy. I believe the expansion was a grave mistake. This was without justification. There were no other people in danger. Kennan was correct, but US and NATO leaders continued to expand, including the contentious inclusion of the three Baltic countries. These nations were not only a part of the Soviet Union but also of Czarist Russia's empire. NATO was now poised on the Russian Federation's border due to that wave of expansion.



Moscow was growing impatient with NATO's growing incursion. When Putin spoke to the audience at the Munich security conference in March 2007, he warned the alliance to back off. "NATO's frontline soldiers have been posted on our borders," Putin lamented. According to the author, NATO expansion "represents a grave provocation that undercuts confidence." And Russians understand who this expansion is aimed at. Following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Putin continued to question the commitments made by Western partners. The relationship with Russia was poorly managed after Bush left office in 1993, according to Robert M. Gates, secretary of defence under George W. Bush and Barack Obama. According to the study, "US arrangements with the governments of Romania and Bulgaria to transport soldiers via facilities in those countries were an unnecessary provocation." "Trying to get Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was setting a bad precedent," Gates said of the younger Bush. This action "blatantly ignored what the Russians perceived to be their critical national interests."

However, Western politicians, especially those from the United States, kept ignoring red warning lights. Tensions escalated as a result of the Obama administration's shockingly arrogant intervention in Ukraine's domestic political affairs in 2013 and 2014 when it supported protesters in their effort to overthrow Ukraine's elected pro-Russia president. In retaliation, Moscow seized and annexed Crimea, igniting a new cold war with a vengeance. The Joe Biden administration responded lukewarmly and evasively to Russian demands for significant Western concessions and security guarantees. Putin then decided to escalate the situation. Even if the country does not formally join the alliance, Washington's attempt to use Ukraine as a political and military pawn could have severe consequences for the Ukrainian people. History will show that Washington made a critical policy error in dealing with Russia following the Soviet Union's demise. NATO expansion would almost certainly result in a significant, if not violent, deterioration of relations with Russia. Perceptive experts warned of the consequences, but no one listened. The US foreign policy elite's folly and arrogance are costing us dearly. Russian aggression against Ukraine will exacerbate already tense relations between NATO and Russia. Russia and the West have rekindled their cold war. Although Vladimir Putin is primarily to blame for these recent developments, NATO bears a large share of the blame for its pompous, tone-deaf approach to Russia in recent years. For more than 25 years, supporters of a realistic and restrained US foreign policy have warned against expanding the world's most powerful military alliance to include another significant state. The conflict in Ukraine demonstrates unequivocally that it did not.

Even if Russia hadn't seen NATO as hostile, expanding it to the east still would have been difficult. In all but the most simplistic scenarios, the alliance would extend to the borders of the former Soviet Union. The alliance could effectively encircle the Russian Federation under certain circumstances. The following are some of the main points made in the book *Beyond NATO: Avoiding War in Europe*, which was published when calls for enlargement in New York and Washington were purely theoretical. The primary defence was that it would unnecessarily provoke Russia. Unbeknownst to many at the time, Bill Clinton's administration had already made the fateful decision the previous year to push for the admission of several former Warsaw Pact nations to NATO. Soon after, the US Senate supported the administration's proposal to encourage Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was thought to be the first of several waves of membership expansion. Even the first phase sparked outrage and condemnation in Russia. In her memoir, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says that Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his people were very against enlargement because they thought it was a way to take advantage of their weakness and move Europe's dividing line to the east, which would leave them alone. Understanding the Russian mindset is critical in this case. Many Russians regard NATO as a Cold War relic and a fundamentally hostile force toward their country. They wonder why the West hasn't followed suit, even though their military alliance, the



Warsaw Pact, has been disbanded. It was a great question, and neither the Clinton administration nor its predecessors could provide the most plausible answer.

In a May 1998 New York Times interview, George Kennan, the United States Cold War containment strategy's founder, predicted the effects of the Senate's approval of NATO's initial round of enlargement. Kennan believes a new cold war is just getting started. It's difficult to conclude that the Russians' sense of aggression evolved and influenced their policy. The expansion, in my opinion, was a severe mistake. This was without justification. There were no other people in danger. Kennan was correct, but US and NATO leaders continued to expand, including the contentious inclusion of the three Baltic countries. Those countries were members of both the Russian empire and the Soviet Union during the Czarist era. As a result of that surge in growth, NATO was now located on the Russian Federation's border.

Moscow was growing impatient with NATO's growing incursion. When Putin spoke at the Munich security conference in March 2007, he warned the alliance to back off. "NATO's frontline soldiers have been posted on our borders," Putin lamented. According to the author, NATO expansion "represents a grave provocation that undercuts confidence." And it is pretty clear to Russians who this expansion is aimed at. Following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Putin continued to question the commitments made by Western partners. According to the study, the US's agreements with the governments of Romania and Bulgaria to transport soldiers through their facilities constituted an unwarranted provocation. "Trying to get Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was setting a bad precedent," Gates said of the younger Bush. This action "carelessly ignored what the Russians perceived to be their fundamental national interests."

Western (especially American) leaders ignored warning light after warning light. The Obama administration's haughty involvement in Ukraine's domestic politics in 2013 and 2014 to help protesters topple the pro-Russia president was the most brazen provocation, which increased tensions. In retaliation, Moscow seized and annexed Crimea, igniting a new cold war with a vengeance.

The Joe Biden administration responded lukewarmly and evasively to Russian demands for significant Western concessions and security guarantees. Putin then decided to escalate the situation. Even if the country does not formally join the alliance, Washington's attempt to use Ukraine as a political and military pawn could have severe consequences for the Ukrainian people. History will show that Washington made a critical policy error in dealing with Russia following the Soviet Union's demise. The severing of ties with Moscow as a result of NATO expansion was almost undoubtedly dramatic, if not violent. Perceptive experts warned of the consequences, but no one listened. The US foreign policy elite's folly and arrogance are costing us dearly.

Conclusion

Relations between the West, Russia, and Ukraine have always been tense, and they've undoubtedly faced significant hurdles over the past few years. Ukraine has had a difficult time developing a functional democratic government. It has been pretty consistently unstable over the past 20 years, under more pro-Western or pro-Russian leadership. It's easy for Western governments to point the finger at Russia's destabilising influence and unlawful acts toward its younger sibling. Still, it's essential to recognise mistakes on both sides, not just the easternmost. The ongoing eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the West's worst strategic error. Russia sees this defensive military coalition as an adversary force and a genuine and severe threat. At the end of the Cold War, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev received assurances from high officials that NATO would not expand further



east. The Russian Federation felt duped and angry because of the broken promise. Historically, Georgia and Ukraine have been considered "off-limits" to western countries because they are within the paternalistic "Motherland's" sphere of influence.

Given that all great countries seek regional hegemony, Russia's desire to maintain its dominance and power in the area and thwart Western attempts to intrude into this territory is understandable and not surprising. Russia's annexation of Crimea was a calculated move designed to protect the country's geostrategic interests and cultural ties. Russia's backing of Ukrainian separatists seems understandable given that they are fighting an administration that is, at the very least, pro-Western and can be reasonably regarded as hostile to Russia.

In this case, it is more appropriate for the West to take a realist rather than a liberal stance. While liberalism's proponents may be lauded for advancing democratisation and human rights, the solutions they propose for the crisis in Ukraine promote violence. Russia and NATO could live together in the future, but for the time being, it's best to prevent NATO from expanding to the east.

References

1. Clapp,S.(2022).AT A GLANCE.|European Parliamentary Research Service. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729380/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)729380_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729380/EPRS_ATA(2022)729380_EN.pdf)
2. Clapp, S. (2022). AT A GLANCE. | European Parliamentary Research Service. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729380/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)729380_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729380/EPRS_ATA(2022)729380_EN.pdf).
3. Russia Ukraine conflict and NATO: Role, functions and powers. (2022, February 28). India Today;India Today Web Desk. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/russia-ukraine-conflict-and-nato-role-functions-and-powers-1918941-2022-02-28>.
4. India, B. I.(2022, February 24). Explained: The role of NATO in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.in/international/news/what-is-the-role-of-nato-in-the-russia-ukraine-conflict/articleshow/89802216.cms>.
5. India, B. I. (2022, February 24). Explained: The role of NATO in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.in/international/news/what-is-the-role-of-nato-in-the-russia-ukraine-conflict/articleshow/89802216.cms>
6. Op.cit, no.2.
7. In, B. T. (2022, February 25). Russia-Ukraine war: What is NATO, what's its role in the conflict. Business Today. <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/world/story/russia-ukraine-war-what-is-nato-whats-its-role-in-the-conflict-323899-2022-02-25>.
8. In, B. T. (2022, February 25). Russia-Ukraine war: What is NATO, what's its role in the conflict. Business Today. <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/world/story/russia-ukraine-war-what-is-nato-whats-its-role-in-the-conflict-323899-2022-02-25>.