1990s NATO

Topic A: Fall of the USSR

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Fall of the USSR

Introduction

Throughout the 1970’s and 80’s, the Soviet Union looked like one of the most powerful and stable nations in the world. Beneath the surface, though, socioeconomic problems were brewing. The Soviet Stalinist economic system was failing, as workers throughout the Soviet Union had little to no incentive to actually do their work. Despite this, the union pushed forward, working to outpace the West in amassing military power. As more and more investment was poured into arms spending, the rest of the economy suffered. Growth declined, then stagnated, and as the 1980s came to a close, the soviet party recognized the fact that its system could not be reformed. Soon, Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Communist Part of the Soviet Union, announced the creation of political pluralism in Russia, as well as the end of the Soviet Communist Party’s period of domination.

As the Union began its reforms, the East and West quickly began negotiating an Open Skies Treaty, as well as a cutback on forces in Europe. In 1989, Crowds of Germans swarmed the Berlin Wall and began to dismantle it, symbolizing the beginning of the end of nearly 30 years of a divided Europe. Three Baltic states: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia embarked on the road to independence. By the spring of 1990, the Warsaw Pact began to dismantle itself, and NATO sent out a “Message from Turnberry,” extending a hand of cooperation and friendship to all nations in the East. By July 1990, German reunification was moving along quickly, with the formation of a monetary union between the East and West states noted to be a practical first step. The movement towards democracy in Central and Eastern Europe proceeded rapidly over the next year, but problems abounded. Yugoslavia faced a civil war in May of 1991, and a coup
arose in the Soviet Union in August of that same year. Nonetheless, reforms and dissolutions pressed onward.

It is currently the autumn of 1991, and the East is continuing to collapse. NATO has been jettisoned into an important period of multinational diplomacy, and is meeting to discuss actions to be taken in response to changes in the East. This meeting of allied leaders is named “The Rome Summit.” With the fall of the USSR itself nearing with each passing day, NATO must come up with a response to this rapid transformation happening in the East. As NATO is a military alliance, the biggest question it must ask itself is: how should NATO revise its military and arms structure to best reflect these changes in the East? Addressing this issue, NATO must come up with a plan of diplomatic action to assure a successful transition out of the Cold War era and into one of prosperity. With the original purpose of protecting the security of member states by countering military aggression, NATO’s mission at the end of the Cold War must adapt to adjust its methods of promoting stability and security in the region. Additionally, NATO must consider the security questions coming out of the Cold War with a focus on “fostering the integration of Eastern European countries into a new world order.” The status of Eastern European countries is undetermined given the Soviet bloc has ceased to exist, but these “East European states are not part of ‘The West’ either, nor [is] it conceivable they could join anytime soon (eg. as members of the European community.)”

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Background and Current Situation

History of Nato - Warsaw Relations:

Tensions between the East and West relating to the buildup of arms began with the end of World War II and the creation of the atomic bomb. With the Soviet Union and the United States leading the way, both sides began to develop large arsenals of nuclear warheads. Fears of a nuclear exchange grew quickly, and both sides were prompted to begin negotiating limitations on the testing and production of nuclear warheads. Many of these negotiations lead to agreements based on the idea of deterrence, or the notion that a nuclear attack would lead to a reprisal from the attacked country.

During the late 50s and early 60s, NATO adopted the doctrine of “Massive Retaliation” based on the idea of deterrence. This gave NATO leaders the ability to focus on economic growth rather than working to create and maintain large conventional forces. As the 60s rolled onward, though, this strict strategy based on automatic retaliation was relaxed, and as conflicts like the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Vietnam War expanded, a new period of East-West relations began called détente. Détente was a period of relaxed tensions between the two sides, and this sparked some interest in changing the status quo of the conflict. John F. Kennedy’s strategy of “Flexible Response” sought to replace the all-or-nothing response of nuclear exchange in the event of a conflict, and NATO and Warsaw Pact members met at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in order to “improve and intensify their relations and to contribute in Europe to
peace, security, justice, and cooperation. This conference led to the Helsinki Final Act, which bound its signatories to “respect the fundamental freedom of their citizens, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief.” Internally, Soviet rulers didn’t pay much attention to these clauses, and attached more importance to the West’s recognition of the Soviets’ role in Eastern Europe.

By 1979, the period of détente came to an end with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the introduction of SS20 Saber ballistic missiles into Eastern Europe. Under the new leadership of President Ronald Reagan of the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, NATO escalated Cold War tensions in an attempt to directly oppose renewed Soviet aggression and force Soviet economic collapse through increased defense spending. Some NATO members in Europe maintained reservations into the mid1980s about Reagan’s “evil empire” rhetoric toward the Soviet Union, his increase in military spending, and the deployment of Pershing missiles onto the continent. The Cold War seemed to reach new heights as Reagan announced his Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly referred to as “Star Wars,” in 1983, and the aging Soviet leadership saw dangerous precedents being set. Many in NATO fear a loss of all negotiations and easing of tensions accomplished during the period of détente. However, in 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. This created extraordinary change in the dynamics of the Cold War.
Gorbachev instituted policies of perestroika, designed to reorder the Soviet economy and end shortages, and glasnost, an opening of culture and liberal rights into Soviet society.\textsuperscript{6} Gorbachev increasingly came to the realization that the Warsaw Pact could maintain a functioning economy by matching NATO defense spending. Therefore, the end of the 1980s became the final phase in NATO’s Cold War policy as the organization reengaged the Soviet Union with regards to disarmament. Arms reduction led to the Reykjavik Conference of 1986 and the subsequent INF Treaty that eliminated an entire class of intermediate and short-range ballistic missiles. Cutting of military spending by Warsaw Pact nations encouraged demonstrations throughout Eastern Europe. Therefore, the NATO policies of the 1980s seemed to be working by methodically bringing about the fall of the Soviet Union through political, economic, and social means.

Arms Control and Disarmament


intentions during the Cuban missile crisis.\(^8\) NATO seeks to enhance security in Europe through a reduction of the threat created by nuclear arms and subsequently the increase in stability promoted by the same measure.

However, there are key differences between arms control and disarmament that are important for NATO delegations to understand. Complete or general disarmament is normally defined as eliminating a country’s entire military capacity. Partial disarmament, on the other hand, may consist of eliminating certain classes of weapons but not a country’s entire arsenal.\(^9\) Disarmament agreements as a whole explicitly disallow the possession and production of certain weapons, while arms control agreements take the approach of limiting the testing, deployment, and use of weapons. Arms control agreements seem to be the more realistic approach to limiting military conflict, as it is nearly impossible to monitor all of the weapons a country deals with and produces. Arms control agreements also encourage participating parties to manage their arms in some sort of cooperation with each other, while disarmament agreements seem to negate cooperation and often create tension between parties.

Past examples of arms control agreements include the Stockholm Conference on Confidence-and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE) conference agreement of 1986 to “increase openness and predictability about military activities in Europe\(^10\).” The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe\(^11\), for example, aimed to stabilize and

\(^8\)ibid
secure arms levels in Europe to eliminate risks.

The USSR and NATO

Gorbachev, “a popular figure in the West but a mistrusted one in his own country,\textsuperscript{12}” in a December 1988 address marked a significant point in the change in the USSR’s foreign policy when he announced plans to “unilaterally [...] reduce Soviet military forces by 500,000, cut conventional armaments massively, and withdraw substantial numbers of armaments and troops from Eastern European countries.\textsuperscript{13}” As far as relations with the United States, Gorbachev declared he had “no 'finished blueprint' for his notion of a common European home\textsuperscript{14},” acknowledging the role of both the Soviet Union and the US in European politics.

Former NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner said in an address to the Annual Meeting of the World Economics Forum, “We are now living through a time of breathtaking movement [...] The ever closer union of Europe, the economic and ideological decline of Communism, Gorbachev's reform drive, the first disarmament agreement in human history, the growing importance of economic power even overshadowing military power, the spreading influence of democratic ideas and free market forces, the revival in superpower relations everywhere the dynamic of history is plain to see.\textsuperscript{15}”

The current NATO strategy is forward defense and flexible response, protecting

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vulnerable borders of allies, aiming to support “deterrence, defense, alliance unity, nonproliferation, and crisis stability." Additionally, NATO should consider nontraditional security challenges and pay attention to potential threats emerging from different geographic areas in the ensuing decade.

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Bloc Positions

Germany

A significant element of Germany’s foreign policy involves the military presence of various countries in Germany since the end of World War II. In West Germany, six NATO allies had military forces stationed, while Soviet troops were in East Germany. The United States’ forces made up the largest presence of NATO countries, with Britain and France also deploying substantial forces. The most relevant threat to Germany leading up to the 1990s was “the forward deployment of armored and highly maneuverable Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces.” After 1989, NATO, although originally focused on countering the power of the USSR, became important to maintaining security in former Soviet satellite states and others saw NATO “as a means to prevent the re-nationalization of German security policy.”

France & Germany  France holds a strong belief that Germany should be tied firmly into Europe and is strongly concerned with the country’s policies. France believes that the integration of Western Europe will eventually provide an identity separate from the blocs that have dominated Europe since the war/ integration and inclusion will help overcome European division.

United Kingdom, US, Canada

During the Cold War, the United Kingdom had prided itself on having a substantial defense budget and contributions to NATO even throughout economic hardship. However, the

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18 ibid
19 ibid
fall of the Berlin Wall led to a re-evaluation of their defense policy. The evaluation, titled “Options for Change,” reinforced the country’s desire to make contributions to NATO a top military priority. Geopolitically, Soviet power was perceived to be the most recent challenge to Europe’s balance of power, however, the ideological differences heightened concerns. By 1989, NATO had acknowledged the decline in Soviet power, noting Soviet foreign relations had shown “new flexibility, pragmatism and sensitivity to the security concerns of others.” Within the alliance, Britain acts largely as an intermediary with the United States and the rest of Europe. Britain also believes in the power of the nuclear deterrent through its own policies as an additional check on the USSR and has historically contributed to NATO’s nuclear strategy.

Britain’s relationship with Germany includes its involvement in a forward defense strategy on the intra-German border.

In Canada’s review of its defense policies in 1987, the government tried to “strengthen Canada’s military and its commitments to NATO, pledging more troops and aircraft to Europe than at any time since the early 1960s.”

NATO prevents the US from becoming isolationist, especially now after Cold War tensions have subsided, by integrating the country into European affairs and creating “mutual

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22 ibid
commitments that help bind the transatlantic community of nations.\textsuperscript{24} The US has always played a significant leadership role in NATO affairs and in contributions to military and political endeavors. In the past 13 years, the US military buildup has placed a particular focus on strengthening NATO forces, while also dealing with domestic political pressure to examine burden sharing in contributions across the alliance\textsuperscript{25}. Regarding Gorbachev’s most recent comments, the US has exercised “cautious optimism,\textsuperscript{26}” while other NATO countries almost immediately cut defense spending. In 1989, the US decided to maintain the same ratio of US forces to NATO forces in Europe, only dropping “its demand for compliance with the 3 percent policy on May 17, 1990,\textsuperscript{27}” a policy formally dropped one week later in response to the reduction of the Soviet threat.

**Nordic Bloc  Norway, Denmark, Iceland**

The Nordic bloc identifies together within NATO, especially because of each country’s respective policies on nuclear weapons and armed forces. Norway has historically oriented its security policies with those of Atlantic powers, especially with the United Kingdom before NATO was formed. Ties between Norway and the UK are stronger than ties between Denmark and the UK due to historical events, such as the British Expeditionary Force in Norway in 1940. In peacetime, both Norway and Denmark prohibit nuclear weapons on their soil; this policy


\textsuperscript{26} ibid

\textsuperscript{27} ibid
means domestic political groups may oppose NATO nuclear policies. With both Norway and Denmark, the Soviet Union has been able to affect NATO policy to some extent by putting pressure on Finland.\(^\text{28}\) Iceland does not have an armed forces system, thus contributing to NATO financially and by committing civilian personnel.\(^\text{29}\) The 1951 Bilateral Defense Agreement with the US is a significant component of Iceland’s approach to security.

**Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy**

The Spanish navy and air force, operating from bases located in the Balearic Islands and southern Spain, afforded NATO a stronger position in the western Mediterranean. Italy feels that the alliance should devote more attention to the southern region of Europe, and should heighten security around the Mediterranean. Italy is concerned with the instability around the Mediterranean and worries about threats to sea lines of communication. Spain’s history with nuclear weapons policies concerning NATO originally aligned with that of the Nordic countries, refusing to have NATO nuclear weapons on its land.\(^\text{30}\) Italy also holds a strong philosophical attachment to nuclear arms control. Spain later accepted the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Due to an incident in 1966 involving three thermonuclear bombs being spilled in Spain because of US plane collisions, agreements later made sure the US could not store nuclear devices or parts on Spanish land. France disagrees with Spain and Italy’s anti-nuclear weapon approach. The nation will make nuclear force spending a priority throughout the years.


following soviet dissolution. Politically, Spain did not share US fears of the Soviet military, instead favoring increased trade and that “they have welcomed Moscow's support of Spain's demand for the "decolonization" of Gibraltar." In the 1980s, Spain became more independent regarding the US and the USSR.

Turkey

Turkey’s shared border with Iraq will play an important role in NATO involvement in the Gulf War, from efforts to protect Turkish security to the bases in the country. Turkey and Greece had historically bad relations, but began to improve in the late 1980s as Turkey sought to modernize and become more involved in Europe.

Belgium, Netherlands, & Luxembourg

The dissolution of the Soviet Union created limited to no change in the strategic objectives of leadership in the Benelux countries. The INF Treaty committed Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg to a short term reevaluation of military strategy. These countries also professed a firm belief in arms reduction, detente, and decreasing defense commitments in Europe. The fall of the Soviet Union brought an end to the desire by Benelux countries to maintain a high volume of troops and weapons. The countries no longer placed emphasis on heavy military investment given the elimination of the threat of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Benelux supported greater economic integration of the newly liberal Eastern European

31 ibid
countries rather than providing military support. These countries developed a comprehensive economic program to facilitate commerce in Western Europe during the 1970s. Therefore, the history of Benelux indicates that their NATO representatives would be interested in promoting free trade agreements and inviting the Eastern European nations into the European Economic Community.

Questions to Consider

1. What will be NATO’s main security purpose with the fall of the USSR?
2. How will the fall of the USSR affect stability in Europe?
3. How can NATO capitalize on the opportunity to form a new relationship with Eastern Europe?
4. How will different blocs in NATO satisfy domestic pressure regarding defense spending?
5. How will NATO integrate Eastern European states, especially former Soviet satellite states, into the balance maintained largely by the alliance?
6. What will nations be asked to commit to contribute to defense, such as defense spending levels?
7. Which leaders will NATO seek to engage in the former USSR?
8. What will be the priority in arms control strategies?
9. How will a radically different situation in Germany affect the dynamic in NATO?
10. What other regions of the world will NATO be responding to in addition to changes in Eastern Europe?
Recommended Sources

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