

## NATO Enlargement and the US- Russian Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Critical Analysis

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*Cold War was the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States to expand their ideology and influence worldwide to become the most powerful state of the world. A significant element of the Cold War was the making of alliances by both the United States and the Soviet Union to materialize their objectives and to contain each other's ballooning influence and ideology. The weakening position of the Soviet Union brought the two countries closer. In addition to this, the United States' assurances to the Soviet Union about restricting NATO's borders normalized relations between the two rivals after being engaged in a Cold War for over 40 years. Later, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s prompted the world to believe that the Cold War had come to an end. However, the North Atlantic Treaty's inclusion of more European countries backed by the United States has again reinstated the Russia-US rivalry leading to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This paper delves into the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization during the Cold War era. The paper then tries to figure out whether there is any significant proof of American promises to the Soviet Union regarding the restriction of NATO's borders. The paper then analyzes Russian policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its invasions of Ukraine in the context of American promises.*



## **1. Introduction**

The cooperative engagement between the United States and Russia in the post-Cold War era could not last longer. The enmity and the viciousness between the two rivals the United States and Russia have resumed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both of the rival countries have been trying to expand their influence in the international world. One of the evident characteristics of this rivalry between the United States and Russia is the presence of sanctions. Both of the countries have been engaged in a dire competition of sanctions and counter-sanctions. In addition to this, the United States and Russia's antagonistic and competitive relations are being witnessed in several regions of as the Middle East and Europe. Washington and Moscow are competing for influence and supremacy in these regions. The recent Russian assault on Ukraine in 2022 has added fuel to the fire. The invasion has heightened and exacerbated the Russian-US inimical and unsympathetic relations. The assault has also resulted in tense and ill-disposed relations between European Union countries and Russia. Both the Americans and the European Union countries have been backing Ukraine by providing it with military and economic assistance and support (Belo & Rodríguez, 2023).

Cold War is the name dedicated to the rivalry, friction, and competition between the Soviet Union and the United States to expand their ideology and influence worldwide to become the most powerful state of the world. A significant element of the Cold War was the making of alliances by both the United States and the Soviet Union to materialize their objectives and to contain each other's ballooning influence and ideology. The United States in cooperation with its partner countries concocted an alliance that came to be known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the late 1950s (Nisar, 2022). The main motivation for constructing such an alliance by the United States was to secure Western Europe from falling under the ascendancy of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic. To secure these West European countries, the Marshal Plan was inaugurated in order to provide an economic umbrella to these countries. In addition to this, the most significant aspect of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was to have a joint defense mechanism and provide help to each other in case of any attack from external countries, specifically the Soviet Union. The alliance resulted in the intensification of acrimony, dissension, mistrust, and malevolence between the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic and the United States (NATO, 2022).

However, the hatred, mistrust, and intense relations between the United States and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic started to normalize in the 1980s. One of the most contributing factors to the building of trust and cooperative engagement between the United States and the Soviet Union was the personality of Gorbachev. A number of Gorbachev's policies and initiatives brought freedom and other advantages to the population of the Soviet Union as well. In addition to this, the personality and the cooperative style of Gorbachev brought the Soviet Union closer to the United States to mitigate the acrimony and antagonistic engagement between the two superpowers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Soviet Union in the late 1980s had also become weak. This factor also played a role in bringing an end to the over 40-year-long Cold War. An important event

that signaled the end of the Cold War was the breakdown of the Berlin Wall. After its breakdown, negotiations were started between West Germany and the United States on one side and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic on the other. During the negotiations, the United States assured the Soviet Union that the military alliance, North Treaty Organization would not opt for expanding its membership to the countries located toward Soviet Borders. However, the United States didn't hold to its promise and the world witnessed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization adding East European Countries in the post-Cold War era which agitated Russia and resumed rivalry between both countries (Mosila, 2022; Ip, 2024).

The world is observing a change in the international world order. After the bipolarity from the mid to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States in the post-Cold War era was the sole superpower of the world and the world order was thus unipolar. While the nature of American engagement with Russia in the post-Soviet breakdown like the breaking of American promises has pushed Moscow to adopt a strict and confrontational policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Russian historical experiences with the United States have made the former carry out such steps that secure Russian interests and undermine American policies. Such developments along with China's rise have altered the world order from Unipolarity to multipolarity. Russian recent assault on Ukraine in 2022 signals that Russia has been pushed toward such bold actions due to the American-backed extension of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's membership to the countries surrounding Russian western borders. However, the Americans and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization debunk Russian concerns and claims of "NATO's non-expansion promise." They believe that Russia desires supremacy in the world and is carrying out such attacks to increase its influence and hurt Western interests (Shah & Afgun, 2020).

### **Research Questions**

Q. 1: What effects has the expanding of NATO had on US-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War?

Q. 2: What were the main driving forces behind NATO's post-Cold War Expansion strategy?

### **2. Literature Review**

"The New Cold War with China and Russia: Same as the Old Cold War?" written by Stuart Ford and published by Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law in 2023 addresses the question of whether there is a Cold War between the contending parties of the Old Cold War. This article deals with three dimensions/questions among which the first is the Old Cold War. Then the article discusses whether there is any Cold War underway in the 21st century or not. Thirdly, it tries to figure out the differences and similarities between the Old and the New Cold War.

"Russia and China between cooperation and competition at the regional and global level" authored by Fabienne Bossuyt and appeared in Eurasian Geography and Economics in 2021 delves into the Russian-Chinese relations that are centered on cooperation and competition as well. Firstly, the article provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the historical ties



between the Soviet Union and later Russia and China. The article gives an account of the bilateral ties between these two neighbors, as how their cooperation in the post-2nd World War era started and what led to the dismantling of the Sino-Soviet alliance against the US.

“Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate by Mary Elise Sarotte” written by Alexander Brakel and published in the israel Journal of Foreign Affairs in 2021 tries to unfold the complexities related to the NATO movement into Eastern Europe for integrating more countries into the organization. Brakel published this review of Sarotte’s book “Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate” with the intent to contribute to the most contested topic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century whether the United States promised the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic to refrain from integrating Eastern European countries into NATO or not. Brakel explains in the article that antagonism between Washington and Moscow has resurfaced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The dissension and acrimony have resurfaced with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in the 2nd month of 2022. The author mentions a decent number of the research in the article that stresses the existence of American promise to the Soviet Union for not letting NATO enlarge in the post-Cold War era.

“Addressing Unresolved Challenges in U.S.-Russia Relations” written by Jeffrey Mankof & Andrey Kortunov, which appeared in the Centre for Strategic & International Studies in 2020 elucidates and addresses challenges being faced by the United States and Russia in the post-Cold War era and more specifically in the recent times. The article argues that the relations between the United States and Russia crumbled, ebbed, and depreciated to a hardly irreversible position in recent times. The two countries are facing challenges in several aspects that have made it difficult to normalize relations between the two. First of all, one of the significant challenges being faced by these two countries is located in the “Western Balkans.” Moscow and Washington have locked their horns for superiority in this region. Another challenge for the United States and Russia is related to nuclear proliferation.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a secondary data analysis approach for investigation. The secondary data has been collected from reputable journals like JCMS, EGE, and ICT. The data has also been collected from government institutions like the US Department of State and the House of Commons Library. The data has been resourced from some research institutes like Lowy Institute that is based in Australia. The material has been collected from such reputable sources to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. Ethical guidelines governing data use and citation are strictly followed to maintain academic integrity.

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1 The Russia-US Rivalry During the Cold War and the Role of NATO**

The Cold War Era saw a bitter rivalry, stretching from the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in 1945 and lasting up to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, which was characterized by intense

geopolitical tension and competition between the Soviet Union and the United States. This period was marked by ideological, political, and military rivalry that influenced global alliances, economic policies, and global conflicts. One of the major and important components of this rivalry was the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in 1949 which played a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of the Cold War. According to Waltz, the US's objective and foreign policy in making the NATO Alliance was a defensive approach toward the soviet union (Song, 2024).

## **4.2 Origins of the Tensions**

The foundations of the Cold War can be traced back to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world War when the world was divided into two different blocs, having different ideologies. The United States and the Soviet Union both Super Powers started to struggle for more power and wanted to become the hegemonic power of the world. The U.S. wanted to inject liberal democracy and capitalism and sought to promote these systems in the world. On the other side of the picture, the Soviet Union aimed to promote its model of communism and its influence in Eastern Europe and beyond (McCauley, 2021).

The Yalta and Potsdam conferences that happened in 1945 between the Leaders of three Allied countries, highlighted the growing distrust between the former allies. The Allied leaders came together to decide what to do with Germany. They had disagreements over the reconstruction of Europe, and the establishment of governments in Eastern European countries laid the groundwork for a divided Europe and the fate of Germany (Malia & Albania, 2019).

## **4.3 Key Events and Intensification of the Rivalry**

### **4.3.1 Iron Curtain and Eastern Europe**

One of the major moments during this Cold War period was Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946 stressed the division of Europe into Western democracies and Eastern communist states under the influence of the Soviets. The Soviet Union established satellite states in Eastern Europe, bringing together its control through political and military means (Larres, 2018).

### **4.3.2 Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan**

Marshal Plan as well as the Truman Doctrine played a role in heating up of rivalry between the two superpowers, Truman 1947 announced the Truman Doctrine stood the support of the US to countries that were under the threat of communism, The Marshall Plan, announced the same year, provided economic assistance to rebuild Western European economies, aiming to limit the Soviet influence (Michel, 2020).

### **4.3.3 Berlin Blockade and Airlift**

The first major event that characterized the Cold War was in 1948-1949 when the Soviet Union sealed West Berlin to expel the allies. The U.S. and its allies responded with the Berlin

Airlift, supplying the city by air and demonstrating their commitment to counter Soviet aggression (McMahon, 2022).

#### **4.3.4 Arms Race and Space Race**

The Cold War saw an unprecedented arms race, with both superpowers developing nuclear arsenals capable of mutually assured destruction. The Space Race, highlighted by the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 and the U.S. moon landing in 1969, symbolized technological and ideological competition.

#### **4.3.5 Proxy Wars**

The Cold War period triggered the proxy war between two blocs of the world led by two superpowers of that time. The ideological and political differences extended beyond Europe, with the U.S. and the Soviet Union supporting opposing sides in various conflicts, including the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (1955-1975), and numerous other regional conflicts in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (McMahon, 2022).

#### **4.3.6 The Role of NATO**

NATO was deeply involved in the Cold War acting not only as a military pact but also as a political one for the crusaders against communism. Its major goals have always been the defense against communism, maintaining order in Europe, and avoiding the return of nationalist militarism.

##### **4.3.6.1 Collective Defense**

According to the NATO treaty, the principle of collective defense was provided under Article 5 where an attack on one Allied member was considered an attack on all. This principle was intended to deter Soviet aggression by ensuring a unified military response. NATO was created not to aggregate power rather it was based on a collective defense strategy.

##### **4.3.6.2 Integration**

NATO facilitated the member states for standardization of military equipment and procedures, enhancing interoperability and effectiveness. This integration extended to joint military exercises, strategic planning, and intelligence sharing.

#### **4.4 Political and Diplomatic Influence**

Beyond its military role, NATO served as a forum for political consultation and coordination among Western nations. It helped to align policies, manage crises, and present a united front in negotiations with the Soviet bloc.

#### **4.4 Nuclear Strategy**

The Cold War strategy emerged with the use of the United States of nuclear weapons in Europe in the form of a Nuclear shield against Soviet imperialism. The Cuban missile crisis was the time when both countries were on the brink of war The military alliance also formulated the



concept of flexible response, by which it meant that the United States' military could utilize desirable reactions to numerous levels of threat.

The Cold War had the Capitalist side led by the United States and the communist side led by the Soviet Union defined the second half of the twentieth century and affected world politics. NATO became the focus and the main actor in this rivalry, being an organization designed to coordinate military cooperation collective security, and political cooperation between the Western powers. This change was brought about by the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union, and their impact on the current global system is still being felt (Vicente, 2023)

#### **4.5 Expansion of NATO in the Post-Cold War Era**

The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance has expanded significantly since the conclusion of the Cold War, encompassing 16 new members and expanding its borders eastward to include the former Soviet nations and Russia itself. The alliance was once bounded by the line between the two Germanies prior to 1990. In tandem, East-West relations have plummeted from a peak in the 1990s to a level never before seen during the Cold War, which will lead to Russia invading Ukraine in 2022. When the "Partnership for Peace" program was initiated in 1994, Hungary Poland, and the Czech Republic were among the first countries to join the military alliance. Then 9 more East European countries were incorporated into the alliance in the first decade of the new century. Later, with the inclusion of more than 4 East European countries, the number of countries that joined NATO after 1991 jumped to 16 which is quite disturbing for Russia. High-ranking officials on both sides of the Atlantic warned succeeding U.S. administrations not to rush into expanding NATO, fearing that this might do exactly what Russian leaders had repeatedly threatened: breed mistrust between Russia and its allies and condemn Europe to antagonism once again. The current situation in Ukraine and enduring security difficulties in Europe are made clear by NATO's history with Russia and its predecessor state, the worries of former officials with alliance growth, and the persistent and open skepticism of NATO in Russia. As a result, it raises concerns about previous NATO policies, adds credence to the ongoing discussion over the war in Ukraine, and provides insight into the optimal structure for future European security (McCracken, 2023).

NATO proceeded with extensive internal and external change while maintaining its basic missions of defense and deterrence. Externally, NATO adapted both functionally and geographically, broadening its scope of military operations and tasks and carrying them out "out of area," or beyond the borders of its allies. Internally, adaptation involved joining forces with non-member governments, mostly in the Euro-Atlantic region but also in other areas, and extending membership in the Alliance through multiple enlargement rounds that included three states from the former Soviet Union and other former Warsaw Pact members. Between 1990 and 2013, NATO developed both internally and externally at the same time (Medcalf, 2024).

Early in 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, upending the European security order and escalating hostilities between the two countries. NATO responded by declaring in its 2022 Strategic Concept that it will consider Russia to be the biggest danger and bolster its defense and

deterrence capabilities. The Alliance must reassess its deterrence and defensive strategies in light of the current tensions (Eickhoff, 2023)

NATO's post-Cold War strategy underwent a dramatic shift with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with the Alliance placing a greater emphasis on defense and deterrence. The 2022 Strategic Concept and the accompanying NFM, which represent NATO's plans to bolster and restructure its conventional defense in Eastern Europe, signaled a shift away from retribution and toward deterrence by denial. Additionally, NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept offered a means of addressing the Alliance's upcoming concerns as well as the opportunity to take action. Future Alliance policy will be greatly influenced by this realignment, which will place a greater focus on collective defense (Menon, 2023).

#### **4.6 Investigation into American Promises Regarding NATO**

The American promises to the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic made during the Cold War are required to be assessed and critically analyzed to understand the Russian policies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Secondly, the analysis of the promises would provide a better understanding of the end of the Cold War. In addition to this, the critical investigation into the American assurances and promises to the Soviet Union would also develop apprehension about whether the United States is responsible for perturbing Russia to adopt the aggressive posture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or not. Another ambiguous matter whether or not the Russian attack on Ukraine can be attributed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, would also become understandable. The Cold War characterized by proxy wars and indirect confrontation between the United States and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic, pushed the world into a teetering and unreliable environment for over almost years. The Cold War significantly impacted world peace and divided the world into two blocks. The threat of the use of nuclear bombs further exacerbated the situation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the malignant and icy relations between the United States and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic started to turn toward joint efforts to bring the tensions and rivalry down in the mid-1980s (Milan, 2013).

The talks between Gorbachev and Reagan's Administrations resulted in the de-escalation of the Cold War tensions and rivalry plus the Cold War itself. There is a difference of opinion as to what led to these talks between the above-mentioned two Administrations which put an end to the Cold War. One purported reason is that the weakening position of the Soviet Union impelled it to pursue a cooperative engagement with the United States and to de-escalate their rivalry and tensions. Secondly, it is believed that the psyche and the character of the two leaders, Gorbachev and Reagan later Bush, were the driving factors that led to the talks and ended the Cold War. Whatever the factor was, the end of the Cold War not only ended the mutual differences but also brought the Soviet Union and the United States closer, even for a short period. The collapse of the Berlin Wall is considered to be the end of the Cold War (CVCE, 2016).

There are mainly two schools of thought regarding the American promises regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War. Both of the





schools of thought include officials from both the United States and Russia. In addition to this, intellectuals and scholars from International Relations and other fields are also present in both of the schools of thought. Firstly, the school of thought that advocates for the presence of promises by the United States to the Soviet Union regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization dates back to the 1990s. Russian President Boris Yeltsin first raised concerns over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's offer to East European countries to join the alliance. He even penned a letter to the President of the United States Bill Clinton recalling that the Bush Administration had promised Gorbachev to not add new members to the alliance from East Europe. Boris Yeltsin is not the only Russian official highlighting Washington's pledge regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The point of such American promises and assurances to the Soviet Union during German reunification has been raised by Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev in the context of NATO's incorporation of new members into the alliance. Even Gorbachev to whom these promises were made in 1990 also recorded his condemnation of the American-backed North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (Ip, 2024).

Contrastingly, the officials from the United States have debunked and quashed the Russian claims for the existence of a "NATO non-expansion promise." The American Administration carried out the branching out of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization toward the countries in East Germany in the 1990s. But the United States has since then denied that it has ever promised the Soviet Union to restrict the North Atlantic Treaty's borders from the Eastern side. Therefore, the United States officials confute and invalidate Russian claims of American betrayal in the matter of NATO enlargement. James Baker who was part of the negotiations during German Reunification has debunked such Russian claims. Moreover, Rober Zoellick has also negated the existence of such American promises (Neal, 2022).

After the Berlin Wall had been flattened and demolished in 1989, soon attempts were made to bridge the two divided parts of Germany. Such attempts and efforts were first instigated by the West Germans. The West Germans considered bridging the two separate parts of Germany so important that they were even ready to pull out from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to appease Soviet Russia. This is where the United States came to the scene which wanted West Germany to be aligned with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Therefore, the United States could not remain isolated and had to involve itself in bridging two parts of Germany (Sen, 2021). The United States coordinated with the officials from the West Germans and became part of the negotiations with the Soviet Union regarding Germany's union (Sarotte, 2021).

The assurance that the North Atlantic Treaty would not add new members from Eastern Europe originated not from the United States but from Hans Genscher who was from West Germany. The United States didn't initiate this assurance to the Soviets. In fact, the United States grasped this offer of restricting NATO's borders from West Germany and became a party to the process and talks of reunification (Spohr, 2012). The then Secretary of the United States Baker was the first one to put this offer before Soviet Russia. He clearly stated that the North Atlantic



Treaty Organization would be restricted in the matter of extending its borders to Soviet side (UNCLA, 2019). Then in February 1990, the United States representatives and their Soviet counterparts discussed the bridging of Germany in detail. During these meetings which were comprised of more than 2 days, Baker used the most famous phrase “Not one inch” in the context of restricting NATO extension if East Germany was allowed by the Soviets to amalgamate with Western Germany. The then National Security Advisor of the United States also professed the same plan/offer to the Soviet Union (Bonev, 2017; Erdem, 2022).

Later, Bush through a telephonic conversation with his Soviet counterpart on February 28, 1990, acknowledged the Baker and Genscher proposals to the Soviet Union. He also assured Gorbachev about restricting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s borders. In May 1990, Baker again repeated his promise to the Soviets regarding NATO. Soviets soon accepted the offer and the two parts of Germany were reunited in October 1990. The final document for the reunification of Germany which was signed, didn’t mention any pledge. However, until the reunification of Germany materialized, the United States neither apprised the Soviets about any change in the offer nor stepped back from the reunification process. Therefore, the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty violates American promises morally, if not legally (APP, 1990) (NSA, 1990) (Texas A&M, 2009) (Shifrinson, 2016).

#### **4.7 Consequences of NATO’s Enlargement**

The Russians in the post-Soviet decomposition considered the United States a partner country to rule the world. The period following the end of the Cold War therefore witnessed the cooperative engagement between the two countries. The United States' actions in the 1990s like the initiative to extend the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty crushed Russian hopes in America. Even the scholars from the United States had recorded their concerns and condemnation of such American moves. George F. Kennan criticized the United States' action regarding the North Atlantic Treaty. He called it one of the biggest mistakes by the United States that would bring hazardous and precarious results. However, this could not prevent the United States from adding new members to the Military Alliance (Jones, 2015). The normalized relations between the United States and Russia could not last even a decade. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s extension of membership created disquietude among the Russians. In addition to this, Russia transformed its policy of cooperation with the United States into an offensive policy. Moreover, Russia has endeavored to regain its power and rose to a position similar to the 20th century (Marten, 2020).

Russia assaulted Ukraine first in 2014 which had been part of the Soviet Union in the previous century. After the 2014 invasion, the discussions over the inclusion of Ukraine into NATO deepened and amplified. However, Russia apprised the United States and the West about its non-compromising posture regarding Ukraine being a member of the North Atlantic Treaty. But the West specifically the United States rebutted and refuted Russian concerns. The United States also insisted that it is a matter of Ukraine’s autonomy. Such American response to Russian concerns



and later the failed talks that were held in Geneva left no option for Russia other than to send its forces into the neighboring country in February 2022 (Walker, 2023).

Russian assault on Ukraine in 2022 has prompted scholars and researchers from around the world to dive into the topic of whether the Russian invasion of Ukraine is linked to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's augmentation of membership in the post-Cold War era or not. The study conducted by several researchers has pushed the matter in Russian favor by affirming that the Russians have carried out the assault on Ukraine due to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's actions which were startling and disquieting for Russia. The study (Lajeunesse, 2023) indicates clearly and affirms the Russian claim that America's breaking of its promise has led Russia to carry out an assault on its neighboring country in 2022. In addition to this, (Suny, 2022; Roberts, 2022) confirmed that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is grounded in the North Atlantic Treaty expansionist policy. Another study (Carpenter, 2022) believes that the Russian invasion of Ukraine would not have happened in the first place if there had been no breaking of promises by the United States regarding NATO. The above-mentioned details signal that the United States has played a role in exasperating and antagonizing Russia (Xianyang, 2022).

## **5. Conclusion**

The Russian-US rivalry has resumed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is quite discernible from the Ukraine Conflict that started in February 2022. One of the most contested things in the current era is whether the United States made any promise to restrict North Atlantic Treaty Organization borders at the end of the Cold War or not. The assurances and promises made claimed by Russia were during the time of German reunification. A detailed investigation into the German reunification has disentangled the complexities and ambiguities surrounding the topic. The step of assuring the Soviet Union regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was first put forward by West Germans and not the United States. Eventually, the United States involved itself in the reunification talks and started supporting the offer of restricting NATO's borders in exchange for reuniting the two divided parts of Germany. To win the trust of the Soviet Union, Several United States officials like Baker Gates and the then President of the United States during German reunification talks, vehemently stressed restricting NATO's borders. Although, the assurances provided by the United States to the Soviet Union were mostly verbal. In addition to this, the assurances regarding NATO were not included in the final document of German reunification. However, this does not exempt the United States from keeping its promises. The promises are not limited to written documents only and verbal assurances do matter. Even if no legal action can be taken against the breaking of verbal assurances, still it can impact, develop experiences, and direct future policy in a totally different way. This has been the case with Russia which has transformed its policy from that of cooperation to an aggressive one toward the United States. Russia after experiencing the treachery and perfidy by the United States regarding NATO's enlargement has invaded Ukraine in 2022 which has further aggravated relations between Washington and Moscow.



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