NATO AND EAST-EUROPEAN SECURITY

Dincă Marian
Doctor of Geography,
Associate Professor at the Faculty of History
International Relations Political Sciences Communication Sciences

Culciar Patricia
BA Student – Security Studies at the Faculty of History, International Relations,
Political Sciences and Communication Sciences

Țoca Constantin-Vasile
Doctor of Geography,
Associate Professor at the Faculty of History
International Relations Political Sciences Communication Sciences,
University of Oradea
Oradea, Romania

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a political-military alliance established on the basis of the North Atlantic Treaty, signed on 4 April 1949, by 10 Western European and two North American states. With the status of a security organisation and international legal personality, NATO has adapted its mandate over more than seven decades of existence.

At the time of its creation, the transatlantic alliance became a key pillar for Western European countries in the face of the threat of Soviet expansion, promoting Western values and countering Communist influence and the Soviet nuclear arsenal during the Cold War.

In NATO's 2010 Lisbon Strategic Concept, three key tasks for the alliance are outlined: (1) ensuring collective security; (2) crisis management; and (3) promoting cooperative security. These provisions are reiterated in the current NATO Strategic Concept Madrid – 2022, but for the first time in the Alliance's conceptual-strategic history, Russia is defined as "the most significant and direct threat to the security and stability of the Allies" [1, p. 1].

Collective security is about defending NATO allies and deterring any attacks against them. In recent years, NATO has focused intensively on strengthening capabilities in this area, including cyber and hybrid threats. Crisis management covers situations outside the territory of NATO allies,

including missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Within the framework of cooperative security, NATO works with a variety of partners, both regional and global. Each area of work provides a forum in which allies and partners discuss, assess threats and risks, plan for contingencies and adopt common policies and standards to improve their ability to work together [2, p. 3–5].

History of the North Atlantic Alliance

Known simply as the "Cold War" in world chronology, the expansion of the Soviet Union into Eastern Europe and the spread of communism in this region posed a significant threat to the security of Western Europe and, by extension, the Western Hemisphere. In response to this challenge, the US commitment to protecting Western Europe against the influence of the Soviet Union became all the more necessary.

In April 1949, the North American nations of the US and Canada joined forces with ten Western European countries to establish the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). This alliance was designed to provide a protective shield against the expansion and ideology of the Soviet Union, and soon after to deter the Soviet Union following its first atomic bomb test in August 1949. In a parallel fashion, the Soviet Union established the short-lived political and military alliance known as the Warsaw Pact in May 1955, with eight member states, to counterbalance NATO's influence on the world stage.

The North Atlantic Alliance was founded on the principle of collective security, where an attack on one NATO member was considered an attack on all, a provision maintained and reiterated in all NATO Strategic Concepts.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and with it the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist. With the end of the Cold War and the absence of an immediate threat from the Soviet Union, NATO's future became uncertain. The new geopolitical landscape prompted NATO to reassess its missions, expand its sphere of influence and adapt to new threats. Dissolution of the alliance was not an option.

Unlike during the Cold War, when the Alliance expanded with only four new members, the collapse of Eastern European communism brings significant waves of new NATO members, virtually doubling the total number of Alliance members (32 members in 2024 with the accession of Sweden).

By accepting former communist Eastern European states, the Alliance has broadened its remit to include conflict management in South-Eastern Europe and North Africa, anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, counter-terrorism actions in South Asia and the Middle East, and recently,

the collective defence of Eastern Europe against aggression by the Russian Federation (successor to the USSR) [3, p. 59–60].

Since its establishment on 4 April 1949 by its 12 founding members, NATO has undergone seven stages of expansion in the number of member states, in accordance with the principles of its "Open Door" policy, as stipulated in Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. This policy has been implemented to include other European countries, with particular emphasis on the former communist states of Eastern Europe. Countries that have joined the Alliance over the years include Greece and Turkey (1952), West Germany (1955), Spain (1982), the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), and Montenegro (2017). In 2020, North Macedonia became the 30th member. Finland and Sweden became official NATO members in 2023 and 2024 respectively [4].

NATO structure, missions and operations

The main components of the NATO structure include the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the NATO Secretary General and the NATO Charter. The North Atlantic Council is the decision-making body comprising representatives of member states at ambassadorial or defence secretary level, with responsibility for discussing and taking decisions on security and defence matters. The NATO Secretary General, appointed by unanimous agreement of the member states, is the chief executive responsible for coordinating day-to-day activities and representing the organisation internationally.

NATO's Command Forces play a crucial role in the organisation's structure and are coordinated through two main strategic commands: Supreme Allied Command Transformation (SACT) in the US, which is responsible for the development and transformation of NATO's military capabilities, and Supreme Allied Command Operations (SACEUR) in Belgium, which is responsible for the planning and conduct of military operations. In addition, all member states contribute to the training of NATO forces by providing troops and resources for collective deterrence and defence in crisis and conflict situations.

The NATO Research and Technology Agency (NCIA) provides technical support, communications, intelligence and cyber security services, complementing the organisation's structure. NATO also works with other international organisations such as the European Union, the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to promote global security and stability [5].

The concept of "collective defence," enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, has allowed the Alliance to expand by bringing in new members, now totalling 32 states. This concept has underpinned consultation and cooperation on defence and security matters, as well as participation in multinational crisis management operations.

The objectives of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security were reaffirmed in the 2014 NATO Summit Declaration. Here the Action Plan was endorsed to enhance responsiveness, adapting to changes in the security environment and managing the challenges posed by Russia's conduct, risks and threats in the Middle East and North Africa.

NATO has expanded its security activities, including counter-terrorism, actively participating in operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Libya between 1992 and 2011. NATO's mission in Afghanistan, coordinated through ISAF, has been a significant effort to stabilise and develop the country.

NATO's participation in Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean, the fight against maritime piracy in the Horn of Africa through Operation Ocean Shield, as well as involvement in supporting the African Union in the Somalia Mission, illustrate the Alliance's continued commitment to global security.

NATO has also engaged in the fight against cyber-terrorism, establishing cyber defence as an integral part of collective defence and stepping up cooperation with private industry partners.

In the context of the suspension of cooperation with Russia, NATO has strengthened its relations with Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia by supporting efforts to reform defence and security systems.

NATO has adapted to the new challenges and threats of the 21st century, reaffirming its active role in maintaining global peace and security through cooperation, military action and engagement in crisis management. The North Atlantic Alliance remains a central actor in ensuring international stability [6, p. 199–202].

NATO human rights policies

With the expansion of NATO operations since the 1990s, pressure from within and outside the Alliance to implement its commitment to human rights has increased. This pressure has been driven by perceived shortcomings in NATO operations, including civil society concerns about civilian casualties in Afghanistan. To clarify its approach, NATO has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards such casualties.

Alliance states that support human rights in other fora have also promoted these issues in NATO. These efforts have involved the adoption

of specific human rights policies, reflecting or extending provisions adopted at the UN level. This work is part of a wider global dialogue on improving respect for human rights in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Together with NATO's long-term work programme on women, peace and security, these policies constitute a developing agenda for human security within the Alliance. In addition to the policies, NATO has implemented internal reforms, including access to justice for personnel and emphasising the importance of human rights in the management of international organisations.

Within the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO), the Protection of Civilians policy adopted in 2016 is a clear sign of a strong commitment to human rights during deployed operations. This policy, based on four key principles, including a lawful approach and taking concrete steps to protect civilian populations, resulted in an action plan in 2018, scheduled for review in 2021.

In addition, NATO responded to the challenges of sexual exploitation and abuse by adopting a specific policy in 2019. By clearly defining these behaviours and ensuring collective responsibility through awareness and training, NATO promotes a safe and harmonious environment.

Regarding the protection of children in armed conflict, allies agreed in 2015 on a policy that integrates UN requirements and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child into military doctrine. The focus is on recognising and reporting violations during operations, highlighting the importance of protecting the most vulnerable members of affected communities.

In an effort to ensure fair and just treatment for its personnel, NATO implemented significant internal reforms in 2013. Through the establishment of the NATO Administrative Tribunal, the Alliance guarantees independent and impartial access to justice for its members. These policies and reforms reflect a comprehensive and committed approach to respect for human rights in all aspects of NATO operations and structures [2, p. 6–7].

NATO's role in the global response to 9/11

European countries provided significant support to the United States after the 9/11 attacks. They have pledged to support the United States both individually, in personal talks with President Bush and senior US officials, and collectively, through NATO and the European Union. Although NATO invoked its self-defence clause, there was an expectation that NATO would be an integral part of the military response in Afghanistan, based on the principle that an attack on one member would be considered an attack on all. However, the United States decided to conduct military operations

in Afghanistan without an explicit NATO role, preferring to integrate European contributions on the basis of bilateral agreements.

NATO reacted promptly and firmly to the September 11 attacks, condemning them and promising assistance. NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson encouraged the United States to formally invoke the collective self-defence provisions of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Although some allies expressed reservations, Robertson insisted on the importance of consensus, arguing that failure to invoke Article 5 would fundamentally weaken the Alliance. So on 12 September 2001, NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history.

Although it was hoped that invoking Article 5 would lead the US to conduct the military response under NATO, or at least coordinate actions with NATO's integrated military structure and political institutions, the United States has determined that the Alliance will not be involved in military action against Afghanistan. Instead, the United States requested NATO support in specific areas, and the allies endorsed the proposed measures, facilitating military planning and ensuring collective support. NATO did not contribute its collective assets to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, but played a major role in the domestic Operation Noble Eagle in the United States, with AWACS monitoring the airspace and providing support to Operation Eagle Assist. [7, p.5-22]

NATO: Different perspectives in Armenia and Azerbaijan

Armenia's position towards NATO is reserved, as the country does not explicitly aim to join NATO, which would be incompatible with its close military and political ties with Russia. Armenia is the only republic in the South Caucasus that is a member of the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). Armenia's membership of the CSTO and its close relationship with Russia in general do not encounter significant opposition in Armenia's domestic political discourse. Another obstacle to Armenia's accession to NATO is the decidedly friendly relationship with Iran, which affects bilateral relations and national security.

Both President Robert Kocharyan and his successor Serge Sarkisyan have expressed reservations about joining NATO, arguing that it would harm Armenia's relations with neighbouring countries and would not significantly improve national security. The "National Security Strategy" document adopted in 2007 prioritises cooperation with Russia and CSTO over interaction with NATO. This principle was also reflected in Armenia's 2007 Defence Doctrine.

Despite a pronounced interest in NATO membership expressed by Vafa Guluzade, foreign policy advisor to Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev,

Azerbaijan appears to have no immediate plans for full integration into the North Atlantic Alliance. While there are efforts to strengthen cooperation with NATO, leaders in Baku are taking a cautious approach, avoiding making clear statements about their intention to seek full membership. President Ilkham Aliyev stressed that the country is not yet ready for such an accession and that he avoids setting unrealistic targets for such a move. Factors such as sensitive relations with Russia and Iran, together with the desire to avoid geopolitical pressures, shape Azerbaijan's attitude towards NATO. In official documents, Azerbaijan aims to integrate into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, highlighting this as a strategic objective, but without explicitly mentioning full NATO membership in the near future [8, p. 24–31].

We can sum up that NATO has been and will remain the essence of European and Euro-Atlantic security, even more so in terms of human security. The North Atlantic Alliance's cooperation with major international organisations, but especially with the European Union, is based on a strong, unique and essential security partnership. [9, p. 135–136] Both organisations share the same democratic values and common strategic interests, and the current security environment highlights the need to strengthen the NATO-EU strategic partnership through multidisciplinary cooperation.

References:

1. Antonio Marinescu, NATO's New Strategic Concept 2022. A Resilience Approach, 2022, URL: https://e-arc.ro/2022/07/13/

2. Christina Binder, Jane A Hofbauer, Philipp Janigeds & Manfred Novak, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)", 2020.

3. Adeleke Olumide Ogunnoiki, Charles Emmanuel Ekpo, "NATO at 70: The history, successes and challenges of the Transatlantic Alliance in the post-cold war era", 2019. vol. 2, no. 2.

4. "NATO member countries" URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq, accessed 11 March 2024

5. "NATO Structure" URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/structure.htm, accessed 12 March 2024

6. Anelis-Vanina ISTRĂTESCU, "The involvement of the UN, NATO, EU and OSCE in ensuring the security of humanity".

7. Nora Bensahel, The Counterterror Coalitions, RAND Corporation, 2003.

8. Martin Malek, "Connections, Vol. 7, No. 3". Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes.

9. Dincă, M. (2012). The evolution of the North Atlantic Alliance seen geopolitically and geostrategically: trends and perspectives, Ed. Univ. of Oradea. URL: https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-81386-2

NATO – THE CORNERSTONE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Dincă Marian
Doctor of Geography,
Associate Professor at the Faculty of History
International Relations Political Sciences Communication Sciences

Since its establishment in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has stood as a pivot of European security, providing a framework for collective defense, cooperation, and stability among its member states. Born out of the ashes of World War II and the looming specter of the Cold War, NATO's core mission has been to safeguard the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its members.

NATO's founding document, the North Atlantic Treaty, embodies the principle of collective defense established in Article 5, which declares that an armed attack against one member shall be considered an attack against all members[1]. This mutual commitment to each other's security has served as a powerful deterrent against potential aggressors, bolstering the peace and security of the Euro-Atlantic region for over seven decades.

Throughout the Cold War, NATO played a key role in deterring Soviet aggression and maintaining the security of Western Europe. The presence of NATO forces, particularly the significant commitment of the United States, provided a crucial shield against the expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union. The alliance acted as a hub of stability, preventing the outbreak of major conflict in Europe while allowing for the gradual thawing of East-West tensions through dialogue and diplomacy.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about a new era of challenges and opportunities for NATO. The alliance underwent a profound transformation, expanding its membership to include former Warsaw Pact

---

[1] Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm