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Considering reinstating the defence-focused character of the NATO

NATO

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Forum: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Issue: Considering reinstating the defence-focused character of the NATO

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Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was a military alliance/organization founded in 1949 in order to protect Western countries with Western ideologies from the influence and propagation of Soviet-initiated communist / socialist / Marxist Leninist ideologies, along with preventing the growth of a sphere of influence for Soviet / Soviet-backed nations/governments. Through NATO policies such as Article V, which will be detailed later on, mutual protection was ensured between member states by promising military assistance at all times. NATO has developed in the last 75 years of its existence to have its own military capabilities, such as an air force, a navy, and infantry, above each country's individual armed forces at its disposal. This means that NATO was an explicitly military organization for armed capabilities. Throughout the years, however, this focus has shifted from purely militaristic means to taking action when it comes to issues such as crisis management, along with new, more contemporary issues such as the complications presented by the emergence of a digital world. Essentially, through the years, NATO's approaches have varied from being initially solely defense-focused to having a larger attack-aligned perspective. As a result of these changes, many have begun to question and criticize the role of NATO, how its current goals will affect the world, and how appropriately it maintains its defensive pretext. Through this research report, the expansion of the organization into other sectors will be evaluated with larger depth in a time of high political tension between the East and West.

Definition of Key Terms

Annex

The formal incorporation of a region or territory into another nation/state/entity through political or military means, typically, it is done so with hostile means, entailing that the affected territory / its governing body does not give consent.

Enhanced Forward Presence initiative

Defense measure established by NATO in 2017, with the aim of bringing up and addressing the increasing threats in Eastern Europe, especially from Russia. It consists of the deployment of troops from a variety of NATO member states with the aim of maintaining a constant and consistent military presence in deployed areas.

Collective defense

The mutual defense agreed upon by member states, if one member state were to be attacked, that attack would be met by collective protection by the larger group of countries.

Article V

The aforementioned clause is one within NATO's treaty, committing member states to collectively defend one another if an armed attack were to take place.

Burden Sharing

Distribution of spending of funds and resources for defensive means amongst NATO members.

Eastern Flank

Eastern member states of NATO, along with Poland and Baltic member states.

Defense Spending Benchmark

An instruction ratified by NATO member states, committing them to spending a minimum of 2% of their gross domestic product (GDP) towards defense.

Deterrence and Defense Posture

A NATO strategy was introduced with the aim of preventing hostility and further aggression by introducing a credible military presence with large capabilities.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

A measure of an economy by computing the number of sum output of goods and/or services within a given time period.

Marxist Leninism

Advocating for a sole party state to change from capitalist mindsets towards socialism, to eventually achieve a classless, individual, stateless society.

Communism

A political ideology that advocates for economic equality amongst individuals and wants a world that does not contain various different social classes.

Socialism

An economic structure in which industries, as opposed to being owned by private businesses/individuals /states, are owned by the workers.

Capitalism

Private businesses/individuals/states own and are able to control property in regard to and according to their own personal interests. Demand and supply are also able to set prices in a market, which benefits society. The key characteristic of capitalism is to turn profit.

Democracy

Democracy is a system of government in which power is essentially given to the people / general majority, where they are able to freely elect their leaders/representatives, typically involving a series of elections.

General Overview

In the year 1949, NATO was established, with the aim to be a defense alliance targeted towards opposing the propagation of the Soviet Union and its ideologies/governance systems. The organization also chose to employ article V of Washington or North Atlantic Treaty as one of its key principles, stating that an attack on a member state of the alliance constitutes, or is to be considered, an attack against all member states. The organization's initial goals were focused heavily on being ready from a military perspective, deterring opposition, and promoting a united front in the Euro-Atlantic area.

With this focus in mind, NATO took action and conducted operations to meet its objectives. However, with the fall of the Soviet Union, which took place in 1991, the organization's mission took a shift towards including crisis management efforts, peacekeeping missions in areas of conflict, counterterrorism efforts, and responding to cyber threats. It also began taking on operations outside

of its initial operational zone, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, Kosovo, and Bosnia, where it took interventional measures within these regions.

Though its shift showed a future for the organization, in 2014, it renewed tensions with Russia. The nation's annexation of Crimea and various activities taking place in Eastern Ukraine sparked apprehension among NATO towards its mission in attempts at collective self-defense. During the conflict, the organization chose to respond with the 'Enhanced Forward Presence Initiative' (EFP), which was used to deter and avoid further aggression. It was also done as a means to encourage and reassure members from Eastern Europe. The EFP, in this instance, consisted of the deployment of battlegroups of many nationals into Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Estonia. This was done to visibly show their commitment to defense and promote regional stability.

In the contemporary era, with the rising presence of unconventional means of aggression, such as through cyberattacks, propaganda, disinformation, and misinformation campaigns, and the ever-growing climate-induced risks, when it comes to maintaining a defense-oriented role, it becomes more complicated, requiring NATO to reassess their strategies and diversify to adapt to a changing environment.

Another issue can be brought up when discussing NATO's defense-focused character and a possible hindrance to that character. This would be the issue of the work done by individual member states. Many member states within the alliance tend to prioritize their own individual interests, make decisions, and take action according to what those respective interests dictate. Due to this, the issue of miscommunication, and as such, a somewhat disarrayed decision-making process and strategic/tactical focus.

Alongside individual state actions, this can also further be emphasized due to many member states possessing converse and conflicting views. Examples of this can include the USA and Turkey, which can also create a fragile environment of weariness, hindering the efficiency of the organization due to increased hesitation by member states when choosing to make decisions or operate.

There is also the issue that many large-scale businesses and organizations alike face, which is inefficiencies caused by bureaucracy. Due to NATO's multinational focus, language differences, alongside the convoluted bureaucratic processes and documentation that must be committed, are also two key factors that contribute to the hindrance of the organization's decision-making capabilities, and hence its defense-focused character as a whole due to also bringing up the occurrence of reduced precision and understanding when undertaking ongoing operations.

There is also the recurring issue amongst member states due to not complying with the 2% GDP contribution, which negatively implicates defensive progress being made by the organization.

There are numerous reasons why a nation is unable to sufficiently provide the 2% of its GDP as agreed upon. Some of these can include the fact that certain member states do not possess the economic resources and capabilities to achieve this goal without hindering or endangering their own domestic economies and interests. Many nations also suffer from political resistance and political resistance movements by local domestic populations against the 2% GDP spending, which results in governments erring towards the side of caution and subsequently not contributing sufficiently towards the target. With these internal issues in mind, many member states prove to be unable to contribute accordingly towards the goal set by NATO, and as such, this would cause hindrance to the furthering of NATO's military capability.

With time, NATO, like all organizations/companies/businesses, NATO similarly has had to adapt to meet the requirements in order to survive and ensure that the interests of its member states are served according to the organization's values, and as such, NATO has shifted from a primary defense focused target, towards taking action in other, more attacking means. Examples of this can be seen in four key relatively contemporary events. One of which was their intervention in Kosovo, taking place in the year 1999. During this intervention period, NATO took part in an unauthorized (by the United Nations Security Council) 78-day-long bombing operation against Yugoslavia. This event was of key importance in underscoring NATO's, at the time, newfound shift, as the interventional efforts were made with the aim of stopping and preventing further human rights violations from taking place. The second key instance would be the Afghan war, lasting from 2001 to 2021. Post the tragic 9/11 attacks, for the first historically recorded period, NATO invoked Article V, resulting in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) being launched into the area. This operation, once again, varies from NATO's defensive stance, as it instead was characterized to be aimed towards nation-building. The third instance was in 2011, when NATO took an interventionist role in Libya through their enforcement of a no-fly zone, combined with a series of airstrikes, taking place during Libya's Civil War. For this operation, NATO received abundant criticism, where many said their intervention was majorly extreme and went over and above the given UN mandate in regard to the issue at hand. The final instance is their Expeditionary missions within Iraq, in spite of not having led Iraq's 2003 invasion, the organization later on had become implicated with training and supporting operations, which was a key moment underscoring the organization's complicity with non-defense oriented missions.

Timeline of Key Events

Date

Event

April 4 1949	North Atlantic Treaty signed, Establishment of NATO as a defense organization promoting collective self defense amongst member states against the possibility of external aggression.
December 26 1991	Fall of the Soviet Union, Marks ending to the Cold War, along with the dissolution of a communist dominion.
July 1992	NATO established a joint naval operation to enforce sanctions on Serbia in the Bosnian war.
August 2003	NATO assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
March 21 2014	Russia annexed Crimea
February 24	Russia began invasion of Ukraine

Major Parties Involved

United States of America (USA)

The USA is one of the most prominent NATO member states, alongside being its largest military and financial contributor, providing the organization an approximate 3.4% of its economy. As such, its interest in the organization, and particularly its interest in seeing the organization as a means to maintaining global security, would be high. The stance that the UAS would hold would tend to be strongly for maintaining NATO's defense-oriented nature, along with introducing the possibility of strengthening it further.

Germany

Germany is also one of NATO's protagonist member states. Due to its complex historical past, it is a country known for its hesitancy towards militarisation and has also received video criticism for having not met NATO's annual defense spending target of 2% of a country's GDP. As such, Germany's stance would be to opt for a more balanced approach, where NATO would still be able to retain its defensive character. However, it would still pursue conflict prevention methods through diplomacy and diplomatic processes.

United Kingdom (UK)

The UK, as a founding member of NATO, has been a staunch supporter of its collective self-defense principles and, hence, its defense-oriented character. Throughout the Cold War and onwards to the Suez Crisis, it has remained committed to the organization and has shaped policies as well in a show of its support for NATO. Following this invaluable support to the organization, the UK would hold strong support towards continuing NATO's defense-focused character and opting for it to increase its military capability, with the aim of ensuring appropriate collective self-defense.

Turkey

Turkey's views on NATO are clear, and it is seen as an organization vital to ensuring security. However, it retains a stew of complicated feelings and relationships with other member states regarding certain issues, such as the management and presence of Kurdish groups and the complexities of Syria. Turkey's stance would be in support of NATO, and its mission for remaining a defense organization, however, would call for further acknowledgment and action towards its own regional security concerns, such as terrorism.

Baltic states and Poland

Due to their past and close proximity to Russia, to these states, NATO can be seen as a tool of essence to ensure their survival and maintain their authority over their respective regions. As such, their stance would heavily fall towards ensuring NATO's focus remains on defense, and they would possibly even request that NATO increase their presence and preparedness towards their respective region.

Russia

Russia has consistently held the view that the activities and actions of NATO pose a direct threat to its strategic and tactical goals, alongside proving to be hazardous to its security. As such, its stance would strongly oppose NATO's defense-oriented character.

Possible Solutions

To make defense a possibility within a large treaty organization, a lot of information has to go through rigorous bureaucratic processes that impede the smooth running of new proposals that drive the development of NATO's military. This would require changes to two superficial changes that are directly related: reducing bureaucratic paperwork and processes that are unnecessary and

time-wasting and money-wasting, ensuring that all NATO members comply with the 2% GDP standard, and 20% of that being dedicated to investing in modern military technology. Other solutions are possible, such as replacing money allocation already invested in the organization with the military aspect of NATO or more radical changes that target underlying issues with the structure of the organization. Delegates are, however, encouraged to seek constructive changes and solutions and to avoid destructive changes that scarcely have positive effects.

Further Reading

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137330307_1

This link explains in detail the changes that were made to NATO after the USSR fell and the Cold War ended

https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/ISR/student-papers/AY21-22/Rutter_AUAR_NATO.pdf

This document explains in extraordinary detail some issues and setbacks that NATO has had during the conflict with Russia, relating points to the NATO articles

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