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NATO in Contemporary Times

Purpose, Relevance, Future

John Michael Weaver

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“A penetrating and deeply insightful look into the world’s most powerful alliance and its component organizations. The SWOT analysis methodology provides the reader a well-balanced assessment of the alliance’s current state as well as its prospects moving into the future.”

—Greg Zellmer, *Colonel, US Army (retired)*

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John Michael Weaver
Intelligence Analysis, School of Arts,
Communication, and Global Studies
York College of Pennsylvania
York, PA, USA

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Michael Weaver is an Associate Professor of Intelligence Analysis at York College of Pennsylvania (USA), a retired DOD civilian from the United States' Intelligence Community, and has served as an officer in the US Army (retiring at the rank of lieutenant colonel). He has lived and worked on four continents and in 19 countries spending nearly eight years overseas (on behalf of the US government). His experience includes multiple combat deployments, peace enforcement, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, and disaster assistance support in both conventional and unconventional/non-traditional units. John has trained and certified multinational NATO reconnaissance teams based in The Netherlands, Germany, and Spain for worldwide deployment in full spectrum mission sets. He has also personally led several reconnaissance missions throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (including multiple missions in Afghanistan). He has received formal training/certification in the following areas from the US Department of Defense: Survival/Evasion/Resistance/Escape (high risk), communications equipment & communications planning (FM radio, landline & satellite communications, encryption, and the use of cryptographic devices), digital camera use & digital photography courses, US Joint Forces Command joint intelligence course, US Special Operations Command counterintelligence awareness course (USSOCOM CI), US Joint Forces Command counterintelligence awareness training (USJFCOM CI), counterinsurgency course, joint antiterrorism course, defense against suicide

bombing course, dynamics of international terrorism, homeland security and defense course, the joint special operations task force course (JSOTF), defensive driving course, vehicle emergency drills (battle drills), composite risk management, the airborne and air assault schools, and more. Additionally, he graduated from NATO's Combined Joint Operations Center course in Oberammergau Germany, the Air Command and Staff College, and the Joint & Combined Warfighting School. John earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in business management from Towson University in 1990, graduated from Central Michigan University with a Master of Science in Administration degree in 1995, earned a Master of Operational Arts and Science degree from the US Air Force's Air University in 2004, and graduated from the University of Baltimore with a Doctorate in Public Administration in 2013.

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PART I

(Purpose): Background



NATO—A Brief History, and Discussion on the Methodology

Abstract NATO was established in 1949. Since its founding, the Alliance has grown to 30 nations on both sides of the Atlantic (as of March 2020). From its inception, it has served as a deterrent to the Soviet Union for most of its history and following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the organization has been involved in multiple operations the world over. This chapter explores precursors to NATO, the member nations (and when each joined), and the North Atlantic Treaty (articles) with a brief analysis of each.

Keywords NATO · Treaty of Brussels · North Atlantic Treaty

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Treaty of Versailles brought to fruition the League of Nations. After World War I came to completion, most of the world wanted a supranational organization to work together to help avoid the manifestation of war to a level akin to the one of the Great War. This did not happen, and in just over two decades the same major belligerent from WW I rose to power once again and launched an offensive against Poland bringing about the Second World War.

During World War II, the United States entered the conflict after the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941. As a result, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers was created and the command was assigned to Dwight Eisenhower, a US Army officer, who led the allied forces to victory in 1945. The United States was seen as the major reason why the allies prevailed over the Axis Powers as was the case with Russia's determination against Germany's eastern flank. Moreover, in the aftermath of the devastation experienced on the European continent, the United States fared much better and emerged as a superpower. Another country re-emerged in the aftermath of WW II as a major player as well, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, otherwise referred to as Russia). Countries in Europe subsequently found themselves aligned into the democratic and communist camps (based mostly on agreed-upon arrangements with the victors of WW II) with many nations in Eastern Europe finding alignment with the USSR ostensibly to serve as a barrier to help protect the Soviet Union from future conflict though most in Europe saw this as a potential threat to democracy and capitalism.

Following the victories in Europe and Asia, the world looked to create a more viable and effective version of the League of Nations. This new organization became known as the United Nations (UN) and was born in 1945 (Weaver 2019). The core of this organization is the Security Council's five permanent members. The nations that comprise the five countries of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) are the major victors of World War II and include the likes of the People's Republic of China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Weaver 2020a). That stated, three were staunch allies during WWII and promoted democratic values and included France, the United Kingdom, and the United States; one, though an ally in WWII subscribed to a communist ideology—the USSR, and one later would become communist—China. The power with the UNSC is underscored by its ability to pass and implement binding resolutions; more pointedly, the power with the permanent members resides in their veto power whereby only one of these five members can derail a proposed resolution (Weaver 2019). Because the USSR possessed the power to veto resolutions, many nations were fearful that the UN would be relegated to a failing organization akin to its predecessor, the League of Nations.

The Treaty of Dunkirk was signed in 1947. France and the United Kingdom were fearful of a resurgence of German power and looked to formalize an Alliance to work together to protect against said threat

(Johnston 2017, 40–42; Oxford, n.d.). Mark Trachtenberg (1998) went further by stating that this treaty was also inclusive of the Russian threat. In the following year, the Treaty of Brussels was ratified and added the BENELUX nations of Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg (Brussels Treaty 1948). It was the following year that NATO was established (What is NATO, n.d.).

1.2 NATO: ITS ORIGIN AND LIST OF CURRENT MEMBER NATIONS

NATO was established in 1949 through the ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty in April of that year (History of NATO, n.d.). The Alliance had aspirations to avoid conflict by aligning countries (Johnston 2017, 131–133). Essentially, it was a sworn pact to stand against aggression created under the premise that “an attack against one would be an attack against all” (History of NATO, n.d.). At the helm, is the NATO Secretary General (SECGEN); the current incumbent is the former Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg (NATO SECGEN, n.d.). It serves to help prevent conflict and also to prepare for the realities of an imperfect world (Krüger-Klausen and Odgaard 2014; Odgaard, 2014). Likewise, it needs to strive to create a coherent strategy (Dorff 2014). NATO will have to remain flexible and adaptive to remain relevant (Wijk 1997).

Since its inception, the Alliance survived the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991, the end of the Warsaw Pact, peacekeeping operations in Europe, the 9/11 attacks, and other operations in more contemporary times the world over. What began as a political–military alliance comprised of 12 nations (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the United States) has burgeoned to 30 nations today when the Republic of North Macedonia joined in March 2020 (History of NATO, n.d.). The following are the member nations and the year in which they joined.

Albania (2009)
Belgium (1949)
Bulgaria (2004)
Canada (1949)
Croatia (2009)

Czech Republic (1999)
 Denmark (1949)
 Estonia (2004)
 France (1949)
 Germany (1955)
 Greece (1952)
 Hungary (1999)
 Iceland (1949)
 Italy (1949)
 Latvia (2004)
 Lithuania (2004)
 Luxembourg (1949)
 Montenegro (2017)
 Netherlands (1949)
 North Macedonia (2020)
 Norway (1949)
 Poland (1999)
 Portugal (1949)
 Romania (2004)
 Slovakia (2004)
 Slovenia (2004)
 Spain (1982)
 Turkey (1952)
 The United Kingdom (1949)
 The United States (1949)

1.3 NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY (ARTICLES)

The overarching legal document that provides NATO with its authorization is the North Atlantic Treaty. The treaty provides greater specificity into the *raison d'être* of the organization. More pointedly, NATO (and by extension, its articles), provide authority for it to operate as a regional organization under the United Nations (Higgins et al. 2017). The treaty and a brief analysis of this are found in the annex at the end of this chapter.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This study focused solely on secondary data. A lot of material exists on NATO, but this book focused on synthesizing information in the context of four variables explained below. This work analyzed data from the

literature and official NATO sources. It also looked at the official doctrine of NATO and the United States as well as oral accounts (interviews and panel discussions) that have taken place in recent years. Moreover, it looked at the contemporary history of the Alliance focusing predominantly on the last 10 years, but in some instances, went back farther for context and clarification on NATO's evolution. The book afforded consideration to major organizations within the Alliance to look at these as cases to better understand what is occurring.

This book departs from traditional theories used to look at the Alliance intentionally taking a new approach to more aptly understand what is taking place. Moreover, what makes this work unique is that (1) it looks at NATO through the lens of a practitioner that spent nearly six years working in the Alliance in the first decade of the millennium, and (2) applies a particular model frequently used in the public policy and administration discipline to more structurally guide the understanding of what is occurring with NATO in contemporary times to help move away from subjectivity and bias.

Bryson is highly regarded among practitioners through his analysis of public sector organizations (of which, NATO is, albeit one that is supranational). This book conducts an analysis of NATO through the use of a model (Bryson 2018, 144–148; Bryson and Edwards 2017) that looks at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an organization (S.W.O.T.). NATO turns to these to help as Johnston (2017) points out, to adapt its strategy to remain relevant going forward. More pointedly, Heuer and Pherson (2015, 308) underscore the value of this model. They write that it is a useful framework from which one can collect data and subsequently analyze the strategic planning to help make informed decisions (Heuer and Pherson 2015, 308). Ultimately, the study considers the Alliance through its purpose and relevance and will provide insight into the viability of NATO going forward into the future. Though there are more organizations that comprise NATO than those covered in this book, this author narrowed the scope of the study to these (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Why may one ask? As a practitioner, this author served as a leader and staff officer in NATO throughout Europe for nearly six years (section head, branch chief, executive officer, and director). During his time in NATO, he interacted directly with most of these organizations and saw the impact (good and bad) of these and accordingly, decided to focus attention only on these. More pointedly, he deployed to Afghanistan several times as part

of the International Security Assistance Force, conducted numerous coordination visits to several NATO headquarters, participated in Alliance led exercises, to include Steadfast Jaguar, NATO's first out of area exercise to Cape Verde, deployed to Pakistan as part of NATO Response Force 7 following the earthquake there, and he even served as the sole NATO liaison officer to the US Central Command in Tampa, Florida in 2008. He saw firsthand the importance of all of these with the exception of two (Joint Forces Training Centre, and Joint Analysis & Lessons Learned Centre), which came into existence after he retired from service. There is also a brand new headquarters stood up in Norfolk in September 2020 excluded from this book because there is nothing as of yet to analyze its performance (Atlantic Command, Norfolk).

1.4.1 Internal Variables

The two internal variables controlled by organizations are strengths and weaknesses (Bryson 2018; Bryson and Edwards 2017). Strengths turn to what the organization has available to it, from which it can leverage in order to enhance its position and remain relevant (Bryson 2018; Bryson and Edwards 2017). Conversely, the weaknesses look at inherent flaws and challenges that could prevent the organization from realizing its full potential (Bryson 2018; Bryson and Edwards 2017).

1.4.2 Part 1.4.2 External Variables

Externally, this book considers two variables: opportunities and threats. Opportunities are areas that an organization can pursue in order to help improve the viability of its structure and could enhance its relevance and position (Bryson 2018; Bryson and Edwards 2017). Threats on the other hand are issues and factors that could harm the organization or reduce its effectiveness (Bryson 2018; Bryson and Edwards 2017).

1.4.3 Value Added

There is value added in conducting a S.W.O.T. analysis. It can generate information that is useful and can serve as the basis for further analysis (Heuer and Pherson 2015, 308). It can also look at matching an

organization's internal strengths and weaknesses to the external opportunities and threats confronting the organization (Heuer and Pherson 2015, 308).

1.4.4 *Methodology Limitations*

However, there are limitations to such an approach. This type of analysis looks at the variables without ascribing weights to them (Heuer and Pherson 2015, 309). Likewise, S.W.O.T. does not necessarily take into account all issues because the analysis only focuses on four variables: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This was intentional to narrow the scope of the analysis looking at the Alliance through a limited lens to not convolute the understanding of what is taking place. There are other variables that one might consider for future analysis on NATO, and attention will be afforded to these others in the last chapter of the book.

Likewise, though academics might be inclined to assign values or weights to variables (considering that the four variables should not be weighted the same), this study intentionally looked at each of the four S.W.O.T. variables as equal, again to avoid convoluting the analysis.

Moreover, the study does not look at legal considerations of the Alliance, and by extension, its operations. Other studies could build on this one looking at conducting an analysis affording attention to international and national law considerations.

Finally, as stated above, the book only looks at secondary data sources. Absent from this work is information derived from interviews, questionnaires, and personal observations actually conducted by this author (at the present time).

When NATO's leaders gathered in 2019 to celebrate its 70th anniversary, they did not want to just focus on past successes. The leaders desired to move forward with a unified vision and the rest of this book will look to the present relevance and future of the Alliance.

ANNEX

“The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments.

They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.

They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security. They therefore agree to this North Atlantic Treaty.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

Article 1

“The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: Article 1 looks to the United Nations as the overarching organization and this paragraph serves to underscore the legitimacy of the UN (AJP-01 2017).

Article 2

“The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: This article underpins the relevancy of peaceful pursuits of resolution to problems and looks to seek conflict avoidance.

Article 3

“In order to more effectively achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: Article 3 explains that all nations must contribute their share to the Alliance vis-à-vis military forces and equipment and each should not fall short thereby shifting the burden to allow other member nations to compensate for that nation’s lack of pulling its fair share of responsibility.

Article 4

“The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: To the Alliance, this article explains essentially that all members are equal and that any one can surface issues if they perceive a threat. NATO strives to achieve consensus in decision making (Jakobsen 2014, 70).

Article 5

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

“Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: Article 5 is often seen as the most important of articles and specifies that an attack on one (no matter how great or small) will be treated as an attack on all. More to the point, it is based on the purpose and principles listed in the United Nations (UN) Charter and in turn, leads to the commitment of nations to unite efforts that should result in a comprehensive and collective defense (AJP-01 2017, 1.6). More pointedly, the authorization for the use of force could be supported by the UN to take forceful action to bring about the restoration of peace and security (Higgins et al. 2017).

Article 6

“For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack.” (NATO Treaty 1949).

- “on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of Turkey

or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer;" (NATO Treaty 1949).

- "on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer." (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: This article provides specific examples of what constitutes an attack and relevant locations.

Article 7

"This Treaty does not affect, and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations under the Charter of the Parties which are members of the United Nations, or the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security." (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: Once again, this treaty and NATO's existence are not designed to supersede the viability of the UN.

Article 8

"Each Party declares that none of the international engagements now in force between it and any other of the Parties or any third State is in conflict with the provisions of this Treaty, and undertakes not to enter into any international engagement in conflict with this Treaty." (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: This article, in essence, looks at the term of conflict as something that occurs after the treaty is ratified.

Article 9

"The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council shall be so organised as to be able to meet promptly at any time. The Council shall set up such subsidiary bodies as may be necessary; in particular it shall establish immediately a defence committee which shall recommend measures for the implementation of Articles 3 and 5." (NATO Treaty 1949).

Analysis: Similar to, but to a lesser extent than Article 5, this one is significant to NATO itself because it allows the political headquarters to set up subcomponents.