

What's wrong with NATO and how to fix it

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What's Wrong with NATO and How to Fix It

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First published in 2021 by Polity Press

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
101 Station Landing
Suite 300
Medford, MA 02155, USA

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ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-8265-5

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Webber, Mark, author. | Sperling, James, author. | Smith, Martin A., author.

Title: What's wrong with NATO and how to fix it / Mark Webber, James Sperling and Martin A. Smith h.

Other titles: What is wrong with North Atlantic Treaty Organization and how to fix it

Description: Medford : Polity Press, 2021. | Series: What's wrong? | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "A penetrating diagnostic of the world's most powerful military alliance"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020038353 (print) | LCCN 2020038354 (ebook) | ISBN 9780745682617 (Hardback) | ISBN 9780745682624 (Paperback) | ISBN 9780745682655 (ePub)

Subjects: LCSH: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. | European Union. | National security--European Union countries. | European Union countries--Foreign relations.

Classification: LCC UA646.3 .W433 2021 (print) | LCC UA646.3 (ebook) | DDC 355/.031091821--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020038353>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020038354>

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Writing on matters of contemporary importance always faces the challenge of relevance. How will a book's analysis and proposals stand up as events carry on regardless of the authors' prognostications? This is a question we asked ourselves many times as this volume progressed. A book originally conceived in 2013 has had to take on board the Ukraine crisis of 2014; the election of Donald Trump in 2016; Brexit; a major reconfiguration of NATO's mission in Afghanistan; and the worsening of political order to NATO's south in the Middle East and North Africa. The manuscript had been drafted by early 2020 with all these events accommodated. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic. For some, this is an event of such magnitude that it amounts to a 'year zero' in international politics. If that judgement were true, much of our analysis would have become instantly redundant. It would be like finishing a book on terrorism the week before 9/11. But such a view may well prove false. This is not to minimize the ghastly and extensive effects of COVID-19. Pandemics, by definition are grave, but history suggests that they are also often temporary. Public health interventions, vaccines and acquired immunity could well mean that within a few years the disease is but 'a disturbing memory'.¹ Equally, as Joseph Nye has suggested, the pandemic 'might not change the world'.² This may seem a hopelessly optimistic view from the vantage point of November 2020, as COVID-19 marches across the globe. But Nye's point is a sensible one. The big issue of global politics – the rise of China and America's adjustment to it – will play out regardless. Equally, NATO's perennial issues – the ones that have structured this book – will remain. To ignore COVID-19

would, however, have been perverse. In finishing the book, we have thus taken into consideration the evolving landscape of international response, but we have not been deflected from retaining a structure for the book that talks to NATO's longer-standing issues – those that pre-date the COVID-19 crisis and those that will outlast it. In short, we have dealt with the pandemic as an important, but second-order, issue (the book's concluding chapter explains how and why). Our thanks are owed here to one external reader who suggested that the pandemic could best be conceived as 'magnifying' but not replacing 'existing trends and fault lines' facing the Alliance.

Getting the book over the finishing line in such turbulent times owes much to the forbearance of Louise Knight and Inès Boxman at Polity. Their patience in the face of more than one delay in the book's delivery is much appreciated. The final push was also made possible by the generosity of the University of Birmingham, which afforded Mark Webber an extended sabbatical to complete the writing and editing. In addition, we would like to acknowledge a range of friends, colleagues and interlocutors, all of whom have fed ideas into the analyses (perhaps sometimes unwittingly). Thanks are owed to Derek Averre, Wyn Bowen, Lawrence Chalmer, Malcolm Chalmers, Lorenzo Cladi, Fabrizio Coticchia, Albert Covelli, Adam Crawford, John Deni, David Dunn, Spyros Economides, Nico Faso, Trine Flockhart, Rita Floyd, Alex Garrido, Tim Haughton, Ben Kienzle, David Logan, Sonia Lucarelli, Jennifer Medcalf, Hugo Meijer, Philip Mizen, Alex Moens, Jaimie Orr, Jack Porter, Patrick Porter, Adam Quinn, Jens Ringsmose, Sten Rynning, Jamie Shea, Thierry Tardy, Keery Walker, Nick Wheeler, Richard Whitman, Ben Wilkinson, Michael J. Williams and Katharine Wright. This book sits alongside others published by Polity addressing the question of *What's Wrong* with international organizations.

Two of these were of some influence in shaping our thinking. We would thus like to thank Simon Hix and Thomas Weiss for their insights on, respectively, the European Union and the United Nations. If these have been transposed wrongly to NATO in any way, the responsibility is ours not theirs.

Finally, a personal note. The book was finalized during what historians might one day refer to as the age of social distancing and lockdown. This meant a lot of time spent with friends and family as homes became offices, and deadlines merged with domestic schedules. The deferred gratification that attends any writing project was intensified in these circumstances. Our thanks are, therefore, owed to Eddie, Della, Joy, Theo, Sheila and Victoria.

*Mark Webber, James Sperling and Martin A. Smith
November 2020*

Notes

1. Tom Clark, 'The Contagion Effect', *Prospect*, May 2020, p. 1.
2. Joseph S. Nye Jr, 'COVID-19 Might Not Change the World', *Foreign Policy*, 9 October 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/09/covid-19-might-not-change-the-world/>.

Abbreviations

ACO

Allied Command Operations

ACT

Allied Command Transformation

AGS

Alliance Ground Surveillance

AMF

Allied Command Europe Mobile Force

ASEAN

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AWACS

airborne warning and control system

BMD

ballistic missile defence

CARD

Coordinated Annual Review on Defence

CDPSP

The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press

CFE

Conventional Forces in Europe

CFI

Connected Forces Initiative

CPG

Comprehensive Political Guidance

CSBMs

Confidence and Security Building Measures

CSCE

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

CSDP

Common Security and Defence Policy

CT

counter-terrorism

DCI

Defence Capabilities Initiative

EDF

European Defence Fund

EDSTAR

European Defence Standards Reference System

eFP

enhanced Forward Presence

ESDI

European Security and Defence Identity

EU

European Union

EUCOM

[US] European Command

EUGS

EU Global Strategy

FNC

Framework Nations Concept

GPS

Global Positioning System

IISS

International Institute for Strategic Studies

INF

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces

ISAF

International Security Assistance Force

ISR

intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance

ISTAR

intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance

JEF

Joint Expeditionary Force

JISR

joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance

KFOR

Kosovo Force

MAP

Membership Action Plan

MARCOM

Maritime Command

MENA

Middle East and North Africa

METO

Middle East Treaty Organization

MPCC

Military Planning and Conduct Capability

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDPP

NATO Defence Planning Process

NNEC

NATO Network-Enabled Capabilities

NORDEFECO

Nordic Defence Cooperation

NRC

NATO-Russia Council

OAF

Operation Allied Force

ORS

Operation Resolute Support

OSCE

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OUP

Operation Unified Protector

PESCO

Permanent Structured Cooperation

PfP

Partnership for Peace

PJC

[NATO-Russia] Permanent Joint Council

SAC

Strategic Airlift Capability

SACEUR

Supreme Allied Commander Europe

SALIS

Strategic Airlift International Solution

SATCOM

satellite communications

SEATO

South East Asia Treaty Organization

SHAPE

Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

SIPRI

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

STANAGs

standardization agreements

tFP

Tailored Forward Presence

UN

United Nations

UNCLOS

United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea

VJTF

Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

WHO

World Health Organization

Introduction: What *Is* Wrong with NATO?

There would appear to be much wrong with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. To its detractors, NATO (or 'the Alliance') has been written off as 'irrelevant'.¹ During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump called it 'obsolete'.² French President Emanuel Macron has suggested NATO is 'experiencing [...] brain death'.³ Hence, so the argument runs, if NATO did not exist, no one in Europe or North America would any longer want to create it.⁴ In this book, we outline the problems that beset the Alliance, but also put forward ways of addressing them. To declare our position up front: NATO, we argue, is salvageable and worth keeping. This book is structured around identifying what its problems are and then showing how they can be treated. Before doing so, however, it is worth outlining some of the broader issues which condition NATO's state of affairs.

NATO's Predicament

Does NATO still have a credible sense of purpose rooted in the realities of contemporary international politics? During the Cold War, when NATO faced off against the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies, this was a question hardly worth asking. The enemy was obvious, as was the means of countering it – through the combined military efforts of the US and its European allies. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 thus raised the question of what, if anything, NATO had left to do. It was a view common in the early 1990s that NATO was ill suited to a world without a powerful adversary.⁵ And despite an

intervening quartercentury of adaptation and deployment – in the Balkans, Libya, Afghanistan and NATO’s eastern flank facing Russia – that argument persists. NATO plays only a marginal role in countering three of the major threats affecting European security: the war in Syria, jihadist-inspired terrorism and migration flows from the Sahel and the wider Middle East. That NATO is positioned against these threats in such an unimpressive fashion owes much to its own crisis of conviction. Over the last three decades, NATO has compensated for the absence of a common agreed enemy of the Cold War type by acting reactively, dealing with crises as they arise according to the dictates of geography (as in the Balkans), American leadership (as in Afghanistan) or geopolitical ‘muscle memory’ (as in its response to Russia).⁶ Behaving in this way demonstrates a certain strategic and institutional flexibility but belies an underlying divergence of priorities among allies as well as the absence of any overarching sense of commitment to a common cause.⁷

NATO’s sense of drift is also evident in its own internal political dynamics. Strains between the US and its Canadian and European allies have been part and parcel of NATO’s history. During the Cold War, the US took a dim view of Europeans’ reluctance to spend sufficiently on defence. For their part, some European governments (most notably in France and West Germany) suspected that the American commitment to the defence of Europe was lukewarm. Division, however, has worsened since the Cold War’s end. This is a theme we take up in later chapters. In brief, each US president has witnessed a different but escalating set of problems in the transatlantic relationship. For President Bill Clinton it was centred on the Balkans. For his successor, George W. Bush, it was over the Iraq war of 2003. The administration of Barack Obama, meanwhile, complained openly about the unwillingness of certain allies

to spend adequately on defence. Unease in Washington was mirrored by disquiet in Europe – at US unilateralism and the shift of America’s strategic priorities away from Europe. NATO was caught up in these currents. Its internal divisions over Iraq were described as the Alliance’s ‘near-death experience’.⁸ Secretary of Defence Robert Gates warned in 2011 that NATO had ‘a dim, if not dismal future’.⁹

Mutual suspicion reached its zenith with the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Trump went on to criticize NATO in a manner unparalleled among previous American presidents. Paradoxically, the level of material support for European defence actually increased in the Trump years. But words matter, and Trump’s broadsides against NATO as well as individual allies (he openly criticized France and Canada and reserved a particular animus for Germany) generated deep anxieties that the US could one day abandon its NATO commitments.¹⁰ NATO scepticism has not been limited to the US. We have already noted the comments of the French President. In 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu suggested his country would ‘think of exit’ from NATO owing to a perceived lack of solidarity for coupthreatened President Erdoğan.¹¹ The Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, has said her country ‘shouldn’t be [a] member of NATO’.¹²

Beneath these voices of transatlantic dissent lurks a deeper problem: the withering away of political community. NATO throughout the Cold War claimed to be the upholder of liberal democratic values. Such a position was, admittedly, compromised by the Alliance’s undemocratic minority: the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal and the occasional military rulers of Greece and Turkey. But in juxtaposition to Soviet communism, the claim had some mileage. Despite the end of the Cold War, such arguments continued to be made,

providing (as we will see in [Chapter 1](#)) justification for NATO's military interventions as well as the policy of membership enlargement. But NATO's value-based orientation now seems less and less convincing. NATO's newest members, Montenegro and North Macedonia, were admitted despite distinctly patchy records of democratic compliance. NATO's military mission in Afghanistan has long been detached from an initial hope that it would incubate political and social reform in the country. And a number of NATO allies – Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Italy and the US under Trump – have succumbed to strains of national chauvinism in their foreign policies that are profoundly damaging to the Alliance's bonds of solidarity. Brexit, although a withdrawal from the European Union (EU), has been seen, similarly, as undermining trust and goodwill among the UK and its NATO allies. Such political currents are, according to *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen, 'the greatest [ever] challenge to the Atlantic alliance and the civilization it has sustained'.¹³

No, NATO Is Not Finished

In view of these deep-seated problems, one might simply conclude that NATO is beyond repair. Why bother attempting to fix it if by doing so an 'institutional dinosaur' is kept on life support? Far better to give NATO a 'dignified retirement', dividing its functions between Europe and America, with states in the former seeking alternative Europe-wide solutions to their common defence thereby leaving the US and Canada to pursue their security interests unencumbered by European responsibilities.¹⁴ This is a view we reject. NATO certainly has its problems, but to do away with the organization would worsen and not improve the security position of its members. Reforming NATO, rather, is the more realistic and preferred course of

action. Occasionally, political leaders have intimated at withdrawal from the Alliance, but none of NATO's members has advocated its dissolution. Any argument for doing so is unpersuasive. The alternative case presented in this book, for a reformed NATO, is framed by five starting assumptions.

NATO is not in terminal decline

Declinist views have characterized much commentary and scholarship on NATO. But time after time, such views have proven wrong. During the Cold War, the Suez Crisis of 1956, French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military commands in the 1960s and differences in the early 1980s between the Reagan administration and some European governments over how to deal with the Soviets were all seen as evidence of internal corrosion. However, as Wallace Thies has convincingly argued, the Alliance's 'self-healing tendencies' of democratic membership, internal democratic decision-making and institutional complexity ensured the accommodation of its members' interests, and with it ongoing resolve in facing down the Soviet bloc.¹⁵

Declinist positions resurfaced at the Cold War's end only to be confounded by NATO's repurposing in the 1990s. By 1995, one analyst was able to write that 'European security was once again dominated by the NATO alliance and US leadership, perhaps to a greater extent than even in the last years of the Cold War.'¹⁶ The prompt for that verdict was the Alliance's decisive aerial intervention in Bosnia. Operation Deliberate Force, launched in August 1995, served as the catalyst for the Dayton Peace Accords, which finally brought a semblance of political stability to the troubled Balkan region. It also marked NATO's entry into peacekeeping (60,000 NATO personnel would go on to be deployed to Bosnia, the largest military deployment in Europe since World War II). NATO undertook a further air

operation four years later. Operation Allied Force pushed the Serb leader Slobodan Milošević to a peace deal over Kosovo and paved the way for the entry of the KFOR (Kosovo Force) peacekeeping mission to the troubled province. A smaller-scale NATO intervention in neighbouring Macedonia in 2001 also had a decisive effect in restoring political order. NATO's attentions then moved to the far-off theatre of Afghanistan. In 2003, it assumed formal responsibility for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ISAF would prove NATO's most complex and demanding mission of the post-Cold War period, entailing both nation-building and gruelling counter-insurgency warfare. In 2015, a new non-combat mission, Operation Resolute Support, was initiated. These missions (along with a further aerial campaign, Operation Unified Protector, in Libya in 2011, and the return to collective defence in the face of Russia's actions against Ukraine after 2014) have not been without their problems, as was noted above. But even if one accepts the criticism that NATO operations have lacked an overarching sense of strategic purpose, taken together they are nonetheless a measure of allied staying power.¹⁷

An organization whose purpose is to protect the security of its members will necessarily have to confront its enemies and face down threats. Dealing with crisis - whether in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya or on NATO's eastern flank facing Russia - is simply part and parcel of what NATO does. To infer from such a state of affairs that NATO itself is 'in crisis' is a mistaken leap of logic.¹⁸ Time and again, the Alliance has proven its naysayers wrong as it has responded, rather than surrendered, to some of the tough security challenges of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

NATO is unique

If we accept that NATO is here to stay, an argument still needs to be made as to why this is a good thing. The merits of that argument rest, in large part, on NATO's own claims to performance: how effectively the Alliance has executed its various missions and, related to this, how convincing have been the reasons for pursuing them. We shall return to these themes throughout the book. Here it is worth putting them in context. Our second assumption is that NATO can undertake operations and, indeed, engage in its full range of activities (military exercises, ballistic missile defence [BMD], nuclear deterrence, partnerships, joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance [JISR], cyber defence, air and maritime patrols, and so on) owing to the development of some unique characteristics.

Ostensibly, NATO is simply a treaty-based alliance of states, a fairly conventional category in international politics. It is, however, much more besides. Since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, the number of NATO allies has grown (from the original twelve to thirty today) and, in parallel, NATO has developed a sophisticated institutional set-up. NATO, consequently, is as much an international organization as it is a military alliance. We will have more to say on this in [Chapter 1](#). The point here is that these 'institutional assets', although initially developed during the Cold War, have proven flexible enough to ensure significant NATO adaptation in the three decades since.¹⁹ Adaptation has, operationally speaking, not always generated the right results; it has also been painful as NATO has had to learn by doing in the field of operations. Yet adaptation has certainly been dramatic. In the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya, NATO laid down a series of firsts – in terms of its willingness to work with non-NATO partners, its ability to provide massive and sustained concentrations of force on land, sea and air, and the expansion of its geographical area of operations.²⁰

Alongside these formal structures, NATO has also developed all manner of informal practices of social and political interaction. Allies working in an organization premised on transparency and consensus have thus developed feelings of familiarity and trust in their mutual relations.²¹ It was noted above that political community, one outgrowth of this dynamic, has been eroded. But an equally important aspect of community remains. NATO is the exemplary case of a 'pluralistic security community'. Its members hold 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' in their relations with one another such that war between them is rendered unthinkable.²² A willingness to desist from violence among one's peers may be a minimum condition of community, but, given Europe's history, it is an undeniably important one. The anchoring of Germany within NATO has put paid to any fear among its neighbours of German military revanchism. NATO has also played a role in mitigating the antagonism between Greece and Turkey. The embrace of new members among some former Yugoslav republics is premised on doing something similar in the Balkans.

Both its informal and formal characteristics place NATO at some remove from more transient coalitions of the willing. Modern warfare is rarely conducted by states acting alone. Even powerful states such as the US have come to rely on allies to give added legitimacy to their cause or to widen the pool of assets upon which they can call. Here, a temporary coalition has certain advantages: flexibility of purpose, fluidity of decision-making and ease of dissolution when its purpose has been served. Coalitions, not alliances as such, fought wars against Iraq in 1990/1 and 2003, and since September 2014 a global coalition has battled ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Yet coalitions by their very nature lack the embedded structures and assets of a permanent alliance such as NATO. NATO's internal politics may mean sluggish

decision-making, and capability asymmetries among its members often give rise to burden-sharing disputes. But when NATO acts, it enjoys the benefits of interoperability, unity of command and pooled resources – all of which are an aid to ‘effectiveness [...] robustness and adaptability’.²³

There is no substitute for NATO

The particular institutional form the Alliance has taken marks it out from other organizational alternatives. The EU, the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) can all lay claim to promoting security. None, however, is possessed of the institutional and military assets described above. None would have been capable of mounting combat operations in the Balkans, Libya and Afghanistan, or of replicating NATO’s Readiness Action Plan to provide reassurance to the Baltic States and Poland in the face of Russian military might.

Three other points are also worth making by way of comparison. First, the US and the UK have consistently given priority to NATO. That choice determined NATO’s European ascendancy at the end of the Cold War. London and Washington have ever since been lukewarm about the idea of an EU role in military security for fear that it will encroach upon alliance prerogatives. As the UK exits from the EU, such scepticism is only likely to increase. Non-EU Turkey has adopted a similar stance. France and Germany, by contrast, have tended to talk up the security and nascent military functions of the EU, but neither has ever contemplated abandoning NATO in order to support a distinct European alternative.

Related to this, NATO enjoys a privileged position in the ‘organizational ecology’ of international security provision.²⁴ Once the Alliance’s primacy had been asserted

at the end of the Cold War, possible alternatives became complementary to its efforts not substitutes for them. Thus, in Bosnia, NATO worked alongside the UN to enforce a series of Security Council Resolutions. NATO's peacekeeping force in the country eventually gave way to an EU operation (EUFOR Althea), a mission reliant on close cooperation between the EU Military Staff and NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). In Kosovo, similarly, KFOR has worked alongside OSCE and UN missions. And in Afghanistan, both ISAF and Resolute Support have been mandated by the UN. Here, EU and UN agencies have carried out significant roles alongside NATO.

Third, NATO has a distinct transatlantic dimension. Membership of Canada and the US means it can legitimately claim to be the institutional expression of the Western group of states. Commentators have warned of 'Westlessness' - a sense of drift, division and disorientation among the countries of North America and Europe²⁵ - but NATO remains the principal connection binding Europe to what is still the world's pre-eminent military power. A similar security blanket is also enjoyed by America's East Asian allies, Japan and South Korea, but NATO is unique in anchoring that guarantee within a multilateral setting. The Alliance cannot claim a membership as large as either the UN or the OSCE, but it has been able to avoid the gridlock that has characterized both those two bodies. Generally speaking, NATO fosters a pragmatic spirit of cooperation among its members generated by their engagement in multiple operations and decision-making formats. Here, consensus is an asset not an obstacle, requiring prolonged and patient interactions, which over decades has sustained a strong sense of shared purpose. We acknowledge that NATO's sense of political community is under strain, but the *practices* of the Alliance remain robust. ²⁶

NATO is strategically aware

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has been engaged in an ongoing search for a compelling strategic vision. As we will see in [Chapter 5](#), it has not found that task easy. But here two points can be made by way of mitigation. The first relates to the complexity of the security environment that NATO has had to deal with. Comparison with Cold War NATO may be unflattering but it is also unfair. Faced with the singular, overarching threat of Soviet power, strategy came relatively easy. Since the Soviet Union's demise, the security challenges facing the Alliance have been multiple in number, form and direction. NATO, consequently, cannot mobilize toward a single set of objectives (deterrence, defence and dialogue, as in the Cold War) focused on a clearly identified foe. Rather, it has had to shift focus according to the most pressing threat or issue at any given time.

Responsiveness of this type is no bad thing if it is consciously considered. Indeed, a second point of mitigation is that NATO has purposively shifted its operational focus on several occasions. On this basis, it has been able to claim that it is multi-purpose. In the words of the 2010 Strategic Concept, the Alliance seeks to fulfil the three 'essential core tasks' of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. As one seasoned NATO official has acknowledged, pursuing all three tasks simultaneously is extraordinarily testing.²⁷ The Alliance, in this sense, is a victim not of inaction but of ambition.

No organization is perfect

Political organizations are rarely without fault, and few, if any, are perfect – able to act in complete accordance with the organization's environment, to exercise flawless leadership and to mobilize resources efficiently and

effectively to achieve its goals. While virtually all serious analysis would accept this as a starting point, opinion then differs on exactly how far organizations are constrained in action and effect.

An influential strand of realist opinion regards international organizations as mattering 'only on the margins'. Such bodies operate primarily because states (and great powers in particular) harness organizations for their own ends. This may mean a temporary meeting of minds, but the cooperation that results is always fragile, temporary and likely to relapse toward more competitive ways of doing things.²⁸ A somewhat different take (but an equally pessimistic one) argues that organizations develop entrenched ways of doing things and so become inherently inefficient. Rigid thinking and inflexible behaviour are especially evident in an organization's bureaucracy, but such patterns can also influence state members who become socialized into bad habits. The outcome is a dysfunctional organization, unresponsive to its environment, preoccupied with process and wedded to policies that end up being ineffective and self-defeating.²⁹

If we accept such views, then NATO would have to be judged against a very low bar, it being just one more flawed and ineffectual international body. Such a starting point would colour both our diagnosis of the problems besetting the Alliance and prescriptions for how to attend to them. We would, in short, steer to a rather limited range of options aware that NATO's influence in the world was constrained and its future uncertain. Such a view is not without its merits. Indeed, even NATO's defenders hold to some of its assumptions, not least the view that the Alliance is an arena in which the interests of its members are presented and sometimes collide, and that, ultimately, the US runs the show.

The following chapters demonstrate, however, that such a view is overstated and, in certain regards, inaccurate. The premise we follow in this book is aligned more with the institutionalist view that organizations can have significant effects.³⁰ This does not mean that organizations are detached from their members – far from it. NATO, we suggest, has endured precisely because it serves its members' interests. It offers 'value-added' to the allies in the shape of permanent, tried and trusted military and political cooperation. It goes beyond an alliance of convenience, coordinating defence and security in ways the allies could achieve neither alone nor in temporary coalition.

NATO's distinct qualities do not, however, make it immune from the external challenges that have bedevilled other bodies. There is a view that the international system has entered a particularly unsettled time, one for which the current crop of international organizations (which largely originated after World War II) are ill suited. All organizations have to deal with uncertainty, but the chain of events beginning with the financial crash of 2008, and continuing with the Eurozone crisis, Russia's annexation of Crimea, the 2015 migration crisis, Brexit, the election of Trump, the rise of populist politics in Europe and the COVID-19 pandemic, has been seen as ushering in a new dark age of problems.³¹ Such problems are, of course, real but perhaps no more troubling than those of previous decades. Robert Keohane argued in 1975 that 'the world is in a profound political and economic crisis' which has imposed severe 'constraints on effective cooperative action'.³² The end of the Cold War gave rise to similar soul-searching as international organizations were immediately found wanting in the face of multiple crises, not least the wars in the former Yugoslavia.³³ In 2007, Edward Newman wrote that a 'crisis of multilateralism' had typified much