

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Developing a NATO presence in the Balkans



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| Forum: | NATO |
| Issue: | Developing a NATO presence in the Balkans |
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| Position: | Chair |

Introduction:

In 2018, global military expenditure rose to 1.7 trillion US dollars, its highest level since the end of the Cold War. At a NATO summit in July, United States President Donald Trump insisted that the alliance should double its military spending target, from two per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to four per cent. The European Union will spend more than five billion euros annually on funding defense research and arms acquisition through its new European Defence Fund.

These developments raise concerns about a military buildup in the Balkan region, either through hybrid warfare or new deployments and bases.

A quarter-century after countries in the Balkans reduced their military capabilities, many are beginning to reverse course. The trend is fueled by a media frenzy and political parties spewing ethnic hate-speech and pushing nationalist agendas.

Unresolved disputes in the Balkans will offer justification for governments to strengthen their armies and keep democratic institutions weak. Global military powerhouses are already getting involved: Serbia and Republika Srpska (an autonomous, majority-Serb region in Bosnia and Herzegovina) will receive Russian weapons and even bases. NATO also plans to build additional bases throughout region.

Definition of Key terms:

Balkans

Also called the Balkan Peninsula, easternmost of Europe's three great southern peninsulas. There is not universal agreement on the region's components. The Balkans are usually characterized as comprising Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania,



Serbia, and Slovenia—with all or part of each of those countries located within the peninsula. Portions of Greece and Turkey are also located within the geographic region generally defined as the Balkan Peninsula, and many descriptions of the Balkans include those countries too. Some define the region in cultural and historical terms and others geographically, though there are even different interpretations among historians and geographers. Moreover, for some observers, the term “Balkans” is freighted with negative connotations associated with the region’s history of ethnic divisiveness and political upheaval.

General overview:

NATO’s door remains open to any European country in a position to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership, and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Since 1949, NATO’s membership has increased from 12 to 29 countries through seven rounds of enlargement. Currently, four partner countries have declared their aspirations to NATO membership: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of North Macedonia and Ukraine.

NATO launched an air campaign, Operation Allied Force, in March 1999 to halt the humanitarian catastrophe that was then unfolding in Kosovo. The decision to intervene followed more than a year of fighting within the province and the failure of international efforts to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means.

By the end of 1998 more than 300,000 Kosovars had already fled their homes, the various cease-fire agreements were systematically being flouted and negotiations were stalled.

Two rounds of internationally brokered talks in Rambouillet, France, in February and in Paris in March 1999 failed to break the deadlock and exhausted diplomatic avenues. At the time, autonomy for Kosovo within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, guaranteed by the presence of a NATO-led force, could have been assured. Accepted by the Albanian delegation, the proposal was rejected by Belgrade.

NATO announced the suspension of the air campaign on 10 June, once it had concluded a Military Technical Agreement with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The same day, UNSCR 1244 welcomed



the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's acceptance of the principles for a political solution, including an immediate end to violence and a rapid withdrawal of its military, police and paramilitary forces and the deployment of an effective international civil and security presence, with substantial NATO participation.

Ever since the end of the end of violence in the region, which has been regarded as the worst on European soil since WW2, the region has been on a path of demilitarisation. Today this status quo is beginning to change, with alliances being formed and cemented, NATO must ensure that it has the upper hand in the region to promote peace and prosperity. Serbia, and their Russian support are the organisation's main opponents.

Countries with significance in the region:

Kosovo

A recently formed state, with 102 member states of the UN recognising Kosovo as a country. Kosovo claimed independence in 2008 from Serbia. There is still tension between the two states, and a cause for instability in the wider Balkan region. Kosovo Force (KFOR), has been operating from their bases in the country since 1999.

North Macedonia

With low military expenditure, the country is one of the least militarised in the region. North Macedonia spent a mere 1% of their annual GDP on defence and military in 2018, resulting in a planned reduction of the country's active military personnel (8200 to 6800) However most Macedonians support NATO membership in a series of polls conducted in recent years. The nation has recently been renamed 'North Macedonia' in place of 'Macedonia' as this eased tensions with the country's neighbour Greece, whom has a province called Macedonia.

Serbia

Spent 731 million US dollars on their military in 2018, however receives support from the Russian military. It is therefore the Western Balkans' strongest military power, with Albania a distant 2nd. Serbian minorities in neighbouring nations tend to block those countries from joining NATO, as



Serbia has been a longstanding ally of Russia and opposed NATO. Serbia's army relies on Russian support as they are one of Russia's western most allies, and most vocal in the region. A remarkable 3% of their population support the country joining NATO, it is unknown as to whether these figures are accurate, however. Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dacic, said that Serbia will never recognise Kosovo as an independent state, this has naturally been an issue in the region, in particular with the nation in question, Kosovo, who claimed independence in 2008.

Albania

Spent 162 million US dollars on its military in 2017, meaning its army is not a powerful force in the region. 90% of its population support the country's membership in NATO, which has stabilised tensions between neighbour Greece. KFOR (Kosovo Force) will soon build an air base in Kucova, Albania. This renewed military presence could create serious tension in the region, as NATO is viewed as an outsider force, and is not respected by Serbia or their allies.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

On the edge of becoming a failed state, with little military expenditure. Saw some of the most violent wars since the end of WW2 in Europe. A majority of civilians in the nation want to become a NATO member state. However the eastern block of the nation, which holds positive relations with Serbia, will veto such moves at a federal level. This region of B & H is called Republika Srpska, and acts as a pro-Serbian subsidiary state, operating as its own political entity in most cases.



^ Coloured with the flag of Serbia represents the Republika Srpska



United States of America

Vice President Pence attended the Adriatic Charter summit in Podgorica, publicly warning against Russia's destabilizing activities in the region, and those of their allies. Also making clear

that assimilation into NATO will be expanded to all Balkan countries, in order to create a lasting peace.

The USA, as NATO's primary supporter, is active in most crisis.

What solutions have already been put in place?

The most sophisticated NATO solutions in dealing with the situation have been through increased economic, social and political cooperation with nations in the Area. The most central ones are their peace support solutions in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well as similar operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. NATO also has extensive relations with Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo where they have also been an active facilitator of Peace and stability. Existing actions NATO is taking can be observed below in greater detail:

1. NATO's active involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been by far the most developed and expansive. It consisted of NATO sending the Implementation force or IFOR in 1995 to administer the military components of the Dayton Peace Agreement which ended the Bosnian War. A year later NATO also mobilized the SFOR or the stabilization force which, in cooperation with the IFOR, had the aim of creating a safe and stable environment in Bosnia for it to be able to restructure politically and economically. This duty included the combating the rise of militia groups and the separation of bosnian and Republika Srpska military forces to prevent hostilities. The SFOR had a more active role as they were consistently on patrols and were in charge of arresting war criminals. A key component to this was the SFORs duty to assist refugees and displaced individuals in their return and resettlement into Bosnia and Herzegovina. This policy also had future self sufficiency in mind because it aimed to assist them in setting up their military defense system.



2. It is important that each approach is adapted to the needs and environment of the particular nation or area being assisted. The Yugoslav republic of Macedonia was an ethnically diverse nation and when Albanian nationalists went into conflict with the national military, NATO intervened in order to neutralize the situation. NATO began its plan by moderating peace talks in 2001 between Albanian separatists and the Macedonian government. These efforts yielded the Ohrid Framework Agreement which resulted in Albanian groups abandoning their aggressive separatist policies. This did not completely stop Albanian aggression and so Operation Essential Harvest in 2001 was put in place to disarm aggressive groups, this was key as removing guns from local circulation is key to creating long lasting peace. The next protocol was to assist Macedonia in setting up a self sufficient military defence and operations infrastructure. This was done by establishing a security HQ in Skopje where NATO has stationed advisors and experts to aid development

3. Objectively the most aggressive NATO peace campaign. NATO has lead a support and restructuring mission in Kosovo since 1999 where the Kosovo Force or KFOR was deployed on a 78 day air-strike based peace support campaign. This was a particularly significant campaign as it was mandated by the United Nations Security Council in resolution 1244. The UN stressed the importance of having a humanitarian focus for NATO's involvement which can be seen through the various community rebuilding and restructuring programmes that create safe environments and ensure that international humanitarian law is being upheld. The large portion of aggression came from the demilitarization of the Kosovo liberation army who were hostile and destructive. This was a logistical challenge as NATO wanted to achieve its goals with as few casualties as possible. This is a standard that NATO communique should always aim to meet.

Possible Solutions

1. One option for approach to the problem is creating a NATO oversight board or committee for the entire balkans region. All operations would thus operate under this board. This helps



centralize the operations more effectively. The idea for this approach is the fact that a solution with longevity must take into account the effects of one action in Bosnia for example, on the region as a whole. Stability must be ensured across the board due to the cultural and economic integration between the nations in the region. This oversight board will mainly be in charge of observing how NATO programmes in one nation are affecting the stability of neighbouring nations. This will not be successful without the inclusion of experts and allies from within the region and areas of conflict. Naturally, NATO members will have the ability to interpret the advice from this board and vote for action accordingly. An important consideration for this board is including sufficient analysis on the nature and requirements of all the stakeholders and ethnic groups within a nation. This is because most conflicts in the region spawn from ethnic or religious divides and disparities with long running histories.

2. The second necessary approach is for NATO to act as a neutral mediating party in conflicts between nations in the balkans. Right now, there is not enough NATO focus on military and physical intervention and not enough on lasting political and diplomatic talks. One main point of conflict that desperately requires constructive mediation is the Serbia Kosovo situation where Serbia has suggested it may block any attempts made by Kosovo to join international organizations and alliances. In cases such as there, NATO must host regular talks mediated by NATO officials which seek to identify the demands of each party and come up with solutions that satisfy both parties and the region as a whole. This solution is not without its drawbacks as it is very difficult to create lasting political stability while remaining impartial and without manipulating the local political climate. The mediation sessions should have the goals listed below:

- Understand the perspectives and actions of all sides
- Identify the demands of all sides
- Invite a team of experts to analyze solutions presented by NATO and the concerned parties in conflict
- Guarantee ceasefires and grace periods during times of diplomatic talks

3. If concrete solutions are not directly possible in certain conflicts, which they often won't be. The most logical approach would be to make steps towards de-escalating political and military



tensions both locally and in border regions as they tend to be most volatile. NATO has generally been quite successful in doing this through sending in forces and operatives to maintain peace and regulate volatile activity. The committee may want to think about creating a NATO framework that determines who is a threat to peace in the area. This has been a topic of great discussion and a severe criticism of the Alliance which is reason to create a definitive protocol for determining who is responsible for instability in regions in active conflict. This protocol should also include what measures to take in order to disarm the radical groups with some ideas being weapon buyback schemes, disarmament in exchange for seats in parliament or extended ceasefire agreements. Doing so while maintaining relative neutrality will be a task that may require frequent deliberation in order to ensure that all sides are being served equally. It is also important that NATO addresses undiplomatic behaviour and groups that do not uphold ceasefires and agreements whether it be by excluding them from talks or other approaches.

4. The power of democracy should not be ignored by the NATO committee. The Balkan region is one with a plethora of ethnicities and religions. This sometimes creates an inherent ideological divide between peoples which can often spawn violent separatist actions. A key solution for this is hosting referendums that give people options to decide upon their independence. It is important that frameworks are in place to prevent the

manipulation of these referendums whether it be social media fake news or other forms of negative propaganda. The UN and NATO should take a leading role in setting up these ballots while not violating on the sovereignty of the nations involved.

Timeline of Events in the Region:

| Year | Event |
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| 1912-13 | Two wars in the Balkans are fought where Bulgaria Serbia Greece and Montenegro defeat the Ottoman Empire |



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| 1914 | <p>Serbia makes moves leading to control over Kosovo and Macedonia.</p> <p>Duke Franz Ferdinand is killed by Slavic Nationalist Gavrilo Princip which in turn is a leading cause for the first world war</p> |
| 1919 | <p>The Treaty of Versailles forms Kingdom of Yugoslavia and results in various territorial changes and confirmations in the Balkan region</p> |
| 1941 | <p>Adolf Hitler launches offensive on Yugoslavia which results in the formation of the Republic of Croatia</p> <p>Large amounts of Serbians are sent to concentration camps.</p> |
| 1945 | <p>The end of the second world war.</p> |
| 1946 | <p>Josip Broz Tito and his fellow communists take control over the Yugoslavia region with great military strength</p> |
| 1949 | <p>The NATO body is created due to increased airlifts on the west berlin region. It was created due to fears of further blockades to the region. NATO remained actively involved in efforts to stabilize vulnerable regions after WW2</p> |
| 1980 | <p>Death of Josip Broz Tito which creates a power vacuum and increased political and social hostility</p> |
| 1991 | <p>The Yugoslav war breaks out. It was essentially the Yugoslav People's Army against separatists from all countries aside from Serbia which heavily backed the YPA</p> |
| 1992 | <p>The end of the Yugoslav war. This was the dismantlement of Yugoslavia as a collective nation. This split resulted in the creation of various new states.</p> |
| 1994 | <p>NATO acts in the Balkan conflict for the first time mainly in the form of sustained air strikes.</p> |
| 1995 | <p>Signing of the Dayton Agreement Officially ends Yugoslav War, this agreement divides the nation of Bosnia into two separate legally recognised bodies</p> |



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| 1996 | <p>International Tribunal on crimes in the Balkan region is set up</p> <p>KLA or the Kosovo Liberation Army begins fight for independence and peace in Kosovo. They want to get rid of neighboring influence in the country</p> |
| 1999 | <p>NATO intervenes with air strikes in the region along with active participation in peacekeeping on the ground. Multiple operative groups are separately launched in each country in conflict with varying degrees of military investment.</p> |
| 2005-Now | <p>Kosovo starts the process for the declaration of its independence. Serbia is in heavy opposition to this and combats this through continuing political and military resistance</p> <p>General elections in Macedonia results in a pro Russian leader gaining the majority of the parliament. Investigations into Russian involvement are started.</p> <p>NATO ends partnership with the Russian Federation in the region due to aggressive military action taken during an intervention into Georgia.</p> <p>Nations such as Moldova and Romania have seen a surge in the popularity of pro russian political parties and coalitions. NATO has been concerned with the authenticity of this development and suspects Russia of political manipulation and propaganda.</p> |



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