North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Addressing the long-term future prospects of NATO

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Forum	North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
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Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in 1949 as a result of the North Atlantic Treaty. NATO was created with 3 key goals, deterring Soviet aggression, preventing nationalist militarism in Europe, and political integration (Nato). NATO now has 30 member states as well as a few states in an application process. One of the most important members of NATO is the United States of America. Under former President Donald Trump, the USA had threatened to pull out of NATO if the other members didn't increase their military spending (Zandee). This left NATO in a precarious position for the duration of the Trump presidency. Since then, Joe Biden has walked back the threats by Trump during the 2021 Munich Security Conference, although the threat of the USA leaving NATO will have lasting effects (Sabbagh).

Another long-term threat to NATO is the rise of China. China has been gaining global influence, especially in the Pacific region, this "rise" has made China a rival for the United States of America. Subsequently, the USA has devoted a notable amount of its attention and resources to the pacific (Chhabra). The USA and NATO fear that China's growing influence will cause them to lose relevance on the world stage. This competition also makes it harder for NATO to grow and admit more members. Following that reasoning, China's growth is a key issue for NATO's long-term prospects.

Aside from China's growing influence, NATO recently accused the Chinese Ministry of State Security of sponsoring a cyberattack on Microsoft Exchange servers (Wilkie). NATO will have to determine how they are going to move forward after these accusations and how they will counter further hostility.

Another notable issue is how NATO is branching away from its original purpose of being a military alliance. One example of this is the aftermath of the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake, where NATO provided aid for approximately 6 months. These aid missions show how NATO's

infrastructure can be used for aid and how the organization can be more than a military. Branching away from NATO's traditional operations may be a way to maintain or even gain relevance on the world stage.

Definition of Key Terms

Membership Action Plan

The Membership Action Plan (MAP) is a program of advice and assistance that NATO creates for aspiring members. The MAP is made in negotiations with NATO and the aspiring country. The plans cover the defense, economic, and political aspects of the aspiring nation and allow the nation to align itself with NATO's requirements. An example of a country undergoing the MAP is Bosnia and Herzegovina, which began in 2011 and is currently ongoing. A notable aspect of the MAP is that it does not guarantee membership.

Partners for Peace program

The Partners for Peace program (PfP) is a program designed to garner trust between NATO and primarily former members of the Soviet Union. The program lasts 2 years and can be renewed at the end of that period. The PfP is usually one of the first steps for a country interested in joining NATO. The PfP has several variations, such as the Global Partners program. The Global Partners program is similar to the PfP although the Global Partner program is less focused on development and more focused on diplomatic ties. Another example of PfP variations is Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Both of which are centered around building diplomatic ties within a specific region.

General Overview

History

NATO was established in 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. NATO served as a key international body during the Cold War, with the addition of new members on a frequent basis. In modern times NATO is known for its involvement in the War on Terror and

other interventions. NATO has 30 member states, the most recent addition to NATO was North Macedonia in March of 2020.

Since NATO's establishment it has participated in a number of armed conflicts around the world. The organization's first intervention was in 1992 during the Bosnian War. NATO carried out 9 operations some of which were in conjunction with UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force). The organization's second intervention was in Kosovo. This intervention started in 1999 and continues to this day in the form of a peacekeeping force. Since 2001 NATO has continued interventions although most of them are related to the War on Terror and other counter-terrorism efforts. One of NATO's most well known interventions is in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan intervention began in December of 2001, with UN Security Council resolution 1863 which approved the creation of the NATO-led coalition, ISAF (International Security Assistance Force). The intervention has lasted until present day, however, combat operations officially stopped in 2014. All forgien forces are set to leave Afghanistan by the end of August 2021. After almost 20 years many people question the legitimacy of NATO's Afghanistan interventions. After thousands of civilian casualties caused by ISAF, the Afghanistan intervention and the greater War on Terror have lost support from the local population and the populations of NATO members.

Many people have criticized NATO for these interventions. While almost all of them are approved by the UN Security Council beforehand, people still do not believe that it is unfair for NATO to intervene in other countries affairs unless specifically asked to do so. For example the Afghanistan intervention in 2001 was unpopular with the local population. This led to a number of cases where people would join the Taliban or other opposition groups with the intention of fighting ISAF. In addition to this, many people question whether or not the War on Terror was successful, citing the resurgence of Taliban activity in August 2021, while ISAF is preparing to pull forces out of the country. One of the key issues for NATO's long term success will be addressing the effectiveness of these interventions and adapting their strategies to make them more popular.

Membership

A key issue in NATO is what nations admit to the organization. NATO's admissions process is fairly straightforward, the organization simply invites other states. Currently, there are 3 countries that have declared interest in joining NATO. Those countries are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, and Georgia.

Shifting Global Powers

Another issue for NATO is how the organization will adapt to the shifting global powers. A notable example of this is China. Chinese projects like the "Belt and Road" initiative have allowed China to garner influence in the parts of the Middle East and Africa. In addition to China's growing influence, NATO recently made allegations that China had sponsored a number of recent cyberattacks. China's growth in terms of influence could pose a threat to NATO if the organization does not adapt to these new circumstances.

Aside from China, NATO has become a political entity, NATO has become quite influential in terms of international politics compared to what it started as. This shift in influence allows NATO to act as a more traditional IGO (Intergovernmental Organization). NATO's growing political influence has been known for a long time, however the organization remains focused on military operations.

Another aspect of shifting global powers is the internal effects it has had on NATO. One example of this was the USA threatening to leave the organization during the Trump presidency. These threats had a large influence on the organization, with its most notable member threatening to back out. Since Donald Trump has left office, Joe Biden has walked back the threats. After these threats, NATO must find a way to ensure stability within the organization.

An additional example of issues within NATO is the tension between Greece and Turkey. Both countries have been members of NATO for many years although tensions between the two have risen in recent years mainly due to the Cyprus Dispute. The island Cyprus has been divided into two halves by different factions. The Southern Half known as the Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognized and is predominantly made up of ethnic Greeks. The Northern section of the island is controlled by a de facto administration which has declared itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is mostly populated by people with Turkish ethinic origin. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' borders are controlled by the Turkish Armed Forces. Given the ethinic conflict on the island, tensions between Greece and Turkey have risen. Allowing the conflict to continue could jeopardize NATO's internal stability. Attempting to find a compromise for Turkey and Greece could be an important step to maintaining NATO's internal stability.

Major Parties Involved

NATO

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is an intergovernmental organization primarily dedicated to sharing military resources.

The People's Republic of China

China is widely regarded as NATO's largest threat. China has been accused by NATO and several other organizations of cyberattacks. Naturally, relations between NATO and China are quite tense as a result of these accusations and the cyberattacks. July 2021 is the first time that NATO has given a conclusive statement about any cyberattacks on its members.

In addition to this, China has been garnering influence in the Middle East and Africa through international Aid. This expansion has drawn American attention and resources to countering this expansion. It is important to note that there is nothing unjust or wrong regarding China's growing political influence, nor the American response. Competition between the two often benefits the other involved nations although it draws important American resources away from NATO which could create even more strain on members given the recent threats of the USA backing out of NATO. It is important to consider that getting the USA to stop diverting resources from NATO to preventing Chinese expansion would allow the expansion to continue unchecked. It would be possible for NATO to divert its own resources to counter Chinese expansion.

The European Union

The EU (European Union) is a very important ally of NATO. Since 21 countries are in both NATO and the EU, the two organizations share ideologies and values. Many experts believe that the European Union will be a key ally for NATO in the coming years. Currently, NATO has been coordinating actions in the Balkans and Ukraine with the European Union using systems set up in the "Berlin Plus" agreement (NATO Futures).

Ukraine

Ukraine is one of three nations that have expressed interest in joining NATO. Ukraine had declared its interest in 2008. Since then Ukraine has seen conflict in its eastern region and Crimea. Between 2008 and 2010 the idea of joining NATO has become less popular with the Ukrainian population. Some people believe that the declining opinion of NATO in Ukraine is because of Russian misinformation campaigns (Kuleba). Plans for Ukraine joining NATO were put on hold in 2010 after Viktor Yanukovych took office. Since 2010, NATO support has risen

as a result of the conflict. NATO reaffirmed that Ukraine would be allowed to join NATO if it met the goals set in 2008. Given that Ukraine is currently participating in the Russo-Ukrainian War, admitting the country to NATO would lead to NATO members becoming more involved in the conflict. Russia has already opposed NATO's actions near the Black Sea. Admitting Ukraine to NATO would lead to an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war and possibly a "World War Three" scenario which all involved parties would like to avoid.

Georgia

Georgia declared interest in joining NATO in 2003 after joining the PfP program in 1994, although the declaration of interest was only recognized in 2011, however, the country has not been offered a MAP due to Russian threats. Georgia's population had shown high interest in joining NATO in national polls. However, plans were halted in 2008 during the Russia-Georgia War. Since the war NATO members have failed to come to a consensus on Georgia's possible membership, stalling any admission plans. The main reason that NATO has not admitted Georgia is that it would anger Russia. Certain NATO members, namely France and Germany, fear that admitting Georgia to the organization would lead to some form of Russian retaliation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina declared interest in joining NATO in 2008. Bosnia and Herzegovina had established a membership plan in 2009 but have not fulfilled the requirements set out in the MAP. Relations between NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina have been somewhat strained since 1995, however, NATO investment and support in the country has led to large amounts of support from the population.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
April 4th, 1949	NATO founded
February 9th, 1994	NATO begins Bombings in the Bosnian War
December 7th, 2001	NATO begins the invasion of Afghanistan
August 1st, 2008	Russo-Georgian War begins
September 7th, 2008	Ukraine and Bosnia recognized as aspiring NATO members
February 7th, 2010	Ukrainian membership plans are shelved
December 7th, 2011	Georgia is recognized as an aspiring NATO member
February 20th, 2014	Russo-Ukrainian War begins

July 12th, 2018   Donald Trump threatens to pull the USA out of NATO

March 19th, 2020   North Macedonia joins NATO

January 1st, 2021   China launches cyberattacks on NATO related systems

January 20th, 2021   Joe Biden's inauguration

July 19th, 2021   NATO formally accuses China of sponsoring cyberattacks

Possible Solutions

It is clear that NATO will need to adapt in order to maintain relevance in the long-term future. There are plenty of ideas on how it will do this. One of the more extreme ideas is to expand NATO and allow countries outside of Europe and North America to join. This radical proposal would increase NATO's physical presence across the globe, however, it could negate the original purpose of the organization which was specifically focused on Europe.

Another solution would be for members to increase their contributions. While this is highly controversial among NATO member states, it would bolster the organization's military presence. This solution would allow NATO to become less dependent on the USA, whose resources are being redirected to counter the rise in Chinese influence. Many strategists believe that one of NATO's flaws is the dependence on the USA, as demonstrated when Donald Trump threatened to leave the organization in 2018.

The third solution to this issue would be to make it easier for aspiring nations to join the organization. While MAPs (Membership Action Plans) are tailored to each aspiring Nation, they usually take at least a decade to complete. Changing the MAP could be used to make it easier to join the organization, however, it could lead to logistical issues later on. In addition to this, NATO would need to make membership more appealing to possible members, this would include similar actions as seen in the aftermath of the Bosnian War where NATO supported the recovering nation. More recently NATO's involvement in Afghanistan has had the opposite effect. These examples show that NATO needs to make membership and involvement more appealing. This would require NATO to move away from its origins as a military organization and become a more traditional intergovernmental organization like the UN or G20.

Finally, NATO could continue and expand the PfP programs. There are several variants of the PfP, such as the Global Partners Program, that expand NATO's relations beyond the North Atlantic. There are multiple regions that NATO does not have partners in. An example would be South America and southern Africa. Expanding the PfP, or a similar program, into

these regions would allow NATO to bolster its reach. This could be a way to counter the increasing Chinese influence the world has seen recently.

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