



## “NATO’s Legacy to the Youth”



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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a regional institution that has evolved to become a permanent intergovernmental international organization with global missions. Its most important legacy is its ability to metamorphose itself and to respond to the social, political, but most importantly, to the military’s needs of its member states. Established in 1949 in Washington, D.C., NATO originally was an agreement amongst North American countries (Canada and The United States) and Western European nations (Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom) to provide a security block against communism. In 1949, the enemy and the conflict zones were clearly defined. After the fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the accession of more members, NATO was ready to guide a selected number of East European nations into their accession to the organization.

Today, with the changing nature of threats, faced with new opportunities, NATO is adapting again to its environment. For the youth to better appreciate NATO’s history and legacy, they have to relive decisive moments that have helped develop the current state of the organization. This activity has the virtue of bringing forward the necessary and crucial metamorphosis through which NATO traversed, which allowed it to define and actualize its international mission of promoting and spreading, as the current NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated earlier this month, “NATO’s Open Door and the enlargement of the European Union have helped spread freedom, democracy and human rights. And we must continue to work hard every day to uphold these values.”<sup>1</sup>

One has to look at NATO’s history through the lenses of capability building activities that have contributed to the alliance’s everlasting success. As we are celebrating the alliance’s 70th anniversary, we need to remember the men and women who fought for our peace, security and freedom. We ought to ask ourselves what is needed from us in order to guarantee that NATO as a legacy to human civilization remains prepared to fully integrate the new era, one characterized by the ascent of the digital revolution.

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<sup>1</sup> NATO, March 18, 2019, *Secretary General praises NATO’s Open Door policy at enlargement anniversary event*. Retrieved from [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_164661.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164661.htm)

NATO functions democratically. It reaches agreements in concertation, while some topics require a unanimous approval (NATO, Article X, 1949). This is not always an easy task as there are similarities and disparities amongst member states. The alliance includes members of different size, wealth, defense expenditure, and overall capabilities.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, NATO's nature is similar to that of a heterogeneous club. Accession to membership is voluntary. Exclusion mechanisms exist. There is a common good (i.e. security). It is an all-for-one alliance where an attack on one is considered to be an attack to all (NATO, Article V, 1949). The challenge with such a heterogeneous organization is that the need to reinforce members' responsibilities and manage divergence of opinions on policies is continuously present. There are certain similarities in their inherent capabilities, but additional similitudes appear amongst countries that are clustered in groups; some nations' systems resemble others. Homogeneous groups perceptible amongst the alliance are: North American, Western European and Balkan countries. To navigate within the different regional cultural particularities, NATO has established various councils and commissions that ensures that dialogue and common understanding are always viable avenues for international actors operating on the world stage. The set-up of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the NATO-Russia Council and the NATO-Ukraine Commission act attest this fact.

NATO has had the merit of creating systemic anchors that guide state to state actors, state to non-state actors and non-state actors to non-state actors' interactions. There is an interesting study done by two authors Glen Grant and Vladimir Milenski who have together more than a half century worth of experience on defense in Central and Eastern Europe. They recently published an article that aimed to be a guide for Ministers, diplomats, advisers and security professionals.<sup>3</sup> In their findings, they have established that there are four types of defense models: rational, emotional, politics dominant and military dominant. The authors understand that a defense system would probably incorporate parts of each model with a preponderance of one of them. A comparison between an emotional and rational model is interesting. In the former model, practitioners hope to interact with a gullible public, while their military capabilities are weak. In the latter model, there is a serious application for "external political gain and [an attitude] of fighters and winners."<sup>4</sup> This study helps to illustrate the fact that national pride is based on a particular foundation, and that in the case of NATO it has to be based on hard work; incessant improvement is willed at all time. Regardless of the size of their economy, members have pledged to fulfill a certain number of responsibilities. For instance, they invest 2% of their respective GDP into NATO. It is their responsibility to make their military interoperable with other NATO militaries, and this starts at the moment they express their will to join the alliance. As a result, international humanitarian and defense missions are successfully achieved, and capacity building

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<sup>2</sup> Ivanov, I. D. (2013). *Adding Allies in Transforming NATO: New allies, missions, and capabilities*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

<sup>3</sup> Grant, G., & Milenski, V. (2019). Defence models uncovered: How to understand the defence style of a country. *Defense & Security Analysis*, 35(1), 82-94.

<sup>4</sup> Op cit, 84.

activities are shared amongst all members. The alliance has deployed Operation Allied Force (OAF) against Serbia in 1999; it has successfully guaranteed the assurance of European peace and stability.<sup>5</sup> Because of organizations such as NATO, peacekeeping activities and the acceptance of rules-based international order, democratic principles, individual freedoms and human rights are protected.

NATO has developed a good working structure that can easily be integrated with various military forces and alliances. Constituted of superpowers, great and regional powers, the alliance has developed a way of sustaining their readiness capabilities and achieving success in their missions. The force prides itself in its ability to be interoperable. Integrated, agile and compartmented, NATO can offer its support to certain regional alliances based on particular skills and military capabilities. The alliance's goal is met because of the integrated fighting force, joint structure planning and the burden-sharing of building military forces.<sup>6</sup> Member states' military capabilities and other alliances add to NATO's readiness capabilities. This is the case with NORAD and European Union. Following the September 11 attack, which was the only time in history article five of the alliance's constitution was ever evoked; NATO provided five Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).<sup>7</sup> AWACS can track up to 300 aircrafts and send set racks to the acting command.<sup>8</sup> These aircrafts were deployed anywhere in the continental United States in just a few hours. In the same way, the British special forces were deployed in and around Afghanistan to share the warfare burden. This is not always actualized as we saw with the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary's inability to "offer a significant military contribution to NATO's 1999 air war against Yugoslavia."<sup>9</sup> Having said this, the changing nature of the conflict allows us to better appreciate each member's particularities and skills. The fight against terrorism, for instance, led the alliance to appreciate its members' individual skills such as areas of specialization, spoken languages and cultural intelligence.

NATO's legacy is also its propensity to adapt its established parameters to allow the treaty to cover new technologies and the myriad of new threats that impact its members' readiness capabilities. Cyber defense is a new strategy fit for a new domain of operations. Looking at the present and potential future challenges, we see that dimensions of operations have moved from four (land, sea, air, space) to five; they now include the cyberspace. Around the year 1995, information was recognized as the fifth dimension of operation.<sup>10</sup> With the

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<sup>5</sup> Webber, M. (2017). NATO: Within and Between European International Society. *Europe after Enlargement*: 48.

<sup>6</sup> Valasek, T. (2001). The Fight against Terrorism: Where's NATO?. *World Policy Journal*, 18(4): 22.

<sup>7</sup> Op cit, 19.

<sup>8</sup> United States Government Accountability Office. (1991). *GAO Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on defense, committee on appropriation, House of representation*. Retrieved from <https://www.gao.gov/assets/160/150487.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Valasek 2001, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Dailey, J.D. (2014). *Fifth Dimensional Operations: Space-Time-Cyber Dimensionality in Conflict and War-A Terrorism Research Center Book*. Edited by R. J. Bunker and Heal, C. "A Terrorism Research Center Book. Bloomington: iUniverse, 2014.

advent of the information age, many thought of it as a domain of operations. Now that the digital revolution is here, and that we understand that it's a force to be reckoned with, it seems fit to view information as a commodity that exists in all dimensions whether than an actual dimension of operations. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, it was established that international law applies to cyberspace, because cyber attacks can affect states' critical infrastructure. A cyber attack carries destructive potentials similar to the ones initiated on land, sea, air or space. Embarked on a mission to ameliorate its readiness strategy with respect to the cyberspace, NATO wills to deter cybercriminals, nation states and state-sponsored hackers by making it clear that a just war can be carried out against cyber attackers. Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations legitimates self-defense actions following attacks; a state has the right to self-defense when its integrity is compromised. A war is considered just when a country's critical infrastructure is attacked through malicious cyber activities. NATO has ensured that an international reception of this particular understanding of cyber attacks is actualized.

The alliance's cyber defense approach is to deter cybercriminals, nation states and state-sponsored hackers from launching attacks regardless of their level (cyber vandalism, cybercrime, cyber espionage, etc.). Historically, the cyberspace was not perceived as a defense domain. Following the NATO Summit in Wales (NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, 2014), it was established that international law, international humanitarian law and the UN Charter all apply in the cyberspace. Knowing that damages on a state's critical infrastructure can also be latent as it is the case with stuxnet-like viruses, malware that can spend years undetected in computer systems, NATO has initiated various activities and transformed its structure in order to allow its members to become ready for any eventuality. At the 2018 Brussels Summit, NATO members agreed to set-up a Cyberspace Operations Centre. This is set to be fully functional in 2023. It is also understood that national cyber capabilities, as we have seen in the case of the war in Afghanistan, will be used for NATO operational needs.

NATO's cyber infrastructure is robust. The NATO Cyber Rapid Reaction teams is operational 24 hours a day. As part of the NATO Communications agency and Information, NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC), based within the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), has its own networks as well as staff that work round-the-clock to support the alliance. There are 100,000 people based in 60 different locations from SHAPE that rely on NCIRC. With a team constituted of 200 experts equipped with the latest information on technology and cyber challenges, the alliance has assured and established a security block whose presence alone is enough to inspire deterrence. NCIRC "prevents intrusions, detects, analyses and shares information on malware, prevents data loss, and conducts computer forensics, vulnerability assessments and post-incident assessments".<sup>11</sup> The best asset of NATO's approach to cyber defense is its awareness and acceptance of the existence of the problem as well as its willingness to

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<sup>11</sup> NATO. (2019, February). *NATO Cyber Defence*. Retrieved from [www.nato.int/factsheets](http://www.nato.int/factsheets)

promote continuous education of its people, because it understands that its employees are and must remain leaders in the new domain of operations; having assured that land, sea, air and space technologies are mastered, it is imperative to assure long lasting competitive advantage within the fifth domain.

When all is said and done, we can all agree that NATO's legacy is mostly its ability to efficiently compose with its environment and manage great powers. NATO's awareness of its own heritage contributes to its success as an agent of good on the world stage. Since 1949, the alliance has been involved in the process of metamorphosis that brought together cultures and intelligence of all kinds. The most important legacy is thus its capacity to be interoperable; its material constitution is that of a transnational armed forces that cooperate on different levels of command and has the ability to add with agility qualitative changes to its system. With shared values, norms, interests, political-military culture, NATO is an international alliance that has been able to prevent conflict over the years with its deterrence capabilities and has proven its capacity to adapt to new emerging threats. The fast-paced evolving environment of cyberspace will bring new challenges to NATO and its allies in the years to come, as the alliance adapts and leverages new technologies like artificial intelligence to embrace the data revolution.

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