NATO's Changing Role in the International System: Security in the Post Cold War World

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Name: Anna R. East

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PROJECT TITLE: NATO’s Changing Role in the International System: Security in the Post Cold War World

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (Attach not more than one additional page, if necessary):

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization faces a variety of changes to its mission and interests. Warmer relations with the Russian Federation, NATO enlargement, and new actions such as crisis management and peacekeeping all point to a more prominent role for NATO in promoting the collective security of the North Atlantic area. However, the implications of expanded NATO actions must be fully weighed before rendering a judgment as to the true new level of international peace and security promised by proponents. This paper will examine several aspects of NATO’s new international personality, including relations with Russia, crisis-management, legality of intervention, and possible implications for the international security system at large.

Projected completion date: 5-7-2002

Signed: Anna R. East

I have discussed this research proposal with this student and agree to serve in an advisory role, as faculty mentor, and to certify the acceptability of the completed project.

Signed: A. L. Morgan, Faculty Mentor

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Name: Anna R. East

College: Arts & Sciences Department: Political Science

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I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

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NATO's Changing Role in the International System: Security in the Post-Cold War World

Anna R. East

Senior Honors Project
May 2002
Introduction

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization faces a variety of changes to its mission and interests. Warmer relations with the Russian Federation, NATO enlargement, and new actions such as crisis management and peacekeeping all point to a more prominent role for NATO in promoting the collective security of the North Atlantic area. However, the implications of expanded NATO actions must be fully weighed before rendering a judgment as to the true new level of international peace and security promised by proponents.

NATO was conceived as a collective defense organization that would work in conjunction with the United Nations Security Council to ensure peace and stability in Europe. Throughout the Cold War, NATO’s primary purpose was to deter the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from launching a westward attack in Europe with its superior conventional forces. After the disintegration of the USSR and its treaty organization, the Warsaw Pact, NATO faced the challenge to redefine its purpose in the context of the new distribution of power in the international system.

One of the first responses was a decision to admit new members into the alliance, all of which were former Warsaw Pact members. The deep mistrust between Russia and the West has been a continual obstacle for NATO’s objective of eastward expansion, as Russia perceived NATO’s action as a move to try and isolate Russia from Europe, despite reassurances to the contrary. However, new agreements have led to a much more cooperative relationship between the two. Plans are underway for Russia’s inclusion on the Russia-NATO Council, where Russia will have an equal voice, along with the 19 NATO member states, on certain policy issues.
Finally, NATO has taken on new responsibilities in the field of crisis management and peacekeeping. Perhaps the most provocative part of NATO's new international personality, crisis management has already raised heated debate. Following NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, states and legal scholars alike have rushed to analyze the action's impact on future interventions. Will NATO's expanded role compete with the UN Security Council in cases of legal intervention?

The implications of NATO's evolving new role in the international system are difficult to gauge. Regardless of one's politics, it is necessary to realize that NATO is very much at a crossroads. Its growth, if carefully planned and weighed, may in fact serve the diverse interests of its member states for greater security. If hastily pushed forward, NATO could become an international wrecking ball, operating inconsistently with the principles of democracy and representation that are so precious to its member states.

**NATO and the Warsaw Pact**

Formed in 1949, NATO began as a collective defense organization that would work with the United Nations Security Council, as both had the aim of promoting peace and security in Europe. During the Cold War, the idea of collective self-defense was generally regarded as a response to the threat posed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and its satellite states, which later formed the Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1955. While both treaties seem similar at first glance, there are substantial differences, even in purpose. It is important to distinguish between the true aims of the North Atlantic Treaty and the Warsaw Treaty, as the first sought primarily to protect its signatories from the second, and the second was an instrument of oppression wielded by the USSR.

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The core of the North Atlantic Treaty is Article V, which unites each signatory of the treaty with the others in a policy of self-defense, as recognized by the Charter of the United Nations. Specifically, NATO members agreed 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.²

Perhaps the most important language in this article is the “such action as it deems necessary” clause. By allowing each member state the freedom to decide when and what type of intervention is appropriate, this article does not bind all members to respond with military force or any action at all, if one of them is attacked. Similar to NATO’s stance, the Warsaw Pact members had a “by all the means it may consider necessary” clause as to the assistance they may give to a member state under attack.³

Both treaties read like benign friendship agreements that promote economic cooperation and peaceful relations, with collective self-defense measures as extra benefits that probably would never be necessary. The truth, however, was that each side had very real concerns as to their own security. In particular, the Warsaw Pact was little more than a façade to conceal the USSR’s occupation of its satellite states.

After World War II, the Soviet Union remained in the territory of several of the states that would come to be member states of the Warsaw Pact: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary,

³ Halsall.
Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. After concluding “twenty-year treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance” with all but East Germany, the Soviets were granted rights to remain in the territory of these states. Later, the USSR would take the same agreement and fashion it into the multilateral Warsaw Treaty. While it seemed as though the USSR formed the Warsaw Pact in response to the formation of NATO (and they argue that it really had to do with NATO’s admission of West Germany), the earlier twenty-year agreements came into force before NATO was established. Because these treaties were identical in language, one can argue that the Warsaw Pact was simply a multilateral centralization of these previous unilateral treaties that provided the USSR with even more oppressive leverage against those who would oppose communism.

NATO regarded Soviet forces stationed in the satellite states as a threat to the security of Western Europe, and reacted by stationing their own troops in their member states that bordered the Warsaw Pact countries. Additionally, United States’ nuclear weapons were deployed as far east as West Germany, and were intended to deter a conventional Soviet invasion. Even in this simple form, these descriptions of the threats and purposes perceived by both sides allow one to analyze the much of the historical baggage carried into the post-Cold War era.

**NATO, Expansion, and Post-Soviet Russia**

After the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet system between 1989 and 1991, NATO was faced with the task of redefining its purpose, since its traditional enemy had been

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
transformed and severely weakened. As former Warsaw Pact members began to be admitted into NATO, Russia felt increasingly threatened. Additionally, the rhetoric behind NATO expansion had several contradictions that did not help to assuage Russia's skepticism. However, as relations between NATO and Russia have warmed, prospects for future cooperation have appeared brighter. The NATO-Russia Founding Act and Russia-NATO Council have shown promise as two cooperative examples of the coming relationship between the two.

NATO, having been primarily concerned with protecting Western Europe from the Soviets, faced a daunting task in convincing Russia that the "Alliance sought only to promote peace, democracy and stability," especially when many of the former Warsaw Pact states were specifically seeking NATO membership as protection from Russian domination. In addition, an attempt to play both of these viewpoints could have led to a challenge of NATO's credibility. Any promise to Russia that NATO would not station troops or nuclear weapons in the territory belonging to new members would in effect undermine NATO's commitment to defend these new areas as part of the Alliance. Many of the states hoping for membership seem to consider Article V as a binding promise of collective defense as opposed to a deterrent, and lesser efforts to ensure their security would be harshly condemned. Also, the question of cost cannot be ignored. NATO's burden sharing among current members already places a disproportionate financial responsibility on the United States for the collective

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10 Ibid., 164.
11 Ibid., 167.
12 Ibid., 164.
defense of its members. With the new admission of states with transitional economies, it is likely that the burden will shift to be further disproportionate.

Russia's skepticism reaches back much further than the Cold War. J.L. Black notes that "there has been a resilient assumption in Russia that unless it was in their greater interests to do otherwise the European powers will naturally combine to keep Russia weak and isolated from Europe." Such suspicion is centuries old, with several notable examples. One could argue that the initial East-West split between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches isolated Russia as early as the eleventh century.\(^\text{13}\) Later, the sacking of Constantinople (the center of Eastern Christendom) by Western Crusaders in 1204 further separated the two Churches.\(^\text{14}\) Another interesting example suggests that Novgorod Prince Alexander Nevsky chose to submit to the Mongols (who ruled Russia for 200 years) when faced with invasion by the Roman Catholic Poles and Livonians (Lithuanians) in 1242, because the Khan did not interfere with religion, and the Roman Catholics were adamant about converting the Russians.\(^\text{15}\) Napoleon's burning of Moscow in 1812\(^\text{16}\), as well as German occupation of Soviet territory in 1941 evoke more recent memories of western "drives to the East."\(^\text{17}\)

In addition to historical suspicions, Russia had more recent cause to doubt the good intentions of the Alliance. Several security concessions, such as: "[opening] military facilities to the West for inspection;...[adopting] a hands-off policy with respect to the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe;...[allowing] Germany to reunify, acquiescing to its membership in NATO;...[and supporting] UN sanctions against Iraq," were met with little

\(^{13}\) Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (New York: Penguin Books, Ltd,1993), 58.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 60.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 82
\(^{17}\) The German phrase, "Drang nach Osten" (literally Drive to the East) is a specifically powerful anti-western term. Black, p. 17.
reciprocation by the West. Western trade has also proved to be suspect. Susan Eisenhower cites a few examples of unfair practices in what Russia believed to be a free market when “the United States and Europe set about imposing quotas on, for example, aluminum, uranium, aerospace and rocket-launch technology—areas in which Russia actually had a hope of competing internationally.” These actions lend credibility to the exercise of caution in Russian dealings with NATO and the West.

However difficult Russia-NATO relations may have been at first, substantial strides have been made to overcome all of the bad blood between the two. In 1997, The NATO-Russia Founding Act sought to foster cooperation through joint action and dialogue. This agreement established the Permanent Joint Council, with the goals of “[overcoming] misconceptions and [developing] a pattern of regular consultations and cooperation.” Even though this document formalized a commitment to work toward a better relationship, both sides remained at odds over several particular issues, some of which will be addressed by the new NATO-Russia Council. Dmitri Trenin contends that, “within Russia, the Founding Act was increasingly regarded as a damage-limitation exercise, which inadequately compensated Russia for NATO-enlargement.”

Perhaps most damaging to NATO’s relationship with Russia was its involvement in Kosovo in 1999. NATO’s action without the endorsement of the United Nations Security Council left Russia both angry and frustrated. It is significant to note that the Founding

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19 Ibid., 140.
21 Dmitri Trenin, Russia-NATO relations: Time to pick up the pieces, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2000/0001-06.htm> (27 April 2002).
Agreement mentions the United Nations nine times in eight pages. Russia's veto power in the UN Security Council was one of its last remaining instruments of superpower status, and therefore especially crucial to its involvement in the international arena. After a year of cool relations with NATO following the Kosovo bombing, Russia and NATO are again working toward more cooperation.

The latest development in the relationship between the two is the new Russia-NATO Council, which would somewhat replace the Permanent Joint Council established by the Founding Agreement. According to the New York Times, "Russia would act virtually as an equal to NATO's 19 member nations. The 20 members would debate, draft and vote on policies and projects ranging from antiterrorism initiatives to missile defense." This agreement is set to be approved on May 28, 2002 in Rome.

It is easy to see that Russia-NATO relations have come a long way since the formation of NATO in 1949. In many ways, Russia has slowly been included in Western activities, after having been put through a somewhat punitive stage after the Soviet Union's demise. While it is unclear as to whether Russia will become a full member of NATO, one can argue that the better relationship between them gives NATO a distinct advantage in pursuing several of its new goals, such as crisis management, that Russia had previously strenuously opposed.

**NATO and the UN: Crisis Management**

At the Rome Summit in November 1991, the focus of NATO's interests was expanded from simple collective defense to include a number of new responsibilities, such as territorial disputes, ethnic conflict, and economic crises. NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 is

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22 NATO fact sheets: Russia-NATO relations.
24 Black, 8.
perhaps the most important example of this new role. Acting without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council, NATO clearly violated international law by engaging in a bombing campaign against a sovereign state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, as is the case for most international law, there are few if any consequences when the powerful break unenforceable measures.

The North Atlantic Treaty specifically recognizes the UN Security Council as having “the primary responsibility...for the maintenance of international peace and security” in Article VII.\textsuperscript{25} Additionally, Article VII also states that “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.”\textsuperscript{26} Finally, Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter specifically bans the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of a sovereign state.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, not only did NATO violate the terms set forth in the UN Charter, it also went against its own Treaty.

The UN Security Council issued four separate resolutions prior to NATO’s campaign.\textsuperscript{28} None of them called for the use of force, with the exception of protecting the verification mission led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.\textsuperscript{29} When the verification mission was forced to pull out of Yugoslavia, NATO began a bombing

\textsuperscript{25} North Atlantic Treaty.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{29} Resolution 1203, 9 makes arrangements for emergency action. OSCE had called for NATO to provide any necessary force to ensure that its verification team was safe under its Agreement on the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission.
campaign against Serbia to force its leadership to comply with UN and NATO demands.\textsuperscript{30} After the conclusion of the bombing, the FRY signed a Military Technical Agreement with NATO that included this mandate:

The State Governmental authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia understand and agree that the international security force ("KFOR") will deploy following the adoption of the UNSCR referred to in paragraph 1 and operate without hindrance within Kosovo and with the authority to take all necessary action to establish and maintain a secure environment for all citizens of Kosovo and otherwise carry out its mission. They further agree to comply with all of the obligations of this Agreement and to facilitate the deployment and operation of this force.\textsuperscript{31}

This agreement was later sanctioned in the UN Security Council Resolution 1244.\textsuperscript{32} It is troubling that a group of states can circumvent the UN Security Council (where Russia would have almost certainly vetoed any military action) and act illegally without any consequences. Legal scholars, however, differ in their opinions as to the legality of this intervention.

In an editorial in the \textit{American Journal of International Law}, Louis Henkin makes several observations as to the legality of NATO's action. First, he argues that NATO action was not "unilateral", but rather "collective," and the prohibition on non-authorized intervention is meant to guard against action by a single state.\textsuperscript{33} He goes on to say that, "the collective character of the organization provided safeguards against abuse by single powerful states pursuing egoistic national interests."\textsuperscript{34} While this may have been true for this particular intervention, his next statement is seriously flawed, because in saying that, "action by NATO could be monitored by the Security Council and ordered to be terminated. The NATO action

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
had the support of the Security Council,"\(^{35}\) he neglects to take into account the veto wielded by the United States, United Kingdom, and France. It is highly unlikely that these three states would order the termination of their own action.

Henkin also mentions a proposed resolution sponsored by Russia that condemned the NATO intervention as unlawful, arguing that because this resolution failed, the intervention “had been called for and should continue.”\(^{36}\) While the resolution failed 3-12, it is notable that both Russia and China voted in favor of it, and may have voted to veto a proposal for intervention, had one been proposed.\(^{37}\) He later cites Resolution 1244, which was only passed after the FRY had already signed the Military Technical Agreement with NATO. It is probable that this resolution encountered no opposition as it was practically irrelevant since the Military Technical Agreement was already binding.\(^{38}\)

Henkin seems to make the argument that it is better to ask forgiveness than to ask permission when it comes to matters of intervention subject to the veto power of the permanent five members of the Security Council. Henkin is not alone in his opinion. Other scholars, such as Ivo H. Daalder, conclude that “the Alliance cannot be held hostage to the whims and fortunes of non-NATO members, including potential Russian or Chinese vetoes.”\(^{39}\) However, it was not only the Russians and Chinese who disapproved of the action. The BBC reported that Greece, a “NATO member, would not join any direct military action against Serbia, a traditional Greek ally.”\(^{40}\)

\(^{35}\) Ibid..

\(^{36}\) Ibid..

\(^{37}\) Ibid..

\(^{38}\) Ibid..

\(^{39}\) Ivo Daalder, *NATO, the UN and the Use of Force*,<http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/views/articles/daalder/1999UNA.htm> (27 April 2002).

\(^{40}\) It is important to note that the Serbs, Russians and Greeks all share the same religion. BBC News, *Russia condemns NATO at UN*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_303000/303127.stm> (30 April 2002).
The New NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has adapted amazingly well to the new state of security after the end of the Cold War. With its increased influence in the international community, NATO is truly at a crossroads. It is now that NATO must decide what its purpose will be in the years to come, and what type of security it will promote in the international system. If NATO chooses to expand slowly and carefully, working in conjunction with the United Nations, it may truly become an instrument for effective collective defense in Europe. If not, NATO could upset the precarious balance of power that barely remains after the fall of the Soviet bloc.

Should NATO choose to keep its former mission of collective self-defense, it could further promote this goal through the United Nations, instead of evading the threat of a veto by a non-member state and acting on its own. While Henkin may argue that action by NATO outside of the UN Security Council is not “unilateral,” it is unrepresentative. NATO’s interests are substantially different from the interests of the rest of the world. As a group of highly developed, democratic states with liberal economies, NATO’s interests are likely to be specific to promoting their values.

Also, concerns as to the geographic reach of NATO expansion bring up several interesting scenarios. While Russia may now be on a path to cooperation with NATO, former worries as to the effect of eastward expansion included a second Cold War. Especially if NATO expanded in phases, Russia could react by expanding westward between NATO recruiting drives.\textsuperscript{41} Additionally, some argue that the general hostility toward NATO in

\textsuperscript{41} Carpenter, 173.
Russia helps support those politicians who are anti-NATO. Since most of the democrats in Russia are pro-West, this could hamper the democratization and stability of Russia.\(^{42}\)

The number of member states may also cause conflict. Paul Gallis suggests that "a 'regionalization' in NATO...could undermine the viability of Article V."\(^{43}\) He cites a specific example involving Germany and Turkey during the Gulf War, where Germany had decided that they did not consider an attack on Turkish territory one worthy of a NATO response.\(^{44}\) Finally he mentions "NATO's effort to manage tensions between Greece and Turkey."\(^{45}\) He does point out that NATO requires "candidates for membership resolve ethnic and border conflicts before entering the alliance."\(^{46}\) However, as evidenced by Greece and Turkey, there have been past exceptions, which suggests that future exceptions are likely. The fundamental difference between a collective security organization, like the United Nations, and a collective defense organization, like NATO, is that the former aims to resolve conflicts between its members while the latter seeks to protect its members from outside aggression.

Besides Russia, China is the only other non-NATO member with a veto in the UN Security Council. While the fear had been that Russia would form its own military bloc, perhaps the more likely threat today is that China would do so. If Russia continues along its path of cooperation with NATO, China may very well feel threatened by the amount of power wielded by the Alliance. Before relations warmed between Russia and NATO, Russia and China concluded an agreement along with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan that formed an alliance called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.\(^{47}\) While this alliance

\(^{42}\) Eisenhower, 143.
\(^{43}\) Gallis, 4.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) SinoMania!, *Shanghai Cooperation Organization Successor Alliance to the Shanghai Five*, <http://www.sinomania.com/CHINANEWS/shanghai_cooperation_organization.htm> (30 April 2002).
aims to "battle the terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan and ensuring regional stability," it could easily develop into a military bloc if Russia or China felt threatened by rapid NATO expansion.

Other selfish NATO aims could lead to competition with the UN Security Council as to who has the primary responsibility for ensuring international peace and stability. There is already plenty of anti-UN sentiment present in the conservative Republican party in the United States. In fact, differences over the amount the United States should pay in its UN dues recently caused tension within the body, as "anger grew among other member nations, which watched Americans expect support for their policies while the organization faltered under the debt." The continued opinion that the United States is paying too much in dues to an organization that does too little in line with United States' interests, suggests that the US is much more likely to use NATO to pursue its foreign policy goals.

Finally, pursuit of NATO interests without UN support could foster further resentment among non-member states. As NATO is a North Atlantic organization, it is arguable that its members are all developed states of the North who have substantial and specific economic interests. Non-NATO states in the South may feel as though they are being exploited or that their security needs are being ignored. The beauty of the United Nations is that it is a representative body that encompasses the whole world. NATO is made up of only a select elite who could defend themselves individually (let alone collectively) better than most developing states. In the post September 11, 2001 world, these developing states could find terrorism to be a cost-effective tool to combat NATO and western hegemony.

48 Ibid...
50 Ibid..
Conclusion

The end of the Cold War has brought many changes to the security structure of the world. Perhaps most importantly have been the new roles of both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations. While the first has expanded its mission and membership, the other has begun to make progress toward the realization of the goals of its Charter.

However, the most crucial determinant as to the real conditions of international peace and security rest more solidly with NATO. Because the organization is comprised of rich, powerful, industrialized states, there is the distinct possibility that NATO could extend its purpose so far as to conflict with the UN. Additionally, eastward expansion has a number of positives and negatives that are not easily measured in the short-term. The impact of NATO’s larger presence will surely change the landscape of the international system, for better and for worse.

Perhaps the guide for NATO’s expansion and new mission can be found within the laws governing its member states. If NATO adapts to its new role while taking into account democracy, freedom, representation, sovereignty and the rule of law, then surely its evolution will produce a solid organization making significant positive contributions to the international system. If NATO simply pursues a realist doctrine of collective defense for its own members at all costs, it could easily become an oppressive monster.
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