NATO IN SEARCH FOR A NEW IDENTITY. FROM COLLECTIVE DEFENSE TO COLLECTIVE SECURITY

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Abstract: *THIS PAPER PROVIDES A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY FROM A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE THAT EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY THROUGH AN EXTENSIVE PARTNERSHIP OF COMMITTED STATES. THE STUDY IS BUILT AROUND THE ROLE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION AS A BASTION OF UNITY, SOLIDARITY, PEACEKEEPING AND SECURITY BETWEEN NATIONS. THE PURPOSE IS TO ANALYZE THE EVOLUTION OF NATO FROM A COLLECTIVE DEFENSE ORGANIZATION DURING THE PERIOD OF COLD WAR, TO A COLLECTIVE SECURITY ORGANIZATION IN OUR PRESENT DAYS. IN THE LIGHT OF THE EVENTS THAT FOLLOWED THE FALL OF COMMUNISM IN EUROPE, THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY HAS STARTED TO REPLACE THE CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE DEFENSE, BY SHAPING NATO DIMENSION FROM A REGIONAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATION TO AN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ORGANIZATION IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC REGION. BY FULFILLING ITS COMMITMENT TO PROTECT AND ENSURE PEACE ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT AGAINST VARIOUS THREATS, SUCH AS COMMUNISM EXPANSION, CIVIL WARS AND TERRORIST ATTACKS, THE ALLIANCE CAN BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST SUITABLE EXAMPLES THAT ILLUSTRATES THE CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY.*
THE EMPIRICAL DATA USE TO ANALYZE THE ROLE OF NATO REGARDING THE CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY INCLUDES RELEVANT ARTICLES AND REPORTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, SECURITY STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCES FIELD. THE FINDINGS REVEALED THAT IMPORTANT EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY, SUCH AS THE ENLARGEMENT OF NATO, NEW THREATS TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND A CHANGE FROM DIRECT THREATS TO RISK SITUATIONS HAS SHAPED A NEW IDENTITY AND EXTENDED THE ROLE OF THE ALLIANCE TO A MORE GLOBAL ONE. ALSO, WE CAN ARGUE THAT NATO'S MEMBERS HAVE CHANGED THEIR APPROACH FROM A STATIC, REACTIVE AND TERRITORIAL CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE DEFENSE TOWARD A PROACTIVE AND ANTICIPATORY APPROACH.

Keywords: *NATO; GLOBALIZATION; COLLECTIVE SECURITY; U.S.; RUSSIA; ASYMMETRIC THREATS,*

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INTRODUCTION

There is a long debate referring to the two concepts of "collective defense" and "collective security". The differences between them have cause an identity dilemma when it comes to NATO's transformation and its role in the 21st century. The term "collective security" has a broader meaning and a universal dimension being related to a series of risk factors, risky situations or regions that does not imply a direct threat. On the other hand, "collective defense" implies a known threat and defining a stable and static structure including separation and delimitation, as it could be seen in the Cold War, when there were created ideological boundaries that divided the world in two.

During the Cold War, one side of power saw a potential threat in the other one and in order to maintain a balance of power each side try to prevent the other one from taking actions in the first place, a strategy that was known as deterrence. After 1989, the concept of threat was replaced by the concept of risk, which does not imply a clearly defined enemy with a single point of origin. This concept became dominant in the international arena and is described by a set of distinctive features like uncertainty, unpredictability, absence of a clear structural model of the field of international affairs and an identity dilemma. In nowadays the concept of risk can be associated with risk situations and risk regions. In this case we have risk situations, such as the refugee crisis in Europe, terrorist threats, the North Korean nuclear missile tests, the conflict in Bosnia or Kosovo and risk regions like Crimea, Donbass, Iraq or Afghanistan. Recently, the whole world is facing an unconventional and unpredictable threat, the SARS Cov-2 virus, which became a global issue. Due to the rapid spread of and the fast expansion of the virus within the geographic areas, it may be likely to affect a significant number of people, leading to a health crisis, which can affect the parameters of the global security dimension. In addition, in regions where the security dimension is already affected by war or oppressive regimes the pandemic situation could amplify even more the social tensions and violence, playing acting as trigger for violent manifestations. (Peptan, 2021, p. 121)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union many analysts predicted that NATO has outlived its purpose and would soon dissolve. Instead, the alliance members due to their strong historical bonds, shared values and common vision for the future has shaped a new role for the international organization in the post-Cold War order. With a less hostile Moscow between the 1990s and most of the 2000s and as a response to the new international environment, NATO's transformation can be described as a strategic change, moving its focus from direct threats to risk factors as a result of the transition from a bi-polar system to a more open and flexible environment. In practice this means that the alliance attention has moved from one simple origin of threat to a multiplicity of time-bound factors which can be characterized by various risk situations. (Popov, 1999, pp. 60-62) Those situations have highlighted NATO's need of expansion, which has materialized in a post-Cold war policy of enlargement. This policy can be translated into a process based on overall security of the international arena, that represents more than just a simple membership. The core of this process is made up of two components, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace programme. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) is multilateral forum that brings together 50 nations to exchange views on political and security issues, such as crisis-management and peace-support operations, arms control, regional issues, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, scientific cooperation and nuclear safety. Moreover, it provides the political framework for the bilateral relationships developed between NATO and individual partner countries under the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. (NATO, 2020). On the other hand, the Partnership for Peace programme is a U.S. initiative, which aims to establish strong links between NATO and new democratic countries, especially with the former soviets' republics, by providing a framework for enhanced political and military cooperation for joint multilateral activities. (The State Department, 1997)

ADRESSING NEW SECURITY THREATS

In the last decade of the 21ˢᵗ century, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has gone through a lot of changes, including its practice and approach in the international arena, here we can refer even to structural and political changes. As the world is changing constantly, becoming more technologized and interconnected, new threats and tensions between the actors of the international environment has arisen. A major event in a certain part of the world, such as politic, economic or military may have direct implications in other different parts of the world even though those are not geographically connected. Therefore, NATO's purpose has evolved from a regional defense organization to an international security organization, by developing its capabilities for both collective defense and crisis response contingencies. A contrast can be drawn between the alliance basic aims during the Cold War and the additional functions it has adopted since the post-Cold War and nowadays. For example, the allied countries had extended their security commitment to non-allies during the conflict in Kosovo from 1999 and allowed the participation of non-allies in a collective defense mission, such as "Operation Active Endeavour". (Yost, 2010, pp. 489-490) Even though, NATO's intervention in the conflict of Kosovo is very debatable because it failed to meet the basic criteria of moral legitimacy, its actions managed to stop the mass migration of people seeking refuge at the borders of the European countries, which could have posed a major threat to the collective security. Furthermore, by removing Milosevic from power it prevented the conflict to escalate and become a bigger threat to the security of its own members.

Without the existence of a clear threat NATO was forced to adapt to the new emerging post-Cold War order, developing new strategic concepts, incorporating new members, deploying troops to theatres across the world and reorganizing its military structures. The new international climate and the lack of an existential threat has generated a leadership crisis inside the alliance, with members falling into an increasing divergence of interests determining the organization to split in two or more factions of members states. This has caused a lot of troubles regarding the decision-making process, the intervention in Afghanistan, the Georgian crisis of 2008 and the missile defense system are just few examples that shows the lack of coherence and disagreement between alliance members. Moreover, until the end of the Cold War the strategic approach of NATO's members was shaped by the US grand strategic doctrine, which was linked to its national security posture of "liberal democratic internationalism" and had a major impact on the development of allies' national strategies. After 1990 two structural trends started to threaten NATO's internal cohesion. The first one was the European Security and Defense Policy, which became a competitor for NATO in terms of political attractiveness because of its incorporation into the broader EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, but unfortunately it still had the disadvantage of lacking military assets. The second trend was NATO's intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which showed the incapacity and distrust of alliance members to agree on an appropriate military strategy, revealing the major discrepancy of military capabilities between the European allies and US. (Noetzel & Schreer, 2009, pp. 212-214).

Recently, the internal cohesion of the alliance was put under pressure by the hasty withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, which brought back into discussion the EU desire for military autonomy. The creation of a European army has been emphasized by the EU's chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, in one of his statements: "The need for more European defense has never been as much evident as today after the events in Afghanistan". His declarations have been supported by other European officials, such as EU military committee chairman Claudio Graziano, who said that "now is the time to act", referring to the creation of "a rapid reaction force". A divergent and surprising opinion came from the German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who believes that EU "will not be able to replace America's crucial role as a security provider". The Defense Minister opinion was criticized by one of EU's top leaders, the French president Emmanuel Macron, who has a strong will

in achieving military, economic and technological independence from a mercurial US. (Wheeldon, 2021) Those statements amplifies the tensions between the EU and US which were already at high level, due to the previous misunderstandings regarding the burden-sharing and EU members state contribution to NATO defense spendings, lack of concrete actions and unfinished businesses, such as the ceasefire agreement between Georgia and Russia.

The globalization and the advance of technology has brought up new challenges to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. New technologies such as the internet, social media and the increasing number of NGO's have become an influencing factor in the organization decision making process. Due to the transnationalism phenomenon all of those indicated factors have increased their role and became involved in the transformation of the new strategic context, in which NATO must take into account their demands, as exponents of people's voice on certain political or military actions. Today, what nation states considered to be important regarding the use of force has become a matter of change, due to the fact that nations should take into consideration the will of the public opinion. In this case, transnational organizations, in the form of aid agencies and human-rights activists has moved from a spectator stance to the decision-making table, determining the way the alliances and international organizations act. For example, NGO's have forced NATO to address new problems, in this case we can refer to the de-mining issue which led to the "Global Humanitarian De-mining Initiative". (Coker, 2014, pp. 67-70)

Another issue that must be discussed is the manner nations engage in a warfare, which by solid reasons due to the globalization process and the evolution of threats has change dramatically. In this case I am referring to the incorporation of cyberspace into conducting warfare and securing national defense. In nowadays the cyberattacks have become a matter of national security and has influenced the internal changes NATO has conducted to adjust the use of Article 5 to react to this new threat. One of the most recent examples in modern warfare has occurred on December 2015, when the Ukrainian power grid has experienced a major disruption due to an external cyberattack which is considered to be part of the Russian Federation's annexation plan of Crimea. The "Declaration of Wales", a turning point in NATO's cyber defense activities, stipulates that Article 5 of the treaty, which represents an expression of collective self-defense and use of force, applies to cyberattacks against any of the alliance members, but on a "case-by-case basis". The debate is based on whether a cyberattack should be considered or not an armed attack and trigger Article 5 and by which criteria cyberattacks will be assessed as issues to NATO's countries. While the North Atlantic Alliance continues to use Article 5 as a way to govern all forms of armed attacks, the cyberattacks represent a new unique threat that is different from traditional methods of combat, producing devastating consequences for the target in terms of espionage, economic and technological disruption, that rarely involves physical casualties, but can seriously threaten the critical infrastructures. Even so, the lack of predetermined standards for assessing cyberattacks will mostly determine divergence between alliance members that could take place while dealing with a major cyber event. (Stephen Jackson, 2016) In this case NATO should take into consideration the necessity of adopting a guideline to reduce the ambiguity regarding this new threat and to offer the alliance members a set of common methods and procedure to combat any potential cyberattacks. Discussion are being held within NATO departments and members on how to counteract this type of threat but, it will take time and lot of negotiation rounds to agree on a common set of norms although almost every NATO ally has an individual national strategy related to cybersecurity. NATO experienced its first major cyber-attacks in 1999, during the intervention of Kosovo, when a group of Chinese hackers lunched a DDoS attack on the Alliance online communications system, which affected many of the allies' official webpages. Three years later, due to the widely reported attacks on NATO organizations and members from Russia, China and Serbia, the Cyber Defense Program was approved at the Prague Summit, which among others implied and

important element, the creation of NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC). Even so, NATO failed to understand the implication and technical scale of cyberwarfare until the 2007 attacks against Estonia. Following those events, two institutions were established within the Bucharest Summit discussion, the Cyber Defense Management Authority (CDMA) and the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE). However, in the absence of a concrete action plan and an operational cyber mission, CCDCOE played a limited role, exerting its influence on legal issues by convening together practicing lawyers and academics than improving the interoperability and capabilities of allied countries. (Healey & Jordan, 2014). NATO commitment to engage in cyberwarfare was better reflected by the endorsement of The Cyber Defense Policy and The Action Plan, which were by far the most important actions the Alliance has taken, making cyber issues a core part of NATO actions.

THE UKRAINIAN ISSUE

Despite the relative peace period from the last twenty years between the two superpowers, Russia and United States, the awakening of the first one from its deep sleep after the second decade of the 21st century had become an actual threat to NATO's collective security. Its actions in Georgia in 2008 and more recent in Ukraine, with the annexation of Crimea has revealed that its hegemonic intentions are still rooted in its character. The change in Russia's strategy happened when Vladimir Putin came to power and dismissed any cooperative relationship with the West. His attitude was determined by NATO's enlargement and policy advancement that forced him to witness how Moscow influence diminish in the Eastern European states. Therefore, NATO's engagement to open its arms to new member states from the Eastern Europe seems to be in contradiction with Putin plans to re-establish the glory of Russia by taking control of ex-soviets states. Although, there isn't a clear image of Putin's intentions to outright control of any of NATO's members, it will be imprudent for the alliance not take into consideration such possibility.

The annexation of Crimea in Ukraine showed that Moscow intends to use military actions and strategies to pursue its goals. In this case, NATO had to deal with a combination of hybrid warfare and nuclear brinkmanship. The concept of hybrid warfare is not relatively new in modern combat but, has become at the center of Russia's recent actions in Eastern Europe. This is just part of Moscow complex plan to avoid a major combat operation or a robust response from NATO, which will eventually lead to Russia defeat due to the North Atlantic alliance military advantage. In order to avoid this situation, Russia intervened in Crimea on the pretext of protecting Russian nationals but, also conducted actions such as propaganda campaigns, cyberattacks and irregular warfare that included professional soldiers in unmarked uniforms aimed to destabilize the political institutions. (Matthew Kroenig, 2015, pp. 53-57) Even if most of those actions were denied by Moscow there is no doubt about its interference. Russia's belligerent attitude was triggered by the expansion of NATO to the Eastern Europe, Ukraine as a former soviet country represents a very important partner and most of all the last bastion between the alliance and Russia. The progress made by Ukraine to become a NATO member, by joining in 1991 the Atlantic Cooperation Council, followed by the signing of the 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership and the 2009 Declaration to Complement the NATO-Ukraine Charter as a result of the Bucharest Summit decisions, has raised Russia's concerns regarding its influence an interests in the region, being described by the Russian president Vladimir Putin as a "direct threat" to its country security. (Erlanger, 2008). Now, probably the most important question regarding the Ukrainian issues, is what NATO will do in case of a military attack? Although, Ukraine is a NATO partner and a very valuable one in the Eastern region, it is still not a member of the club, so the activation of Article 5 can't be seen as a viable option, at least not for now. In this context, the difference between a NATO ally and a partner has been reiterated recently by the secretary general of NATO, as he stated: "We

provide support for Ukraine... for the NATO allies we have the security guarantees, Article 5". However, in case of a military aggression, Russia will pay a "high price", the chief of NATO implying that harsh economic and political sanctions will be undertaken. (Rettman, 2021). As we noticed, this argument is supported by previous evidence. For example, in case of the invasion of Georgia from 2008, which is also a partner of NATO, the counteract actions implied only diplomatic and political sanctions against Russia, without any bold or military actions. This approach of coercive diplomacy and politics represents a modality used by NATO to avoid a military conflict and falls in the category of smart power practices, which includes a combination of both soft and hard power practices that were at the very heart of former President Obama and Secretary Clinton's policy vision. While through military force Russia has regained its influence in the former soviet republic, it struggled to win international recognition, as the justification to protect its citizens abroad didn't legitimate the military intervention. (Nye, 2011, pp. 190-191) In the aftermath of the Georgian conflict, NATO had frozen most military and political cooperation with Moscow, including the cooperation in the NATO-Rusia Council (NRC), until Russia will withdraw its troops from the separatist region. Those measures did not affect the relationship between NATO and Rusia regarding operations on issues of common interests, such as Afghanistan, terrorism, drug trafficking non-proliferation, arms control and the new threat of piracy. This decision was mostly influenced by other alliance members, especially those who had close ties to Russia, such as France or Germany, which saw the benefits in continuing this cooperation. (Haas, 2009, pp. 5-6)

With the military intervention in Georgia, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the recent deployment of troops to the Ukrainian border, Russia has defined its "red lines" and according to Putin's recent statements, Moscow is ready to act if NATO does not give up to the expansion of its military infrastructure in the Balkan region. (Soldatkin & Osborn, 2021) In this case, the most important matter NATO must address to is in which manner will react in case Russia will pursue is actions against a former soviet country which is member of NATO or if will decide to use nuclear weapons to lower its military disadvantage. Moreover, in the recent years Russia's nuclear-capable fighter bombers has tripled the number of patrols over the Baltic region, nuclear submarines were detected off the coasts of Western European countries and the new Russian intercontinental ballistic missile has been successfully tested.

CONCLUSION

To sum it all up, due to the advance of the globalization process and the fall of the Soviet Union, the existence of a clear threat with a single origin of power has vanish, being replaced by a multiplicity of time-bound factors which are characterized by various risk situations. Furthermore, the concept of threat has been substituted by the concept of risk and involves a series of risk factors as part of a more flexible international environment. In this case, following the transition from a bi-polar system to a more open environment, NATO had to adapt to the new post-Cold War order, by changing its role from a regional defense organization to an international security organization. In practice, all of those changes have shaped NATO a new identity, which is no longer based on the principle of "collective defense" but more on "collective security", with a broader meaning and a universal dimension that better fits to the new international context. Moreover, as we can observe new threats have arisen in the international arena. Hybrid warfare and tension regions, such as Afghanistan, Iraq or Crimea became part of the evolution of warfare, while the advance of technology started to threaten the international security through the cyber-attacks. Also due to the new international climate, NATO had to adjust its strategies and policies and to advance an enlargement policy in the Eastern Europe, which triggered Russia's dissatisfaction of losing its influence in the ex-soviet countries. In any case, the transatlantic alliance mission has become harder in the new international order being forced,

because of nature of events which are more interconnected, to commit itself to both collective defense and crisis response contingencies. Moreover, due to the latest events in the Balkan region and the deployment of Russian troops at the border of Ukraine, the need for consensus and common actions represents the only way to solve an imminent military conflict.

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