

## WHY DID NATO PERSIST AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR?

## ЧОМУ НАТО ЗБЕРІГАЄТЬСЯ ПІСЛЯ ЗАКІНЧЕННЯ ХОЛОДНОЇ ВІЙНИ?

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Since the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949, the global political agenda has shifted drastically. The new situation forced Western strategists to reconsider the architecture problem of the security of the Atlantic world. It could be either the replacement of existing institutions or their adaptation to the changed realities of the world. Thus, the problem of defining new functions of the Alliance in the changed situation in the Euro-Atlantic region has acquired an urgent importance. After the disputes of the late 1980s, the conclusion was made that NATO should be preserved but adapted to new conditions. Subsequent events have shown that after the disappearance of the bipolar system, the Alliance, which was one of its basic frameworks, not only preserved but also strengthened its positions and even acquired global significance.

**Key words:** threat, aggressor state, international policy hegemony, international politics, military confrontation, instrument of international security, sphere of influence.

Із часу підписання Північноатлантичного договору в 1949 році глобальна політика різко змінилася. Нова ситуація змусила західних стратегів переглянути архітектуру безпеки атлантичного світу. Це може бути або заміна існуючих установ, або їх адаптація до змінених реалій світу. Таким чином, проблема визначення нових функцій альянсу в умовах зміни політичної ситуації у Євро-Атлантичному регіоні набула нагальної важливості. Після дискусії наприкінці 1980-х років було зроблено висновок, що НАТО має зберігатись, проте адаптуватись до нових умов. Наступні події показали, що після зникнення біполярної системи Північноатлантичний альянс, який був однією з основних конструкцій колективної безпеки балансу, не тільки зберіг, а й зміцнив свої позиції та навіть набув глобального значення.

**Ключові слова:** загроза, держава-агресор, гегемонія, міжнародна політика, військове протистояння, інструмент міжнародної безпеки, сфера впливу.

Со времени подписания Североатлантического договора в 1949 году глобальная политическая повестка дня резко изменилась. Новая ситуация заставила западных стратегов пересмотреть архитектуру безопасности Североатлантического оборонного сообщества. Это может быть либо замена существующих учреждений, в том числе и НАТО, либо их адаптация к изменившимся реальностям мира. Таким образом, проблема определения новых функций военного альянса в изменившейся ситуации в Евро-Атлантическом регионе приобрела неотложное значение. После дискуссий на высшем политическом и экспертном уровнях в конце 1980-х годов был сделан вывод о том, что НАТО следует сохранять, но адаптировать к новым условиям. Последующие события показали, что после исчезновения биполярной системы Североатлантический союз, который был одной из его основных рамок, не только сохранил, но и укрепил свои позиции и даже приобрел глобальное значение.

**Ключевые слова:** угроза, государство-агрессор, гегемония, международная политика, военная конфронтация, инструмент международной безопасности, сфера влияния.

**Introduction.** Since the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949, the global political agenda has shifted drastically. The new situation forced Western strategists to reconsider the architecture problem of the security of the Atlantic world. It could be either the replacement of existing institutions or their adaptation to the changed realities of the world. At that moment of time, NATO had a leading position in that exact system of the collective security of the West, the sense of which became a question. Firstly, the reason for its creation was directly related to the Cold War (the result of which was the victory of the West). Secondly, the North Atlantic Alliance had at its disposal a huge infrastructure and resources, which raised a question about the appropriateness of such expenditure in the future. Thus, the problem of defining new functions

of the Alliance in the changed situation in the Euro-Atlantic region has acquired an urgent importance. After the disputes of the late 1980s, the conclusion was made that NATO should be preserved but adapted to new conditions. Subsequent events have shown that after the disappearance of the bipolar system, the Alliance, which was one of its basic frameworks, not only preserved but also strengthened its positions and even acquired global significance.

**The purpose of the article.** In this essay, I am arguing that NATO is not a pointless “vestigiality” of the Cold War but rather is a crucial power on the global political arena as well as a tool of geopolitical influence, the contemporary relevance of which should not be underestimated. While analyzing the issues of contemporary international relations and states’ for-

eign policy at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE), plenty of discussions were held on the efficiency of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Do really NATO works the way it is meant to? In this article, author is going to elaborate on this topic. The article is based on researches of leading scientists, international agreements, speeches of officials and other instruments of international policy and security.

**Results.** Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Europe was in a victim position because of the struggle over influence between two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union. While the former had cooperated with the West, the latter controlled the majority of Central and Eastern European countries, which was justified by the Warsaw Pact in 1955. This balance has tipped after the West prevailed in the Cold War, claiming the end of the Cold War and, as a result, making the Warsaw Pact no longer relevant and the member-states free to develop their own agenda. As a way of securing themselves from the external threat, Eastern European states, such as the Visegrad Four (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia) started to join the Alliance, which, in its turn, was actively seeking enlargement on the European soil. The smaller states viewed NATO rather from the point of view of rational institutionalism, the result of the cooperation being mutual security and, hence, ability to focus on domestic issues. Zoltan Barany, Frank C. Erwin, Jr. Centennial Professor of Government at the University of Texas, in his *The Future of NATO Expansion*, mentions that one of the pro-enlargement arguments was fostering democracy. Not to enlarge NATO would be to encourage the division of Europe to a self-confident and secure West and an unstable and insecure East [7, p. 13]. Members of the Clinton Administration made a concerted effort to convince Congress that NATO membership for Eastern Europe was key to safeguarding and promoting democracy and free markets there [2].

Having in mind that the United States is considered to be the most prominent proponent of democracy, one may assume that by spreading it to the Eastern European countries, the United States is also spreading its cultural and geopolitical influence over the region. Discussing how NATO and the US benefit from the enlargement of Alliance we have to remember that NATO – the only international organization in Europe of which the United States was a recognized leader – would continue to be the institution through which the United States could best pursue its interests in Europe. Therefore, NATO expansion would increase Washington's ability to shape East-Central and Southeastern European political developments and security [1].

On contrary, the boundary of Russian hegemony is being pushed away towards East. This brings me to my next point – NATO as a way to hold back the imperial ambitions of the Russian Federation. Even though

Thomas Risse-Kappen in his “Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO” argues that the crucial role in triggering the dissolution of the Soviet Union and, hence, ending the Cold War was Mikhail Gorbachev, and later Boris Yeltsin, democratizing the Soviet state by seeking to embrace Western liberal values it was still highly doubtful if the newly-formed Russian Federation was willing to comply with the Western ideology [6, p. 393–396].

Daniel S. Hamilton, elaborating on the Russian role in the enlargement of NATO, writes: Incidentally, other proponents of the enlargement, like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, and William Odom, contended that the outcome of Moscow's democratization experiment was far from certain and though Russia might have lost its empire it did not lose its imperial ambitions. NATO's enlargement, then, was an insurance policy against the potential future reassertion of such aspirations. In other words, given its size and historical proclivities, a resurgent Russia in future was likely to threaten Eastern Europe again [3, p. 15–16].

Indeed, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian has taken part, either as an aggressor or as a proponent, in more than ten military conflicts, such as War in Abkhazia (1991–1993), Transnistria War (1992), and Russo-Georgian War (2008), the listed ones resulting in the formation of self-proclaimed, de facto independent states supported and supplied by Russia. The most recent instance of Russia aggressively exercising its imperial ambitions is Russian military intervention in Ukraine (2014 – present) and Russian annexation of Crimea (2014). Even though Ukraine is not a member of NATO, the neighboring countries are highly disturbed about the foreign policy pattern of the Russian Federation. After Russian troops invaded Crimea and annexed it in 2014, Poland invoked Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty feeling a threat to its security, which made NATO officially involved into dialogues with Ukraine and Russia [8]. Again, since Ukraine is not a member-state of NATO, the Alliance cannot physically interfere into the conflict. Furthermore, Ukraine is a strategically important territory for NATO, however, accepting Ukraine to the Alliance would mean direct confrontation with Russia, which might lead to disputes among the member-states, since some of them are dependent on Russia trade-wise. On the other hand, giving up Ukraine would mean a huge loss for the West – geopolitically stronger Russia. As a result, Ukraine might be seen as a buffer zone between Russian and Western spheres of influence; since most of Russia's other neighboring states are under the patronage of the military alliance and confronting them would mean, in the best case scenario, the beginning of a new Cold War.

Obviously, smaller states are not able to withstand Russian aggression, however, the Alliance makes it possible. Rittberger Volker, Bernhard Zangl, and

Andreas Kruck strengthens, that leaders of the Alliance recognized NATO was the only institution that could guarantee East European security [5]. “Thus, they believed, actual membership in the Alliance for these states was the way to go” [4].

The idea of a “collective identity” significantly strengthens the ties between the member-states and restrains the external threat. Not only the threat of a military confrontation of smaller states with a powerful aggressor but also Russia prevented from becoming the hegemon on the continent, hence, not giving it an opportunity to psychologically blackmail the Western Europe and destabilize these countries politically and economically [6, p. 361]. That is, if not for the existence of NATO, it would be very likely for Russia to try and expand its borders and political influence by using military force against the smaller Eastern and Central European states.

**Conclusions.** To sum up, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization remains one of the world’s most crucial military alliances, which, other than being “the policeman of the world” together with

the United Nations, also influences the political and diplomatic decision-making of both members and non-members and has a crucial role in the contemporary anarchic state of the world. The Alliance can be seen through the prism of realism as the United States’ instrument for spreading its influence and realizing its interests in Europe. From the perspective of rational institutionalism, the organization is vital for the smaller states in Central and Eastern Europe because of the external threats that might lead to a destabilized economy or loss of territories. NATO takes a major part in holding back Russian imperial expansion and prevents the Russian Federation from obtaining a hegemonic power in the region, as it was the case during the period of the Warsaw Pact. Even though the Cold War is over and the Soviet Union is no longer a threat, the world is changing very rapidly, which challenges major intergovernmental institutions like NATO to adapt quickly to the emerging situation. In my opinion, NATO has been more than successful in doing so and keeping its reputation firm.

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