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NATO in the Euro-Atlantic Zone

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Historical Background

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington D.C. on 4 April 1949 as the foundational treaty of NATO. From 1945 to 1949, faced with the pressing need for economic reconstruction, Western European countries and their North American allies viewed with concern the expansionist policies and methods of the USSR. Having fulfilled their own wartime undertakings to reduce their defense establishments and to demobilize forces, Western governments became increasingly alarmed as it became clear that the Soviet leadership intended to maintain its own military forces at full strength.

Moreover, in view of the declared ideological aims of the Soviet Communist Party, it was evident that appeals for respect for the UN Charter, and for respect for the international settlements reached at the end of the war, would not guarantee the national sovereignty or independence of democratic states faced with the threat of outside aggression or internal subversion. The imposition of undemocratic forms of government and the repression of effective opposition and of basic human and civil rights and freedoms in many Central and Eastern European countries as well as elsewhere in the world, added to these fears.

Between 1947 and 1949 a series of dramatic political events brought matters to a head. These included direct threats to the sovereignty of Norway, Greece, Turkey and other Western European countries, the June 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia, and the illegal blockade of Berlin which began in April of the same year. The signature of the Brussels Treaty of March 1948 marked the determination of five Western European countries Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to develop a common defense system and to strengthen the ties between them in a manner which would enable them to resist ideological, political and military threats to their security.

Negotiations with the United States and Canada then followed on the creation of a single North Atlantic Alliance based on security guarantees and mutual commitments between Europe and North America. Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Portugal were invited by the Brussels Treaty powers to become participants in this process. These negotiations culminated in the signature of the Treaty of Washington in April 1949, bringing into being a common security system based on a partnership among these 12 countries. In 1952, Greece and Turkey acceded to the Treaty. The Federal Republic of Germany joined the Alliance in 1955 and, in 1982, Spain also became a member of NATO. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined NATO in 1999.

The North Atlantic Alliance was founded on the basis of a Treaty between member states entered into freely by each of them after public debate and due parliamentary process. The Treaty upholds their individual rights as well as their international obligations in accordance with the Charter of
the United Nations. It commits each member country to sharing the risks and responsibilities as well as the benefits of collective security and requires of each of them the undertaking not to enter into any other international commitment which might conflict with the Treaty.

Between the creation of the Alliance and the present day, half a century of history has taken place. For much of this time the central focus of NATO was providing for the immediate defense and security of its member countries. Today this remains its core task, but its immediate focus has undergone a fundamental change.

The key features of this transformation are summarized in the relevant chapters of the Handbook.

The Brussels Treaty of 1948, revised in 1984, represented the first step in the post-war reconstruction of Western European security and brought into being the Western Union and the Brussels Treaty Organization. It was also the first step in the process leading to the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 and the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance. The Brussels Treaty is the founding document of the present day Western European Union (WEU).

In 1990, with the unification of Germany, the former German Democratic Republic came under the security protection of the Alliance as an integral part of the united country.

This was approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. on 23rd and 24th April 1999. At their Summit meeting in Washington in April 1999, NATO Heads of State and Government approved the Alliance's new Strategic Concept.

NATO has successfully ensured the freedom of its members and prevented war in Europe during the 40 years of the Cold War. By combining defense with dialogue, it played an indispensable role in bringing East-West confrontation to a peaceful end. The dramatic changes in the Euro-Atlantic strategic landscape brought by the end of the Cold War were reflected in the Alliance's 1991 Strategic Concept. There have, however, been further profound political and security developments since then.

The dangers of the Cold War have given way to more promising, but also challenging prospects, to new opportunities and risks. A new Europe of greater integration is emerging, and a Euro-Atlantic security structure is evolving in which NATO plays a central part. The Alliance has been at the heart of efforts to establish new patterns of cooperation and mutual understanding across the Euro-Atlantic region and has committed itself to essential new activities in the interest of a wider stability.

The Alliance has an indispensable role to play in consolidating and preserving the positive changes of the recent past, and in meeting current and future security challenges.
This new Strategic Concept will guide the Alliance as it pursues this agenda. It expresses NATO's enduring purpose and nature and its fundamental security tasks, identifies the central features of the new security environment, specifies the elements of the Alliance's broad approach to security, and provides guidelines for the further adaptation of its military forces.

The Purpose and Tasks of the Alliance

NATO's essential and enduring purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. Based on common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Alliance has striven since its inception to secure a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe.

The Alliance embodies the transatlantic link by which the security of North America is permanently tied to the security of Europe. It is the practical expression of effective collective effort among its members in support of their common interests.

The fundamental guiding principle by which the Alliance works is that of common commitment and mutual co-operation among sovereign states in support of the indivisibility of security for all of its members. (Solidarity and cohesion within the Alliance)

The resulting sense of equal security among the members of the Alliance, regardless of differences in their circumstances or in their national military capabilities, contributes to stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

To achieve its essential purpose, as an Alliance of nations committed to the Washington Treaty and the United Nations Charter, the Alliance performs the following fundamental security tasks:

Security: No country would be able to intimidate or coerce any other through the threat or use of force.

Consultation: To serve, as provided for in Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, as an essential transatlantic forum for Allied consultations on any issues that affect their vital interests.

Deterrence and Defense: To deter and defend against any threat of aggression against any NATO member state as provided for in Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty. And in order to enhance the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area:

Crisis Management: To stand ready, case-by-case and by consensus, in conformity with Article 7 of the Washington Treaty, to contribute to effective conflict prevention and to engage actively in crisis management, including crisis response operations.
Partnership: To promote wide-ranging partnership, cooperation, and dialogue with other countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, with the aim of increasing transparency, mutual confidence and the capacity for joint action with the Alliance.

The North Atlantic Treaty

Article 1

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

Article 2

The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.

Article 3

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

Article 4

The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.

Article 5

The Parties agree 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-defense 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.
Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

Article 6

For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack:

on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer;

on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.

Article 7

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, or the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 8

Each Party declares that none of the international engagements now in force between it and any other of the Parties or any third State is in conflict with the provisions of this Treaty, and undertakes not to enter into any international engagement in conflict with this Treaty.

Article 9

The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council shall be so organised as to be able to meet promptly at any time. The Council shall set up such subsidiary bodies as may be necessary; in particular it shall establish immediately a defense committee which shall recommend measures for the implementation of Articles 3 and 5.

Article 10

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States of America. The Government of the United
States of America will inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.

Article 11

This Treaty shall be ratified and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible with the Government of the United States of America, which will notify all the other signatories of each deposit. The Treaty shall enter into force between the States which have ratified it as soon as the ratifications of the majority of the signatories, including the ratifications of Belgium, Canada, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, have been deposited and shall come into effect with respect to other States on the date of the deposit of their ratifications.

Article 12

After the Treaty has been in force for ten years, or at any time thereafter, the Parties shall, if any of them so requests, consult together for the purpose of reviewing the Treaty, having regard for the factors then affecting peace and security in the North Atlantic area, including the development of universal as well as regional arrangements under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 13

After the Treaty has been in force for twenty years, any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the United States of America, which will inform the Governments of the other Parties of the deposit of each notice of denunciation.

Article 14

This Treaty, of which the English and French texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the United States of America. Duly certified copies will be transmitted by that Government to the Governments of other signatories.

Footnotes:

The definition of the territories to which Article 5 applies was revised by Article 2 of the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the accession of Greece and Turkey signed on 22 October 1951.

On January 16, 1963, the North Atlantic Council noted that insofar as the former Algerian Departments of France were concerned, the relevant clauses of this Treaty had become inapplicable as from July 3, 1962.

The Treaty came into force on 24 August 1949, after the deposition of the ratifications of all signatory states.
NATO Today

NATO today consists of 26 member states.

Including Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Rep, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

The Evolving Strategic Environment:

The Alliance operates in an environment of continuing change. Developments in recent years have been generally positive, but uncertainties and risks remain which can develop into acute crises. Within this evolving context, NATO has played an essential part in strengthening Euro-Atlantic security since the end of the Cold War.

In parallel, NATO has successfully adapted to enhance its ability to contribute to Euro-Atlantic peace and stability. Internal reform has included a new command structure, including the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept, the creation of arrangements to permit the rapid deployment of forces for the full range of the Alliance's missions, and the building of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) within the Alliance.

The United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the Western European Union (WEU) have made distinctive contributions to Euro-Atlantic security and stability. Mutually reinforcing organizations have become a central feature of the security environment.

Security Challenges and Risks

Notwithstanding positive developments in the strategic environment and the fact that large-scale conventional aggression against the Alliance is highly unlikely, the possibility of such a threat emerging over the longer term exists. The security of the Alliance remains subject to a wide variety of military and non-military risks which are multi-directional and often difficult to predict. These risks include uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area and the possibility of regional crises at the periphery of the Alliance, which could evolve rapidly. Some countries in and around the Euro-Atlantic area face serious economic, social and political difficulties. Ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, and the dissolution of states can lead to local and even regional instability. The resulting tensions could lead to crises affecting Euro-Atlantic stability, to human suffering, and to armed conflicts. Such conflicts could affect the security of the Alliance by spilling over into neighbouring countries, including NATO countries, or in other ways, and could also affect the security of other states.
The existence of powerful nuclear forces outside the Alliance also constitutes a significant factor which the Alliance has to take into account if security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area are to be maintained. Also, the proliferation of NBC weapons and their means of delivery remains a matter of serious concern.

The Approach to Security in the 21st Century

The Alliance is committed to a broad approach to security, which recognises the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors in addition to the indispensable defense dimension. This broad approach forms the basis for the Alliance to accomplish its fundamental security tasks effectively, and its increasing effort to develop effective cooperation with other European and Euro-Atlantic organizations as well as the United Nations. Our collective aim is to build a European security architecture in which the Alliance's contribution to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area and the contribution of these other international organizations are complementary and mutually reinforcing, both in deepening relations among Euro-Atlantic countries and in managing crises. NATO remains the essential forum for consultation among the Allies and the forum for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defense commitments of its members under the Washington Treaty.

The Transatlantic Link

NATO is committed to a strong and dynamic partnership between Europe and North America in support of the values and interests they share. The security of Europe and that of North America are indivisible. Thus the Alliance's commitment to the indispensable transatlantic link and the collective defense of its members is fundamental to its credibility and to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic.

The European Security and Defense Identity

The Alliance, which is the foundation of the collective defense of its members and through which common security objectives will be pursued wherever possible, remains committed to a balanced and dynamic transatlantic partnership. The European Allies have taken decisions to enable them to assume greater responsibilities in the security and defense field in order to enhance the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area and thus the security of all Allies. On the basis of decisions taken by the Alliance, in Berlin in 1996 and subsequently, the European Security and Defense Identity will continue to be developed within NATO. This process will require close cooperation between NATO, the WEU and, if and when appropriate, the European Union. It will enable all European Allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities
of the Alliance as an expression of our shared responsibilities; it will reinforce the transatlantic partnership; and it will assist the European Allies to act by themselves as required through the readiness of the Alliance, on a case-by-case basis and by consensus, to make its assets and capabilities available for operations in which the Alliance is not engaged militarily under the political control and strategic direction either of the WEU or as otherwise agreed, taking into account the full participation of all European Allies if they were so to choose.

Enlargement

The Alliance remains open to new members under Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. It expects to extend further invitations in coming years to nations willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and as NATO determines that the inclusion of these nations would serve the overall political and strategic interests of the Alliance, strengthen its effectiveness and cohesion, and enhance overall European security and stability. To this end, NATO has established a programme of activities to assist aspiring countries in their preparations for possible future membership in the context of its wider relationship with them. No European democratic country whose admission would fulfil the objectives of the Treaty will be excluded from consideration.

The Euro-Atlantic Partnership

Growing security challenges make it ever more vital for NATO Allies and their Partners to work closely together.

At the Prague Summit, NATO and Partner countries expressed their commitment to building a truly common security architecture based on the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and Partnership for Peace (PfP).

These initiatives were set up after the end of the Cold War and have played a significant role in increasing stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. They are now being strengthened to address today's security challenges.

A Double Framework: Cooperation for Stability

The two parallel partnerships, which involve the same countries and uphold the same democratic values, have distinct but complementary functions:

The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) is a body for consultation in which the 46 NATO member states and Partners meet regularly to consider cooperation activities and current political and security questions.
The Partnership for Peace (PFP) is based on bilateral relations between the Alliance and individual participating countries, focusing chiefly on practical cooperation. In particular, PFP activities help Partners build forces capable of participating in peacekeeping operations alongside NATO troops.

**The PFP**

The Partnership for Peace (PFP) is chiefly aimed at defense cooperation and is the operational side of the Partnership framework, designed to reinforce stability and reduce the risk of conflict.

Since its creation in 1994 it has been joined by 30 countries, ten of which have since become members of the Alliance.

Interoperability at the centre of partnership

The PFP’s main task is to increase the participants’ ability to act in concert. Through various mechanisms it helps Partner countries prepare to operate jointly with NATO forces.

In practice

The key contribution of the PFP is establishing a real dialogue between NATO and each participant.

Joint activities and regular consultation improve transparency in national defense planning and budgeting, encourage democratic control of the armed forces and help nations equip and train to operate at the Alliance’s side, generally furthering the democratic values at the heart of NATO's partnership policy.

A two-year Individual Partnership Programme (IPP) is established between each Partner country and NATO. In each case, it draws on the wide range of activities described in the Partnership Work Programme, from purely military cooperation to fields such as crisis management, peacekeeping, civil emergency planning, air traffic management and armaments, according to the specific interests and requirements of each nation.

The PFP Planning and Review Process (PARP) assesses Partners’ capabilities for multinational training, exercises and operations with Alliance forces. The countries concerned undertake to provide a wide range of information covering their defense policies, progress in democratic control of the forces and relevant financial and economic plans. The Alliance provides guidance on interoperability and required capabilities.

Joint projects

A PFP trust fund supports the safe destruction of stockpiled antipersonnel mines and other munitions. Each project is led by a NATO member and partner country which are responsible for its implementation and the organization of funding. The funding is provided by the countries which wish to join the project.
Increasing Partner Participation

Various steps are currently being taken to also enhance the operational and decision-making roles of Partners.

A special Political-Military Framework (PMF) allows Partner involvement in political consultation and decision-making, operational planning and building forces for NATO-led PFP operations.

An Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC) also helps to assemble multinational forces for crises.

NATO-Russia Relations

NATO member states and Russia regularly consult on current security issues and are developing practical cooperation in a wide range of areas of common interest.

The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established in May 2002 as the main forum for advancing NATO-Russia relations, in which the 26 Allies and Russia work together as equal partners to identify and pursue opportunities for joint action.

The decision to establish the NRC was taken in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, which reinforced the need for coordinated action to respond to common threats. It signalled the determination to give the NATO-Russia partnership new impetus and substance, and demonstrated the shared resolve of NATO member states and Russia to work more closely together towards the common goal of building a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic Area.

This goal was first expressed in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, which provides the formal basis for NATO-Russia relations.

What does this mean in practice?

The Allies and Russia will not always agree on everything and differences remain on some issues, which may take time to resolve. However, the driving force between the new spirit of cooperation is the realisation that they share strategic priorities and face common challenges.

In the framework of the NRC, Russia and NATO member states are developing a continuous political dialogue on current security issues. Constructive political consultations have been held on issues, such as the situation in Afghanistan, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and the “Greater Middle East” concept. Practical cooperation, directed by the NRC and developed through various subordinate working groups and committees, is already generating concrete benefits in many key areas.
To facilitate cooperation, Russia has established a diplomatic mission to NATO and Russian Military Branch Offices have been set up at NATO’s two top military command headquarters. In Moscow, a NATO Information Office seeks to explain NATO and promote the benefits of the NATO-Russia partnership, and a Military Liaison Mission is helping improve transparency and coordination on the military side.

NATO-Russia relations formally began in 1991 at the inaugural session of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council), which was created following the end of the Cold War as a forum for consultation to foster a new cooperative relationship with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It was actually while this meeting was taking place that the Soviet Union dissolved. A few years later, in 1994, Russia joined the Partnership for Peace programme – a major programme of practical security and defense cooperation between NATO and individual Partner countries.

The NATO-Russia Council is the principal structure and venue for advancing the relationship between NATO and Russia. It has created several working groups and committees to develop cooperation in key areas.

**NATO – Russia Council**

Cooperation between Russia and NATO member states is directed by the NRC and developed through various subordinate working groups and committees. Key areas include the fight against terrorism, crisis management, theatre missile defense, non-proliferation, military-to-military cooperation and defense reform. Collaboration is also being taken forward in the areas of airspace management, logistics, civil emergency planning, scientific cooperation and environmental security.

The struggle against terrorism and new security threats are key areas of cooperation that are generating some of the first tangible results of the reinforced NATO-Russia relationship. Joint assessments of specific terrorist threats in the Euro-Atlantic area are being developed and kept under review.

Three high-level conferences – in Rome and Moscow in 2002 and in Norfolk in April 2004 – have explored the role of the military in combating terrorism, generating recommendations for ways to develop practical military cooperation in this area.

Specific aspects of combating terrorism are a key focus of activities in many areas of cooperation under the NRC, such as civil emergency planning, non-proliferation, airspace management, theatre missile defense, defense reform and scientific cooperation.
NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue

Meeting in Istanbul, NATO leaders decided to elevate the Alliance’s Mediterranean Dialogue to a genuine partnership and to launch the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative with selected countries in the broader region of the Middle East.

NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue has successfully contributed to confidence-building and cooperation between NATO and its seven Mediterranean partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

The enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue will contribute to regional security and stability. At the same time Alliance leaders decided to reach out to the broader region of the Middle East through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, by promoting practical bilateral cooperation with interested countries of the region, starting with countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

This Initiative aims at enhancing security and stability through a new transatlantic engagement, offering tailored advice on defense reform, defense budgeting, defense planning and civil-military relations, promoting military-to-military cooperation to contribute to interoperability, fighting terrorism through information sharing and maritime cooperation, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means and fighting illegal trafficking.
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