
NATO – strategic concept and global partnerships

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Abstract

The Alliance needs to differentiate between types of partners by reviewing their grouping. The deteriorating security environment in the Middle East and North Africa has forced NATO to focus on its southern flank. In view of the deepening relations between Russia and China, it can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that both countries are a threat to security. NATO's Strategic Vision Documents and the Medium- and Long-Term Partnership Challenges assess a set of criteria derived from them. The work on the new strategic concept provides a very good opportunity to prioritize models of cooperation, such as those that NATO has with the Asia-Pacific Quartet. The Alliance can be much more effective than relying solely on bilateral cooperation.

Key words: NATO, partnerships, security, strategy.

Introduction

Due to the deteriorating security environment, it has made it imperative for NATO to focus on its southern flank. The Alliance should distinguish between the types of partners by reviewing their grouping – with which it can establish deeper ties and with which fewer deep ones. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, as well as the build-up of significant forces along the Alliance's eastern border, there has been an urgent need to respond to security threats in the Euro-Atlantic area. The relative weight of the Partners and the changing challenges require more in-depth scrutiny before adopting NATO's new Strategic Concept. Partnerships can be risky for both the Alliance and the partner. There are several types of risk to NATO – political risk, risk to their forces and risk of regime change. In order to keep partnerships flexible on a specific issue, an alternative is to remove the existing PAG nomenclature.

Materials and Methods

The materials for this article are publicly available in the Internet space. In such a manner, the subject of the research and the sources for its construction are the same, which is a good fundament for the recognizable position for the expecting results.

The main method of research is to review and analyze some publicly available expert points on NATO's security policies on the Internet. Their brief presentation in the article aims to achieve the main goals, namely much more active discussion and adoption of the new strategic concept and counteraction to current and future challenges facing the Alliance.

Results and Discussion

The method proposed below for presenting the Internet resources is valuable for the following reasons – review and analysis of the information and projection of the response to the challenges facing Europe and NATO, as well as the visible specialization of the various electronic platforms.

NATO – Strategic Concept and Global Partnerships

The proposal for a discussion based on a new NATO 2030 strategic concept proposes that the Alliance become more politically active and global, along with strengthening its military might (Johns

Hopkins University Press, 2017). This proposal also draws attention to NATO's global partnerships, which include Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Colombia, New Zealand, Afghanistan and Pakistan, i.e. NATO partners around the world (PAG). Due to NATO's changing strategic goals, maintaining the status "quo vis-à-vis" global partnerships are not advisable. In the context of changing goals, NATO can eliminate the World Nomenclature (PAG) and be much more flexible in its partnerships with regard to specific issues. The Alliance could differentiate between types of partners by reviewing their grouping – with which it can establish deeper and less deep ties, such as the institutionalization of the Asia-Pacific Quartet instead of an informal platform for cooperation. In this way, NATO could follow the "NATO 30 + n" model, which will include working with a specific group of partners on various issues (Gorana, G. NDC Policy Brief No. 16-21, October 19, 2021).

The Alliance's drive to become more global stems mainly from operational considerations and is driven by a desire to make a greater contribution to NATO operations, greater interoperability, greater political legitimacy and greater trade interests (Gorana, G. NDC Policy Brief No. 13, July 21, 2021; Trine, F., 2014; Andrea, G., Marc, O. & Thierry, T. NDC Research Paper No. 17, February, 2021). Following Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine, as well as the build-up of significant forces along the Alliance's eastern border, there has been an urgent need to respond to security threats in the Euro-Atlantic area. All this replaced the focus after 9/11, which shifted from counter-terrorism operations to operations in the region (NATO Defense College, June 14, 2021). The deteriorating security environment in the Middle East and North Africa has forced NATO to focus on its southern flank. This has recently led some analysts to question the deepening of cooperation with a number of global partners, with whom they believe cooperation has declined significantly (Stephan, F. & Benjamin, S., 2011).

The basis of the new NATO 2030 Strategic Concept challenges these assessments, and the vision is to establish a more active global partnership as an agenda. Strengthening cooperation with countries with which the Alliance agrees focuses on both deepening existing partnerships and expanding the scope of the PAG, with an emphasis on the political dimension of the Alliance. So far, NATO's PAG partners have a middle ground between NATO member states and contact countries, along with other initiatives, but these arrangements date back to the enlargement of the 1990s and the operational imperatives of the 2000s, some of which are largely non-existent or non-functioning and are called "zombie" groups (such as the EAPC) (NATO policy staff). In 2014, NATO launched the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) to improve the quality of partners' contributions to NATO-led operations, missions and exercises. Under the Partnership for Enhanced Opportunities (EOP) program, additional opportunities have been offered for the cooperation of six new countries: Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, Sweden and Ukraine (NATO Defense College, June 14, 2021), and according to NATO representatives, there is no hierarchy between the partners (NATO policy staff). For the time being, the PAG does not act as a comprehensive platform for cooperation with Partner countries, but as a general category that does not fit into the countries' partnership with NATO. Coordination between the countries of the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea) offers extremely different opportunities and levels of compatibility with NATO objectives.

The relative weight of the Partners and the changing challenges call for further scrutiny before the adoption of NATO's new Strategic Concept, with the Alliance remaining focused on the PAG's geostrategic sphere. It is safe to assume that in both the new strategic concept and the Alliance's political interests, he will continue to see Russia as a threat to Euro-Atlantic security, while China will be presented as a strategic challenge given its growing strength and influence (NATO Defense College, June 14, 2021). In view of the deepening relations between Russia and China, it can be assumed with a high degree of certainty that both countries are a threat to security. Their actions in recent months confirm this thesis. Partner countries have a very important role to play in adopting common positions in response to actions that often stem from areas outside the transatlantic space but have serious negative consequences for it. NATO's Strategic Vision Documents and the Medium- and Long-Term Partnership Challenges assess a set of criteria derived from them. The criteria include the Partner's willingness to join NATO's new

strategic concept, and this is related to its position “vis-à-vis” China, its political relevance and its potential contribution to issues identified by NATO as a top priority.

Modern strategic and operational planning frameworks offer useful tools for analyzing the value of partnerships (Mike, F., 2018). All this is a clear signal to potential future NATO partners, as well as to countries with different priorities that can implement them in a way that could have adverse consequences for NATO. A country is more likely to want to become a partner country or maintain a partnership with NATO if its political security goals are in line with those of the Alliance (Stephen, B. October 1, 2017). In grouping the PAG, first of all, the desire of each country to coordinate more closely the Alliance’s stated position on China as a strategic challenge must be assessed, taking into account the region’s history and culture, the performance of bilateral relations and domestic policy. Observing the contribution of the partners, in many cases there is an overestimation of their military capabilities.

Assessments of a country’s military power are increasingly being assessed not only as capabilities through the types of troops, the quantity and quality of military force, but also as the ability and capacity to use them (NATO policy staff). Ultimately, assessments of potential contribution must combine and include diplomatic capabilities, the partner’s experience in resolving security crises, the infrastructure owned, and their geographical location. Partners with significant diplomatic capabilities, as well as those with experience in dealing with crisis issues and responding to the challenges facing NATO, have been recognized as critical. In this sense, it can be concluded that those who are local and established in a particular region have an advantage over those who are not.

The partnership can pose a risk to both the Alliance and the partner. There are several types of risk to NATO – political risk, risk to their forces and risk of regime change. Political risk must always be taken into account, which is related to the internal perception in allied countries and the perception in the international community of coordination with a particular country. With regard to the risk of hostilities, the assessment shall include the potential risk to the forces located in the area, which may be expressed in the likelihood of personnel being wounded or killed or equipment destroyed. The last risk, the regime risk – determines the appropriateness and is based on the probability of regime change, which can lead to a major change in policy. A regime change leads to a new government that may be hostile to the Alliance or at least slow down relations. In this sense, engaging with established democracies is always preferable than working with other types of regimes.

Then, when a particular country wants to be a partner of the Alliance, the first thing it has to do is declare that desire, which ends with the signing of a partnership agreement. In order to sign such an agreement, it is appropriate to analyze in advance the potential contribution of this partnership to NATO, as is the case with the nine current PAG countries. The analysis relies on indicators such as diplomatic power, military capabilities and experience in resolving crisis problems in terms of security, infrastructure and location, as well as the political risk of the possibility of regime change.

Such an analysis shows that each of the partners has a different position on its value to the Alliance, with some obvious groups of countries. For example, the Asia-Pacific Quartet shows a high level of alignment with NATO’s political goals and offers potential contributions given their high-income status and political power, while Pakistan is becoming increasingly unsuitable as a close partner due to internal instability and closer ties with China. Mongolia and Colombia show moderate compatibility and relevance in the context of their partnership with the Alliance. The partnerships built during the Middle East crisis are not entirely suited to the new challenges facing NATO today. Not all PAG partners have the same attitude towards the new set of strategic goals, when much better coordination is required between them in response to the challenges coming from China and Russia. Partners must contribute with their efforts to the conventional military cooperation. If the Alliance’s commitment is to become more political and global in its approach, it would be good to reconsider the grouping of PAGs and distinguish between the types of partners that can help in pursuing these goals.

A very good opportunity to prioritize models of cooperation, such as those that NATO has with the Asia-Pacific Quartet, provides work on the new strategic concept. The Alliance can be much more effective in this situation than relying solely on bilateral cooperation. This is the direction that the Alliance has taken over the last two years, and there are grounds for further institutionalization. The recent

announcement of the AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-United States) Security Partnership, as well as the first formal summit of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Japan, India and Australia, has sparked controversy, but further evidence that mini-coalitions are the preferred mode of security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Conclusions

Partners who are not fully in line with NATO's strategic vision may be encouraged to cooperate more deeply and continue to work with the Alliance. Such partnerships should not be underestimated, as they may remain largely unfulfilled. NATO must avoid such an end result.

In order to keep partnerships flexible on a specific issue, the alternative is to remove the existing PAG nomenclature. This is called the "NATO 30 + n" model, where "n" means "anyone who is interested" (NATO policy staff). This model of cooperation is in favor of building broad coalitions on specific issues, but can be difficult to implement from an institutional point of view. For countries wishing to cooperate with NATO, evaluation tools are available to determine the benefits of potential new partnerships. However, in the context of the discussion of the new strategic concept, the question remains to be seen whether the individual allies will recognize this as an item on the union's agenda that is worth pursuing. Unfortunately, due to the desire to keep regional groups in the shape of the 1990s, the status quo is often presented as a preferred option and does not demonstrate a desire for reform, even if it would be to the detriment of NATO and its future burden in the world.

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