NATO Essay, Research Paper

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been a silent partner on the world

stage for more than half of the century and the most successful

political-military alliance in history. The United Nations and their

peacekeeping efforts have had the spotlight for the past few years. However the

driving force behind any successful agreement or, if needed, action on the part

of several countries has been because of the strong foundation and experience of

NATO and its members. The following report will chronicle the events leading up

to the creation of NATO, its first decade, the constant struggle with communism

in the decades that proceed, and finally the challenges for NATO today and in

the future. In the years after World War II, a new threat encroached upon the

leaders of Western Europe and their hopes of a stable peace. This threat would

be from the growing dominance of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

in Eastern Europe. The USSR had an increasing appetite for the smaller countries

to her west. These aggressive demands for territory and the placing of

installations in taken countries fueled the fears of many that the USSR was

marching toward a third world war. Britain and France, not wanting to make the

mistake again of appeasing this new menace until it was too late, developed the

Dunkirk Treaty in 1947. This treaty in essence pledged a common defense against

any aggression. The USSR answered this by creating a European Communist

organization called the Cominform and it rejected the European Recovery Program,

which is commonly known as the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan, named for the

US Secretary of State, was basically a financial bailout for the European

nations. These nations were starving because of the slow and near stopping of

the coal and agricultural industries after WWII. The US offered millions of

dollars to all of Europe to aid in rebuilding for four reasons. First, Europe

had been a great marketplace imports and exports for the US. Second,

historically West Germany had been an industrial hub and needed to be brought

back to tip-top shape to buffer the expanding USSR. Third, with its increasing

mass the USSR was becoming a rival to the US. Lastly, without this aid Western

Europe might look to the USSR for help, which would make life a lot tougher for

American interests. The year of 1948 was pivotal for Europe. In February, the

Communists in Prague staged a coup d?etat and the spring brought the beginning

of the Cold War. Immediately after WWII, Germany was divided in to occupation

zones by Britain, France, the US, and USSR. The capital of Germany at the time

was Berlin, which happened to fall in the Soviet zone. The governing

administration located in Berlin fell, because of the obvious reason of ?too

many cooks spoil the broth?. When this happened, the USSR demanded that Berlin

become solely part of the Soviet zone, since its status as capital was ruined.

The USSR enforced this ruling by blockading all land routes into and tried to

force the other powers out of its respective sectors of Berlin. Eventually the

Berlin Blockade was squelched by a military airlift that lasted the rest of the

year. The city still remained divided and became known as East (Soviet

controlled) and West Berlin. This transgression on the part of the USSR prompted

negotiations between Western Europe, the US and Canada that resulted in the

North Atlantic Treaty. The language of the North Atlantic Treaty originally

consisted of its preamble and fourteen articles. The preamble states that

members will promote common values and will ?unite their efforts for a

collective defense.? The key article of the North Atlantic Treaty is number

five (it?s the one that inspired my title) it reads, ?The Parties agree that

an armed attack against one or more of them?shall be considered an attack

against them all.? Another interesting article is the last one, number

fourteen, and it calls for the deposition of the official copies of the treaty

to be kept in the US Archives. The US already was establishing itself as the

dominant member of an organization that is supposed to be based on equal

responsibility. After the ratification of this treaty the structure of the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began. The highest policy-making body in

NATO is the North Atlantic Council, which met in Paris until 1967. The council

composed of permanent delegates from all members was responsible for general

policy, budgetary outlines, intergovernmental consultation and administrative

actions. There are two main temporary committees that answer directly to the

council. Those are the Secretariat, which handles non-military functions of the

alliance (economic, scientific, cultural, and environmental issues), and the

Military Committee or the Defense Planning Committee (DPC), which consists of

the chiefs of staff of the various armed forces. They meet to discuss military

policies, develop defense plans for their respective areas, determine the force

requirements, and deploy and exercise the forces under their command. The forces

directly below the DPC are the Allied Commands Europe (was first headed by

Eisenhower), Atlantic, and Channel and the Regional Planning Group (for North

America). To assist in carrying out their global roles, the council and the DPC

have established committees to deal with emergencies and the new threat of

nuclear power. They meet only in a dire situation. However, until the outbreak

of the Korean War in 1950, NATO had no real military structure. The Korean War

was at first perceived as part of a worldwide Communist offensive beginning in

the divided Germany. This perspective lead to the NATO military force that was

explained in the preceding paragraph. Within NATO?s first decade the main

military and security forces have come from the US. Along with this the US was

depended on for the revival of Europe?s economy and polity. The Korean War

also brought an overall expansion of the organization. By 1955, Greece, Turkey,

and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) had entered as members. The

only provisions for West Germany was not allowed to manufacture NBC (nuclear,

biological, and chemical) weapons. With the rearmament of West Germany in

progress, the USSR and her allies decided to created a treaty organization of

their own. The Warsaw Pact, signed in 1955, combined to powers of Albania,

Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and of course

the USSR. The members of this communist alliance were under strict control of

the soviets headquartered in Moscow. Key posts in these satellite countries were

usually ran by soviet-born or soviet-trained officers and all their equipment

was standardized to the regulations of the USSR. The structure of the Warsaw

Treaty Organization (WTO) was similar to NATO. Two major bodies carried out the

policies of the pact. The first was the Political Consultative Committee, which

handled all activities except military, and the Unified Command of Pact Armed

Forces, which had authority over the troops assigned to certain members. On

paper you can see the similarities, but the USSR rule with absolute dominance.

When members tried to break away or try to join NATO, the consequences were

terrifying. In 1956, Hungary tried to withdrawal from the WTO; the USSR took

unilateral military action against the revolt killing 200,000 people. Another

member state, Czechoslovakia attempted to leave and was swiftly forced back by a

soviet invasion. Albania seemed to find a way out, because of their alliance

with China and some other ideological reasons, and broke off in 1968. With the

USSR?s undeniable stranglehold on its neighboring countries in place, the race

began for total superiority on the global scene over the US and her allies. The

main gauge for this was nuclear weapon advances and stockpiles. Who could have

the biggest and best in the shortest amount of time and who would dare to use it

first? These pressing questions tainted the next three decades and worried some

of the other NATO members that the US wouldn?t honor their pledge if the USSR

were to do the unspeakable to Western Europe. NATO members tried to keep a

positive perspective, but several events caused a sense of dissatisfaction of

its worth by the end of the sixties. To begin the decade off the USSR officially

blockaded their side of Berlin by erecting the ?wall?. At first the Berlin

Wall consisted only of barbed wire, but people were ?escaping? to East

Germany, so an actual concrete wall was constructed with all the bells and

whistles, like checkpoints with armed guards and minefields. The people of East

Germany were prisoners in their own country and were not allowed to contact or

visit family. In addition, the withdrawal of France, one of the founding

members, in 1966 by President Charles de Gaulle sent shock waves through the

organization. Although they continued to contribute to the alliance, they left

the governing duties to the other members. Also NATO was pressured by the

smaller nation-states to be come members and that would take a lot of funding,

time, and focus away from the problems in Eastern Europe. One of the main

factors of the late sixties and early seventies was America?s involvement in

the Vietnam War. This horrifying war sapped the US economy, morale, and foreign

policy prowess. Although the 1970s began with the Strategic Arms Limitation

Talks (SALT I), this decade created more disillusionment by world powers as the

Soviets continued to rapidly stock their military and nuclear arsenals. In 1979,

NATO initiated a dual-track program where new defense efforts were coupled with

new efforts in reconciliation and cooperation. Unfortunately, the steps taken by

both sides were small and uneventful and usually were retracted within a short

time. This brings us to the Reagan years, the eighties, and to the closest

watched political tug-a-war in years. This decade opened with a deepening crisis

and in 1983 the USSR failed to prevent the deployment of intermediate-range

ballistic missiles, sent to counteract the ones they had pointed a Europe?s

major cites. It is possible to say that NATO help greatly in dissuading the USSR

from following through on attacking Western Europe. The ?game? had gotten

deadly serious and in 1987 both sides agreed to talks. Out of these talks came

the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty, which not only gave people a

sense of relief across the world it also began the breakdown of the Warsaw Pact

and the WTO. The change in the wind prompted the Berlin Wall that separated a

people for over twenty-five years to be torn down and Germany was finally

reunified. The late eighties to the mid-nineties finally saw the beginning of

the end to the Cold War. This time also showed the world the success of NATO and

the unified efforts of its members in meeting the challenge of the Communists

and the WTO. NATO had finally shown itself to be a viable source for

communication and resolution between factions instead of war. That became more

evident in the 1990s, with the continued depletion of nuclear arsenals on both

sides, the dissolving of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, and the continued duties to

help return the countries of Eastern Europe to normalcy. An example of this is

evident in Bosnia/Herzegovina and Kosovo. These areas and people have been able

to strengthen their nationalistic feeling with both encouraging and disastrous

results. Through the efforts of the UN and NATO forces a peaceful conclusion may

be in the future for this troubled culture. The organization has already placed

in the works the inclusion of the Czech Republic (formerly part of

Czechoslovakia), Hungary, and Poland. These talks are setting the stage for

NATO?s most significant expansion. These countries will need modern military

training, upgrades on their communications, command, and air defense systems at

an estimated cost of between $25 and $35 billion over thirteen years. The

members of NATO pay out this money, the US share being approximately $200

million over ten years. There was a time that even the thought of these

countries entering NATO peacefully was unheard of. These new members make

NATO?s interests in the Balkans even more timely. Over the past few years, the

establishment of a long-term stability in the Balkans has fallen on NATO?s

already overweighed shoulders. The former Yugoslavia is one area of Europe where

the end of the cold war has not brought about the general trend towards

openness, democracy and integration that we have seen elsewhere. Ending this

anomaly will mean looking beyond the time frame of NATO?s Stabilization Force

in Bosnia. Once the parties realize that settling differences peacefully and

democratically really is the only viable option, then Bosnia and other countries

in the region will have the right to the fullest integration into the

international community. In Kosovo, where the world community is facing

humanitarian, political and legal dilemmas, a solution must be found that allows

the Ethnic Albanians more autonomy within the confines of the Federal Republic

of Yugoslavia. In finding such a solution, we must avoid a situation where moral

considerations are pitted against international law. And we must remember that a

security policy that doesn?t take as its point of reference the needs of

humanity, risks suffering the worst possible fate- a slide into irrelevance. In

Kosovo?s immediate neighborhood, NATO has helped to provide hope and some

stability, as well as assistance in coping with the refugees in Albania and

Macedonia. The latter country is hosting a NATO extraction force, ready to

support the verification mission deployed in Kosovo. Hopefully, the prospect of

long-term stability, coupled with the desire for economic benefits, will draw

the entire Balkans back into the European mainstream. None of this will happen

without NATO continued belief in ?collective security?. To deal with these

challenges, there is a need for further improvements in the inter-operability

and sustainability of alliance forces. The future of NATO lies in having rapidly

deployable capabilities to fulfill an increasing range of missions. The military

forces of NATO allies will need to be on the same wavelength; able to move

effectively and quickly, to communicate with one another- service to service, as

well as ally to ally- in a world where information technologies are becoming

part of the modern soldier?s basic kit. Trying to stay as current as possible

on NATO?s movements is not an easy job these days. Every hour seems to bring a

new page to NATO?s illustrious history. We can only sit back and watch the

further developments in the Balkan region and in the other ?hotspots? around

the world, like Korea, Rwanda, India, and even within the NATO members

themselves. Other important issues approach on the horizon that will strongly

effect NATO, the unification of Europe, China?s threats to security and the

questions of a possible global peace in the millenium. Can NATO meet these

challenges? Can it evolve in the shadow of the Cold War? The next few years will

unfold an exciting chapter in the history of the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization.

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