

Carmen ARDELEAN

NATO 3.0: FROM EURO-ATLANTIC TO GLOBAL COVERAGE
A Multicultural Approach

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The Author

FOREWORD

The North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been an important actor on the international stage for almost 65 years. Born out of the need to maintain and protect democracy in Europe against the communist expansion and the potentially aggressive hegemonic intentions of the Soviet Union in the new context of the Cold War, NATO survived through difficult times, outlasted its socialist counterpart – the Warsaw Pact – and even found sufficient resources to adapt its short- and long-term strategy to the post-Cold War period, thereby surprising most political analysts and theorists who had predicted its demise.

For any researcher in the field of International Relations and Security Studies all the above represent as many reasons to start on a long journey of study, in order to discover the inner mechanisms that justify NATO's continuing validity and potential sources of efficiency in the future years. Since world politics undergo continuous changes, while periods of peace alternate with times of conflict, the usefulness of an international military structure is obvious, but must not be taken for granted in the absence of complex institutionalization and political involvement. Throughout the years, NATO has managed to create such solid structures and to shift from a mainly military relevance to a complex, well trained organization – or *alliance*, as it is commonly known – whose members are also trained for peacekeeping, crisis management or humanitarian and civilian emergency protection operations.

Even today, NATO continues to expand even beyond the borders of Europe, the continent that it had initially vowed to protect. While maintaining a strong, multi-level relationship with both members and non-members of the European Union, NATO is now asserting its global role through its “*global partnerships' network*” – a necessary step forward from the set of partnerships established with European countries, as well as the continuation of a *global, long-term strategy* which, in the opinion of the author herein, started with the Enlargement project.

As a result, the present study starts from the hypothesis that there is a close connection between these two projects and that the Enlargement was conceived, from the very beginning, as a *transition* towards the global action phase. As explained in the chapter dedicated to the Enlargement project: “It is the strong belief of the author of this study that, in its bid to acquire worldwide strategic, as well as political acknowledgement, NATO’s *Enlargement Project* was conceived as a transitional phase towards further, deeper involvement in solving political and military crises at a wider level – one that was signalled by the “global partners’ network” agreed upon during the 2012 Chicago Summit. At the same time, the cohesion between Euro-Atlantic allies continues to be relevant, in spite of a number of case-by-case disagreements (e.g. the War in Iraq) which may have looked, at the time, as potential reasons for breaking the alliance. *Political cohesion* between allies itself is not a given fact, but rather *a process* in continuous change, which calls for adjustment proportionally with the events taking place on the international stage.”

The relevance of both the Enlargement and the global partners’ network projects is debated by assessing the existing data according to the significance of two basic concepts – those of *convergence* and *divergence*. The *convergence* of purpose, action and means between the members of any alliance or organization is considered critical in maintaining its relevance worldwide. At the same time, a certain degree of *divergence* is inherent in the case of an inter-state organization having the size and multitude of goals such as NATO’s.

If “*convergence*” can be judged in a unitary way, “*divergence*” is used in this study in *both its meanings*: on the one hand, as a “*source of conflict*” (as explained with respect to potential risks and threats acting in the geographical areas which the new partners belong to, in Chapter III) and, on the other hand – and more significantly – as a “*departure*” from a common root or direction, which nevertheless does not result in breaking up the alliance. This approach could account for the solidity of the relationship between NATO and the European Union, one in which the weight of common projects largely exceeds the temporary dissatisfaction of either side, with reference to specific issues. However, whether or not these convergent interests will remain valid in the future decades remains to be seen; the

wisdom of national and organizational leaders will be called upon to find the right answer to this question.

It is also the belief of the author herein that NATO does have a good chance of continuing its mission at global level, due to the “small steps” policy which has marked its evolution, starting with the 1995 Study on Enlargement. By expanding its potential for action (through a constant involvement of the military and civilian forces of partner states, according to their respective means and abilities) and on account of its experience and know-how accumulated in so many years, the Alliance will, no doubt, get a chance to verify its validity in its actions against the new unconventional, asymmetrical and cross-border threats, or even in solving the nuclear threat arising from new actors aiming to assert their hegemonic hopes at regional level.

For the moment, the existing literature speaks little about the global partnerships’ network established during the 2012 Chicago Summit, so much so due to its being a “work-in-progress” that still needs confirmation for a more thorough theoretical approach. Authors continue to treat NATO Enlargement and said partnerships as two separate topics. It is our hope that, by underlying the close connection between these two projects, the present study will open the door for other directions of research in the years to come, on the basis of this new perspective.

