THE ALTERATION OF NATO AFTER THE COLD WAR

AUTHOR
Levent YİĞİTTEPE

May 2013
The alteration in NATO’s policies after Cold War

USA president George Bush and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics president Mihail Gorbakov, who negotiated in Malta in 3 November 1989, declared the end of the Cold War. The demolish of Berlin War in 1989 and after that Varşova agreement and the dissolution of Soviet Union brought some new directions to the studies of NATO in terms of political and military aspects. Together with the dissolution of Soviet Union, it is highly discussed that the establishment of another union, called as Community of Independent States, whose states are loosely bound to each other, would not form the desired power. As after the dissolution of Soviet Union, the collective threat would be eliminated, what will be the function of NATO in the future?

The new situation is the point where it is wondered that how NATO will react to the possible offences. In post-war period, there had been many local and personal conflicts and subsequent wars instead of the collective threat of Varşova agreement. In local and personal conflicts, generally, at least initially, the member states, who would be subject to the offence, would be able to cope with this offence, so there could be some hesitation, delay and loosening in the reactions of NATO.

On the other hand, in December 1987, an agreement was signed in Washington, INF agreement (Eliminating Medium Range Nuclear Weapons according to NATO and Varşova Agreement), insisting on the necessity that Low Range Nuclear Nuclear Forces stay in Germany, gave a new direction to the alteration process of future strategy of NATO.

Meanwhile, the Nuclear Weapons were restricted in terms of both number and using conditions and there were seen some developments. NATO adopted the idea that “We would apply to Nuclear Weapons as the last chance” instead of the notion that “Using Nuclear Weapons firstly” which is stated in Flexible Response Strategy, presumed by MC 14/3 Strategic Concept.

While there were not exact indications, it was estimated that the events around NATO would also affect NATO also. Hence, on these days (1989-1990), it was not thought that a war,

2 Necip Torumtay, Değişen Stratejilerin Odağında Türkiye, AD Publishing, 2. Edition March 1997, İstanbul pg. 18,19
which could affect the NATO states and another bloody war in Europe the old Yugoslavia would be started.

In the light of these ideas, NATO accepted the new factor that could bring the alliance together and substitute for the old threat. This meant some concepts such as indefiniteness, instability and also chain of possibilities that covered some dark and dangerous developments would be seen in the future.

This union of perceptions was reflecting the common belief that would help the future collaboration of NATO to be established. Therefore, such values as friendship, cooperation and standardization would be developed. On the other hand, because of some insufficient measures, United Nations were subject to some criticisms, and it would be able to preserve its presence and image with the help of NATO and therefore NATO would continue to be the source of moral support not only in the both sides of Atlantic but also all around the world.

Within the framework of these approaches, NATO adopted the “Out Of Area” concept and paved the way for a collaboration in order to provide a peaceful environment for Middle Europe countries of Varšova Agreement, and therefore brought a new direction to the scope and strategy of the alliance.  

During Cold War, security was regarded as only a military aspect. After Cold War, this changed. NATO was supporting the idea that the security should be evaluated as not only a military force, but also as political, economical, humanitarian and environmental factor. This means that NATO is one of the organizations which undertake a crucial role in providing peace and security all around the world. For example, European Union is also another organization that plays a fundamental role economically. Notwithstanding NATO is still a collective defense organization. Rome summit in 1991 was giving the first signs of the changes in NATO’s policies. It established the framework of the future strategic concept.

As some constituents that were threatening the security of Europe were changed, NATO’s policies were intended to be changed. Currently, Europe regards such problems as terrorism, human smuggling, illegal migrations to the West, dangerous regimes having the weapons of mass destruction, drug and arms smugglings, poverty, income disparity, corruption, environmental pollution and unsuccessful countries, as threats to international security.

3 Necip Torumtay, a.g.e. pg.21,22
4 Rob De Wijk, a.g.e. pg. 45
Turkey recommends collaboration with its allies against the threats same as before and production of new strategies and policies that could reconstruct NATO instead of destroying it.

Turkey was a front country in the axis of West-East during Cold War period. After the war, it became a front country in the axis of South-North. In the new period, Europe will contribute to its security with its new strategic dimension.  

In 1989, Berlin Wall was destroyed and after that the two separate Germany got united. After 1 years, Varşova agreement, in the following years the dissolution of Soviet Union prompted NATO to have reconstruction. NATO, based on the principle “Protecting the territories conjointly in case of any invasion.” decided to reorganize and accepted the duty of “Keeping the peace” after these rapid changes.

The leaders of NATO members, negotiated in 5-6 July 1990 in London, issued a call to the states of Varşova agreement for a common declaration concerning the fact that these two pacts did not regard each other as enemy.  

After London summit, the presidents of sixteen countries of NATO and six countries of Varşova agreement came together in Paris in 12-21 November 1990 and stated that they did not regard each other as enemy in ‘’ New Europe’’ period. They declared that they had entered a new period of fellowship and collaboration and called this period as ‘’Paris condition for a New Europe’’ Moreover, they signed ‘’Europe Conventional Forces Treaty’’ and ‘’Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces’’ agreement.

On 7-8 November 1991, NATO leaders came together in Rome, determined the new strategy concept of NATO and issued ‘’Peace and Collaboration Declaration’’ and invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Baltic Republic, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia to the NATO meeting on 20 December 1991 in Brussels and proposed an agreement concerning politics and security. Upon this proposal, the authorities of the participating countries established the ‘’North Atlantic Treaty Organisation’’.  

7 Kemal Soyupak, a.g.e. pg. 7
Development of NATO Strategies

The changes in strategic principles of NATO alliance are brought by America. Military and economical superiority of USA and the fact that European countries gave particular importance to their economical developments and allowed USA to arrange their defence mechanisms strengthened the directive role of USA on strategy.

While USA is determining the strategy of the alliance, it regards NATO as a part of general strategy. However, the most important issue for the European countries is not a universal strategy, rather the defence strategy of Europe. In this sense, it is not surprising that there are some disagreements between America and European countries. Hence, Flexible response strategy, prepared in accordance with the targets of America drew reactions. 8

The fact that strategy bases of NATO are open to attack is an attracting factor that could draw European members of NATO paradoxically because Europe is more interested in deterring strength than firepower of nuclear weapons. 9

NATO is implementing the strategy of forward defense and flexible response. Its target is to protect the security, independence and territorial integrity of its members. In order to be protected against the attacks and to expel them with military damage is only possible with strength. The first target of conventional and nuclear forces of NATO members is to deter the invasion.

However, if this fails and one of the members is invaded, it will be necessary to determine the strategy and how the military power will be used. Flexible response is a phrase used to indicate the actions to be taken while determining this strategy. 10

In the context of newly developed strategies, Military Strategy Studies was established under the presidency of Captain Klaus Writtmann in 1990. This group was comprised of military personnel from NATO’s working staff. The aim of this group, which deployed on NATO military quarters in Belgium, is to provide balance between Eastern and Western military forces and to take precautions against the possible threats.

---

8 İlter Turan, NATO İlişkisinin Stratejik ve Siyasi Sorunları, I.Ü The School of Economics, İstanbul 1971, pg. 30
9 İlter Turan a.g.e. pg. 37
In 1991, in heads of state and governments summit in Rome, a new partnership Strategic Concept was approved. This concept constitutes a milestone for allies to be adapted to new security conditions that came up in the new period.  

**The Role of NATO After the Cold War**

The optimistic atmosphere brought by the destruction of Berlin Wall and the New World Order discourse of that time paved the way for some optimistic projections concerning the fact that military alliance organizations like NATO will be eliminated. The owners of these optimistic projections presumed that NATO will gain the characteristic of transitional period organization as EU kept on establishing its own independent defense mechanism and deactivated and constrained the role of NATO. On the other hand, the ones with realist approaches emphasized that it is inevitable that NATO’s mission would be developed in order to face the non-military threats and they were trying to enable the organization to turn into an active power from the European-based deterrent feature.

In the context of these developments, it is claimed that European sense of security turned into a versatile sense of threat, which could be coming from each region, from a perception that Europe is threatened by a powerful aggressive group in the East.

Considering the current security needs, it is seen necessary to discuss the security possibilities of 1990’s which is the period of covering the unconventional aspects of security. Increasing nuclear, chemical, technological pervasion, the threat that terrorist groups and bandit regimes would make use of these developments, economical and social instability, ethnic and religious fanaticism in international terrorism and mass migration could be considered among these new security threats.

As world public opinion tended to accuse the alliance which had seen its efforts to solve the Yugoslavia crisis insufficient, which was the most important collective security failure in Europe after Cold War period, the urgency of the problem gained importance in terms of NATO. The continuous delay of intervention in the Bosnian Crisis caused some serious discussions including the the doubts about the reliability and competence of alliance after Cold

---

11 Rob De Wijk a.g.e. pg. 40
War period. This challenging duty was managed by United Nations in order to widen and legalise it and therefore to earn the support of world public opinion.

Nevertheless, it could be seen that the criticisms brought to efficiency and reliability of NATO in the new period ignored this problem. NATO provided full support to United Nations during Bosnian operation and put its forces into action effectively in the direction of the demands of UN. Within this framework, NATO supported the embargo by means of establishing no-fly zones on both sea and land. 13

Varşova agreement countries terminated the agreement, which was established in 1955, signing the integration protocol with Europe in Brussels on 5-6 July 1991. The popular wisdom among the European countries is favoring the elimination of NATO as it carried out its aim. However, as there were instabilities and the possibility of new threats, NATO felt obliged to question its responsibilities, structure and mission.

In order to survive, NATO should have changed its responsibilities, eliminated its policies regarding Soviet Union, developed new relations and partnerships with countries and strengthen the common defense with social and economic collaboration.

Hence, in 1990’s because of some events, NATO had to survive. For example, there were some ethnic-regional conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, Soviet Union still held nuclear power, together with the instabilities, energy sources in Middle East gained importance and the instable environment in Middle Asia and Caucasia came into forefront. Therefore, NATO adapted itself to the changing conjuncture and had to change its mission and duties.

The current period is a time when there is no concrete enemy, state and ideology standing against NATO. In this period, ethnic and regional conflicts, migrations, ultra nationalism, weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, drug traffic and organized crime became the main problems of changing security environment and this factors were regarded to threaten the global economy, world peace and stability. Therefore, these factors led NATO to make conceptual changes.

NATO gave the first signals of this change in London summit in 1990 and finalized it in Rome summit on 7-8 November 1991 and ‘‘new strategy concept’’ was accepted. The new strategy concept brought about revolutionary changes in the structure, duties and

responsibilities of NATO. Besides, the new strategy concept underlined that Europe was not threatened by any forthcoming military conflict.  

NATO intervened in the developments in Middle East, provided peace and stability in the region and secured the oil benefits of its members. Kuwait invasion of Iraq on 2 August 1990 was regarded as threat to the oil incomes of such NATO members and USA, England, France and Italy. The reason why Iraq invaded Kuwait was that it saw Kuwait as a province, part of its own territories. Terms president Saddam Huseyin made this statement just after the invasion.

UN Security Council made a decision on 7 August 1990 and demanded Iraq to retreat. When Iraq did not accept it, on 17 January 1991 it is decided to intervene in Iraq. Iraq was expelled from Kuwait with a military force, which had been established with the help of such NATO countries as USA, England, France, Italy, Spain, Netherland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Greece, and half of the country was subjugated with “Mobile Striking Force”. 

NATO participated in The Gulf Crisis War in 1990 not directly, but with UN. However, after that it participated in the war in Yugoslavia directly and that meant NATO Allied Forces firstly took part in a common operation.

NATO’S conventional mission is to protect the territorial integrity and political independence, in other words “necessary defence”. However, during the process following the end of Cold War, NATO focused on such collective security duties as keeping and providing peace, humanitarian intervention. The first example of this is teh role it played in Bosnia.

On 24 March 1999, NATO initiated a long-term air operation in order to punish Serbia, which did not give up its ethnic cleansing despite all diplomatic suppression, and in order to put a stop to the humanitarian plight in Kosovo. This shows that NATO’s new duty and characteristic had become concrete. The example of Kosovo indicates a new type of intervention and war in the field of International Relations. This operation is also an implementation of the new ‘Out of Area’ concept. Also it was not necessary to receive the approval of United Nations for intervention.

16 Rob De Wijk, a.g.e. pg. 115
In accordance with the approach whose theoretical and legal framework were set by the new strategic concept, human rights violation, ethnic cleansing and genocide could not be regarded as the problems of the countries in no circumstances.

NATO is carrying out a range of projects in order to amend the security environment of Europe. Among these are enabling the military forces of Eastern Europe countries, which had just participated in the alliance, to adapt to the reforms, preparing educational programs in order to educate the redundant military personnel and providing support to mine cleaning and annihilation of armaments. Together with this, within the frame of changing priorities of the alliance after 11 September attacks, it is supporting the research projects concerning such problems as terrorism that threaten the modern community.

In today’s security conditions, NATO has not only become an organization protecting the territories of its own members but also contributed to the general stability of Europe-Atlantic region. Hence, last years, NATO was subject to an adaptation process, developed its partnership and collaboration relations and started to undertake missions in keeping peace activities without losing its own main duties and characteristics.

**Conclusion**

While the future of NATO after Cold War is being discussed, NATO proved to be an indispensable organization for Europe-Atlantic with the decisions it made and the new strategic concepts it determined.

Especially, it achieved a phenomenal success with its interventions in the conflicts in Yugoslavia after Cold War. NATO is continuing its existence with this new mission. Even though European Union countries are trying to develop defensive policies, they could not be regarded as successful. All of their efforts to maintain their security have fallen behind NATO.

NATO made important decisions against the terrorism after 11 September attacks and implemented new strategies. With this aim, it deployed a military unit in Afghanistan under the leadership of America. It developed strategies in order to fight with international terrorism and focused on eliminating terrorism. As long as a new defense organization is not established in Europe, NATO will continue its existence in order to provide security for Europe-Atlantic in future as today.

*PhD Candidate, Levent Yiğittepe*