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2022-23 IPPF Topic Primer

Resolved: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an effective model for international cooperation.

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Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), founded in 1949, served as a pillar of stability and cooperation for the United States and its European allies throughout the Cold War. A primary reason for the founding of this security alliance stemmed from the desire to deter aggression from and prevent conflict with the Soviet Union. In a 2009 interview, the influential social and political critic Noam Chomsky observed that “once the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union was beginning to collapse, that reason was gone. So, first question: why does NATO exist?” (Chomsky and Goodman). Supporters and opponents of NATO continue to debate this question as the organization evolves to confront different international challenges compared to when it was created.

Given these changing dynamics within NATO, as well as the emergence of challenges that are increasingly international in scope, this motion asks students to explore the effectiveness of NATO as a model for international cooperation.

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Since the creation of NATO over 70 years ago, the alliance and the international community have gone through three distinct phases: the transition from World War II into the Cold War; the post-Cold War environment; and the return of a confrontational Russia. NATO is a defensive alliance of 30 countries from Europe and North America. This organization's core mission is to safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries through political and military means ("NATO's Purpose"). The alliance utilizes a system of collective security to achieve this mission, whereby member states agree to defend one another against attacks by third parties (Ebright). During the Cold War, NATO operated as a deterrent against the perceived threat of the Soviet Union. The organization continued even after the dissolution of the U.S.S.R, causing its mission to evolve to include diplomatic and military activities beyond the immediate geographic area of its members into locations such as the Middle East and North Africa.

The 2022-23 IPPF motion tasks students with evaluating whether NATO is an effective model for international cooperation. The debater's job is not simply to prove if the alliance is generally desirable or undesirable, but to specifically prove or disprove its effectiveness as a model for cooperation. Teams will need to navigate this nuance by analyzing the historical record of collaboration amongst NATO members as well as the alliance's capacity to serve as a template for cooperation by other countries elsewhere in the world.

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Past

The initial founding of NATO was made with the benefit of both hindsight and foresight. Engineers of the alliance viewed it as part of a broader effort to accomplish three tasks: deterring Soviet expansion, limiting the revival of nationalist militarism on the continent through a strong American presence, and encouraging the political integration of the European community (“A Short History of NATO”).

In 1949, the original 12 founding members of the alliance signed the Washington Treaty, also known as the North Atlantic Treaty. This short fourteen clause document contained numerous provisions that laid the political and military groundwork for broader cooperation over the coming decades. Article 5 of the treaty contains the famous **collective defense clause**, which holds that an attack against one member of the organization constitutes an attack against all. The United States would even explicitly extend the coverage of its nuclear umbrella to NATO allies through the forward deployment of nuclear weapons beginning under the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s (Tsuruoka). A round of expansion would eventually increase the size of NATO to 15 total countries with the accession of Greece, Turkey and West Germany.

The early years of the alliance would not be free from internal strife. Allies disagreed about the value and deployment of American tactical nuclear weapons on European soil (Stuart). France would even withdraw from the organization’s integrated military command structure in 1966, where its absence would be felt until it rejoined in 2009 (Blakemore). Despite internal tensions, the solidarity of the alliance would persist in the face of external threats. NATO’s resolve would be tested by the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. Berlin itself become a flashpoint of tension between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, triggering the Berlin Airlift in 1948 and a military-standoff in 1961. Even in the face of these challenges, the alliance remained resilient and expanded again to add Spain to its ranks in 1982. The first chapter of NATO’s history would officially come to an end with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Garamone).

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Present

Although the demise of the Soviet Union would temporarily resolve one of the three goals of NATO, the need to limit militaristic nationalism and pursue broader political integration would persist in the post-Cold War world. Many American officials felt that a new vision for NATO was required and that it needed to look beyond the collective defense commitments of the alliance. Admiral James Stavridis, a former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, captured the outlook of alliance members during this period by noting that “[a]fter the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, NATO 2.0 began with a breath of optimism.” Former U.S. Senator Richard Lugar expressed this sentiment during an interview in 1993 when he said that “the common denominator of all the new security problems in Europe is that they lie beyond NATO’s current borders” (Dannreuther).

These sentiments would be put to the test with the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. What began as a UN-mission to stop escalating ethnic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina quickly evolved into a NATO-led bombing campaign against Bosnian Serb forces. This mission marked NATO’s first combat operations in its forty-year history (Masters). By the end of the 1990s, NATO would expand further to include the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

The 2000s marked a fundamental shift in NATO as its mission transitioned from collective defense to **out-of-area operations**. These military missions would see the deployment of NATO forces beyond the shores of member countries into regions such as West Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East. A significant milestone in NATO’s history occurred when the United States invoked the Article 5 commitment following the events of September 11, 2001. Members of NATO would participate in the occupation of Afghanistan following the U.S.-led invasion. This mission constituted a turning point for the alliance in the post-Cold War security environment since it became the first operational commitment beyond Europe (Masters). In 2004, NATO would initiate its fourth and single-largest round of expansion through the addition of seven new members in Eastern Europe.

The last fifteen years of NATO’s history have been largely dominated by a resurgent and revisionist Russia. Both NATO and Russia took steps toward reconciliation in the post-Cold War environment. The 1990s featured the signing of the Founding Act, which established an official forum for bilateral discussions. Despite such overtures, a persistent lack of trust plagued relations. Former Secretary of State Christopher Warren warned in 1994: “If there is a long-term danger in keeping NATO as it is, there is immediate danger in changing too rapidly. Swift expansion of NATO eastward could make a Neo-imperialist Russia a self-fulfilling prophecy” (Masters). The 2008 Bucharest summit deepened Russia’s suspicions of NATO’s eastward expansion. At the summit, the alliance indicated its support for future membership of Georgia and Ukraine. Russia responded by invading Georgia later that summer as an indication of its intent to protect its sphere of influence (Masters). Relations further deteriorated with Russia’s aggression

towards Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. At the same time, NATO would continue to integrate other Eastern European countries into the alliance. Albania and Croatia joined in 2009. Montenegro joined in 2017, while North Macedonia would become the final member of the alliance in 2020. Sweden and Finland are currently on their way to joining the ranks of NATO, which would bring total membership to 32 countries (Deni).

One internal challenge that will continue to trouble NATO cooperation relates to defense spending contributions. In 2014, members of NATO pledged to increase their defense spending to 2% of their gross domestic products by 2024 (Techau). The 2% GDP threshold has become a common metric to evaluate **burden sharing** amongst alliance members. The United States is historically the largest contributor to NATO's overall budget. In 2022, the United States spent 3.47% of its GDP on NATO defense expenditures while only eight other members met the 2% threshold (Buchholz). Former U.S. President Trump even suggested for the United States to withdraw from NATO over lagging defense spending by most members (Barnes and Cooper).

Internal issues have also posed a challenge to NATO solidarity in recent years. NATO strives to present itself as a consensus-driven, democratic oriented alliance. Various political headwinds across member countries have tested this traditional narrative. Actions from political figures such as former U.S. President Trump, failed French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, the prime minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán, or Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan confirm the growing influence of populist and authoritarian voices within member countries. Political movements in the United States and the European Union along with Hungary's democratic backsliding continue to pose an ongoing challenge to NATO's internal solidarity and external moral standing (Singh, Rohac, and Plekta, 2018).

The issues of **out-of-area operations, confrontations with Russia, defense spending, as well as populist divisions** have dominated organizational attention during the current era of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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Future

International organizations such as NATO will encounter a raft of challenges in the coming decades. New challenges will present new opportunities for international cooperation.

Lawrence Korb, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, summarizes the challenges that security experts predict will confront the NATO alliance in the coming decades:

- political relations with Russia;
- international terrorism;
- a rising China;
- internal challenges to democracy; and
- emerging and disruptive technologies.

Beyond these challenges, NATO has even identified climate change as an urgent threat demanding organizational solutions (Bodnar). The alliance has attempted to position itself to tackle the emergence of these traditional and nontraditional threats through the affirmation of an organization-wide agenda known as NATO 2030. Adopted at the 2021 Summit, this agenda features a series of policy proposals that are intended to focus the alliance’s attention and resources towards these emerging and disruptive threats (“NATO 2030”). The alliance followed through on a major element of NATO 2030 by issuing a new Strategic Concept in 2022. This strategic document, last updated in 2010, defines the security challenges facing the alliance and outlines the political and military tasks the organization will utilize to address them.

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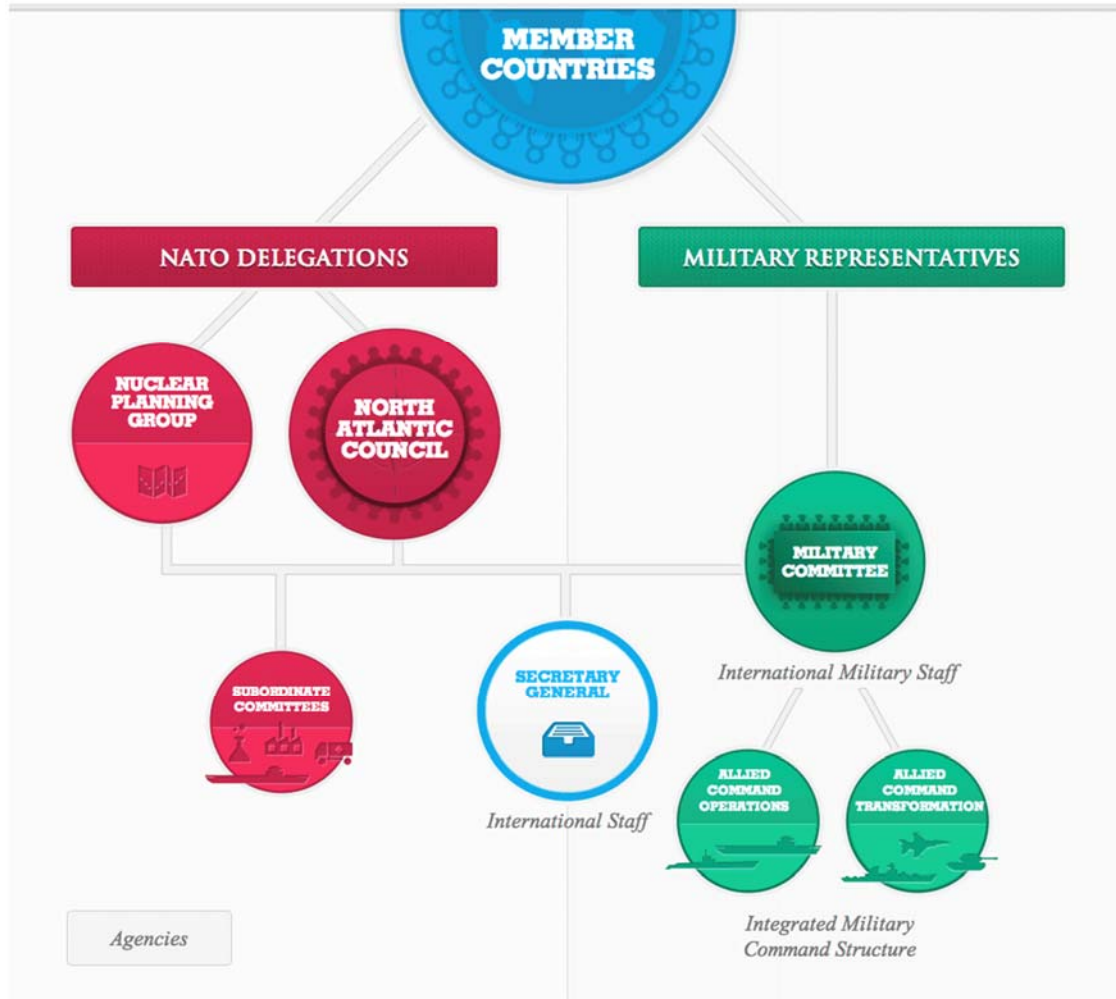
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Defining “International Cooperation”

A proper understanding of the “international cooperation” terminology in the resolution is necessary to guide in-depth debates on this topic. Fortunately, the academic literature provides a nuanced understanding of what these terms mean when used by experts in the field. Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, two influential figures in the field of International Relations, attempt to understand this phenomenon by noting that “cooperation occurs when actors adjust their behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others” (226). According to this definition, states cooperate when they change their behavior to align with the interests of other states. A broader view of the term might recognize that “international cooperation describes interactions to achieve common objectives when actors’ preferences are neither identical (harmony) nor irreconcilable (conflict)” (Paulo 3). These definitions provide clarity as to what “international cooperation” means since it occurs when countries find ways to overcome existing differences in the pursuit of jointly preferable outcomes.

Given these definitions of international cooperation, it is important for both sides of the debate to understand how NATO members cooperate to properly engage in debates about its effectiveness as a model. Wallace Thies, in his book *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO*, provides a thorough analysis of the institutional mechanisms that facilitate cooperation amongst alliance members. A central finding holds that “NATO-the-organization appears as neither an accident nor a bureaucracy-run-amok but rather as the product of preferences clearly understood and deliberately pursued” (266). The main theme of the book suggests that the unique structure of the alliance enables important bargaining pathways for members to resolve differences and maintain solidarity.

NATO is both a political and military alliance. The civilian side of the organizational structure is designed to allow delegates from member states to consult and cooperate on defense and security-related issues. The military side of NATO is designed to undertake crisis-management operations as determined either through the founding articles of the Washington Treaty or through cooperation with outside countries or international organizations. Alliance decisions are achieved through consensus to reflect the collective will of all member states. The following chart provides a visual breakdown of NATO’s command structure for both its civilian and military branches:



Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *What is NATO?*

This visualization can help guide debates about NATO cooperation by illuminating the pathways in which members states interact with one another through the organization’s overall command structure. These linkages are important since they tie together the national and multinational forces of NATO and its members states (Weinrod and Barry).

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Defining “Effective Model”

Affirmative teams do not need to defend that NATO is the most effective model for international cooperation, just that it is an effective model. Debates about effectiveness should center on criteria and examples that clearly distinguish between effective and ineffective models. As such, a clear understanding of the “effective model” terminology in the resolution will help guide both sides of the debate on this topic. It is useful to conceive of effectiveness along two dimensions. The first dimension assesses an international organization’s ability to overcome barriers to cooperation (i.e., process-based measurements), while the second dimension evaluates if an organization achieves desirable outcomes stemming from this cooperation (i.e., outcome-based measurements).

In regards to the first dimension, James Morrow, in a widely cited article for the academic journal *International Organization*, articulates four barriers to cooperation that effective models of international cooperation must overcome: sanctioning problems, monitoring problems, distribution problems, and information problems. The ability to navigate these barriers can aid in distinguishing between effective and ineffective models for international cooperation.

According to Morrow, sanctioning and monitoring problems can inhibit the enforcement of cooperative arrangements. Sanctions or punishments might be needed to penalize members who renege on cooperative agreements. Monitoring is required to determine if members are fully committed and if sanctions are warranted. Distributional and informational problems precede sanctioning and monitoring problems because, if actors cannot agree on how they might cooperate, then there is nothing to enforce. Distributional problems occur when actors have divergent preferences over possible solutions. Informational problems occur when actors are uncertain of the value of sharing their knowledge and withhold valuable information. As Morrow explains, “any issue that is a candidate for international cooperation presents a mixture of all four problems” (388). This analytical framework helps address the first dimension for evaluating if NATO is an effective model, since it focuses on the initial barriers to international cooperation. This method of evaluation would focus debates around whether or not NATO’s organizational structure is an effective model for international cooperation.

For the second dimension, debates about whether or not NATO is an effective model for international cooperation can focus on the ability of this organization to achieve desirable outcomes. Tamar Gutner and Alexander Thompson, in a comprehensive review of the academic literature on measuring international organization effectiveness, note that outcome-based measures are often favored by scholars in this field. “This is the approach adopted in much of the literature on regime effectiveness, where effectiveness is often defined in terms of problem solving and measured by aggregate outcomes or impacts. It is also the preferred approach in most large-n studies of IO effectiveness, which focus on such outcomes as reduced conflict” (Gutner and

Thompson 234). As the authors note, scholars in this field frequently use outcome-based measurements to assess the empirical effectiveness of international organizations. This method of evaluation would focus debates around whether or not NATO's ability to achieve desirable outcomes makes it an effective model for international cooperation.

Both teams will need to devise frameworks that justify a particular metric for evaluating an effective model. Since both process-based and outcome-based measurements can be used for this purpose, teams will need to decide which measure to emphasize. For example, it is conceivable that an Affirmative might focus on NATO's effectiveness based on process-based measurements, while the Negative builds a case based on outcome-based measurements. Students will need to be thoughtful in how they resolve these differences and attempt to sway judges through differing and varied measurements.

Sources:

Gutner, Tamar and Alexander Thompson. "The Politics of IO performance: A framework." *The Review of International Organizations*, vol. 5, 2010, pp. 227-248.

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Areas of Clash

The following section highlights areas for exploration to determine if NATO is in fact an effective model for international cooperation. Students may explore any of these concepts but should not be expected to write about all of them in a single paper. Furthermore, this exploration of clash points in the literature is not necessarily exhaustive, leaving room for students to deepen their own research throughout the year.

International Relations Theory and Multilateral Cooperation

Central Questions: Does international relations theory help understand the capacity of NATO to be an effective model for international cooperation? How do the major schools of thought evaluate NATO's effectiveness?

There are many schools of thought in international relations. Traditional theories can be categorized by their focus on individuals, states, or on the state system as a primary source of conflict and cooperation. Each theory attempts to provide a general explanation for how agents in the international system behave. The three dominant schools of thought are **realism**, **liberalism**, and **constructivism** (Cristol). Knowledge of these theories is important since the authors that advocate for and against the effectiveness of the NATO model will either explicitly or implicitly anchor their arguments in these schools of thought.

The tradition of realism, alternatively referred to as *realpolitik* or power politics, has a long history that can be traced back to the Greek historian Thucydides in the fifth century BCE when he chronicled the power struggle between Athens and Sparta during the Peloponnesian War. A general definition of the term notes that “realism emphasizes the constraints on politics imposed by human nature and the absence of international government. Together, they make international relations largely a realm of power and interest” (Donnelly 9). Proponents of this theory agree that nation states prioritize security and survival above all else. States will inevitably compete for power and status in a system without an all-powerful world government (Antunes and Camisão). The origins of NATO can be squared with the realist tradition given the historical desire of Western European and North Atlantic countries to secure themselves against the perceived threat of the Soviet Union (Sireci and Coletta). The survival of NATO in the post-Cold War world can also be understood through a realist lens. Former communist states may have sought the protections of NATO to secure themselves against a power vacuum in Eastern Europe and existing members may have valued security in the continuation of the alliance to guard against future rising hegemony and balance-of-power politics (Waltz).

The tradition of liberalism, or liberal institutionalism, shares core assumptions with realism regarding the anarchic nature of the international system; however, scholars from this school of thought are more likely to emphasize the role of domestic politics in explaining state action. Liberal theorists generally believe that states are more prone to cooperation than conflict when compared to their realist peers (Walt). Liberalism as a political philosophy and theory of international relations holds that concentrations of unaccountable power are a threat in need of restraint. The primary means of limiting power are through institutions and norms at the domestic and international level (Meiser). A liberal IR lens can help understand the longevity of NATO and under what circumstances it can be modeled. Liberal theorists would contend that NATO members have historically shared a bond rooted in liberal values such as democratic governance

and the rule of law. The power of these bonds was especially evident during the Cold War. In the post-Cold War world, NATO members have justified external military actions on liberal grounds such as its humanitarian mission in Kosovo (Owen).

Constructivism is a broad school of thought that refers to many different sub-categories of IR theory. These share a common assumption that challenges the central foundation of realism and liberalism. Constructivists emphasize the importance of values and shared interests among individuals as well as how social norms and cultural values shape state action at the international level (McGlinchey and Gold). Alexander Wendt, a prominent constructivist, described that the essence of international relations exists in the interactions between individuals. The behavior of states at the international level is a reflection of the beliefs of individuals that influence state policy (Wendt). One constructivist explanation of NATO's longevity relates to the shared cultural attitudes amongst its members and the desire of aspiring members to share in these traditions (Schimmelfennig). Scholars from this school of thought are more likely to forward criticisms of the NATO model. The glue that binds the NATO alliance may only be as strong as the shared cultural attitudes of the citizens in the member states, and should these attitudes diverge then cooperation could falter as the alliance fragments (Van Ham).

Furthermore, security studies and securitization theory, a specific sub-field of IR, hold critical views of NATO and its role in fostering international cooperation. Military alliances built with foundations rooted upon an identity culture which emphasizes an in-group and an out-group can be volatile and dangerous. Political entities can become locked in a negative security spiral of antagonistic identification that can lead to violent confrontation (Wilhelmsen). Reading European history through a constructivist lens might reveal that NATO's activities may have contributed to various crises throughout the Cold War and ongoing tensions between Russia and Western Europe.

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NATO: Unity vs. Divisions

Central Questions: Does NATO’s organizational structure promote resilience and unity?
How effective is the alliance at managing internal divisions?

Cooperation requires participants to resolve differences and find common ground. At the international level, this involves states with diverging preferences achieving a cooperative outcome through diplomatic means. An essential characteristic of an effective model for international cooperation relates to its ability to promote unity and overcome divisions. A likely area of debate about NATO’s efficacy as a model will involve its track record on managing alliance unity and membership divisions.

Solidarity is a central pillar from which the NATO alliance draws much of its strength. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg once stated that “unity is the most effective arrow in NATO’s quiver” (qtd. in Garamond). A credible deterrence posture of collective defense requires that adversaries believe alliance members will stand united in the event of aggression. Public support for the alliance remains high across the alliance. According to a Pew Research Center survey, the median approval score for NATO was 65% across the surveyed countries (“International attitudes”). Russia’s actions in Ukraine further solidified popular support for NATO’s collective defense policy (“Putin’s aggression”). The alliance has also proven resilient and capable of displaying unity in the face of non-traditional challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (De Mayo).

The populist presidency of former U.S. President Trump demonstrated how political turmoil between NATO members can undermine its broader military purpose. An article in *Foreign Policy* reflecting on trans-Atlantic tensions amidst the 70th anniversary of NATO perfectly described this problem:

“If political disagreements lock up NATO decision-making, it will make little difference how ready and capable the alliance’s military forces are when allies can’t agree to deploy them” (Townsend and Kendall-Taylor).

French President Emmanuel Macron even went on to state that the alliance was suffering “brain death” in reference to the abrasive policies of the Trump administration (Gramer and Seligman).

The structure of the alliance itself makes it prone to bickering and divisiveness, especially in the military domain. Edward Lucas, a nonresident fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, succinctly explains this problem:

“The 30-strong alliance is unwieldy. In military terms, only a handful of members matter—above all, the United States—but in political terms, even little Luxembourg and Iceland get a voice. Worse, the political divides are huge” (Lucas).

Military responses to the resurgent Russian threat demonstrate these lingering problems. NATO's European members are extraordinarily dependent on American defensive capabilities; however, the organizational command structures do not fully reflect these force imbalances since they rely on the questionable assumption that all members are equal partners in the military domain resulting in a command structure that "is like a tangled pile of spaghetti" (Lucas).

Resources:

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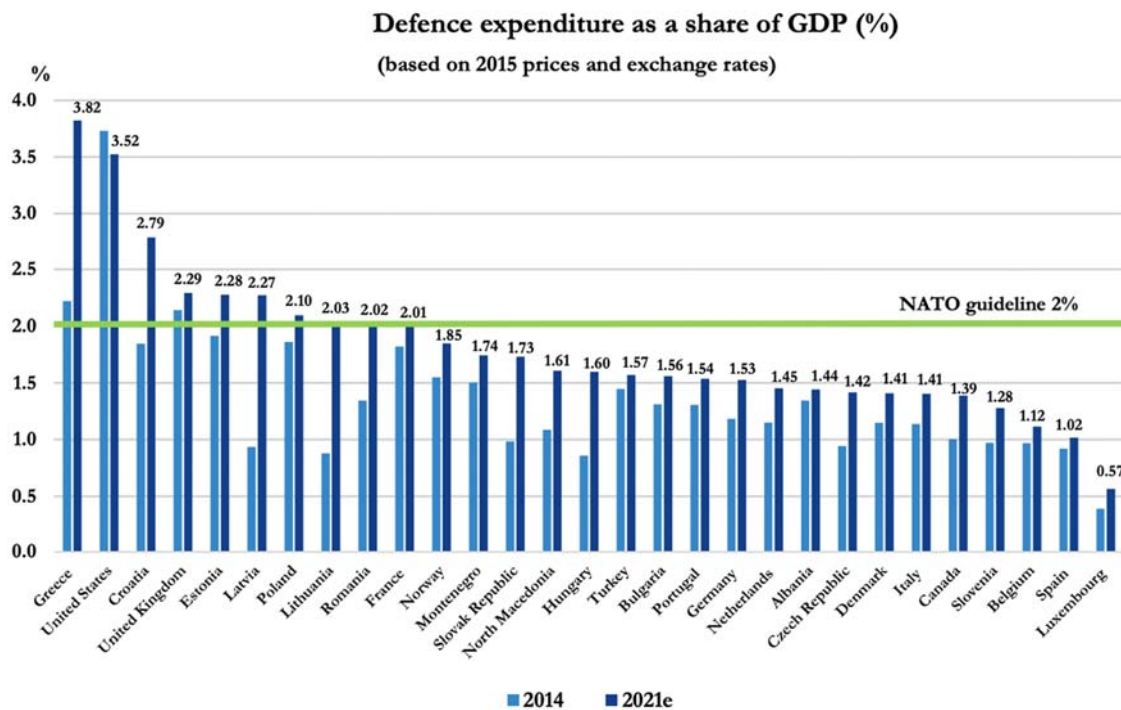
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NATO: Burden Sharing vs. Free Riding

Central Questions: How well does the NATO alliance facilitate burden sharing amongst its members? Do free rider problems pose a barrier to international cooperation?

The collective defense of the entire NATO alliance is achieved through collective contributions by individual members. Advocates of the NATO model refers to this as **burden sharing**. The organization is attempting to meet a pledge whereby all members achieve individual defense expenditures that equal at least 2% of their respective GDPs. The graph below shows the breakdown of defense expenditures by country between 2014 and 2021.



Note: Figures for 2021 are estimates.

Source: NATO, "Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021)"

As the graph clearly indicates, most members fall short of the 2% target. Critics of NATO argue that this is an example of **free-riding**, whereby many members are able to obtain benefits that vastly exceed their costs of participation. Former U.S. President Trump famously voiced his frustrations about this arrangement during his time in office. During a closed-door meeting between U.S. congressional senators and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, members on Capitol Hill reportedly grilled the NATO official about the wide discrepancy between the few members that meet the 2% defense spending threshold and those that do not (Hudson). Much of their frustration stemmed from the fact that each member receives an equal degree of protection from the alliance no matter what it contributes to its own defense. For example, the United States is pledged to defend the

Republic of Macedonia even though it devotes just \$120 million per year to its own defense, which is less than the Cincinnati Police Department (Whiton).

The question of free-riding has also been a topic of empirical analysis. Wukki Kim and Todd Sandler published a study in the journal *Defense and Peace Economics* that found evidence of the free-riding phenomenon in the context of NATO. The authors conducted a study of NATO burden sharing by analyzing defense spending by individual members between 2011 and 2017. The study finds that when NATO allies' defense shares of GDP are correlated with their GDP ranks, there is strong evidence of exploitation of the larger and richer allies by the smaller and poorer allies (Kim and Sandler).

Skeptics of NATO also argue that military alliances should reflect the core national interests of the individual members. Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, makes the case that this no longer characterizes the alliance:

“As the NATO study demonstrates, should the alliance’s Article 5 commitment get invoked, America would do most of the fighting. It would be one thing to take that risk where vital interests were at stake. But they are not in the Balkans, let alone in the Caucasus, which was part of Imperial Russia even before the Soviet Union” (Bandow).

Critics of NATO would likely use this logic to further argue that costs of free riding far exceed the benefits of burden sharing in a world where this model of international cooperation results in essential members taking unnecessary geopolitical risks.

Proponents of the NATO model would refute these points by questioning the efficacy of a 2% defense spending benchmark. This metric has the benefit of simplicity, but is potentially misleading. NATO is an alliance that provides disproportional benefits to its members. For a small country like Estonia, the general defense commitment may be its largest benefit. For the United States, the alliance system helps with the global balance-of-power and maintaining American influence abroad. These two benefits are not equivalent in value and expecting all countries to meet the same metric might not be the best way to measure the alliance’s success (Layton).

Academics do not completely agree on the empirical record of NATO contributions and whether or not that is sufficient evidence to indicate free-riding amongst its members. Jo Jakobsen, in an article for the journal *European Security*, directly confronts the question of if European NATO members free-ride on American contributions to the organization. The study investigated “material” measures, such as military expenditures and troop contribution, and “non-material” measures, such as public opinion polls regarding domestic support for the alliance. The author finds support for the waxing and waning of European support for NATO contingent on the immediacy of external threats. Material and non-material support from European members declined somewhat in the post-Cold War years, but increased following Russia’s annexation of

Crimea in 2014. Overall, the free-riding phenomenon has been limited and contingent to certain moments in time rather than a general state of affairs for the alliance as a whole.

Even if the United States shoulders more of the burden of NATO, proponents do argue that the benefits it obtains as an organizational leader far outweigh the costs of participating in the alliance. Katherine McInnis, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, makes a powerful version of this argument in an article for *Foreign Policy*:

“Successive American governments have been afforded privileged status when it has come to issues including trade partnerships and access to bases in large part because of the outsized role that the United States plays in the defense of its allies. Nor would the United States have been able to sustain its significant portfolio of foreign military sales and defense technology cooperation activities without the strategic foundation laid by its role as NATO’s primary security guarantor for seven decades” (McInnis).

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NATO: Stability vs. Entanglements

Central Questions: Does NATO’s core mission of collective defense promote stability and cooperation? Does the alliance’s structure encourage unnecessary foreign entanglements?

NATO is both a political and a military alliance. In addition to promoting unity amongst its members, the organization has a military dimension with the ultimate aim of creating stability for the region in which it operates. A key point of debate regarding the effectiveness of this model in promoting international cooperation will center on whether or not it actually promotes stability and cooperation or if it contributes to unnecessary entanglements and conflict.

Critics worry that NATO responded to an “identity crisis” in the post-Cold War years by searching missions beyond the core interests of the alliance. With a resurgent Russian threat, the codification of out-of-area-operations as a central military aspect of the NATO alliance risks distracting from its core task of collective defense (Stapleton). Others worry that its biggest mistake has been the drift from the core omission of collective defense to a period of unending expansion and out-of-area operations (Brown). The NATO campaign in Libya is a tangible example of this mission creep. Although the Libyan civil war in 2011 was a humanitarian disaster in need of a response, the NATO bombing campaign inflicted a devastating toll on the civilian population to which alliance leaders have still not taken responsibility or issued meaningful apologies (Dyke).

Even when the United States does not become directly involved in foreign entanglements, the alliance itself allows less-than-noble actors to pursue questionable goals. For example, Turkey’s inclusion in NATO has inadvertently contributed to the persecution of local Kurdish minorities. Turkey’s treatment of the regional Kurdish minority took center stage within the alliance when it threatened to block the inclusion of Finland and Sweden unless NATO agreed to crack down on Kurdish militants. Cihan Tugal, a professor at the University of California-Berkely, notes in *The New York Times*:

“For the alliance itself, the impasse brings to light facts currently obscured by its makeover as a purely defensive organization. NATO, which has long acquiesced in the persecution of the Kurds, is far from a force for peace” (Tugal).

The alliance would acquiesce to Turkey’s requests, implicitly tolerating its questionable policies.

NATO’s decision to put Ukraine on a path to future membership is also a point of contention in the current Russia-Ukraine conflict. John Mearsheimer, a professor of international relations at the University of Chicago, represents a point of view that holds NATO responsible for provoking Russia into unnecessary territorial aggression through the expansion into its sphere of influence (Mearsheimer). In international relations, this is known as a **security dilemma**, in which two states, not necessarily seeking out conflict

with one another, inevitably end up in a conflict spiral where defensive actions eventually take on offensive features, which encourages each side to view one another with deep suspicion and mistrust.

Proponents of the stabilizing effect of NATO would, first and foremost, point to the continuing importance of the alliance's core mission. The collective defense policy of NATO is ultimately undergirded by a nuclear guarantee. Nuclear deterrence still matters in a world of great power competition. The nuclear umbrella provided by the major NATO powers helps preserve regional stability and reduce the incentive for non-nuclear powers to contemplate pursuing a nuclear program (Kroenig and Slocombe). NATO contributes to allied and regional stability through non-military means. The alliance is increasingly relevant for nearly every mission that doesn't involve actual combat (Baboons, 2018). Missions related to gender inequality (Wittwer), disaster response (Jacuch), public health (Garamone) and climate change (Lippert) draw NATO's attention and resources.

The empirical record of entanglement conflicts involving the United States is questionable. Michael Beckley, in an article for the journal *International Security*, finds a handful of instances in which the United States was entangled in foreign conflicts (Beckley). On the question of alliance expansion, such actions may have actually helped to reduce regional tensions that would have otherwise erupted sooner or later (Sullivan). The security dilemma between Russia and NATO need not be inevitable and is not necessarily the primary product of NATO expansion. Russia's suspicions of NATO are rooted more in historical misunderstandings than actual reality. Mark Katz, a professor of government at George Mason University, explains that NATO's posture contributes to regional stability and can work in the interests of both Russia and alliance members:

“Far from threatening Russia, a strong NATO has a much greater incentive to act with self-restraint toward Russia than individual countries (both members and non-members) being undermined by Russian actions” (Katz).

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Modeling NATO Abroad

Central Question: Can NATO’s organizational structure be effectively modeled around the world?

The preceding areas of clash address the efficacy of the NATO alliance in terms of its ability to foster cooperation amongst its members. Since the resolution asks if NATO is an effective model for international cooperation, it is worth considering if this alliance can serve as a template for other countries and geographical regions or if its success is a product of specific and unique circumstances that hinder replication elsewhere.

Proponents of the NATO model provide numerous examples of its replicability around the world. One obvious candidate is East Asia. China’s geopolitical trajectory and unfriendly territorial policies towards its neighbors parallel the actions of the Soviet Union during the early years of the Cold War. Zachary Keck, in an article for *The Diplomat*, evaluates the competing views on an Asian version of NATO and finds the region ripe for this kind of organization (Keck). Although there are persistent diplomatic tensions between regional powers like Japan and South Korea, the same state of affairs characterized Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. France was initially distrustful of the United Kingdom and the United States. A need for collective security eventually united the European nations. The same force could bring Asian nations to the alliance table:

“It took a number of strong catalysts from the Soviet Union and its allies (Berlin, nuclear weapon testing, Communists winning in China and the Korean War) to compel the U.S. and its Atlantic allies to form a collective security arrangement. The same is likely to prove true in Asia. While no immediate Asian NATO is likely to be forthcoming, this could change very quickly if China takes a brazen action such as invading Taiwan or the Senkaku Islands” (Keck).

A smaller version of an “Asian NATO” already exists in the form of a strategic alliance between India, Japan, Australia and the United States. Although military officials from this group have dismissed the “Asian NATO” reference, it has since become known as the Indo-Pacific Quad (or just simply “the Quad”). Members of this group have cooperated on regional military exercises, but there is nothing like the collective defense clause binding all members together in the same way that Article 5 unites NATO members under the same defensive banner. Nonetheless, this organization could serve as a template since “an Asian security organization modeled on today’s more genteel NATO would help its members deal with 21st-century threats” (Babones).

Even existing organizations have entertained the notion of incorporating various aspects of the NATO model into their organizational structure. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) suggest the organization move to incorporate interoperability standards for military platforms modeled on NATO to help

bolster regional security (Walsh). In response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss proposed that the G-7 countries “act as an economic NATO, collectively defending our prosperity” (Stokes).

There are many authors who argue that NATO either cannot or should not be modeled elsewhere. Europe’s unique geopolitics since the mid-twentieth century may limit the effectiveness of the NATO model to this specific region. Wallace Thies in *Why NATO Endures* argues:

“Outside Europe, there were attempts to emulate the durable, integrated, and open-ended alliances that formed in Europe after the Second World War, but these achieved only modest success, in large part because the conditions that made such alliances both necessary and feasible in Europe were not present elsewhere” (125).

Examples of regional security organizations that missed the mark in replicating NATO, according to the author, include the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and the ANZUS alliance between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

NATO is also a hard model to replicate in terms of the economic characteristics of its members. The power of the organization stems from attributes that are not evenly distributed across the world. Alliance members account for more than 50% of the world’s gross domestic product, have over three million troops on duty, and operate massive combined air forces and naval fleets while collectively spending over \$1 trillion on defense (Stavridis).

Students interested in pursuing this area of argument will need to firmly link the issues of replicating NATO with the “effective model” topic language. For example, one line of argument from the Negative may involve acknowledging the local effectiveness of NATO but attacking its capacity to serve as a model elsewhere in the world. Since the resolution asks if NATO is an effective model for international cooperation, the Negative can disprove the motion by highlighting the inability of NATO to serve as an international model due to localized factors and regional constraints.

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Conclusion

This motion tasks debaters with evaluating whether NATO is an effective model for international cooperation. Both teams will need to carefully construct their arguments around the important terminology in the resolution.

International cooperation involves states with divergent preferences finding pathways to cooperation. Effective models of cooperation can be judged by their internal-measures that observe the capacity of organizations to promote cooperation amongst their members, such as achieving member unity or political consensus, as well as external-measures that consider the desirability of these cooperative efforts, such as responding to security challenges.

NATO is an organization with a deep history and evolving future. International relations theorists continue to anchor their views about this organization in rich theoretical traditions. Proponents and opponents of NATO continue to spar over questions related to the alliance's ability to achieve unity over division, burden sharing instead of free riding, stability rather than entanglements, and its general ability to serve as an international model.

While these comparisons will be born out of clash during the round of 64 and on, the qualifying round papers should develop an affirmative or negative stance, while also briefly addressing the major arguments of the other side of the motion to resolve the question of NATO's effectiveness as a model for international cooperation.

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