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THE NATO AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE: A REFLECTION ON THE JUSTIFIABILITY OF THE ORGANIZATION IN THE 21st CENTURY

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Abstract

This article examines the rationale behind the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as its relevance in the present-day world. The departure of rigid bipolarity from the international system sequel to the demise of the Warsaw pact; coupled with the roles played by some of the leading members of the NATO in fermenting chaos and hardships to Africa, Asia and the Middle East, have clearly bared the incongruity of the organization to the modern-day International Administration. While on the other hand, the growing threats of global terrorism as well as that of thermo-nuclear holocaust, especially in the Korean peninsula, which apparently require the assistance of the NATO, may reverse the misgivings against the organization. Nevertheless, for the NATO to justify its relevance in the 21st century the article suggests speedy rapprochement between warring partners, speedy restoration of normalcy in conflict-trapped nations and, most importantly, ensuring sustainable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Keywords: NATO, Warsaw, International Administration, hegemony, security community

1.0 Introduction

One of the outcomes of the Second World War was the outright political overhaul of the international system. The erstwhile global powers notably Germany, Japan, Britain, and France suddenly lost their prestige of playing the leading roles in global affairs. That was what paved way for the emergence of two new superpowers namely, the United States of America (USA) and Russia. Coincidentally, each of the novel superpowers was dogmatically an ideological doctrinaire, enthusiastically resolute to protect and promote the course of its chosen ideology. Consequently, that development necessitated the polarization of the whole world into two powerful antagonistic political-cum-military alliances namely, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. Soon afterwards, the two camps began a crusade of intense ideological battle, diplomatic bungling and sophisticated arms racing.

The horrendous competition between the two rival groups worsened when the Soviets Union under Joseph Stalin began the exportation of Communist ideology to all parts of the world, including Europe. For the NATO allies, such a development was conceivably a devastating threat to their corporate existence. The first political repel against the imbroglio was the introduction of a policy

christened the Truman Doctrine (Kaine, 2017). Under the policy, President Harry Truman of the United States expended a huge financial aid, to the tune of \$400, 000, 000, to support the missions of the anti-Communist forces in Greece and Turkey respectively. Soon afterwards, the policy of Containment Doctrine, which was an expansion of the earlier policy, was introduced to function as a comprehensive support package for all nations deemed threatened by the Soviet ideological indoctrination (Kaine, 2017). In that way, containment immediately became the official U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union. The intense rivalry and competition between the two blocs, named the Cold war, continued up to the late 1990^s when the Soviet Union swiftly crumbled and consequently forced out of the race (Guyatt, 2013). Sequel to the historic emasculation of the erstwhile Warsaw alliance from aggressive power politics; it may not be out of place to contemplate the continuing relevance of the NATO confederacy in today's International system. This article, therefore, aims at examining the aforementioned contemplation by rethinking the basis for the formation of the organization, theorizing the rationale behind its retentivity in the contemporary time, as well as suggesting some ways through which the organization can justify its substance in the present-day International system.

1.1 The Formation of NATO

First, this article assumes that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was a child of necessity born out of fear of military aggressions against western capitalist powers. The article assumes further that the jealousy and fear of the Western imperialists over the rapid spread of communist ideology and influence in Europe, Asia, the newly emerging independent African countries and other parts of the globe constituted another factor that provoked its formation.

On August 29, 1949, President Harry S. Truman of the United States signed the North Atlantic Treaty, marking the beginning of NATO. Here, it is worthy of noting that even by 1947 prior to the emergence of NATO, the Soviet ideological threat had already grown considerably strong having successfully brought a substantial part of Europe under her influence and control. Against that background, the Western powers presumed that the Soviet Union might have used military aggression against them in the absence of American forces in the region. One of the reasons that informed their position was that, with a ruthless dictator like Stalin who had already used substantial military power to enforce Soviet domination over many formerly independent European nations, the Western Europe could not have sufficient security guarantee without some form of coalition with the United States (Duba 1992). On her part, the United States emphasized that fighting two world wars in less than 50 years was enough justification that the control of Europe by a single, aggressive and unfriendly power constituted an intolerable threat to her national security. The United States therefore sought for the formation of a very powerful organization through which it could adequately guard and promote her own security interest hence endorsing the treaty for the formation of NATO (Duba, 1992).

Presumably, with the aforementioned strategic calculations both Europe and the United States foresaw that through confederacy they could mobilize enough forces and resources to serve as reliable safeguards against all manners of aggression and, at the same time, to promote their vested interests.

2.0 Theorizing the Rationale behind NATO's Longevity

To comprehend the rationale behind the durability of NATO's paternity in global management, this study adopts tripartite analytical tools comprising the theoretical guidance of Constructivism, Institutionalism, and the Hegemonic Stability Theory. Constructivism, to begin with, is an amalgam of the liberalists and realists standpoints on the formation and maintenance of pluralistic security communities such as NATO (Pedersen: 2011). This theoretical hybridization, first mentioned in the Deutschian security community thesis, had the aim of selecting some of the basic assumptions of two opposite poles (Liberalism & Realism) to explicate the secret behind the continuity of NATO in today's international system. For the liberalists, one of the major reasons behind the continued relevance of NATO in today's international system is simply forestalling the recurrence of catastrophic wars either of continental or global scale. For example, in one of their works, Karl W. Deutsch *et al* (1957 as cited in Pedersen, 2011: 8) described a security-community as "one in which there is real assurance that the members of the community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way". The liberalists therefore may not give room for any trade-off for their solid pacifistic conviction that war is irrational, backbreaking, costly and ruinous. The liberalists, *ala* Kant, I. (1795), see the possibility of establishing a perpetual peace "through a worldwide adoption of a Republican Constitution" (Appendix II, last paragraph). This is because the republican constitution is the one that has the capability to give a favourable prospect for the desired outcome, i.e., perpetual peace. Interestingly, Waltz, K. (1959 as cited in Kant, 2016: 137) went further to describe the conviction of the liberalists that:

If the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared... nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war. Among the latter would be: having to fight, having to pay the costs of war from their own resources, having painfully to repair the devastation war leaves behind, and, to fill up the measure of evils, load themselves with a heavy national debt that would embitter peace itself and that can never be liquidated on account of constant wars in the future.

Contrary to the aforementioned conviction, the realists see some meanings in battle preparedness taken into cognisance the inherent anarchy that characterizes our world. For the realists therefore, "the sole purpose for alliances is to respond to a threat posed by an opposing power (Liska: 3)". Similarly, it was re-echoed that "a rise in threat level significantly increased the cohesion of an alliance, allowing the alliance to respond more readily to the threat" Holsti *etal* (1973: 84 & 143). Therefore, the higher the levels of threats the more relevant a security community such as NATO

becomes. The hegemonic stability theorists, on their part, consider the presence of a very powerful hegemonic power as an indispensable prerequisite for global peace and security. That could be one of the reasons why, Yazid, M. (2015:67), a hegemonic stability theorist, avers that the existence of “a hegemonic power is very importance [important] in creating stability in international politics and economy. The author maintains further that, “without strong hegemon, the creation of international stability is impossible (Yazid, 2015: 67)”. Now, it is noteworthy that while the foregoing theories (constructivism and hegemonic stability) emphasize more on alliance formation, the ensuing theory (institutionalism) focuses more on alliance maintenance. Institutionalism (organizational behaviour theory) sees alliances such as NATO as institutions in the international system. The theory maintains further that the durability and strength of such organizations “may depend on their institutional characteristics” (McCalla, 1996:461). For example, there are occasions when “a nation acts seemingly against its best interests in order to maintain its relationship with its allies” (Pedersen, 2011: 11). For instance, despite her unequalled credential in the defence of human rights abuses, the world has witnessed an unprecedented gag of the U.S. over the extrajudicial killing of the renowned Aljazeera correspondent (Adnan Kashogdji) inside the Saudi Arabian embassy in Turkey. Likewise, although the world is witnessing one of the worst humanitarian disasters in Yemen sequel to the intrusion of Saudi Arabia in the internal affairs of the former, yet the U.S. and her closest allies have turned a blind eye on the issue. Consequently, one can argue, that a nation’s actions within an alliance may be limited due to the institutional characteristics of the alliance. In other words, “the nation may act against its best interest due to its participation (Pedersen, 2011: 12 as cited in McCalla, 1996:462)”. In another conception, Pedersen, K. W. E. (2011) avers, “a hegemonic organization will continue to operate, and even reinvent itself, simply because the powers that run it do not want it to stop” (P.12).

2.1 The Relevance of NATO in Today’s International System

With the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union, one may not hesitate to assume that the trepidation against communism that engulfed the late 20th and early 21st centuries was thenceforth over. It is now indisputably clear that the Warsaw military alliance is either dead or dreadfully emasculated. In fact, with the current development in the international security architecture, the perception of any strategic aggression by the remnants of the erstwhile Warsaw pact community is minuscule. In a nutshell, since the contagious virus of anti-communist hysteria is now over, why the continuation of NATO?

While responding to the aforementioned conundrum, the apologists of NATO or any keen observer of the exigencies of today’s global affairs may see some meanings for the continuity of the organization. For instance, the frequent testing of the life-threatening Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile by the DPK in the Korean peninsula may prompt her immediate neighbours, especially South Korea and Japan, to support the continuation of NATO. Likewise, the heavy stockpiles of nuclear arsenals in some countries, including the former Warsaw allies would naturally constitute a

threat to the uncompromising domination of the imperialists in the international system. Second, with the growing influence of Russia in Europe and the Middle East, a pessimistic political observer may assume that the erstwhile Cold War saga is sluggishly resurging. Third, the Taliban insurgency and the resultant seizure of power in Afghanistan, the haunting Al-Qaeda guerrilla networks in Iraq and Pakistan, and their offshoots in the Middle East and Africa constitute another threat that warrants courteous policing of the international system by NATO, at least to ensure a terror-free Europe and America. Here, one can easily recall the terrorist attacks on London bridge, Paris, Madrid, the World Trade Centre, Pentagon, Washington and a host of other strategic locations cutting across the whole NATO enclave. All these are empirical evidences that NATO is still relevant, at least to her members. Fourth, the threats of becoming Nuclear powers posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the communist North Korea are all powerful signals that not only the Euro-American security pact but many other regions, especially the Korean peninsula as well as the Sunni Arabia are all greatly at stake. Therefore, the trade-off for discontinuity of NATO may not have the endorsement of many. Apparently, NATO is now facing tremendous challenges that are equally if not more threatening than what obtained during the departed cold war period hence the substance of its continuity is solidly justified.

2.2 The Irrelevance of NATO to Contemporary International System

Despite the huge challenges identified above, the political situation in the International system is as sufficient as to warrant a rethink on the significance of the organization *de nos jours*. The reasons for the misgiving may have bearing on some of the faulty foreign policies of the leading members. First, the roles played by the coalition forces of NATO, particularly the United States and Great Britain, in orchestrating a regime change in Iraq has created a huge doubt for the continuing relevance of the organization. For example, since the ouster of Saddam Hussein from power and the subsequent crises that engulfed Iraq, the world is still awaiting plausible justifications from the two principal architects of the adventure: Blair and Bush. In fact, what is more disturbing is the indisputable fact that the Iraqis have seen no steady peace since then. This certainly validates the assertion of Sanders: “that it is reasonably easy to engineer the overthrow of a government or a regime; yet, it is perfectly not easy to know what consequences will be the long term impact of the action (B. Sanders, personal communication, September 21st, 2017)”.

Secondly, the participation of some members of NATO in the uprisings that saw the forcible seizure of power from Gaddafi in Libya has done a huge damage not only to Libya but also to the entire African continent. Debunking the self-proclamation of President Obama, that the incidence was the gravest mistake of his presidency, Campbell considers the ploy, “a NATO’s effort to subvert the process of creating an African currency which Gaddafi had taken seriously the time-frame for its realization” (H. Campbell, personal communication, February 22nd, 2018). The reason is that, NATO, being the captain of global capitalism, is likely to do everything possible to pre-empt the invention of an African currency. Perhaps, an African currency could be a great threat to

the continuing dominance of both Euro and Dollar in the international economic system. Instrumentally, another thing that may not escape the course of history is the indisputable fact that Libya under Gaddafi was relatively more stable, more peaceful and more caring to its citizens. It had a promising future because its huge foreign reserve was more than enough for Libyans-many generations to come. Unfortunately, Libya has today become a safe-haven for mercenaries, insurgents, terrorists and human traffickers. Not only that, the fall of Gaddafi's regime has cleared ground for firearms and light weapons to slip into wrong hands not only in Libya but also in the neighbouring countries and beyond. Moreover, another devastating consequence of the fall of Gaddafi saga is that the economies of neighbouring countries such as Niger and Nigeria are suffering, if not collapsing, due to the colossal amount of resources being committed to contain the spates of insecurity in their respective countries.

Thirdly, the inability of NATO to restrain Saudi military operations in Yemen that catapulted the Yemenis into the worst catastrophic humanitarian disaster, the world has ever seen, is another reason that bared the irrelevance of the organization.

Fourthly, the deterioration of relations between member countries such as Greece and Turkey which NATO has failed to normalize; as well as the failure of the organization to establish a solid rapprochement between some warring partners, such as Russia and Ukraine is another pointer to the irrelevance of the organization in today's international system.

Fifthly, the failure of NATO or the European Union (E.U.) to compel the U.S. to reverse her decision of withdrawing from the multi-lateral treaty on the Iranian Nuclear development programme has clearly bastardized the presumption of the erstwhile hegemonic credentials of NATO in today's international administration.

Finally, the incessant clashes between the State of Israel and her Arab neighbours especially Palestine, which NATO has hitherto failed to resolve has further worsened the precarious security situation of the region as well as the delicate diplomatic relations between the NATO allies and the Muslim communities. Likewise, the official, unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the United States has beclouded the faith of those who believe in the relevance of NATO in a world that is poised to promote global peace, security and prosperity. Perhaps one of the gospel realities about this imbroglio is that the U.S. is simply frustrating the quest for sovereignty by Palestinians; as well as deepening the Muslims' mistrust against the NATO itself.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Besides keeping Europe permanently strong and free, another motive behind establishing NATO was simply to deter the Soviet ideological imperialism and to counter the threats of thermonuclear attacks posed by the Soviet Union against the Western European countries. Yet, the demise of the Warsaw Pact more than two decades ago has cleared all doubts, that the Cold War between NATO and Warsaw Pact is now a relic of military history. This development prompts one to ponder

weather NATO still has any relevance in the current century. To the optimists (liberalists), who believe in the possibility of a perpetual peace, the downfall of Warsaw is a welcome development. Possibly, the crusade for the adoption of the prescribed 'Pacifistic Republican Constitution' is likely to be easier in a unipolar international system. Yet to the pessimists (realists), who may not take for granted the apparent precarious character of today's world, the continuity of NATO may have some meanings especially since the contemporary international system is hitherto not in peace despite the existence of NATO. Part of the reasons that best explain the aforementioned paradox is "the failure of nation states to compromise the pursuit and articulation of their national interests" (Akinbobola: 336). Yet still, a hegemonic stability theorist may stick to his gun that a world devoid of a hegemonic power could be more chaotic and warring. Nonetheless, for NATO to justify her relevance in the contemporary international system, this paper suggests NATO should focus its energy on restoring peace and stability in terror-prone and nuclear haunted countries. In addition, the diplomatic rapprochement between NATO and some Socialist and Islamic states particularly Russia, China, North Korea as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan is a welcome development in the maintenance of world peace.

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