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The Complexities of the US- NATO-UN Relationship and the Complications which Arise

The North Atlantic treaty organization has been for a long time one of the most important and largest security collectives in the world. Similar to the United nations NATO is committed to maintaining peace and security in the world and ensuring global stability and order. Although these organizations differ in their work, their overall goals of maintaining peace and overall security within various regions of the world are key to the global system. Despite their similarities these organizations have different rules and mandates which guide their actions and follow different sets of ideals in reacting and dealing with International Security situations. while these policies and goals may sometimes differ, the UN and NATO have collaborated in the past on various conflict resolution missions and peacebuilding initiatives. The United states is a major player and not only NATO but the United nations as well. This has caused a variety of complexities throughout time and have contributed to the present global instability. By examining the relationship between the United States and these global institutions better policy goals and initiatives can be created to deal with the rising problems of globalization and militarization.

To get a better understanding of how to deal with the present complexities, it is important to understand some of the history and problems that the United States and NATO have encountered overtime. “The United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) both emerged within the context of the post-World War II international order.[[1]](#footnote-1)” While both organizations emerged to be very influential and important their roles in positions in the international order what diverge in different ways overtime. While the United nations is a truly international institution that seeks to allow all states, who wish to join to have a part in the decision-making and allow for a truly representative body of all the states who wish to be there. While more than military alliance, The United nations seeks to also delve into the social and political aspects of other states, and such is more than just a military pact. in a different perspective, the North Atlantic treaty organization was created as an alliance of member states to guarantee the freedom and security through political and military measures of all of its participants. Through this definition, we can see that NATO encourages the cooperation and consultation of all thirty of its member states regarding International Security issues which constitutes its main political thrust and influence. As time has gone on other initiatives and operations regarding NATO influence have arisen, however their military operations and activities continue to be a main focal point. With their influence and through the powerful military and political alliance NATO has established itself as a menacing international entity which carries out its various missions to promote and defend the security and goals of its member states. The UN’s function, according to the official website of the UN, is expansive, covering various international issues “such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production, and more”[[2]](#footnote-2). The UN, comprised of the Security Council, the various General Assemblies, and other subsidiary bodies, courts, and tribunals, provides a forum for its 193 member states to discuss and deliberate on issues to reach an enhanced cooperation and compromise to solve international crises.

The Washington treaty, which was the document that led to the establishment of the North Atlantic treaty organization reaffirms and emphasizes the values and ideas laid out in the United Nations charter. The preamble states the following: “The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.[[3]](#footnote-3)” This reaffirmation was done to ensure and show the commitment that in the future the North Atlantic treaty organization would work within the international guidelines and political framework set forth by the UN charter to ensure continual international peace and security amongst all regions of the world. The United states as a main proponent of both the UN and NATO played a major part and ensuring that these are political international institutions could be created and would be upheld and maintain power overtime. Even in recent time such as in 2018 where a joint UN and NATO declaration was published not stated the following, “... cooperation between the United Nations and NATO in support of the work of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security,[[4]](#footnote-4)” It can be seen that publicly, the idea of cooperation and unison between these two international institutions is something that remains of outmost importance.

Despite such provisions within the Washington Treaty, The UN charter and countless joint statements, this idea of enhanced cooperation between the UN and NATO seems to be largely absent with inner conflict and tension at an all-time high alongside joint missions and operations to be very rare and far apart when examined chronologically. Although the reasoning for this it's still rather inconsistent and unapparent examining the trends points to limited success as a result of United States complexities and interventions that lead two very little cooperation amongst UN and NATO bodies. The question does arise: what is causing the issues present within these two organizations and how have US foreign policy initiatives clouded and brought more problems two other members states in situations within these two international institutions. The inconsistency and unreliability of these bodies the inception of counter propagating entities, the domination of unipolar powers and motivation of self-guided interests by countries like the US and others all points to the lack of viability and efficiency of NATO and UN operations.[[5]](#footnote-5) One of the major hindrances of the UN and similar bodies is that they lack the ability to carry out their own conflict resolution operations enter thus forced to rely on the military and compassion/private interests of their member states. This forces these institutions to be dragged into the own political agendas and try to meet the private goals of the owner members which sought to join and upheld the values of these organizations. By relying strictly in voluntary military assistance in areas of conflict, they are often met by opposition because of underlying factors and the expensive nature of going about such missions and the impacts on the politics and stability of those regions. Another major roadblock to self-sufficiency is the widely limited pool of resources available causing an overwhelming dependency on other entities forcing inadequate cooperation that is often not efficient and has very little impact. The lack of a standing force coupled with a large limitation of resources and necessary equipment often makes it impossible to carry out conflict resolution without having to abide by and request assistance from individual state governments or other groups forcing regional and international dependency. Michael Harsch, in his work ‘*The power of dependence: NATO-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management*’, highlights a Resource Dependence Approach (RDA) narrative to the need for international collaboration, especially between the UN and NATO. Stating the various resource deficiencies and the ability of the other entity to fill this deficiency, Harsch explains that these entities rely on each other when one does not have the resource set available, be it logistical, military, or monetary based. His work highlights that the perceptions that arise out of these resource dependencies determine the levels of anticipated collaboration between organisations. Although an analysis of missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan show that the UN’s and NATO’s resource dependence perceptions determined the degree of collaboration and cooperation in missions, he does not consider the effect of political interactions between member states or mandate restrictions of these entities on such collaboration. In a later work he also highlights three major reasons for the reluctance of these entities to cooperate- “US interest, incompatible organizational cultures, and the absence of interpersonal trust”[[6]](#footnote-6). Harsch goes to explain how the impact and large complexities brought in because of prior US foreign policy involvement on top of the intense crisis in the lack of resources help bring about a plethora of problems and inefficiencies. This can be seen when examining some of the history of these operations. He explains that in Afghanistan, NATO and the UN initially operated independent of each other with autonomous missions that had similar but operationally different mandates which governed how and what they were there to achive. While NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was mandated by a UNSC resolution, it still worked independently of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Eventually, these missions were compelled to cooperate due to resource limitations on both sides, but this gave rise to new operational complications. As stated by Harsch, UNAMA was forced to rely on ISAF for protection from insurgent attacks due to the professional and military expertise of ISAF. Whereas ISAF was forced to rely on UNAMA for logistical resources and operational legitimacy. This then caused a lot of reluctance in cooperation because of the poorly planned joint missions and the botched operations causing an overall waste of resources and time, all of these short time benefits which both entities achieved was erased because of their lack of a thorough cooperative framework.

Another unsuccessful example which can be historically examined was the intervention in Libya in 2011 which is largely considered to be one of the biggest miscarriages of cooperative efforts in modern history. In a 2012 article by Patrick Terry regarding the Libyan intervention he describes NATO's position and the effects as the following: “As of 31 March NATO assumed control of all military action intended to implement resolution 1973but while NATO took over this military action, it failed to comply with the accountability measures enshrined in the resolution.[[7]](#footnote-7)” NATO was deemed to have gone beyond the simple act of protecting civilians, and rather seemed to take sides in the civil war while propagating the interests of member states within NATO such as the US. NATO was also reported to have repeatedly ignored Gaddafi’s offers of a ceasefire agreement, thereby violating the terms of the resolution. NATO’s direct support of anti-government rebels in Libya made them complacent to the crimes committed by these rebels on civilians.[[8]](#footnote-8) NATO’s air strikes also seemed to be specifically targeting Gaddafi and his family, with his son and numerous grandchildren being killed in a NATO attack, which proved that NATO was acting in the interest of its member states rather than under the mandate of the resolution. The UN was also not without its flaws in this operation. By granting relative autonomy and discretion to states under the resolution and by having no meaningful accountability system, the UN unintentionally provided a leeway for NATO and other member states to act in their self-interest while violating the principles of the resolution.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Through the analysis of these historical examples and the catastrophic failure and negative impacts of these emissions we are able to observe the common trends in failure an miscarriage of these cooperative efforts to help increase security and stability. One of the biggest issues with such collaboration as witness above, is the lack of accountability and transparency causing in the diminishment a formalized cooperative framework because of the driven self-interest and propagation of foreign policy initiatives by its member states. it can be seen that the influence given two individual states such as the United states is something that should not be allowed when determining and organizing international missions they have to deal directly with the overall security and stability of the lives of any people around the world. The need for increase institution collaboration is something that is highly important especially going forward between both UN bodies, NATO, individual states, in any other group or international institution. NATO's military influence and expertise is something that should not be misused and allowed to be corrupted through self interest initiatives in order to gain better global positions by its member states. Although most member states in general scholars would agree that a large increase in collaboration is highly necessary the path towards achieving this it's not something that will be easy. To truly be able to become the international institutions that are needed to safeguard and protect global interests, it is important to take proactive steps to ensure that individuals and groups are not able to exert any influence on such operations because their impacts could be catastrophic as historically measured. The creation or change of existing committees to provide a more oversight and analysis into the measures and influence their member states have on institutions as a whole should be created to ensure that no one state is able to exert too much pressure and bend initiatives towards their likeness at all food a permanent overarching body would ensure the sustainability of a cooperative framework and not allow such tensions to be created, this approach would standardize the best practices in conflict resolution cooperation and allow for this framework to be recreated my other organizations and institutions to fit the regional needs. The US-NATO-UN relationship has been wrought with its own difficulties and hurdles but the recent trend towards the need for increased collaboration has prompted important dialogue in both organizations regarding the future of this relationship. The UN has been open and communicative about its willingness to achieve a better standard for cooperation with regional bodies such as NATO, albeit certain member states still hold reservations regarding the extent of this collaboration. With a formalized and institutionalized cooperative framework, standardized mission models, and an overarching body to ensure accountability, this partnership may achieve new levels of success while alleviating the concerns held by member states. With increased dialogue and continued development in the collaboration between these entities, the future of an enhanced partnership looks promising

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