

Milestone III: Political Risk Analysis:

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has long been recognized for its role in promoting peace and security through various endeavors, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. However, to comprehensively understand the impact and significance of NATO, it is crucial to conduct a political risk analysis that delves into the potential risks posed by the organization. This paper aims to fulfill that objective by examining and analyzing the political risks associated with NATO, providing examples, evidence, and an assessment of the potential future threats it poses.

In this analysis, we will explore the diverse aspects of NATO and their implications for global stability. Our focus goes beyond NATO's role as a peacekeeping alliance, aiming to provide a comprehensive assessment of the organization's potential risks and their impact on international relations. By evaluating the geopolitical challenges faced by NATO, including rising tensions with Russia, evolving threat perceptions, and the changing security landscape, we can gain a deeper understanding of the risks inherent in the organization's operations.

In order to identify and analyze these risks, we will examine NATO's structure, decision-making processes, and the motivations of its member nations. By understanding the origins of NATO and the commitments made by its member states, we can better comprehend the potential risks they collectively pose. Furthermore, we will assess NATO's involvement in crisis management operations and missions worldwide, drawing insights from past experiences such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo, and maritime surveillance operations in the Mediterranean.

This analysis aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners, enabling them to effectively manage political risks associated with NATO. By

examining the identified risks, providing concrete examples and evidence, and analyzing the potential future threats, we will contribute to a deeper understanding of NATO's role in promoting global peace and security.

In the subsequent sections, we will delve into the specific political risks posed by NATO, supported by examples and evidence, and analyze the implications and potential future threats they entail. By doing so, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the political risk landscape surrounding NATO and contribute to the ongoing discussions on international security.

Background and Motivations of NATO Member Nations

To fully understand NATO's role, it is essential to grasp the motivations and origins of its member nations. The treaty was originally drafted and signed on April 4, 1949. The purpose of the treaty was a commitment of each member state “to share the risk, responsibilities and benefits of collective defense – a concept at the very heart of the Alliance” (NATO 2022). The original treaty consisted of 12 nations: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. Later the Alliance grew to what it is today. As of 2023, NATO consists of 31 nations, including the same influential actors from the original treaty such as the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, and Denmark (NATO 2023). These member countries collectively shape NATO's policies, actions, and responses to political risks.

NATO is a complex organization of 31 sovereign nations. To make a massive intricate organization function, there must be a working structure and a process of making decisions. The method utilized by NATO is that of the “consultative, vice decision making,” (Benecke 2007) process within the Alliance. This process over time, has allowed three elements to emerged to form the “cornerstones of NATO’s decision-making process: Consultation, Consensus, and the

Indivisibility of Alliance Security” (Benecke 2007). Consultation is the starting point for any decision “providing every member the possibility to bring to the other members’ attention any issue regarding its political independence or threat to its own security” (Benecke 2007).

In general terms, there are three strategic decision-making layers within NATO. At the top is the North Atlantic Council (NAC), with permanent representation by all member states, headed by the Secretary General (SecGen) and supported by the International Staff (IS). Second is the Military Committee (MC), again with a permanent representation from all member nations, headed by its Chairman (CMC) and with a supporting International Military Staff (IMS). Both are located at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. As an external, second source of advice on, amongst others, military operational matters, the third decision making level includes the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) who heads Allied Command Operations (ACO) with its headquarters at SHAPE, in Mons, Belgium. (Benecke 2007)

This organization so far has worked and helped to make NATO the strongest alliance in the world.

Identification of Potential Risks Posed by NATO

NATO, as the world's most powerful alliance comprising 31 nations (NATO 2023), possesses both strengths and weaknesses that introduce a range of potential risks. It is crucial to identify and examine these risks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organization's political landscape. The risks posed by NATO encompass various aspects, including geopolitical tensions, relations with Russia, alliances and partnerships, implications for non-member states, and considerations of public opinion and domestic politics.

Geopolitical tensions emerge as a significant risk associated with NATO's involvement in regions marked by geopolitical instability, such as Eastern Europe and the Middle East (NATO 2022). While NATO's presence aims to foster stability, there is a potential for conflicts to escalate, contributing to regional instability and heightened political risks. Despite their interventions, the Middle East is still full of unrest and the missions in a few nations, like Afghanistan, are viewed as failures (Herd 2021).

NATO's expansion and military activities near Russia's borders have strained relations with Moscow, resulting in increased tensions and the potential for confrontations (NATO 2022). This geopolitical dynamic adds a layer of risk to NATO's operations and the broader international security landscape. Many have accused NATO of instigating war with Russia and causing political tension with neighboring nations by trying to encircle Russia (NATO 2022). These accusations revolving around Russia are just rumors, however, they can and have caused political tension.

The alliance's commitments and alliances with countries beyond its traditional scope can generate political risks. NATO has many global partners that are not official members (NATO 2023). These partnerships may be perceived as interference or provocation by other nations, potentially leading to heightened tensions and a challenging diplomatic environment. Despite this risk, the nations of NATO deem these partnerships as a strategic strength by widening their sphere of influence and reach (NATO 2023).

NATO's actions and policies can also have political implications for countries outside the alliance. Non-member states may perceive NATO's activities as exclusionary or foster increased rivalries, further shaping the geopolitical landscape and introducing potential risks to regional stability. Many of the missions NATO has started or gotten involved in have been viewed as failures (NATO 3 2022). That the actions of NATO actually destabilized a region and caused more problems than they fixed, like the Iraq invasion to remove Saddam Hussein (Cordesman 2020).

Furthermore, NATO's decisions and operations can encounter political challenges, public opposition, or debates within member states. Public opinion and domestic politics can influence the organization's cohesion and effectiveness, potentially impacting its ability to navigate

complex political landscapes and address emerging threats. Such as the political unrest that caused France to withdraw its troops from NATO's integrated military command structure (SHAPE n.d.). By identifying these potential risks, we can gain insights into the multifaceted nature of NATO's political landscape and the challenges it faces in fulfilling its mission of promoting peace and security.

Analysis of Risks and their Impact

In this section, we will delve into a comprehensive analysis of the identified risks and their potential implications for NATO. The assessment will involve evaluating the magnitude and nature of these risks to gain a deeper understanding of their significance.

By analyzing how these risks could evolve over time, we can assess their potential impact on NATO's cohesion and effectiveness. Changes in geopolitical dynamics, emerging security challenges, or shifts in member states' priorities may influence the organization's ability to address political risks, potentially undermining its unity and effectiveness as a collective defense alliance.

Furthermore, it is crucial to discuss the broader implications of these risks on international cooperation and global stability. The political risks faced by NATO can reverberate beyond the alliance itself, affecting diplomatic relations, regional dynamics, and the overall security environment. Understanding these implications is vital for comprehending the wider consequences of NATO's actions and the potential ripple effects on global peace and stability.

In light of the identified risks, it is essential to explore potential responses or countermeasures that can help mitigate their impact. This could involve diplomatic initiatives, strengthened alliances, adaptation of defense strategies, or diplomatic engagement with relevant

stakeholders. By proactively addressing the risks, NATO can enhance its resilience and maintain its role as a key contributor to international security.

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the identified risks, their evolution, and broader implications, we can gain valuable insights into the political landscape surrounding NATO. These insights can inform strategic decision-making, guide policy responses, and contribute to the ongoing efforts to manage and mitigate the identified risks.

Future Threats and Implications

Looking ahead, it is crucial to analyze the potential future threats that NATO may face and consider their implications for the organization's role and relevance in the international arena. One significant concern is the possibility of another world war if any allied nation is attacked. As a collective defense alliance, NATO's primary purpose is to deter aggression and provide a united response to any act of aggression against its member states. The implications of such threats are far-reaching, with the potential to reshape NATO's role and relevance in a rapidly changing global security landscape.

The consequences of these threats extend beyond NATO's immediate sphere of influence and impact on global peace and security. A large-scale conflict involving NATO member states could destabilize regions, disrupt international trade and commerce, and strain diplomatic relations between nations. It would pose a severe challenge to the existing global order and institutions, with significant implications for the stability and well-being of nations worldwide.

To address and manage these threats, it is essential for NATO to consider possible strategies. Enhancing collective defense capabilities, investing in advanced technologies, and fostering closer cooperation and coordination among member states are some potential approaches. Strengthening partnerships with other international organizations and regional

alliances can also contribute to a more comprehensive and effective response to emerging threats. Additionally, maintaining open lines of communication, engaging in dialogue with potential adversaries, and pursuing diplomatic solutions whenever possible can help prevent escalation and promote stability.

By analyzing the potential future threats, understanding their implications, and exploring strategies to address and manage them, NATO can adapt and prepare for the challenges ahead. This proactive approach is vital for preserving the organization's role as a key pillar of global security and its ability to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability in an ever-changing world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has provided a comprehensive analysis of the political risks posed by NATO, their impact, and potential future threats. By examining the identified risks, including geopolitical tensions, relations with Russia, alliances and partnerships, implications for non-member states, and considerations of public opinion and domestic politics, we have gained valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of NATO's political landscape.

The analysis of these risks has highlighted the potential challenges and complexities faced by NATO in fulfilling its mission of promoting peace and security. The examination of their magnitude and nature has allowed us to assess their impact on the organization's cohesion and effectiveness. Changes in geopolitical dynamics and emerging security challenges can influence NATO's ability to navigate political risks, potentially undermining its unity and effectiveness as a collective defense alliance.

Furthermore, the implications of these risks extend beyond NATO itself and have broader implications for international cooperation and global stability. The political risks faced by NATO

can impact diplomatic relations, regional dynamics, and the overall security environment. It is crucial to understand these implications to comprehend the wider consequences of NATO's actions and their potential ripple effects on global peace and stability.

Looking ahead, the analysis has also highlighted the possibility of future threats, such as the potential for another world war if any allied nation is attacked. These threats have significant implications for NATO's role and relevance in the international arena. Addressing and managing these threats require proactive strategies, including enhancing collective defense capabilities, investing in advanced technologies, strengthening partnerships, and pursuing diplomatic solutions.

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the identified risks, their implications, and potential future threats, we have contributed to a deeper understanding of NATO's role in promoting global peace and security. This knowledge can inform strategic decision-making, guide policy responses, and facilitate the ongoing efforts to manage and mitigate political risks associated with NATO. It is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners to consider these insights as they work towards maintaining the stability, resilience, and effectiveness of NATO in an ever-changing and complex global security landscape.

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