

NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT

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The origins and aims of NATO

The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation had, as its basic origin, the fear of communist expansion. Ironically, it was Roosevelt and Churchill who were probably indirectly responsible in helping the spread of Soviet power. As a result of their sanctioning the Yalta Agreement and their condonation, without any legal right, of Soviet military control over, inter alia, Manchuria and Korea, the basis was laid for communist expansionism in Eastern Europe.¹

The indiscriminate use of the veto in the Security Council of the United Nations by Russia, ostensibly to further her own ends, resulted in the inability of this organisation to resolve conflicts and institute adequate arms control. It became obvious to the West that the instrument of world peace and security was thus severely restricted in its task.² In addition to this, the Soviet rejection of the American initiated Marshall Economic Aid Plan in June 1947 and the enforced compliance with this policy by its satellite states, led to the West's suspicions being well founded, especially after the Soviet introduction of the Cominform – its own answer to the Marshall Plan. It became imperative that the West took cognisance of the Soviet Bloc's intentions.³

The idea of a defensive alliance amongst the nations of the West within the framework of the United Nations, was initially suggested by Churchill in 1946 and taken up a year later by Mr Louis St Laurent, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs. The more concrete form of a proposal for a type of Western Union was put forward by Mr Ernest Bevin (British Foreign Secretary) in a speech in the House of Commons in January 1948. He mentioned the Dunkirk Treaty March 1947 wherein a firm basis had been laid for mutual assistance between France and Britain, primarily for their protection against a resurgent Germany and spoke of the need to conclude similar pacts with the Benelux countries (i.e. Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg.)

This proposal was welcomed by America. However, both the Benelux countries and America felt that as the Dunkirk Treaty was aimed primarily against renewed German aggression, a collective defence arrangement aimed against any aggression would be more suitable.

While these problems were being discussed the communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia reminded the negotiators that the time was running short.

Resumed negotiations resulted in the Brussels Treaty of 17 March 1948; the signatories being the Benelux countries, France and the United Kingdom. They pledged to set up a joint defensive system as well as to strengthen their economic and cultural ties.

No sooner had the Brussels Treaty been concluded when the Soviets commenced their blockade of West Berlin which was to last for nearly a year and be ultimately negated by the airlift.⁴ Against this background of tension, negotiations for a North Atlantic Treaty were pursued because it became apparent that the imbalance of the defence system of Western Europe could only be effectively countered with the aid of United States participation.

American conditions for participation were set out in the Vandenberg Resolution which committed the United States, in principle, to military assistance to regional alliances entered into within the framework of the United Nations. Congressional approval would, however, be a precondition to such assistance.

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1. M.V. Naidu: *Alliances and balance of power: a search for conceptual clarity*, (London, 1975), pp 43, 45.
2. H.I. Ismay: *NATO: The first five years 1949–1954*, (Utrecht, 1954), p 7.
3. NATO Information Service: *NATO: facts and figures*, (Brussels, 1974) pp 16, 17.
4. H.I. Ismay: *op. cit.*

On the basis of the Vandenberg Resolution and resultant negotiations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation came into being on 4 April 1949. The signatories were United States, Canada, Belgium, Britain, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Italy and Portugal. Later adherents to the Treaty were Greece and Turkey (18 February 1952) and the German Federal Republic (5 May 1955). Protocols were added to the text of the Treaty to make provision for the admittance of these states.⁵

The governments of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation are possessed of largely democratic structures. Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and Norway are constitutional monarchies and with the exception of Denmark (a single chambered parliament), have two houses or chambers of Parliament elected on the basis of universal suffrage. The legislative power of the Netherlands and Denmark is shared by their heads of state/crown and their parliaments, while that of Belgium and Luxembourg is vested in the crown only. The United Kingdom and Norway, however, has its legislative power vested in their respective parliaments. Where legislative authority is not wholly dependent on Parliament, certain restrictions guarantee that the crown cannot act in an autocratic manner.

The remaining North Atlantic Treaty Organisation members are constituted on the basis of republics, federal or otherwise. Two houses of parliament characterise the legislative constituent of their political structure and are elected on the basis on universal suffrage.⁶

The electoral processes of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation members guarantee complete freedom of political thought or ideology, which in the future may adversely affect the security of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. A communist orientated government may come to power in the not too distant future in Italy for example. This would naturally threaten the security of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation alliance.

The origins and aims of the Warsaw Pact Organisation

The establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (April 1949) and the admission of later adherents, culminating in that of the Federal Republic of Germany, resulted in the formation of a 'Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance', which became known as the **Waraw Pact Organisation**.

All the European communist states (except Yugoslavia) met in Warsaw under the leadership of the Soviet Union to sign the Treaty on 14 May 1955. Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Poland, Rumania, Hungary and the Soviet Union became regular members of the Warsaw Pact Organisation, while the communist regimes of China, North Korea, North Vietnam and Mongolia enjoyed observer status.

The preamble states that the fundamental aim of the Warsaw Pact was the communist opposition to the remilitarisation of West Germany and its admission into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

It is probable however, that the Soviet Union made use of the threat of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the admission of West Germany to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to emphasize the threat of German militarization both to the communist allies and to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies. The communist states needed to be persuaded that they needed a unified military alliance and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies needed to be reminded of the fear of the European peoples of a remilitarized Germany.

Actual Soviet Policy with respect to the creation of the Warsaw Pact, was inter alia of a dual nature. One was the establishment of a unified organisation to counter the genuinely felt threat of a resurgent Germany; the other, the creation of a legal precedent to station Soviet troops in the communist states.⁷

Basically all Warsaw Pact adherents subscribe to the usual form of communist government. As in democratic governments amongst North Atlantic Treaty Organisation signatories, the Soviet Union and its satellite states have 'elected' parliaments on the basis of universal suffrage. Legislative authority is vested in these parliaments but, obviously, any legislation enacted must not violate communist policy expounded by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in every communist state. The seat of real power is therefore present in the Central Committee of the Communist Party in each communist state.⁸

5. Treaties and alliances of the world. An international survey covering treaties in force and communities of states, (Bristol, 1974), pp 93, 94.

6. O. von Pivka: *The armies of Europe today*, (Osprey, 1974)

7. M.V. Naidu: *op. cit.*

8. O. von Pivka: *op. cit.*

Only political parties subscribing to communist ideology are permitted to function in these countries and therefore the parliaments elected on the basis of universal suffrage contain communist members only.

There are thus inherent advantages in this system devoid of any democratic institutions for the Warsaw Pact — a change of government means that the political allegiance of that country will never change.

NATO Command structure

The only provision for an organisational structure in the North Atlantic Treaty is the authority for the establishment of a Council. The North Atlantic Council is the supreme authority of the Atlantic Alliance, located in Brussels and comprised of the governments of the fifteen member-countries. The Council meets at two levels: one, at the level of Ministers (either Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs or Economic Affairs) twice a year and the other, at the level of Permanent Representatives (of ambassadorial rank) who are in permanent session.

The North Atlantic Council is assisted by various committees amongst which are the Political Committee, the Economic Committee, the Defence Review Committee, the Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee and the Security Council.

France left the integrated military organisation in 1966, whereupon the fourteen-nation Defence Planning Committee was formed (no French representation). This Committee meets on the same level as the North Atlantic Council, that is Ministerial, and deals with aspects related to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation military planning and other matters wherein France does not participate. Greece's intention to leave the integrated military organisation is under review; but she left the Defence Planning Committee in 1974.

The Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is chairman of the North Atlantic Council, the Defence Planning Committee, Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee (comprising all member states except France, Iceland and Luxembourg which normally meets once a year at Defence Minister level to enlighten non-nuclear members in the nuclear affairs of the Alliance), and the Nuclear Planning Group subordinate to the Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee.

The Military Committee consists of the Chiefs of Staff of all member countries except France, which maintains a liaison staff, and Iceland which has no representation. The Committee functions in permanent session at the level of Permanent Military Representatives who in turn are appointed by their Chiefs-of-Staff who meet at least twice a year. The Military Committee is responsible for providing military advice to the North Atlantic Council and the Defence Planning Council so that it can act as the executive power.

Europe is divided into three main spheres of defence organisation viz Allied Command Europe (divided into subordinate commands owing to its great size), Allied Command Atlantic and Allied Command Channel. Each command is entrusted its own responsible area of defence.⁹

Warsaw Pact Command Structure

From an organisational point of view, the Warsaw Pact Organisation bears some resemblance to the North Atlantic Treaty although the Warsaw Pact Organisation has not developed the intricate number of institutions as its equivalent has. Provision was, however, made in the Warsaw Treaty for the establishment of two special organs — a Unified Command and a Political Consultative Committee.

The Political Consultative Committee comprises the first secretaries of the communist party, heads of Government and the Foreign and Defence Ministers of the member countries. Subordinate to the Committee is a Joint Secretariat and a Permanent Commission, which has the task of making recommendations on foreign policy for Pact members. Both are located in Moscow.

Following the reorganisation of the Pact in 1969, the non-Soviet Ministers of Defence form the Council of Defence Ministers under the Soviet Minister of Defence. This is the highest military body in the Pact. The other military body, the Joint High Command, which was provided for in the actual Treaty, is the executive arm of the Council. The Joint High Command is composed of a Soviet Commander-in-Chief and a Military Council (representing permanent military representatives from each of the Pact forces and the Soviet Chief of Staff).

9. M.V. Naidu: *op. cit.*, pp 53, 54; The International Institute for Strategic Studies: *The Military Balance 1977 — 1978*, (London) pp 16 — 18.

With the exception of Poland and Czechoslovakia, all members of the Pact have Soviet Consultative Groups which function in a military advisory capacity. Consequently the Soviet officials can keep a constant check of defence industries, military training and other military affairs in Pact countries.

In the event of hostilities the non-Soviet Pact forces become operationally subordinate to the Soviet High Command.¹⁰

Anti-Soviet agitation in Hungary in 1956 led to open revolt against the Soviet dominance in their country — this was inspired inter alia, by Hungary's official denouncement of the Warsaw Pact Organisation. The rebellion was speedily quelled and immediately afterward a pro-Soviet regime was instituted. Hungary thus returned to the Pact.

After the severance of relations with the Soviet Union in 1961, Albania took no part in Pact activities, and in 1968 withdrew from the Pact on the grounds that the Pact had violated the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia during that country's invasion in 1968.

The 'liberal' sentiments prevalent in Czechoslovakia under Dubcek came to a head in 1968 when a strong Warsaw Pact force invaded that country. Czechoslovakia was consequently forced to toe the Party line. The presence of Soviet troops there was legalised by the treaty signed in Prague.¹¹

The Military Balance

The appraisal of the military balance will be largely quantitative as qualitative factors such as geographical advantages and logistic support are not easily evaluated in a short review such as this. Certain other factors are, however, important. Any comparison of forces during peacetime can only give a limited insight into events which might occur under conflict conditions. The military requirements differ with respect to both alliances: Soviet forces are designed for an offensive; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces for defence, to create a doubt amongst the Soviets as to whether a successful conventional attack warrants the nuclear consequences that might follow.¹²

a. Ground formations:

Comparison of combat divisions cannot be regarded as a true guide owing to variations in their organisations, size, equipment and the exclusion of combat units outside divisional structures, but the following table indicates in broad outline the availability of divisions in Europe during peacetime (3 brigades to a division).

GROUND FORCES AVAILABLE IN PEACETIME (Armoured, mechanised infantry and airborne)

North & Central Europe		South Europe	
Nato	Warsaw Pact	Nato	Warsaw Pact
10	32	4	6
13	33	7	24
4	5	26	3

French formations are not included here as they are not committed to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. If included they would strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation total in Europe by two mechanised divisions. All the Pact forces stationed in Eastern Europe are included in the table. Apart from the Soviet divisions present in Eastern Europe, there are some stationed in the western part of the Soviet Union that are included in the table as well. Therefore a proportion of the Pact strength is some distance away in the Soviet Union while that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is stationed predominantly in Germany where it is most needed. It is evident that there is a considerable disparity in the ground force strength, however this is less notable in Southern Europe.

b. Manpower:

We now compare the front line combat manpower strengths deployed on the ground in peacetime. This is distinct from total manpower. The figures shown in the table below reflect the variations in divisional strengths mentioned above, but also include combat troops in formations higher than divisions. The figures are very approximate as many NATO and Pact divisions are under strength in peacetime.

MANPOWER AVAILABLE IN PEACETIME

North & Central Europe		South Europe	
Nato	Warsaw Pact	Nato	Warsaw Pact
630 000	945 000	560 000	39 000

There is, therefore, a marked Warsaw Pact advantage in North and Central Europe, and although the figures slightly favour North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Southern Europe, their scattered force deployment mitigates against this gain, as those of the Pact can be more flexibly employed. The figures do not include French forces stationed in Europe (40 000) but do include those of Greece.

10. The International Institute for Strategic Studies: *op. cit.*, p 12; M.V. Naidu: *op. cit.*
11. Treaties and alliances of the world: An international survey covering treaties in force and communities of states, p 21.
12. O. von Pivka: *op. cit.*, p 13. The International Institute for Strategic Studies: *op. cit.*, p 102.

c. Reinforcements:

It must be borne in mind that there is only a limited use in comparing peace time strengths as variables such as speed of deployment would materially affect the comparison in a combat situation.

The North Atlantic Treaty defence plans rely heavily on the concept of political warning time — there should be adequate warning of a possible attack so that forces can be brought to a higher state of readiness.

Speculation has it that the improved firepower and mobility of Pact forces has been so constituted so that an attack may be launched initially without mobilisation having had to take place. This strategy implies that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation will not be forewarned and that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces are adequate for the task. An alternative, which might be less advantageous for the Warsaw Pact, is that of partial mobilisation prior to attack. However, it is a fact that initial mobilisation of the Pact can occur faster than that of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Apparently the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is paying attention to this weakness.

The most rapid North Atlantic Treaty Organisation mobilisation would be that of its reserves in Europe — this could happen within days. Germany is particularly geared to effective mobilisation; reserves would bring units up to wartime strength, and the territorial army of 500 000, constituted so as to conduct rear area defence would be mobilised. Canada, Britain, (France possibly) and in particular the United States would be the main suppliers of forces from outside Germany. Two United States divisions and an armoured cavalry regiment stationed in America, but whose equipment is in store in Germany, are earmarked for rapid deployment — a rapid airlift being possible. Ten United States infantry divisions (some with heavy equipment) and two brigades, positioned in America, are designed for deployment in Europe, but there would be a considerable mobilisation delay as much of their equipment would have to be moved by sea. A further eight United States divisions and 19 independent brigades of the National Guard could only be fully mobilised after some five weeks and, in addition, might need further training.

Warsaw Pact reinforcement is somewhat different. Many Pact divisions are manned at three different levels (category 1 up to 75% of establishment

strength; category 2 up to 50%; category 3 about 33%). All the Soviet divisions in Eastern Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia are category 1; they would need little if any reinforcement, but other Pact divisions stationed in this central sector are manned at a lower level. The divisions of the Soviet Union deployed in its Western sector, 50% of which are earmarked for use in the Central European sector, are normally category 1 or 2. Although category 2 divisions take about 72 days for full mobilisation, they can be sent into battle early at 75% strength, leaving reinforcements to come later. Reinforcement divisions from as far afield as the Sino-Soviet border area can be deployed, but more time would be required.

Soviet mobilisation could take place speedily although no concealment on any scale would be possible. It is estimated that the 27 Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe could be increased to 50–60 within a few weeks, and the total number of Pact divisions to about 80.

The Soviet Union has a geographical advantage regarding the movement of reinforcements with heavy equipment; this could take place more quickly than the United States could, owing to its reliance on a searift. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's real problem lies in the time lag which might follow the initial build-up of its European combatant units before the arrival of the American follow-up formations. It is the opinion of many that the Warsaw Pact is capable of a much faster build-up of formations in the initial two or three weeks, particularly if local surprise is achieved. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation would only be able to reach a better position should the crisis develop slowly enough to permit full reinforcement. However, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries (including France), apart from being more economically resourceful, maintain more men under arms than the Warsaw Pact. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has 2 842 000 and the Pact 2 647 000 army/marine troops.

d. Equipment:

Warsaw Pact equipment is largely standardised, while that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is not. The implications are obvious, but the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has recently introduced methods to evolve greater standardisation.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's essentially defensive role is reflected in her numerical weakness in tanks — and other armoured fighting vehicles, where Pact forces are well equipped.

MAIN BATTLE TANKS IN OPERATIONAL SERVICE

North & Central Europe		South Europe	
Nato	Warsaw Pact	Nato	Warsaw Pact
7 000	20 500	4 000	6 700

French tanks are not included in the table. 325 French tanks are stationed in Germany and 160 in Eastern France.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's tank minority has been somewhat offset in the past by a heavy anti-tank weapon superiority, but with the advent of air and ground launched missiles, this is being somewhat eroded by the Pact's corresponding gain in this field. The Pact possesses numerically more ground launched weapons and anti-tank guns, but the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's airborne anti-tank and other precision air to ground weapons carried by fighter aircraft and helicopters are more effective.

The Warsaw Pact has a large superiority in conventional artillery in Northern and Central Europe. The Pact's total of field, medium and heavy guns, mortars and rocket launchers is in excess of 10 000 while the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation only has some 2 700. The position in Southern Europe is less desperate, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation having 3 500 and the Pact 4 000. The artillery imbalance is somewhat offset by the more lethal ammunition used by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and a greater logistic capacity to sustain higher rates of fire. This is being countered, however, by improved Soviet logistic systems.

e. Logistics:

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's logistic system is inflexible and based almost entirely on national supply lines. French territory cannot be presently used, in addition to which many lines of communication run North to South near the forward deployment area, restricting logistic diversity, especially on East to West lines. The Soviet logistic system has improved of late and the former North Atlantic Treaty Organisation superiority in forward area logistics has now probably been equalled or even superseded, though there is some advantage in operating on home territory.

f. Air Power:

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has an inferior number of aircraft, but she does possess a higher proportion of performance orientated multi-

purpose aircraft with regard to range, payload and all-weather capability. The introduction of more advanced longer-range Soviet aircraft now present a great air defence problem for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, whose priority lies in maintaining a long-range deep-strike tactical aircraft capability so as to provide adequate cover for her numerically less endowed ground forces.

The Pact possesses more airfields, protective shelters and standardised ground support equipment than does the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. This means greater Pact flexibility but, on the other hand, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation leads the field in technologically more advanced aircraft. The capability of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's air crew training is superior to that of the Pact's and together with the more advanced technology employed, results in greater all-weather operational strength and superiority in ground and airborne control equipment.

It is evident that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's air power capability could be positively influenced, should she make more airfields available.

TACTICAL AIRCRAFT IN OPERATIONAL SERVICE

	North & Central Europe		Southern Europe	
	Nato	Warsaw Pact	Nato	Warsaw Pact
Light bombers	150	125	—	50
Fighters	1 500	1 350	625	325
Interceptors	400	2 050	200	1 000
Reconnaissance	300	550	125	200

f. Nuclear weapons:

It is estimated that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation possesses some 7 200 nuclear warheads which are delivered by some 3 000 vehicles such as aircraft, shortrange missiles and specialised artillery. The yield is mainly in the low kiloton range (between four and twelve kilotons) while that of the Soviet Union is somewhat larger (about twenty kilotons), there being only some 3 500 nuclear warheads.¹³

A comparison of the capabilities of nuclear weapons is difficult in that no matter who strikes first, both can deliver warheads into the conflict area from outside it and any one is able to destroy the other.¹⁴

13. The International Institute for Strategic Studies: *op. cit.*, pp 102 – 109.

14. *Paratus*, vol 24, no 7, July 1973 (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks), p 20.

Arms limitation and force reductions

Negotiations on the mutual reduction of forces and armaments and associated measures in Central Europe (MUREFAAMCE) were begun on 30 October 1973, but so far little progress has been made.¹⁵ The latest proposals, put forward by the Pact countries, provide for the reduction of Soviet and United States troops in Central Europe by an equal percentage (2–3%) of the total number of forces of both alliances present in the area. Both sides would reduce 300 tanks, 54 aircraft, an equal number of tactical missile launchers and nuclear warheads as well as 36 anti-aircraft missile launchers. It is therefore obvious that, owing to the present superior strength of numbers of men and equipment deployed by the Pact in Europe, an equal percentage-wise reduction would substantially favour the Pact. These proposals have not been adopted yet.¹⁶

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) although not directly involving the alliances, have a great bearing on them in that the participants, Russia and America, are both the greatest contributors to the alliances.

The first phase of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks was concluded in May 1972 whereby each power was to restrict her anti-ballistic missile systems, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and missile carrying submarines. However, the Soviets using their stalling techniques, stretched the negotiations to two and a half years, during which time she deployed 50% more intercontinental ballistic missiles and increased the size of her submarine missile force.¹⁷

In similar vein, negotiations for a Strategic Arms Limitation Talks 2 treaty have not reached finality

as yet. Disarmament is therefore of great concern to the security of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as it seems certain that Russia will continue to use her filibustering methods, while America will acquiesce to unreasonable disarmament proposals.¹⁸

The overall military balance is such that any military aggression appears unattractive. A major attack would be required to breach the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defences; the risk being nuclear retaliation and this must of necessity impose caution. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has emphasized quality armament production, but this is being increasingly matched by the Soviets. The maintenance of low North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence budgets will result in greater Warsaw Pact capability in making gains in the technologically expensive sphere.¹⁹ The average North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence expenditure is 3,8% of the combined gross national product, whereas that of the Soviets is estimated at between 11 and 13%.²⁰

All in all the Warsaw Pact is rapidly overtaking the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as the power of Europe. This must be a cause for great concern — only radical measures can counter the communist threat.

15. The International Institute for Strategic Studies: *op. cit.*, p 110.
16. SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament 1977, (Stockholm, 1977), p 411
17. *Paratus*, vol 27, no 7, July 1973 (*op. cit.*), p 20
18. SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament 1977, p 16
19. The International Institute for Strategic Studies: *op. cit.*, p 109.
20. *To the Point*, vol 6, no 20, 20 May 1977 (Keeping up with the Russians a difficult balancing act), p 10