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ZVEZA NATO KOT KOALICIJA (VOLJNIH)

THE NATO ALLIANCE AS A COALITION (OF THE WILLING)

Povzetek   Prispevek opisuje razliko med dvema konceptoma meddržavnega sodelovanja ob upoštevanju varnosti in njenega izvajanja v Natu. Avtor v prvem delu prispevka natančneje opiše razliko med vojaškim zavezništvom in vojaško koalicijo. Medtem ko je bistvena naloga zavezništva obramba, je koncept koalicije precej primernejši za začasne razmestitve zunaj lastnega ozemlja. V zvezi s tem avtor v drugem delu prispevka analizira preoblikovanje Nata in vpliv operacij kriznega odzivanja na dojemanje ter notranjo strukturo Natove moči. Sistem kriznega upravljanja in Natov koncept nosilne države sta temeljna primera, kako Nato deluje bolj kot koalicija, ne kot zavezništvo.

Ključne besede   *Vojaško zavezništvo, vojaška koalicija, operacije kriznega odzivanja, koncept nosilne države.*

Abstract   The purpose of this article is to describe the difference between two intra-state concepts of cooperation with regard to security and its application in NATO. In the first part of the article the author elaborates the distinction between a military alliance and a military coalition. While an alliance is inherently defensive in nature, a coalition concept is much more suitable for *ad hoc* deployment outside its own territorial space. With regard to this, in the second part the author analyzes the transformation of the NATO Alliance and the impact that Crisis Response Operations have had on the perception and inner power structure of NATO. The Crisis Management System and the Framework Nation Concept are used as primary examples of NATO acting as a coalition rather than an alliance.

Key words   *Military alliance, military coalition, crisis response operations, Framework Nation Concept.*

Introduction   The NATO Alliance is celebrating its 70th anniversary, which for any military alliance is very impressive. Established in 1949, in very different circumstances, it has survived all the turbulent political and societal phases of the last seven decades. As those political changes occurred, NATO was forced to adapt, especially after the end of the Cold War, which brought tectonic changes to the political landscape of Europe – the essential part of the Alliance. Much has been said about the period of adaptation and transformation of NATO after the Cold War, but here we argue that an equal, if not even greater, change to NATO was introduced after the terrorist attack targeted towards the USA on September 11 2001. As Asmus pointed out, "after the collapse of Communism and the Soviet Union, NATO had to reinvent itself politically for the initial challenges of the post-Cold War era… In the wake of 9/11, however, the Alliance faced the need to reinvent itself a second time to face the challenges of the post-post-Cold War era" (Asmus, 2005). Influenced by the new political and pragmatic orientation of the West, NATO sharply changed its *modus operandi* and engaged itself in carrying out Crisis Response Operations. As a consequence, over the last two decades NATO has looked less like an alliance and more like a coalition.

This article is not intended to discuss all the complex and robust mechanisms that constitute NATO's daily work, nor is it intended to analyze the political and military dynamics of NATO. The purpose is rather to emphasize the latest changes in its strategic orientation, which influences how NATO does business today and what its (unintended) consequences are.

1   METHODOLOGY

In order to reach our objective, we will use a qualitative method to confront two concepts of international cooperation. By using a comparison of their attributes and analyzing the relevant literature we will outline the main characteristics that distinguish each concept in order to emphasize the differences that are usually omitted. We will then apply these differences to the NATO Alliance, and, by outlining the historical transformation of NATO after the Cold War, come to the conclusion that the latest *modus operandi* of NATO represents a shift from an alliance towards a coalition posture. To support this conclusion we will analyze Crisis Response Operations and the Framework Nation Concept as prime characteristics of that shift.

2   AN ALLIANCE COMPARED TO A COALITION

There are substantial differences between an alliance and a coalition. We are of course talking about military alliances, although the term is widely used and applied in the sphere of national and international politics. For examples, recall the historical Holy Alliance, the Triple Alliance, the Triple Entente, the West European Union, and many more, as well as the 19th century system of European alliances

introduced and championed by the German Chancellor of the time, Bismarck.[1] In fact, Bismarck made intra-state alliances a principal course of action when defending national interests. Aside from aristocratic medieval reasons to form an alliance, the core motive to make alliances in the Bismarck era was in line with the realpolitik and modern states rivalry of the time. In the 19th century, and even today, a political alliance between states was not separated or disengaged from a military alliance, and one cannot think of any example where one country would form a political alliance with another and at the same time form a military alliance with the allied country's enemy.[2] There are also coalitions; recent examples include the Gulf War Coalition and the Coalition of the Willing. Generally, it is presumed that a coalition refers to the military and an alliance to the political domain, although, as said above, the two go hand in hand.

When war or an imminent crisis occurs, states seek partnership to better protected and to preserve their interests, since neutrality is a very rare commodity. In fact, neutrality is not what one state declares, but rather what other states respect. Countries are more and more likely to solve crises with allies and partners than alone. In fact, 40% of the interstate wars of the past two centuries have been multilateral, and the USA has built coalitions of varying sizes to support nearly half of its own uses of force since 1948, and almost all since the end of the Cold War (Wolford, 2016, p 1). In today's globalized and interdependent world there are very limited possibilities for one country to engage itself in a conflict alone, since acting with partners enhances domestic public approval for the engagement and reduces the possibility of pressure from the international community and civic organizations. In a way such an intervention is also perceived as morally justified, in the sense that if many countries are involved then it cannot be wrong.

In today's general use, the terms military alliance and military coalition are widely synonymous and for most people mean more or less the same thing. The perception is that both serve the same purpose, as two or more countries and their armed forces join together for the common interest. Viewing the matter more closely, however, there are some substantial differences between a military alliance and a military coalition. The main distinction is the purpose of forming either an alliance or a coalition, but there are also matters of the status of the individual partners, the structure of forces, duration, internal command and control, allocation of resources and so on.

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[1] There are many references to the Bismarck's art of making alliances. As Hobsbawm put it, he "remained the undisputed world champion at the game of multilateral diplomatic chess" in Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire: 1875-1914, Weidenfeld&Nicolson, 1987. See also A.J.P. Taylor: Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1969, and many others.

[2] However, one possible example of this might be Italy. In the First World War Italy was committed by treaty to the Triple Alliance, but joined the Triple Entente (to which it was not committed) to fight its ally. They did something similar again in the Second World War.

2.1 Alliance

According to the US Department of Defense definition, an alliance is "a relationship that results from a formal agreement (e.g. a treaty) between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interest of the members" (US DoD, JP 5-0). The purpose of forming an alliance between several partners is in principle defensive in nature. When states recognize a potential threat that is equal to or bigger than a separate state, they join together to better defend themselves, their territory and their integrity. They are willing to share responsibility and obligation with each other in order to protect their territory. A military alliance is therefore an agreement between two or more states and their armed forces to form a military partnership when required (Weitsman, 2003). To be more precise, "defensive and offensive alliances are treaties, a formal promise to cooperate – that is, to form a coalition in the event of war" (Wolford, 2016, p 16). After negotiations and discussion between the interested partners, the alliance is made by signing a formal contract between the parties. The partners are therefore equal. They might not be equal in terms of their size or influence, but they are equal in terms of the responsibilities and obligations that come out of the contract. It is presumed, though, that signing the contract to form an alliance is voluntary for each state, otherwise this would not be called an alliance.

The contract between the partners to form the alliance is signed in peacetime and serves as a formal obligation to each partner. On signing the agreement there is usually no crisis or war on the horizon, or at least not an imminent one, and the enemy might not even be specified. Alliances are made to prepare the parties for a potential crisis or war in the future (Gibles, 2008, p xlix), possibly a distant future or a war that will never take place. In fact, by forming the alliance, the partners give signals to potential enemies that they will be prepared for the conflict. An alliance is therefore a sort of pre-coalition that imposes obligation on the partners in peacetime in order to prepare the alliance to be ready when and if war occurs. It is obvious that the alliance also serves as a deterrent.

But even if war is in the indefinite future, preparation for engagement might call for advance planning and structuring of forces. If the alliance is not merely a political statement, then obligations to the partners require making their personnel and resources available to be used in common. As the partners are equal by contract, then also command and control of the forces, internal dynamics, resources and planning should be an equal burden on all the members of the alliance. Equality also means that the decision-making process is conducted with all partners equally involved. The alliance might have pre-set forces or just "on call" forces, but they all need resources, for example, logistics, investment, manpower and so on, and this is another obligation of all the partners. When the crisis (that leads to war) begins, the partners of the alliance are asked to fulfil their obligations, but the transition from peacetime to a wartime footing is not a very quick or simple process, especially if the alliance has no pre-set forces. Because the alliances that operate in war are usually created during peacetime, the transition is not so easy (Weitsman, 2011).

An alliance is therefore a closed, privileged club of allies. At a minimum, to enter the club requires acceptance by its members and the signing of a contract. It is not very often that an alliance expands, because this could be a lengthy process, but it is even more unusual for members to leave the alliance. This rarely happens even during combat engagement (Gibler, 2003).

2.2 Coalition

In contrast, a military coalition, according to the same US Department of Defense definition, is "an *ad hoc* arrangement between two or more nations for common action" (US DoD, JP 5-0), so a military coalition is a short-term joint venture of two or more states and their armed forces that serves a specific interest or goal and is formed around one nation that assumes the status of lead nation (Watford, 2016). The purpose of forming the coalition is to defend, protect or secure the interests of the coalition's members. Whether offensive or defensive in nature, the purpose of forming coalitions is to engage the partners in achieving the goal of eliminating a threat, which is known, clearly defined, and usually imminent. This may be different from simply defending the territory, and could involve also offensive, pre-emptive, and disruptive actions by the coalition. The coalition is therefore built by the invitation of one nation to others to join it and form a coalition in order to fight an enemy that will threaten the interests of all the members, territorial integrity and freedom being the most important ones. It is obvious, though, that within the coalition the partners are not equal and the lead nation is the most potent one. Within an alliance one nation can assume the role of "first among equals", but this is not the case within a coalition. Even if two or more nations are of equal size and influence, they do not have the same, equal interests at the time of the crisis; so one nation with the greatest interest will emerge as the lead one. It is at the lead nation's discretion to give status to its partners, which means that the lead nation determines what the level and depth of the relationship of each partner to the lead nation will be. Other partners may join the coalition; that is to say they accept the terms and requirements set by the lead nation, and usually there are different modes of relationship within the partners towards the lead nation. There may be negotiations and discussion between the potential partners before forming the coalition, but coalitions are made at the initiation of one nation that becomes the lead nation.

A coalition is formed when crisis or war are in progress or imminent, and this implies a limit to the duration of the coalition, as it serves its purpose only during the engagement. Once the threat no longer exists, there is no reason for the coalition to exist. Forming a coalition may or may not need some kind of contract, since this is a multinational group of partners, but the contract needs to contain the known adversary (or enemy) and the end state. Coalitions are *ad hoc* multinational understandings that are forged to undertake a specific mission and to be dissolved once that mission is complete (Weitsman, 2011).

We should not look at a coalition simply as a derivative of an alliance, but rather as an independent entity (Wolford, 2016, p 16), because it has a specific, unique

algorithm which corresponds to the question of why countries form a coalition. There has been broad academic research on the complexity of this question, because the answer is not straightforward. To simplify the issue, we can say that for the nation that aspires to become the lead nation, forming the coalition serves as a vehicle to achieve a specific goal. Junior partners are invited because of their niche capabilities, geopolitical location, historical partnership, or merely for public relations reasons. The lead nation is willing to share with them, at its discretion, resources and responsibilities, as well as profits and gains. In short, the coalition format gives the lead nation far more freedom to manoeuvre than an alliance, since it is not constrained by any provision of a contract or by cooperation in the decision-making process. On the other hand, under the umbrella of the lead nation, the junior partner(s) join the coalition because they can identify with the necessity to fight the threat; because they have an interest in engaging in operations but do not possess sufficient means and capabilities; because they want to participate in future profits and gains; or merely just to please the lead nation and/or domestic public opinion.

Each partner within the coalition has a special relationship with the lead nation, but the lead nation has special relationship with no-one. The numbers of coalition members can therefore easily expand or decline due to the one-way relationship with the lead nation.[3] The transition from crisis to war is relatively easy, since the majority of activities depend on the lead nation. In most cases it occurs as if just the lead nation were making the transition to war, with the other nations in support. It is obvious then, that command and control, logistics, preparation of the battlefield and so on is primarily the lead nation's responsibility, and it is up to it to decide how much information it is willing to share with each partner.

3 NATO AS AN ALLIANCE

Following the characteristics of an alliance, we can easily identify NATO as a true alliance; NATO has become the reference for alliances in modern times.[4] First, it is based on a treaty, which sets conditions and obligations for all members. The core element of the Alliance is set in the famous North Atlantic Treaty Article V, which ties the members of the Alliance together by declaring mutual intra-dependency in the event of war. The statement that the "parties agree that an armed attack against one of them, … shall be considered an attack against them all," effectively expresses the defensive nature of the Alliance. The threat or enemy was not

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[3] *For instance, a nation may only politically support the coalition's cause, and not actually participate in the military activities, but it still counts as a coalition member. This could be the case with the Coalition of the Willing against Iraq, where Sweden, Slovenia, Norway and Croatia politically supported the coalition but did not participate in any activities.*

[4] *One can argue that also Warsaw Pact was an alliance, at least by its name – Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. However, the Warsaw Pact was heavily influenced by the USSR, which occupied all the key positions so that the members of the Pact were not equal. And no alliance attacks and occupies one of its own members, which the Warsaw Pact did with Czechoslovakia and Hungary.*

specifically stated[5] (although it was clear to everybody) so no particular interest of any member, apart from territorial defence, could be implied. Based on Article IV, the Treaty ensures the equality of each member by imposing a consultation-based decision-making process, and in Article IX ensures that they are equally represented in the North Atlantic Council as the governing body. The duration of the Alliance is not mentioned, although the Treaty provides the opportunity for each member to evaluate its membership after 20 years. Since the role of the Council, in which each member has a voice, was to set up subsidiary bodies and implementation measures for defence, collective responsibility and burden sharing between all members is implied.

Among the most prominent and important implementation measures of the Treaty was to establish a NATO Command Structure (NCS) and a NATO Force Structure (NFS). To become more than just a political declaration, the NATO Alliance needed real power behind political will. The NATO Command Structure represented the ability of the Alliance to fully control the security architecture of all the member states. Not only did the establishment of the NCS and the NFS give NATO real power, at the same time it bound the member states and their military forces together in true alliance. By organizing NATO HQs at all levels in different countries, by manning them proportionally with personnel from all member states, by enforcing common standards and doctrine, by practising interoperability between different armed forces, by sharing the financial and resource burden between members, and especially by practising a consensus decision-making process, NATO demonstrated its potency and preparedness to do the job it was created for – to execute Article V if required and decided on. Furthermore, NATO was perceived and acted as a political alliance by promoting common values, namely a liberal democratic political system, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights, which were the political glue of the Alliance.

Throughout the 70 years of the Alliance, the major influence and burden has been, and still is, on the shoulders of the USA. Acting as a majority shareholder in NATO, the USA has been the driving force and pillar of all NATO activities, and today's Western military doctrines and structures are heavily adjusted to US influence. Nevertheless, throughout at least the first four or five decades, the USA acted as a benevolent force and the common denominator of NATO, respecting established procedures to keep NATO potent and homogenous. Although heavily influenced by the USA, NATO was nonetheless perceived as an Alliance of the West, not just the USA.

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[5] *In the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (2012) it is clearly stated (in para.2) that "The Alliance does not consider any country to be its adversary," https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm.*

4   A COALITION WITHIN AN ALLIANCE

After the fall of the Berlin Wall there were some serious debates about the future of NATO, mostly referring to the understanding that viewed NATO as connected to the Cold War world order and therefore a relic of the past. Precisely because NATO was perceived as a model military alliance, as well as a promoter of Western values, it was necessary for NATO to remain part of the security architecture of the West, and although the period after the end of the bipolar world was declared a "peace dividend", this did not mean that all the threats were gone. Political changes in Europe soon brought new security challenges, this time in the shape of a crisis, at a level below war. NATO had to adapt to this challenge. In its Strategic Concept of 1991, NATO acknowledged its role to "improve and expand the security of Europe", and, based on its experience in the Balkan engagements (Bosnia, Serbia/ Kosovo) the Security Concept of 1999 called for NATO to commit itself, not only to the defence of its member's territories, but also to "stand ready to contribute to effective conflict prevention and to engage actively in crisis management". The Strategic concept of 2010 went even further, to adopt a "comprehensive, all-encompassing approach to crisis management, enhancing greater interoperability between NATO and partner forces" (NATO, Strategic concepts).

4.1   Out of area operations

The solution to the dilemma about the future of NATO after the Cold War was depicted in the now famous statement by American Senator Richard Lugar, "out of area or out of business" (Medcalf, 2008, p 67), which became the new reality of NATO. The transformation in this new direction was twofold; by expansion of NATO to new member states and signing cooperation agreements with as many entities as possible on the one hand, and on the other hand by conducting military interventions under the auspices of Crisis Response. Today, NATO is about to accept its 30th member state[6] and has cooperation agreements with over 40 non-member states (NATO, organization). Since the end of the Cold War NATO has conducted more than a dozen "missions and operations" outside its territory, and has currently about 20,000 soldiers engaged in these operations (NATO, operations). How has NATO conducted these missions and operations? The Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept was endorsed by NATO Heads of States in 1994, recognizing the need for deployable, multinational and multi-service forces in support of missions below the level of war, namely peace support, humanitarian relief, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement (NATO Handbook 2001, p 249-254). There are two important features in the CJTF concept: first, it was designed with the notion of deploying troops outside NATO territory; and second, it was designed to incorporate partners of NATO (out of the Partnership for Peace initiative) and others. The US military elaborated the Combined Joint Task Force concept primarily as an instrument to facilitate NATO's undertaking of

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[6]   *NATO has begun accession preparations with North Macedonia.*

non-Article V military missions, and only secondarily as a means of developing ESDI[7] within NATO. (Grant, 1999)

In its first intervention outside its territory, in Bosnia in 1995 (preceded by air support to UNPROFOR[8] and IFOR[9]) NATO created SFOR[10] as a separate, *ad hoc* contingent to carry out a mission mandated by the UN. Generated troops from most of the NATO countries and some non-NATO members participated. Although only intended for a duration of one year, the mission continued for several years. Later in the 1990s NATO conducted an air campaign in Serbia and a ground campaign in Kosovo. Also in KFOR[11], an *ad hoc* contingent was generated to conduct a mission on the ground in Kosovo in which many NATO countries participated alongside some non-NATO countries. The same was the case in other NATO Crisis Response Operations, from the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) to ISAF/RSM[12] in Afghanistan. As the official NATO website states, "the NATO force generation process, which is still in use today, was developed during the NATO-led operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later in Kosovo".

In fact, all contingents that have been engaged in Crisis Response Operations have been generated *ad hoc*, from NATO and often from its partner countries, for a specific mission and (at least initially and declaratively) for a limited period of time, led by "framework nations" as the driving force of the troop contingent. On the official NATO website we can read that "NATO provides the framework within which members can work and train together in order to plan and conduct multinational crisis management operations, often at short notice", and, further, that "personnel serving in a NATO operation are referred to as NATO forces, but are actually multinational forces from NATO countries and, in some cases, partner or other troop-contributing countries". "Force generation" is the procedure by which the Allies (and partner countries) resource the personnel and equipment needed to carry out North Atlantic Council-approved operations, and "national capitals take the final decision on whether to contribute to a NATO-led operation or mission" (NATO, Crisis management).

This looks very much like coalition operations. The key word here is NATO-led, which means it is not only NATO, but equally also its partners which belong to a variety of formal cooperation agreements. For partners which are not members of the Alliance, it is obvious that they could work with NATO only in coalition. Furthermore, the NATO member countries themselves are working in coalition. The force generation process means that NATO countries firstly form a coalition

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[7] *European Security and Defense Identity.*

[8] *United Nation Protection Force.*

[9] *Implementation Force.*

[10] *Stabilization Force.*

[11] *Kosovo Force.*

[12] *International Security Assistance Force/Resolute Support Mission.*

among themselves and then form a coalition with its partners. NATO-led does not mean an alliance in coalition with partners, but rather a NATO 'inner' coalition in coalition with others. Although still under the Alliance's framework, in Crisis Response Operations NATO has adopted the logic of coalition to operate outside its territory. All missions abroad are organized around lead nations (usually with a strong particular interest) which provide bulk capabilities and occupy specific territory. The remainder of the participants, those who wish to participate, are tied to each lead nation and have the option to disengage from the mission if they so wish. The line between member and non-member state has become less and less important, especially in relation to an operationally strong non-member state.[13]

This became even more emphasized after the attack on the USA in 2001, which brought further transformation of the Alliance's engagement in Crisis Response Operations. The decision of the USA to wage a war (against terrorism) exclusively in the coalition setting also affected the Alliance. The USA administration "questioned the continued relevance of multilateral alliances, notably NATO, as a primary foundation for American national security policy (Stuard, 2009, p 27). As a consequence, not only did some of the Alliance member states (the USA, the UK, Poland etc.) form separate coalitions (e.g. Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom) when deploying troops to military missions, but also NATO's role in those operations was reduced to that of coalition partner. For instance, NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan was operating alongside Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) led by the USA. Forty states participated in Afghanistan, only 28 of them NATO members.[14] From 2008 onwards, American generals were operational commanders of both OEF and ISAF, so, speaking ironically, in Afghanistan the NATO Alliance was in coalition with itself.

With regard to military interventions, many authors have made very clear arguments in favour of coalitions versus alliances (Weitsman 2011, Grant 1999, Watford 2016). The simple fact is that a coalition is more effective in *ad hoc* operations than an alliance, and better serves the interests of the lead nation. From the perspective of the coalition leader(s), there are fewer caveats,[15] less discussion, less sharing of information and more operational freedom if a contingent is formed as a coalition to wage war outside national territory. In addition, to avoid legal constraints, the coalition intervention outside the territory must be conducted by all-volunteer forces. Strong states therefore use coalitions when they want to fight wars efficiently, and alliances when they are more concerned about managing broader political issues (Weitsman, 2011, p 48).

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[13] *For instance, Austria in KFOR.*

[14] *See Report Towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 2009, p 27. Montenegro changed its status from non-member to member.*

[15] *For instance, in ISAF there were 50-80 caveats that limited the NATO Commander (Weitsman, p 47).*

Crisis Response Operations are not main, traditional military tasks such as attack and defence. Nevertheless, over the past three decades NATO has been primarily engaged in carrying out those operations. The implication here is that "NATO is a highly useful Alliance with great utility during peacetime because of its focus on political effectiveness, but during wartime, more flexible and adaptable institutional structures are necessary for effective war prosecution – more emphasis on operational effectiveness is necessary". (Weitsman, 2011, p 49). The invention of non-Article V and NATO-led operations, accompanied by the transformation of all NATO national militaries into all-volunteer forces, set the NATO Alliance to organize itself and conduct Crisis Response Operations under the logic of coalition warfare. This has an impact on the perception of NATO as a defensive Alliance, and on its unity and cohesion. For an outside observer NATO can be perceived as an interventionist force; from its inner power structure NATO could be perceived as being merely a toolbox where powerful member states can find the right instrument to serve their purposes; and (most) member states could question the value of NATO as a servant of their interests.

4.2 Framework Nation Concept

Based on the Chicago Summit of 2012, where NATO leaders recognized the importance of the initiative by the Secretary General named "Smart Defence" (Hlatky, 2012), they approved the Framework Nation Concept (FNC) as a facilitator of the multinational project under the Smart Defence Initiative in 2014 (NATO, Wales summit declaration, para 67). The purpose of Smart Defence is to overcome capabilities gaps between NATO member states, identified in the NATO defence planning process. The defence planning process aims to ensure that the Alliance possesses the necessary capabilities to achieve its ambitions, as assigned by the highest Allied political authorities.

According to the FNC, member states (only the European ones) should organize in groups or clusters in order to synchronize their capabilities to overcome the constant shortage in NATO's defence planning goals, and to become more effective and sustainable. Each cluster is led by a framework nation; this is one of the large member states that provide military backbone capability (command and control, logistics, etc.), and the remainder of the smaller member states are to plug in to each cluster by providing specific capabilities.

Although still under Alliance provisions, it is obvious that the FNC came in the form of a coalition structure. Powerful states assumed the role of the lead nation and set conditions for smaller ones to join them. Based on the military principle "fight as you train", it is understood that cooperation between states within each cluster will not stop only at procurement and equipment, but will necessarily also spill over into procedures, standards and tactics.

What interoperability is for an alliance, smart defence is for the FNC. The difference is that interoperability is a necessary standard relevant across the all member states,

but smart defence is linked to the framework nation. This does not mean that smart defence is not interoperable, but achieving it goes through the framework nation, which could have (unintended) implications. It is implied that within the FNC smaller nations should be interoperable with the lead nation, but it is only assumed that the lead nations will be interoperable between themselves, especially since each cluster is developing its own priorities for cooperation – for Germany it is multinational formations and structure as part of collective defence, for the UK it is an expeditionary force, and for Italy it is a stabilization operation. The FNC is therefore a regionalization of NATO that could threaten the interoperability and the political cohesion of the Alliance (Glanz, 2019).

If the coalition settings of NATO were so far reserved for Crisis Operations and therefore for deployment outside NATO territory, then the FNC concept brings the coalition format right inside NATO. Although the FNC appears to be a very pragmatic and attractive concept, it affects the inner structure of the NATO Alliance; being a prime example of the coalition concept within the Alliance, it might put to the test the postulate of the Alliance itself. In the future, the equality of the member states may not be self-evident, unity may become fragmented (regionalized), and consensus may only be necessary between the lead nations.

Conclusion   NATO is still regarded as the best possible and the best workable alliance for almost all its member states[16], especially with regard to collective defence. Since small nations usually have no luxury to shape and lead intra-state arrangements, it is understandable that they are very sensitive about these issues, so they are in a way the real indicator of the true value of the arrangements, especially if unity is the core value, as is the case in NATO. However, the constant transformation of the Alliance towards a more effective fighting force in Crisis Response Operations, and the experience of participation in those operations in the past few decades, has made public opinion in some smaller countries slightly derail support for NATO membership. [17]

One of the reasons for the perception that the Alliance's *modus operandi* in Crisis Response Operations does not reflect the true nature of the Alliance, lies, as we have described, in the shift from an alliance principle towards a coalition one. Selectively choosing engagements, often based on the geopolitical preferences of the powerful members, constantly reshaping and reorganizing its military posture, long-term commitments with dubious outcomes and consequently a significant burden on resources, has made public opinion in some member states doubtful whether Crisis Response Operations strengthen or weaken the NATO Alliance. In fact, according to the Transatlantic Trends 2014 Report, when asked what kind of missions NATO should conduct in the near future, the majority of respondents – 59% of Americans

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[16] *Paw Research center; https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/07/09/nato-is-seen-favorably-in-many-member-countries-but-almost-half-of-americans-say-it-does-too-little/.*

[17] *Slovensko javno mnenje 2013; https://www.cjm.si/ul/2013C/SUM_2013_13_M.pdf , and Center for Insight In Survey research at https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/four_country_full_presentation_may_24_2017.pdf.*

and 73% of Europeans – answered that territorial defence should be the core task of the Alliance.[18] This outcome could also provide the answer to why many (exclusively European) states have a hard time allocating 2% of GDP to defence spending. The question that the public have is what is it for – to conduct Crisis Response Operations or collective defence? Smaller countries in NATO perfectly understand the fact that they could never be a lead nation nor could they assume the heaviest political and military burdens within the Alliance. As a matter of fact, there are only a few member states that are capable of leading the Alliance; all the rest are there to support the cause. It is therefore more for the most powerful states to preserve and retain the principles of the Alliance – equality, unity and burden-sharing.

Since the early 1990s, and especially after 9/11, the NATO Alliance has gone through some substantial transformations. Alongside the process of globalization, the West has also acknowledged security challenges as global, which has forced NATO to adapt to contain these challenges. By its decision to go outside its territory and conduct non-Article V Crisis Response Operations, NATO transformed its *modus operandi* towards a coalition rather than an alliance. It was then just a matter of time before the coalition concept was brought within the NATO structure, and the FNC does exactly that.

There will be challenges to NATO security in the future, though most likely no longer at the sub-state, local, technically inferior and power projection limited level. Lessons learned from the era of Crisis Response Operations could be that an alliance far better guarantees security and cohesion between its member states than a coalition, so the next transformation of NATO could be a step back to basics – or better, back to alliance.

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