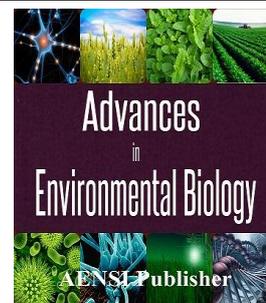




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## NATO expansion to the East: Goals and Consequences

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### ABSTRACT

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main threat to "North Atlantic Treaty Organization" (NATO) destroyed. After 1990s, this organization adopted a "new security strategy" through a new definition of "security". Based on this approach, NATO's range of action extended from "territory of member states" to any part of world where members' interests are threatened. According to globalization process and based on "new security strategy", NATO established new institutions and mechanism such as "North Atlantic Cooperation Council" and "Partnership for Peace". In NATO members' idea, after the collapse of the Soviet Union not only threats haven't gone away but also they have become multilateral and more diverse in ultra bipolar arena. Based this approach, NATO tries to expand the organization to reach economic and security areas. The reason of members' attention to the idea of "expansion towards the East" was to complete the second half of the "Marshall plan".

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## INTRODUCTION

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was appeared when the threat of the Soviet Union arose. The presence of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe after World War II, formation of Cominform (communist Information Bureau) in 1974, Soviet intervention in taking communists to power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the blockade of West Berlin by the Soviet Union in 1948 were some reasons that led to NATO formation. In fact, the main reason for the emergence of NATO was the Soviet Union threats against Western Europe which continued in the years followed by the formation of this organization.

Achieving atomic bomb in 1949 and hydrogen bomb in 1953, formation of "Warsaw Treaty" in 1955, fabrication of Ballistic missile in 1957, and Cuban missile disaster in 1962 indicate that the Soviet Union was a dangerous enemy to the members of NATO.

However, the emergence and continuity of North Atlantic Treaty Organization until the collapse of the Soviet Union was due to the fear of western European countries from the threats of the Soviet Union against their security. NATO's main goal was to provide security for members, especially in Western Europe. NATO as the military bloc of west successfully completed this mission and prevented any danger to national security of member states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO was expanded towards the East in 3 steps. In the first step, 3 Eastern European countries including Czech, Poland, and Hungary joined NATO through North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and then Partnership for Peace in 1994. The second step was characterized by the joining of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. In the third phase of NATO expansion towards the East, Albania and Croatia were accepted to join this organization in 2009 and this way the number of NATO members reached 28 countries.

*Philosophy of NATO existence after the collapse of the Soviet Union (paving the way for NATO expansion):*

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 destroyed the most important threat to NATO countries. The reasons of NATO continuity, the philosophy of its existence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and two Neorealism and Functionalism theories about the continuity of NATO existence are discussed in this paper.

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Neorealists believe in "continuity of threats" principle about the survival of alliances. According to this view, alliances are formed in response to external threats and their long-term solidarity depends on the intensity and continuity of the threat. The main reason for their dissolution may be the reduction or elimination of external threats.

In Neorealism view, the threat of the Soviet Union as a primary threat which had led to the emergence of NATO disappeared after its collapse in 1991 and dissolution of Warsaw Treaty in 1990. Hence, the legitimacy of NATO was questioned as the primary threats didn't exist any more. According to this theory, NATO should have disbanded with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but it continued its activities. So, what are the reasons?

These reasons are not found in Neorealism theory, which is one of the main weaknesses of this theory about alliances. Therefore, the reasons of NATO survival should be searched in Functionalism theory. Based on this theory, organizations can continue their life at all times if they adapt their functions with the time. Functionalists believe that North Atlantic Treaty Organization greatly helped its survival through creating new entities and mechanisms which were consistent with the requirements of each time period.

Based on Functionalism, the following 3 factors were involved in the continuation of NATO's activities:

- 1- Adopting a new security strategy
- 2- Organizational interests
- 3- A need to develop cooperation between member countries

#### *1- Adopting a new security strategy:*

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 destroyed the most important threat to NATO. So, this organization should define new threats to legitimize the continuation of its activities. In NATO members view, the dangers which now threaten their security are more than the past and more multilateral.

Conference of NATO members in Brussels (1994) also announced that with the end of Cold War, the factors causing crisis, tension, and war have changed and security should be considered not only from military point of view but also from economically, socially, environmentally, and developmentally.

NATO members believe that a lot of threats including the danger of atomic energy of Russia, the danger of Islamic Fundamentalism, liberation movements in Arabic countries (which are considered a risk for the future of Israel), the Islamic Revolution of Iran, instability in Eastern Europe countries, ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, the risk of war in former republics of the Soviet and Chechnya war, the increase of chemical and microbial weapons in Third World countries, nuclear weapons proliferation, non-military threats such as environmental pollution, violations of human rights standards, immigration, and drug problem put the security and interests of their countries at risk. This fact is true that NATO won the Cold War when the Soviet Union collapsed on Christmas day in 1991. NATO remained in a different way which may last longer than expected. The new NATO will not be like the past which acted collectively or didn't act at all. This new NATO has new dimensions and missions.

According to the extent of threats (both subjectively and geographically), NATO decided to adopt "New security strategy". The principle of this strategy is this that any risky action in the world that threatens the interests of NATO members is in conflict with the security of NATO countries. In previous strategy (1949-1991) the objective of organization was to defend the territory of members, while in new strategy the main goal is to defend the mutual interests of members inside and outside of its borders. Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State of the US, emphasizing on events and threats outside NATO, stated that this possibility that these events can influence the vital and strategic interests of NATO is not far-fetched.

Due to the diversity of threats against NATO members, existence and continuity of this organization seemed to be necessary to protect the security of members. Possibility of harmful threats in the future made the member countries come to this conclusion that NATO is the best means to achieve security. Henry Kissinger was also among those who believed that we need NATO for our future and the importance of NATO is not because of current needs, but also for the needs that may arise in the future. That's why the comments of former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Mr. Youshka Fisher who said "NATO should change its atomic strategy" was severely criticized by NATO members especially Mr. Sharping, former Minister of Defense of Germany, and all of them acknowledged that the range of threats to NATO members has increased since the Soviet Union collapsed.

Based on the new definition of security and adopting a new security strategy in order to deal with threats, NATO has taken some steps such as intervention in Kosovo crisis (1999) and military presence in Afghanistan.

#### *2- Organizational interests:*

In addition to adopting a new strategy, the other factor in maintaining the survival of NATO after the Soviet Union collapsed was the organizational interests. Having shed norms and values, NATO members tried to adapt NATO missions with existing conditions and establish agencies and institutions in compliance with changes and international conditions and approach towards the current mechanisms and procedures instead of

creating new strategies, because establishing a new security institution as substitute for NATO was costly and members believed that these costs were already paid. On the other hand, NATO has attracted a lot of people in its different departments (in member countries). For instance, just NATO headquarter in Brussels has employed more than 3750 full-time labor force. These employees are motivated enough to maintain the organization and as they are from different European countries, persona and organizational interests of members is another incentive for them to care about the survival of NATO.

### *3- A need to develop cooperation between member countries:*

Founding members of NATO believe that this organization, during its 63-year life, has greatly served these countries about security and developed the cooperation between members. Reginald Bartolimo, former deputy of Secretary of the US Department of the Interior, about the success of NATO says, "the coordination of priorities and goals of members was the main reason for NATO's success in its continuation and survival. No alliance can survive and thrive unless it is more than a military alliance".

NATO played a significant role in integration of Western Europe and North America, which encouraged the member countries to back its continuity.

The greatest service NATO provided to members (over more than 6 decades) was to prevent the outbreak of war between them. "The name of the Soviet Union never mentioned in Washington negotiations in 1949 which led to formation of NATO and NATO will remain to meet the needs of its members," said Manfred Werner, former Secretary General of NATO.

### *NATO objectives in expansion towards the East:*

NATO expansion towards the East has been one of the most important developments of this organization since it appeared. The motives of NATO members for expansion towards the East are discussed in below.

#### *A) NATO expansion for ensuring the security:*

The hypothesis of this subject is this that the US and European members have different intensions of NATO expansion. The main objective of NATO expansion for European members is to acquire security for themselves, while the US pursues the interests of European members to broaden its penetration areas.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, major geopolitical changes occurred in Europe's political map. Czechoslovakia was split into Czech and Slovakia; East Germany was unified with West Germany; communist domination of the Soviet Union on the Eastern Europe ended and Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldavia which has come out of the political domination of the Soviet Union independently emerged in political map of Europe; and in the Balkan Peninsula, as the result of the breakdown of Yugoslavia, a federation containing Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia was came into existence. Thus, 11 new countries were added to Europe. In Western Europe members of NATO idea, the risk of instability is very high in these new countries and as they are in the neighborhood of European members of NATO, it is necessary that NATO prevent the security of the Western European countries to be at risk through developing new mechanisms and functions.

North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) establishment in 1991 made the opportunity to the remaining republics of the Soviet collapse along with the Eastern European countries and NATO members to help maintain peace and security in Europe by attending in the meetings of council. The "Partnership for Peace" which was agreed by NATO members in 1994 paved the way for a action plan for expanding the organization. The members of NACC signed separate contracts with NATO (the 16+1 plan) and found the principles which were in the line of NATO objectives as an obligation that should be followed.

The countries that were NATO partners according to "Partnership for Peace" program could join NATO after a period of time. For example, the membership of some countries like Poland, Hungry, and Czech in NATO in 1999 followed this procedure.

With the membership of 3 above-mentioned countries in the first step of NATO expansion, NATO members reached 19. This was mostly supported by Germany which believed that the Eastern Europe should join the security system of the united Europe. After these 3 countries joined NATO, Germany reached its main demand of NATO which was security along its borders. But other countries like France and Italy believed that Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovenia should join NATO in the first step of expansion towards the East. In France and Italy idea, the acceptance of these countries in NATO seemed imperative to inhibition of the Balkan crisis, because one of the origins of this crisis, in addition to European borders, is the collapsed countries of former Yugoslavia. Instability in these countries would be a threat to the security of Western Europe countries.

NATO expansion was followed by conflicts between European countries. Now this question raises that why did Germany's wishes fulfill in the first step of NATO expansion, whereas those of France and Italy lasted 5 years to fulfill?

The following 3 points should be mentioned to answer this question:

1- One of the reasons for NATO's survival after the collapse of the Soviet Union was denationalizing the defense and preserving the members (especially Germany). Germany unification in 1990s expanded its military

strength. So, the fear of other European countries especially France seemed to be natural. It seems that the fulfillment of Germany's wishes was intended to keep this country in NATO and so that this country feels that NATO is the place to maintain security.

2- Unlike France, England, and the US, Germany is not considered an atomic power in NATO. Fulfilling Germany's wishes by NATO avoids this country to enhance its defensive power outside the organization and turn to nuclear power. Therefore, when the unified and powered Germany feels that NATO can still fulfill its security needs, other European countries won't feel threatened by this country.

3- Giving priority to Germany's demands (by NATO) to France is completely natural. France was away from the military committee of NATO from 1966 to 1995 and quit the organization because they disagreed the leadership of the US in NATO. The US, as one of the most powerful members of NATO, never forgot the memory of France withdrawal from the military committee of this organization, and perhaps more attention to Germany was a reminder for France that they should comply with the US.

It seems that the acceptance of new members in Central and Eastern Europe aimed to fulfill the US wishes to enhance "New Europe" against "Old Europe" and also was a response to France which disassociated with the US. From the perspective of Neoconservatives who had a great influence on George Bush's government, the tendency of Western Europe (or Old Europe in their words) to use diplomacy instead of military power, emphasis on multilateralism, and implementation of international laws is not justifiable. "Our nations have the same idea about New Europe in which free European countries are united with each other and with the US through cooperation, partnership, and alliance," said George Bush in his speech in favor of New Europe and NATO expansion in 5 January, 2005.

According to article 5 of the NATO charter, NATO members declared their collective defense support for the US after the 9/11 event but for presence in Iraq faced serious opposition from some powerful members including France and Germany. But the members of New Europe such as Poland, Czech, Hungary, and Romania agreed the presence of their troops in Iraq to show their support of the US. Although the US backed the presence of NATO in Iraq at Prague Meeting in 2003, France and Germany emphasized on the necessity of ratifying a resolution to maintain security and stability in Iraq in Security Council of the UN. They pointed out that NATO can enter Iraq as the military aid of this resolution with an international authorization. Otherwise, NATO cooperation with the US would be restricted just to training and equipping Iraqi forces outside Iraq.

Now this question comes to mind that what's the objective of NATO expansion from the US perspective?

The US believes that many dangers are now threatening the interests and security of NATO members. In the US idea, the expansion of NATO in order to reduce the threats to NATO members would be possible by controlling and managing the international crises. In addition to the danger of instability in Eastern Europe countries, the US sees Russia as the main threat to NATO members.

Crisis management in Islamic countries, creation of civil society, and spreading democracy in Central Asia and Caucasus region in order to minimize the role of Russia were 3 objectives of the US for supporting the expansion of NATO after the 9/11. They also proceedings including increasing the military contracts with regional countries, provoking the security conflicts between regional countries and Russia, enhancing the westernized treaties such as Guam, helping the region countries develop the program of their cooperation with NATO, and establishing an air base in Karshi Khanabad in Uzbekistan and Manas base IN Kyrgyzstan. Hence, NATO achieved an effective strategic influence in Central Asia and Caucasus region after the 9/11.

The US believes that Russia which has massive nuclear arsenals and 1035 intercontinental Ballistic missiles with various nuclear warheads is a nuclear power. So, NATO felt the necessity of expansion towards the East in order to prevent the intervention of Russia in decision making of other countries especially Eastern Europe ones and broadened its range of influence. Accordingly, some experts of geopolitics during the Cold War like Henry Kissinger believe that Russia is the main reason of NATO survival and its expansion towards the East and find the development of this organization necessary for the enhancement of democracy in Eastern Europe.

The US believes that the objective of NATO expansion towards the East was the completion of the second half of the Marshall plan. According to Robert E. Hunter, America's former representative in North Atlantic Council, the goal of completing the Marshall plan was to build democratic, rich, and safe societies across the Europe, provided that they are not confined by the Iron Curtain.

While the US emphasizes on precautions against the unusual potential threats (weapon of mass destruction) after the 9/11, the European alliances of NATO resist this idea and deduct that NATO is a defensive union and is not supposed to enter other areas.

In the US perspective, the followings should be taken into account in this case:

1- Preventing the intervention of Russia in political destiny of the Eastern Europe countries should be one of the objectives of NATO in expansion towards the East. This spreads the influence of the US to the whole of Europe. The US tends to expand the NATO which is under its command towards the East and use this organization as an effective tool to consolidate its dominance and leadership.

2- The aforesaid goal doesn't mean the exclusion of Russia and isolating this country, but the US thinks that NATO expansion should be accompanied by "New relationships with Russia".

Therefore, NATO tried to encourage Russia to participate in the Partnership for Peace program. After Russia became the 21<sup>th</sup> partner of NATO in this program (2 June, 1994), this organization tried to give a special position to Russia. Since Russia was willing to have such a place in NATO, an agreement on mutual relationships, cooperation, and security was signed between Russia and NATO in Paris in 27 May, 1997. In Paragraph 2 of this agreement it was mentioned that NATO and Russia are not enemies and their objective is to fade the impacts of hostility and competitiveness era and enhance mutual trust and cooperation. Also to ensure Russia (about NATO expansion), It has been pointed out in the articles of this agreement that NATO members emphasize that they have no intention of storing nuclear weapons on the territory of newly joined members, whether through the construction of new sites and storage of nuclear weapons or through updating the previous bases.

Kosovo crisis suspended the relationships of NATO and Russia, but after the 9/11 their relationships was formed within the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). The cooperation of Russia with the US after the 9/11 in struggle against terrorism and transferring some military bases of Russia in Central Asia to this country caused the blockage in NATO-Russia relationships break and consequently a new institution named NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was agreed in Rome meeting in 2002 to be created in order to encourage the more participation of Russia in security affairs of the Eastern Europe.

It seems that the type of behavior and reaction of Russia to the expansion of NATO towards the East is influenced by the Moscow-Washington relationships. In Mac Farlane idea, Russia will show competitive behavior against the US only when the main interests and priorities of their country are at risk. Russia wants NATO members and especially the US to respect the leadership and dominance of Moscow in the region (including Eastern Europe republics, Caucasus, and Central Asia).

However, NATO doesn't intend to eliminate Russia from the security system of Europe, but NATO seeks a Russia which can pursue the process of creating a democratic society and the implementation of political and economic reforms. From the perspective of NATO members, Russia isolation is to detriment of members, because this causes damage to the democratization process in Russia and can lean this country toward militarism. NATO members understand that Russia should be participated in the security system of Europe. Therefore, NATO accepted the new request of Russia participation (after the beginning of the second millennium) and Russia was chosen as the partner of NATO.

On the other hand, most independent republics of the Soviet Union want to join NATO and NATO has necessary attention to this issue as Russia opposes the expansion of the organization.

NATO members try to ensure Russia that the objective of expansion is aimed at security not developing weapons. They believe that increased security in Europe will help the promotion of peace and stability, and NATO expansion towards the East is not about to limit or isolate Russia. In members' idea, NATO expansion not only doesn't aim to develop militarism, but also enhance peace and stability in Europe and this can also be of benefit to Russia. Hence, NATO overlooked its expansion towards the East during the Lisbon summit in 2010 in order to attract Russia's participation in Afghanistan crisis and although there was a great deal of discussion on the membership of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO in the 2008 summit in Bucharest, these issues were not mentioned in the Lisbon summit and the issue of NATO-Russia joint statement was one of the achievements of this summit.

NATO expansion towards the East is so important to Russia that Russian political doctrine extensively investigated it in 2010. As the subject of creating the US missile defense shield in Europe was discussed, political doctrine of Russia in 2010 was extremely offensive unlike doctrines of 1993 and 2000. NATO expansion towards the East and the US plans for creating a missile shield in Europe have been considered threatening to the national security of Russia in this doctrine and Russia as a nuclear power has been authorized to use the inhibitory nuclear power to confront their enemies and prevent potential acts of aggression.

The relationships of NATO and Russia improved again when Rasmussen, the Secretary General of NATO, met the president and Foreign Minister of Russia in 2011 and Russia proposed to have strategic partnership with NATO. "NATO is our partner and we want the cooperation continue in strategic form, as agreed in the Lisbon summit," said the Foreign Minister of Russia.

Moscow's efforts to create such a relationship aim to increase the opportunities for greater control over NATO actions. Such a strategy can put Russians in a atmosphere of strategic interaction and gives NATO a multilateral condition for decision-making.

#### *B: NATO expansion in order to achieve economic benefits:*

One of the objectives of NATO expansion towards the East, after providing the security of European countries, is to achieve economic benefits.

The case study about the acceptance causes of three countries of Poland, Czech, and Hungary, in the first step of NATO expansion in 1999 (after the Soviet collapse), has an important role in knowing the objective of NATO expansion towards the East. Considering the security matters earlier, and now the economic perspective, the reasons why the mentioned three countries have joined the treaty shall be discussed.

First, this question emerges that in comparison with the other countries requesting membership in NATO, how do the economic statuses of Poland, Czech, and Hungary affect their acceptance in NATO? With a comparative study of the economic statuses of the applicant countries to join NATO, it is clear that one of the reasons of the mentioned countries' designation to join NATO is their good economies.

The UN's economic commission conducted a study in 1993 in an effort to classify the purchasing power of citizens of Eastern European countries. According to this study, in terms of per capita, Slovenia with 9210 dollars, the Czech Republic with 8422, and Hungary with 5692 are the first three countries. Poland in two lower ranks with 46669 dollars is among the six wealthiest Eastern European countries, too.

Undoubtedly, this wealth comes from industrial productions growth. Hence, what distinguishes the new members (compared to other Eastern European countries), is their economic and industrial power.

On the other hand, the overall foreign investment in Eastern European countries had been 37 billion dollars during 1989 to 1996, which each of three countries of Hungary, The Czech Republic, and Poland shared almost 25 billion dollars (over 70% of the total investment in Eastern Europe). Not to mention, the Czech Republic did more than 60% of her foreign trades with the countries of OECD (Organization for Economic cooperation and development). This amount is estimated 65% for Hungary and 64% for Poland, while the average level of other Eastern European countries' trades with the total of world's industrial countries was lower than 40%. Moreover, between the years 1988 and 1996, revenues from privatization had been over 10 billion dollars in Hungary. This figure was announced almost 3.6 billion dollars in Poland and almost 2.3 billion dollars in the Czech Republic. It is noteworthy that none of the Eastern European countries has one-billion-dollar revenue.

It is obviously clear that from the perspective of liberal capitalism development in three newly-joined countries of NATO in the first step of expansion, these countries are more developed in comparison with the other Eastern European ones, and can be considered promising markets for the productions of NATO countries.

It has been set that NATO would give a 10-billion-dollar assistance to the mentioned countries in a 10-year period, so that they can equip their armies, provide essentials, and develop the military. The money presented to the new members by NATO in order to improve their military structures will also be spent purchasing weaponry. In other words, such countries will try to buy weaponry from countries like the US, France, Germany, and England; in this way, the benefits of membership of these countries is clear for NATO members.

Given the military expenses, Poland was considered the greatest spender among Eastern European countries by spending 3.2 billion dollars in 1999. The military expenses of Hungary were estimated 760 million dollars in the same year.

Thus, Eastern Europe is the top of economic attraction for the NATO members (Western European members and the US). Among these countries, three countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were chosen as NATO members, due to their more desirable economies.

It seems that the success of NATO's expansion plan is possible only through the support of America's military-industry complexes. Because the managers of the US's military-industry complexes have eyes on the new markets in which the new members of NATO are asked to replace their available military weaponry with those of NATO's standards, and this process means to create a multibillion-dollar market for the factories manufacturing fighter aircrafts, electronic equipment, helicopters, and telecommunication networks in the US's military-industry complexes.

Now comes this question that if the rationale for NATO to select new members is the economic statuses of the applicants, why aren't the central Asia countries and Caucasus chosen as a large consumer market in the first step of NATO expansion towards the East?

To answer, firstly, this should be taken into account that the selection criteria for new members of NATO are not only economically defined, but as mentioned in the previous topic; the first priority of this selection has been security issues. Secondly, the relation and economic exchange of the Eastern European countries with the Western European ones and the US have been much more. Thirdly, although the Central Asia countries and Caucasus possess of rich oil and mineral deposits, and NATO countries want to achieve such benefits in these regions, they were not chosen to join NATO in the first step of expansion towards the East, due to Russia's disagreement with their membership. Because Russia strongly opposes the presence of American and European countries in "Near Abroad."

But in the long-term strategy to expand NATO, Central Asia and Caucasus bear high significance after Eastern Europe, mainly because of the economic issues.

Among Central Asian countries and Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan can stand highly important for NATO members. The registered oil deposits in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are estimated 3.8 billion tons (28 billion barrels) and 1.5 billion tons (11 billion barrels) on the territory of Caspian Sea coast. Hence, the West entitles itself to have benefits in using the oil and gas of the Central Asia. Entering the gas and oil of these regions to the new markets can affect the way that the needs of the West are met. Additionally, the NATO's presence in this region can diminish Iran's and Russia's power.

It seems that in the long-term strategy of NATO (in order to get new members), countries like Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are prioritized after Eastern European countries. These two countries have signed contracts

with NATO under the program called "Partnership for peace," and they are now considered NATO partners. Georgia can also be one of NATO's priorities for selection in the future, due to her important role in transiting Azerbaijan's oil to Europe and the US, after two mentioned countries. The American government sees the regions beyond the Caspian Sea a kind of alternative to supply oil from the Middle East. So, we can say that one of the selection criteria for new members of NATO is the economic issue, and the most important reason of the organization by expanding towards the East is again the economic issue, after the matter of security.

#### *Concluding remarks:*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) helped its own survival by making new functions, after the Soviet collapse and dissolution of Warsaw pact in 1990. NATO made a plan to expand itself towards the Eastern European countries and the surviving republics of the Soviet Union, alongside the emergence of a new entity called "The North Atlantic Cooperation Council" in order to deal with the Crisis of Legitimacy.

Partnership for peace program, as a practical plan for NATO expansion, provides the integration of Eastern countries in the Euro-Atlantic security system, and through this, the number of NATO members grew from 16 to 28.

From the perspective of NATO members, NATO enlargement towards the East is in process to control and manage the crises which may happen in these countries due to the security vacuum caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. To them, the expansion process of NATO, which is caused by globalization phenomenon after 1990s and at the beginning of the third millennium, will help promote peace and stability in the international system.

The NATO members who foretold the disagreement of Russia with the expansion of this organization tried to seek Moscow's agreement and requested Russia's participation in the Europe's international system. The fundamental agreement document of Russia-NATO in Paris in 1997 was considered one of the biggest successes of NATO, because according to it, Russia and NATO didn't see each other as enemies for the first time. Although the Paris agreement continued to provide NATO and Russia with a consulting mechanism for a lasting relationship, the involvement of NATO in the Kosovo war which took place without consulting Russia put an end to the relationship between NATO and Russia. But after the events of September 11, 2001 a re-development and cooperation is observed in the NATO-Russia relationship, because Eurasians in Russia tend to fulfill their demands by taking an active part in NATO and negotiating with the members in an effort to prevent expansion towards the East.

Although the European members of NATO and the US seek different goals in the expansion towards the East, the most important outcome of this expansion for all members is to provide security for themselves. In this regard, the NATO countries believe that in the post-bipolar era, not only the threats have faded away, but also they have become broader and more multilateral. Accordingly, NATO has changed its strategy from regional to global, given the enlargement of threats.

Any hazardous action in the world, which threatens the interests of NATO members, is in conflict with the security of them. Consequently, unlike the past that the domain of NATO's actions was in the members territories, by the new definition, NATO can now take actions anywhere in the world.

In addition to the security issue which was dominant in expansion towards the East and will be so, gaining economic benefits is also one of the factors which stand valuable in the NATO's new strategy. Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Caucuses, and even the Middle East are regions that bear great value in terms of economy for the members of this military organization. The members of NATO have also a glance at geo-economic areas, in addition to paying attention to the geopolitical and security side of the matter.

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