

## Factors in the expansion of NATO after the Cold War

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**Abstract:** End of the Cold War was considered as a transitional period for NATO. In this period, new tasks of NATO were based on the way of ensuring the peace and stability in Europe and cooperation with NATO non-member countries and according to this second way, the issue of establishing the NATO forces out of the boundaries of member countries was proposed for the first time. In this paper, we seek to examine the factors affecting the expansion of NATO after the Cold War. In summary, the results of study show that the following factors are effective in this regard: creating the racial and ethnic crises in the Balkans and inability of European countries in resolving this crisis, existence of new threats against the interests of West such as terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, Weapons of mass destruction, etc ..., fear of Russia's revival and return of this country to the authoritarianism and regain the control of eastern Europe, lack of alternative for a capable and ensuring security structure instead of NATO.

[Iraj Mazarei. **Effect of NATO expansion into the Central Asia and the Caucasus and Russia's reaction to it.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(4):2941-2949] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 430

**Keywords:** NATO, expansion of NATO, Cold War

### 1 - Introduction:

Cold War is a term which refers to a period of tension, conflict and competition in the relations of the United States, the Soviet Union and their allies from 1940s to 1990s. During this period, the competition between these two superpowers was continued in diverse fields such as military alliance, ideology, psychology, espionage, sport, military equipment, and industry and technology development. These competitions led to the consequences such as spatial competitions, paying the high defense costs, nuclear war games and a number of indirect wars.

Despite the fact that no direct military confrontation was happened between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the expansion of military power and major political tensions and conflicts between the countries allied with this superpower were among its consequences. Despite the allies of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Second World War and against Nazi Germany, they had disagreement about the reorganizing the world after the war even before the end of war.

After the war, while America was trying to limit the communism in the world, the Cold War was expanded into the several parts of world especially Western Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. In this period, the recurrent crises such as construction of Berlin Wall [1961-1989], Korean War [1950-1953], Vietnam War [1959-1975], Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), and Soviet war in Afghanistan [1979 - 1988] were happened and the beginning of a World War was not unexpected every moment, but finally it did not

happen. One of the reasons that both sides avoided form a direct war was their access to nuclear weapons and fear of using these weapons by the opposite side. Finally, the Cold War ended at the end of 1980s and by senior officials' meetings, which were arranged by the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, and according to Gorbachev's reforming program.

End of the Cold War was considered as a transitional period for NATO. In this period, new tasks of NATO were based on the way of ensuring the peace and stability in Europe and cooperation with NATO non-member countries and according to this second way, the issue of establishing the NATO forces out of the boundaries of member countries was proposed for the first time. In this paper, we seek to examine the factors affecting the expansion of NATO after the Cold War.

### 2 - Theoretical Principles of NATO Expansion

#### 2-1 - Theoretical points of view and issues

Traditional literature of alliances proposes that the coalition is built in response to the threat and when the threat is reduced, the alliance will be continued no longer. Researchers have paid less attention to what the alliances are faced with at the time of change and threat or lack of threat. Those, who have studied the alliance under these conditions, have generally concluded that the alliance will have no durability without the threat.

With inspiration of "Waltz's" view about North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at the end of the Cold War, the Neorealism Theory predicts that:

A) Following the elimination of threat, which justifies the high level of military costs, the members of NATO also reduce the military costs.

B) NATO members will be involved in the conflicts over the common policy. Moreover, they will adopt a more independent orientation in their own defense and foreign policies.

Furthermore, the international institutionalism view considers NATO beyond a mere military alliance. Based on these theorists' view, with hundreds offices and facilities, which NATO has in the member countries, it is a multilateral coalition which the West has applied it as a powerful political tool and a method for dealing with the security issues of Europe, linking with the European Union and governments member in Warsaw Pact.

Therefore, based on the institutionalists' view, NATO is not a dimensional treaty which can be collapse like other military unions in case of reduced threat. In general, it can be stated that those, who predicted the end of NATO, have provided a more than limited imagination about the function and date of NATO and mainly based on the military functions and geographical limitations. NATO has numerous mechanisms for development of severe military functions and has used these facilities in line with important civilian functions. As the institutionalists expect NATO has taken advantage of organizational resources for its own continuation and has change its tasks.

Geopolitical and environmental theories also study the correlation of geography and political power. Researchers of this branch of science emphasize that the geographic factors have a direct correlation with the national power and the geographic factors determination or limit the players' political behavior. They also believe that the large geographic space means to have hegemony and superior power in the region and throughout the World.

## **2-2 - Political-Security point of view**

Bipolar system of the Second World War leading by two superpowers (USA and Soviet Union) created two independent and hostile blocks. Conflict of two blocks was in fact the motivation for internal unity and coordination of members' policies and this system created a kind of integration of policies for each block and also the existence of common enemy and widespread publicity in this field prevented from intra-group differences (Haj Yousefi, 1995) and this led to the negative outcomes such as internal tensions, growth of nationalism, the socialism and racism, ethnicity, and reviving the longstanding border disputes, which were not happened until then due to

the rule of international system based on the Cold War.

This difference had vast domain and more than eighty-two conflicts happened around the world during the years from 1982 to 1988 or 6 years.

## **2-3 – Economic-Political point of view**

Based on this point of view, the mystery of capitalism survival lies on its expansion in all aspects. Unlike the communist system, which can survive in a limited land, the capitalist system cannot be survived through the stagnation. However, the barriers, which are classified into external and internal factors, threaten the development of capitalist system. Internal barriers are as the results of internal changes and the external barriers are due to the incompatibility of other phenomena with this phenomenon. Thus, the historical experience of external barriers in agricultural production systems of Soviet, the pioneer and Communist world leader, are considered as the external serious obstacles to the expansion of capitalism (Taeb, 1999).

Moreover, the internal barriers to the growth and development of fascism in three countries including Germany, Italy and Japan in thirtieth decade of twentieth century were considered as the barriers to the development of capitalism in the world. Fascism is considered as the political entity of monopoly capital.

## **2-4 - Economic globalization and changing the concept of security**

Economic globalization has had several important international effects:

First, it has eliminated the importance of boundaries and barriers; the government cannot establish the national sovereignty like the past concept.

Second, most of the multinational companies have seized the power from the governments in the global market of power and have become as the main players in the scene of international relations. Now, it can be stated that the governments are afraid of multinational companies.

Third, the international organizations have become important along with the important economic issues and multinational companies and weak and influenced governments. The international organizations' role, which was ignored in the realistic point of view, was gradually increased and more important and now we can see the increasing power of United Nations and dependent institutions, International Monetary Fund, World Bank etc.

Fourth, changing the concept of power and security is the results of economic globalization and in this type of world the economy speaks first and

military issues and weapon forces have lost their own influence to a large extent.

## 2-5 - New World System and Role of NATO

Nowadays, there are more than 190 countries around the world and the existence of these numbers of players is unprecedented, although a kind of ideological and economic compatibility can be seen throughout the history. Unity is the unit feature of this symmetrical unipolar system. It is the unity, which is in the controllable multiplicity; multiplicity in the approaches and unity in equality of criteria and objectives (Dehshiar, 2009).

America can continue the current domination role after the Cold War if it continues the existing "bargaining space" and intensifies it if possible. This only is possible if it does not allow the current compounds of power, which are based on inhibition described, capitalistic, fixed and competitive models and liberal thoughts, to be instable. This bargaining space creates an opportunity for the United States to weaken the potential opponents and impose its own power position in the field of power of other countries of system to them.

## 4 - NATO and expansion policy

Cooperation of Central Asia and the Caucasus countries with North Atlantic Treaty Organization within the framework of Participation for Peace Program has led to a positive reaction of NATO members and especially the United States. Countries, which demand the membership in NATO, should strengthen the strategic interests of this union and increase the security of West states. Now, this question is raised that what interests and objectives the NATO members including the United States have due to the comprehensive presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus? (Shirazi, 2000)

### 4-1 – Presence in the Russia's Backyard<sup>1</sup> and filling the created power gap after the Fragmentation of Soviet

After the Fragmentation of Soviet, Russia was replaced with it. Some of the analysts have considered Russia as the threatening factor, while others believe that the process of NATO expansion is

The term "backyard" refers to the set of Russia's neighbors which are located across the western and southern borders of this country. Countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania in the Baltic Sea, and countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus are part of the Russia's backyard and security fence barrier.

not completely Anti-Russian, but one of its incentives is definitely Russian.<sup>2</sup> AS "Brzezinski" expresses his own concerns about Expansionist Russia in one of his books. He argues that the created power gap in Eurasia, as the result of Soviet Union Fragmentation, has the potential to disturb the balance of power.

He believes that while Russia is the most powerful country in Central Eurasia, the countries in Eurasia are face with two options; first, moving toward the European democracy and priority in creating a link with Europe, and second creating the European empire through reintegration of Russia's domination on dissatisfied and weak neighbors after the fragmentation of Soviet (Mandelbaum, 2006).

While the first option helps to create the regional stability, the second option leads to Russia's geopolitical isolation. As a result, defense of U.S.A interests means the inhibition of Russia combined with building the trust for the countries located in Eurasia and their movement towards the international organizations and western dominant security unions (Brzezinski, 1997).

Countries, which are located in Eurasia region and are kinds of small countries, will be remained independent countries in long term without joining the West security structures. Moreover, "Javier Solana", NATO former secretary general, declared in a statement in February 1997 that if the countries of the Caucasus remained out of the Europe zone, Europe would be completely secure. Thus the process of expanding NATO into the Caucasus and Central Asia is justified in order to preserve the independence of countries located in Eurasia against the Russia's domination.

### 4-2 – Dominating the oil resources and other natural resources in countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus

Exaggerated estimates have been provided about the amount of oil and gas and it seems that most of the declared statistics have political and commercial reasons. The last realistic estimates of known reserves have put the position of Caspian Sea oil and gas in the world's third largest oil field after Persian Gulf and Siberia.

Three important features of Caspian Sea oil field:

Possibility of easy utilization

Being close to consumption markets

Being located in Europe connecting road to Indian Ocean and the north of Caspian Sea to its south.

The North Atlantic Council, The Atlantic Strategic Concept In Washington D.C. On 23RD and 24Th. April 1999

These features have reduced the exclusive reliance of several major countries, which consume the energy, on the oil and gas of Persian Gulf, although the Persian Gulf field still has the largest resources of World energy (Dehghan, 1999).

Great and mainly undiscovered energy resources in Caspian Sea have provided new opportunities for the world oil market, region and the United States. According to the West and NATO view, Central Asia and the Caucasus will have a significant geopolitical growth during next 10 to 15 years and this is due to the potential portion which they will have as the result of providing the global energy and security (Croissant, 1998). Strategic evolution and development of NATO, the changed geopolitical environment in Caspian Sea region and the tendency of regional countries towards relying on NATO in order to be on balance with Russia raise this issue whether the West security interests have sufficient importance for justifying the commitment and military involvement of NATO in this region? In the case that it has necessary importance, the West will have increasing and significant investment in creating the security of region and the stability, sovereignty and independence of new states, which have been created as the result of Soviet Fragmentation in current decade, both based on the geopolitical reasons and in terms of energy security (Yousefi, 2000).

#### **4-3 – Preventing from the risk of dominance of regional powers**

Aside from the existence of abundant natural resources in Caspian Sea region, the geopolitical position and locating at intersection of East and West, the regional and trans-regional powers compete with each other for influencing this region. Therefore, as the member of NATO and leading by the United States, the West attempts to welcome more and closer links to the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus in order to provide its own interests and preventing from the dominance of regional powers such as Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan and India in Caspian Sea region (Shirazi, 2000).

#### **4-4 - Combat terrorism and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

Preventing from the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction is one of the NATO members' interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions because this region has the significant amount of uranium hidden in unreliable regions. After the fragmentation of Soviet and following the events on 11<sup>th</sup> September, there is this concern that some of specific countries or terrorist groups may seize the

mentioned Uranium, infrastructure and its experts (Cohen, 2003).

After the events on 11<sup>th</sup> September, the issue of terrorism was put on the security agenda of the United States and NATO; in fact these events showed its essential role for the security of countries more than any other time and made the need for NATO maintenance essential for collective confronting with it by posing an objective and a serious threat against the West (Karami, 2003).

Neighborhood of Central Asia republics with Afghanistan and influence of the whole region of Central Asia and the Caucasus by the radical Islam procedure and weakness of governments in this region against the above procedure on the one hand, and considering this region among the regions with vital interests for the West and especially the United States, and providing the objective of NATO based on combating the terrorism on the other hand rationally justify the policy of expansion of NATO into the region. Furthermore, the policy of NATO in supporting the control of weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation, which plays the central role in Union achievement of security objectives, justifies the presence of NATO in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions and this is potentially a source of instability.

### **5 - Findings:**

#### **5-1 - Fields of expansion of NATO after the Cold War**

The existence philosophy of NATO was questioned after the end of Cold War and fragmentation of bipolar structure because the alliance theories never predicted that the alliances would be continued in the case that their main threats were disappeared. Nevertheless, the political and international issues analysts had been faced with a new reality by the issue of continuity and expansion of NATO and had tried to legitimize the continuity and retention of NATO. More criticisms were about the realistic and neo-realistic theories. Consequently, some of the analysts sought to justify the issue by utilizing the institutionalism theory and international regimes. Here, the fields and background which expanded NATO after the Cold War are studied.

#### **5-1-1 - Establishment and Consolidation of Democracy**

Some of the analysts argued that the expansion of NATO can ensure the democracy and stability in a united Europe. When the expansion of NATO into the East was raised for the first time, the governors in major countries of NATO and especially the Americans declared clearly that there were conditions for the membership in NATO. In other

words, they could not accept any country which demands the membership in NATO. They have clearly expressed that the countries, which have accepted the democracy and implemented its basis, can be the member of NATO. Based on the West scholars and governors' point of view, there is no fundamental difference between the democracy and liberalistic capitalism of and the main objective of NATO Expansion is to inhibit and destroy all potential and actual barriers to the development of liberalistic capitalism (Taeb, 1999).

### **5-1-2 – Providing and Strengthening the Security and Stability**

Strengthening the security is one of the main reasons of the expansion of NATO. The process of expansion will increase Europe security against the actual or potential or civilian threats.

The threats, which are inevitable for the expansion of NATO, include:

#### **5-1-2-1 - Russia**

Official policy of NATO and the real reason of the expansion of NATO is mainly the prevention of so-called risk of Moscow. This policy has always been the main issue of NATO and this Union has not been able to provide the convincing alternative for the reason of its own existence. Fear of reviving an independent and a strong government in the vast land of Russia has disturbed once more the West World. They are seeking to prevent the creation of this power in Moscow. Meanwhile, NATO is the main tool which can inhibit Russia. European countries and the United States know that Russia is not the Soviet Union any more, but it has the status and privileges which give it the vast power, and according to the power of military and nuclear weapons and influence on the Third World countries and its own former subsidiary countries, Moscow can endanger the security of Europe as a potential risk (Latifi, 1997-98).

On the other hand, the expansion of NATO into the central and Eastern Europe consolidates the position of these countries against Russia. Some of the countries in the central and Eastern Europe are willing to cooperate with the winner of the Cold War, thus they are demanding to join NATO.

#### **5-1-2-2 - Islamism**

During the years, when Gorbachev came to the power, the groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, Akromiya group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizb-an-Nusra, Tablighi Jamaat, Hezbollah and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were created and developed in the region due to the relative open political-social space in the

Soviet. Hizb ut-Tahrir is the most significant radical Islamist group which is active in the region.

Number of members in this party of Uzbekistan, where is the main center of its activities in Central Asia region, is estimated between seventeen to sixty thousand members. Therefore, based on NATO strategic planners' points of view, the Islamic force in the Eastern region is considered as the most serious risk for the expansion of this treaty, but it is the only excuse for the expansion of this military treaty. The Islamism movement of "Fundamentalism" is one of the issues which have been considered by the United States. In fact, by the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, the Islamism movement was the only common point which could attract the NATO members' agreement (Mousavi, 1999).

#### **5-1-2-3 - Extreme Nationalism**

Some of the analysts believe that the continuation of NATO after the Cold War of NATO, in which there is the United States, indicates the requirement of Europe to the presence of the United States in the Europe (although this covers the United States' Interests). Concern of political -military elites in Europe is based on this issue that the Western Europe states will return to the destructive nationalistic past and the security- armed competition begin due to the collapse of NATO. It is clear for the Europeans that since 1945, the serious military-competitive policies were reduced in Western Europe and this was due to the ensuring results of the United States' presence in Europe. Therefore, one of the reasons of NATO continuation is due to this Europeans' concern, under which the outcome of the United States' exit from Europe will change the economic-political relations of Western Europe states and at least will begin the severe security competition. In this case, the presence of NATO, which is doing changes for compatibility with the new international structure, will be so important. In fact, by continuity of NATO activity, which ensures the military presence of the United States in Europe, the Europeans can establish the economic and political relations inside the stable Western Europe (Garmaroudi, 1999).

#### **5-1-2-4 - Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism**

A large amount nuclear weapons remained form the era of Soviet domination and the possibility of sending them secretly to other countries was another challenging which justified the continuity of NATO. Terrorism event on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 as a sudden and quick return to the reality of the world and its contradictions and as the optimistic ending of democratic values also changed NATO completely



and affected the functional field of this organization. Soon after the events on 11<sup>th</sup> September, NATO formed the largest permanent union in the world against the Terrorism by adopting important measures and new commitments for itself through the "Combined Joint Task Forces". NATO has taken serious attention to the increased participation of organization forces in operation against the World Terrorism, continuous and serious effort for preventing from the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and tools for transporting them, and preparation against the terrorist attacks by using the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons in order to Adapt itself with new conditions and developments and strengthening the capabilities of organization with new threats. (Farsaei, 2002) In fact, it can be stated that based on the new method of play in the international field, not only the Terrorism now has become the most and highest risk and threat against the international peace and security, but it mutually has reduced the intensity of traditional and past threats unity, which was the sense of threat by powers towards each other. In fact, the terrorism has led to the change of criteria towards the international threat and risk as well as leading the governments into finding the common aspects which can be resulted in the coalitions and cooperation (Torabi, 2002).

#### **5-1-2-5 - China**

China is a strong country which has the potential to become as a more outstanding power during a few decades (Pickering, 2000).

It is stated that China will become as one of the world poles in 21st Century. Thus, limiting the role of Asians and especially China in new system is one of the reasons for the expansion of NATO into the East and especially the influence area of the Union Soviet around the boundaries of China (Taeb, 1999).

#### **5-2 - Factors which facilitate the expansion of NATO**

Essentially, providing the new strategy of NATO was first discussed at the leaders' summit in London in July 1990 and after it in Rome in November 1991; changing the structure of forces quantitatively and qualitatively was among the agreement cases at this summit. In other words, it was weakened in terms of quantitative aspect but strengthened in terms of qualitative aspect. Existence of multinational forces, the existence of forces which could be immediately ready, strengthening the communications among the forces, greater mobility of forces, higher aggregation of forces in the central region of this organization and using the nuclear weapons as the last weapon were among the principles

of this new strategy (Sarraf-Yazdi, 2002). On this basis, the institutions were created in order to facilitate the process of the expansion of NATO slowly and developmentally. These institutions were as follows:

#### **5 -2 - 1 - Establishment of North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)**

At the beginning and following the Rome Conference, the "North Atlantic Cooperation Council" had the task to establish a regular communication between the NATO organization members and former members of Warsaw Pact. For this purpose, this council was held meetings at two levels of foreign affairs ministers and ambassadors of Member Countries in NATO and former members of Warsaw Pact. The first annual conference at the level of foreign affairs ministers was held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1991 and then the ambassadors' conference was held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1992. During these meetings, different security issues including the development of cooperation were raised in the field of defense, exchanging the information and establishing the air lines and the participants came to the agreement. Similarly, at next meetings, the member countries in North Atlantic Cooperation Council emphasized on other issues especially the necessity to strengthen the democracy bases and supervising the members' military forces (Rahmani, 1998).

#### **5-2-2 - "Partnership for Peace" program**

This program was first raised by the United States at common summit for the defense and foreign ministers of NATO member countries in Germany in October 1993 and was approved at the Leaders' Summit in Brussels in January 1994 (Rahmani, 1998).

In general, 25 states (All which except three ones were either the member of Warsaw Pact or among the republics of the Soviet) accepted this invitation. Participation For Peace Program is not multilateral treaty, but is a set of mutual contracts which has been concluded between NATO and any state interested in the membership and has been implemented within the framework of an individual participation program. Therefore, a member government in Participation for Peace program like Russia is not considered as the partner of other government like Poland, but is the partner of NATO Treaty.

The objective of this program is to encourage the non-member countries in NATO in order to develop the military and defense cooperation with NATO.

In fact on the one hand, the Participation For Peace program engage the NATO member governments to help other governments, which join

this project, with planning, Education and military exercises and even if their national security, territorial integrity and political independence are endangered, they have a right to consult with NATO, and on the other hand, the governments, which involve the participation program are assigned to accept commitments (Azami, 2002).

### **5-2-3 - Euro- Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)**

Institution of Euro- Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was replaced with North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in May 1997. The task of this alternative institution is to provide a framework for establishing the link among the foreign ministers of member governments in NATO, the states involved in the Partnership for Peace program and other European and Asian State (Betty, 2001).

### **5-2-4 - Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFS)**

Creation of these forces was approved by NATO members in January 1994, but its final approval was in June 1996. Philosophy of creating these forces was to integrate the multinational separate forces with versatile military service under a joint combined command within the overall framework of NATO. Mentioned forces are supervised by the Western Europe Union and can do the tasks within the framework of Article (5) of NATO association or out of this framework by using the facilities and infrastructures of NATO. Furthermore, these forces can utilize the participation of non-member states in NATO or even the participation of the Euro-Atlantic region in order to do their own tasks. Participation in these forces is voluntary and is done based on the system of special voluntary coalitions or is done case to case and in voluntary way. These forces have the function of NATO support which increases the flexibility of NATO as well as providing the fields for increasing the role of its European allies by the West European Union (Azami, 2002).

### **5-2-5 - Membership Action Plan (MAP)**

Membership Action Plan was provided in April 1999. Based on this plan, the states, which demand the membership in NATO, provided a list of activities which have been done in line with preparing themselves in mentioned union. Therefore, the relevant plan is not focused on establishing the standards and criteria necessary for the membership of mentioned states in NATO and only specifies the issues which may be discussed. These issues are: Issues Political and economic issues, defense-military issues, issues related to the resources, security and legal issues. Therefore, this plan has been a kind of practical declaration in line with the policy of open

doors and the states, which demand to join the NATO, apply it.

### **5-2-6 - Rapid Reaction Forces (RRFS)**

NATO Union declared its own decision about creating the first Rapid Reaction Forces in October 2003. Based on the points of view of member states in NATO, creating these forces increase the flexibility of the union with the capacity of intervention in mild conflict, combating with terrorism and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, lead of the peace preservation operation and support of human's friendly missions within and out of Europe and it can help to evolve it.

### **6 - Conclusion:**

The reasons for the expansion of NATO can be summarized as follows:

The creation of racial and ethnic crises in the Balkans and disability of European countries in resolving these crises;

Existence of new threats to the West interests like terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, Weapons of Mass Destruction, etc...;

Fear of Russia's revival and this country's return to the authoritarianism and re-dominance on Eastern Europe;

And the lack of replacement for the security and capable structure instead of NATO. The United States is willing to the continuity of NATO based on two reasons; first, Washington has considered NATO as the military arm for its own policies and hegemony objectives and even some of the analysts have considered NATO as the toolbox of the U.S foreign policy. Second, the collapse of NATO can seriously undermine the role and position of America in Europe. By NATO, the United States will be able to impose its own leadership on Europe and apply Europe as the platform for dominating the strategic region of Asia, Middle East and other sensitive areas. European countries also demand the NATO continuity and its presence in Europe. There are several points of view in this regard;

A - Countries freed from the hegemony of the Soviet which demanded the membership in NATO and its continuity and also the presence of the United States in Europe due to the fear of Russia's re-dominance.

B - Small and medium-sized countries in Europe such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, Greece and..., which were worried about the hegemony of France and Germany, believed that the persistence of NATO is beneficial to the future of Europe.

After the Cold War, allies in both sides of Atlantic voted to the continuity of NATO and merely called for the structural reform of in this organization.

Structural reforms in NATO were done in various issues at the same time with changing the existence philosophy of NATO. NATO defined its own enemy in another way and fighting against the terrorism and fundamentalism and preventing the Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction were replaced with the Soviet threat. In this new strategic environment after the Cold War, the global main risk (The Soviet threat) has been replaced with low-intensity, numerous and multilateral risks. Therefore, the changes in the nature of threats has also changed the NATO's operation, thus the new role of NATO is to help to promote democracy and the process of democratization, peacekeeping, bringing the peace, and management of international crises and these have made the new missions of NATO.

North Atlantic region was the area which was already considered for NATO because the factor of (The Soviet) threat was in this region, but with new proposed definition of safety, the range of the West security contains all international system and it will change NATO to the world police. On the other hand, due to the expansion of NATO into new and in-conflict regions, NATO requires the fewer number of military forces which are more experienced and high capable and compatible with new regions and crises.

By limiting the army and making it smaller, NATO is seeking to change its own members to a more dynamic and smaller army and change the strategic plans of organization from the regional defense to the armed interventional and rapid reaction forces. The plan for the expansion of NATO into the East after the Cold War was the most important and discussable measure of NATO in order to adapt the structure with the international developments. The primary objective of this plan was to prevent from any kinds of security gap in the region after abolishing Warsaw Pact and the lack of any types of security structure in Eastern and Central Europe and after the creation of fundamentalism ethnic-Sect threats.

But NATO seeks a variety of security, political, economic and cultural objectives in its plan of expansion into the East and this is done by different mechanisms. North Atlantic Cooperation Council and Partnership for Peace program are among the main mechanisms of NATO in the plan of expansion into the East.

Finally, it can be concluded that the newly independent republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus are seeking to the convergence with Euro-American structures. The security and stability are the main issues for these countries, thus they have been convinced that NATO can play an important role in creating the peace and stability in these countries. These republics, which are called as the small and

weak governments, are seeking to eliminate their own external and internal deficiencies and vulnerabilities within the framework of trans-regional cooperation. Fear of Russia's re-domination has caused that these countries to tend towards Western countries in order to maintain their internal stability and territorial integrity; as Azerbaijan has declared its willingness to grant the base to NATO and the United States in the Absheron Island.

On the other hand, the strategic geo-economic position of region has caused that NATO to have interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia and also to be interested in participating in this important area. But naturally, the process of NATO expansion into the Central Asia and the Caucasus has opponents including the Islamic Republic of Iran because the presence of NATO in the region will have negative effect on the national security of Iran. Structural developments at the level of Central Asia and the Caucasus regions can be resulted in serious threats for the national security of Iran. Therefore, by a deep understanding of current developments in the region it is necessary to manage the status quo by careful planning and using diplomatic methods and taking the initiative.

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11/10/2012