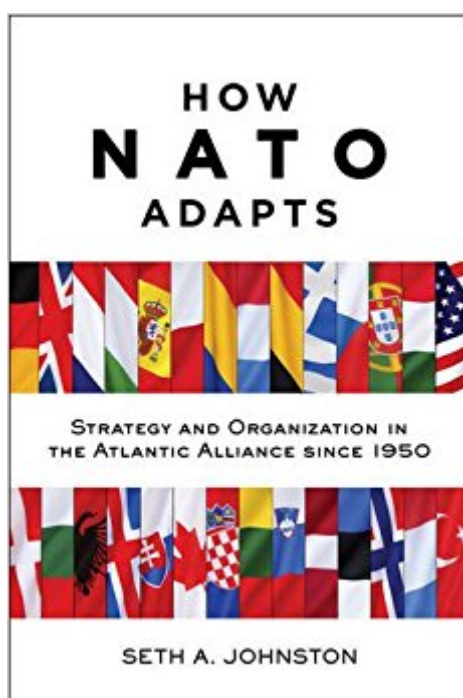


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# How NATO Adapts: Strategy And Organization In The Atlantic Alliance Since 1950 (The Johns Hopkins University Studies In Historical And Political Science)



## Synopsis

Today's North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with nearly thirty members and a global reach, differs strikingly from the alliance of twelve created in 1949 to "keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down." These differences are not simply the result of the Cold War's end, 9/11, or recent twenty-first-century developments but represent a more general pattern of adaptability first seen in the incorporation of Germany as a full member of the alliance in the early 1950s. Unlike other enduring post-World War II institutions that continue to reflect the international politics of their founding era, NATO stands out for the boldness and frequency of its transformations over the past seventy years. In this compelling book, Seth A. Johnston presents readers with a detailed examination of how NATO adapts. Nearly every aspect of NATO—including its missions, functional scope, size, and membership—is profoundly different than at the organization's founding. Using a theoretical framework of "critical junctures" to explain changes in NATO's organization and strategy throughout its history, Johnston argues that the alliance's own bureaucratic actors played important and often overlooked roles in these adaptations. Touching on renewed confrontation between Russia and the West, which has reignited the debate about NATO's relevance, as well as a quarter century of post-Cold War rapprochement and more than a decade of expeditionary effort in Afghanistan, *How NATO Adapts* explores how crises from Ukraine to Syria have again made NATO's capacity for adaptation a defining aspect of European and international security. Students, scholars, and policy practitioners will find this a useful resource for understanding NATO, transatlantic relations, and security in Europe and North America, as well as theories about change in international institutions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"How NATO Adapts is a good read, providing much solid information." "Nothing is more important to NATO than the ability to adapt and adjust its approach—tactically, operationally, and strategically—as circumstances change. How NATO Adapts is an honest and unbiased examination of the successes and challenges of this turbulent twenty-first century for the world's premier security Alliance." (Admiral (ret.) James G. Stavridis, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, current Dean of The Fletcher School, Tufts University) "How NATO Adapts offers a theoretically innovative and empirically rich account of why this post-World War II military alliance continues to play an important role in today's multipolar world. This well-researched book constitutes an excellent addition to the growing scholarly literature that applies historical-institutional theories to the study of international relations." (Giovanni Capoccia, University of Oxford) "A unique analysis of NATO's evolutionary development, How NATO Adapts effectively employs a useful new prism for examining the alliance. Well-organized and well-written, this book should be of great interest to anyone with an academic or professional interest in NATO's history and institutional dynamics." (Stanley R. Sloan, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, The Atlantic Council, author of *Defense of the West: NATO, the European Union and the Transatlantic Bargain*) "A meticulously researched and in-depth historical study of the NATO Alliance and its responses to inflection points throughout its history. Johnston knows NATO, and he knows how to write. How NATO Adapts is illuminating and educational." (Jeffrey A. Larsen, NATO Defense College, coeditor of *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century*)

Seth A. Johnston is a major in the United States Army and recent assistant professor of international relations at West Point. He holds a doctorate from Oxford University and is a veteran of NATO missions in Europe and Afghanistan.

A definitive and timely account of NATO's place and ability to respond in a rapidly-shifting world order. The author demonstrates a command of both theory and practice in explicating how the alliance has changed, and changed again, since the 1950s. This book is

particularly germane today, at another "critical juncture" in history, as the relationship between Russia and the West is revisited. But its lessons reverberate beyond NATO itself to shed light on the role of international institutions in the twenty-first century.

Well-written, nails down what one needs to know and understand. I am impressed with this book on my Kindle.

Dr. Johnston's grasp of NATO's history serves as a solid foundation for his model which has utility as a predictive model of NATO adaptations at critical junctures--a brilliant, novel approach to understanding an exceptionally complex organization.

Great book from this author.

A must read for anyone working in the defense and security field, particularly for civilians and uniformed members of NATO staffs, Allied and Partner nation militaries and students of international affairs. Dr. Johnston clearly has extensive knowledge of how NATO works and why it works the way it does. This work delves into key historical moments in the Alliance and goes below the surface to explain particular outcomes. Parts of the book also help refresh one's knowledge on certain historical accounts. Excellent book, highly recommend!

Dr. Seth Johnson, a soldier-scholar, provides a timely, in-depth analysis of NATO with an emphasis on the institutional strengths that have allowed this organization to grow and adapt to past "tectonic" shifts in world politics. Challenges, notably the Trump administration's uneven support of America's foremost alliance, persist. Dr. Johnson provides a cogent intellectual argument that NATO has a strong record of successful adjustment at such "critical junctures." May its current institutional leaders adapt as well as previous ones A careful read of Dr. Johnson's study could help them do.  
Ambassador (ret.) Edmund J. Hull

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has adapted itself organisationally and strategically to the challenges of a new age to become an international organisation. This is the central idea of the book. Johnston traces the origin of NATO to the Berlin blockade by writing on page 41:  
"And the 320-day Berlin blockade, among the Cold War's first major crises, began on June 24, 1948. The Western system of alliances, which developed in response to these events

and culminated in the North Atlantic Treaty, provided politico-military solidarity in the West and served as a warning against potential aggression from the East. Here, Johnston overlooks the fact that NATO was not a sudden rise of an idea to engender an organisation. Instead, the seeds of NATO's origin lay hidden in the Fourteen Points pronounced by US President Woodrow Wilson in his speech in January 1918 while addressing the US Congress for peace negotiations to end World War I. Point 14 was, "a general association of nations to be formed to guarantee to its members political independence and territorial integrity." This point gave birth to the League of Nations, which encompassed the globe, a geographical area broader than Europe. Later on, the League failed to forestall the World War II emanating primarily from Europe. Both World Wars compelled the US to shun its Monroe doctrine (which was declared in December 1823 by the fifth US President James Monroe and which enjoined upon the US to watch its interests in Americas only) and got involved in intra-European conflicts. Taken together, these developments imply three messages. First, Europe was a continent of conflicts such as democracy vs Nazism or Fascism; second, a European conflict had the potential of failing an international organisation such as the League; and third, the involvement of US in any intra-European security apparatus was imperative to stabilize Europe. Hence, the solution for resolving or containing a European conflict lied in the formation of a European-based organisation to be the first stakeholder of European affairs, but with the compulsory participation of the US. In this way, the idea of a "general association of nations" in Europe made local contributions by bringing about two developments: first, the Truman doctrine (expounded by US President Henry Truman in March 1947) which led to the formation of NATO in April 1949; and second, the Marshall Plan in June 1947 which led to the formation of European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in April 1948 and later on evolved into the European Union in November 1993. In the rest of the book, Johnston tries to establish two points about the nature of NATO. First, NATO is adaptive in nature; and second, NATO is an international organisation. Regarding NATO's being adaptive in nature, from pages 59 to 79, Johnston tells the ways NATO underwent organisational (i.e. internal; expanding its bureaucratic structure) and strategic (i.e. external; expanding its goals to achieve) adaptations whenever a challenge erupted. Johnston uses the word "contingency" and says that NATO has preferred one consequent course of action to the other. Nevertheless, another way to perceive NATO could be that adaptation is not a prerogative of NATO but a compulsion. For instance, during the initial days of NATO's formation (1951-1954), Europe faced two challenges. First, the anticipation of expansion of the former Soviet Union (and its communist ideology) to Western Europe (to challenge the capitalist ideology) in the wake of the beginning of

the Korean war (June 1950 – July 1953); and second, the US demand to rearm West Germany to counter any military threat coming from East Germany that was under the Soviet auspices. NATO responded to this contingency by turning down the Soviet offer in March 1954 to join NATO and by including West Germany (and not East Germany) in May 1955 to its fold as an adaptive response to rearm West Germany within NATO. This contingency decision might have been different, if NATO had not been under General Dwight Eisenhower who was not only the first supreme allied commander of NATO but he was also the commander of US forces in Europe from April 1951 to May 1952. The choice of excluding East Germany and its Soviet benefactor backfired in the shape of the Warsaw Pact in May 1955. The origin of NATO itself was a contingency phenomenon for Europe: whether to develop a supranational European body with or without a non-European member-cum-leader. What Johnston justifies under contingency is actually a compulsion imposed on NATO by a non-European power, US. This is valid to date. The lopsided practice of selection and rejection promoted at NATO's platform is still jeopardizing peace in Eastern Europe. Regarding NATO being an international organisation, Johnston writes on page 12: [A]lthough the North Atlantic Treaty created an alliance in the traditional sense, NATO is also an international organisation. Here, Johnston relies on two points. First, the mere presence of any non-European members makes NATO an international organisation. Second, the expansion of NATO strategically makes it qualify for being an international organisation. However, Johnston himself writes on page 173: "Afghanistan represented the first major land combat operation that NATO had ever undertaken. It brought new scale to the out-of-area issue, as central Asia was not only outside the territory of NATO's member-states but entirely outside the Euro-Atlantic region. In addition, many non-NATO member-countries participated in ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] operations under NATO command. Forty eight countries were participating in the ISAF by 2010 (compared with twenty-eight members of NATO), with non-NATO countries such as Australia providing some of the most significant military contributions. That is, the engagement of NATO in Afghanistan was in collaboration with other military forces and not independent of them. The expansion of NATO's strategic role to Afghanistan does not vouch for its being an international organisation. In fact, NATO's strength of having non-European members to steer its boat is becoming its weakness, as Johnston writes on page 171: "NATO's involvement in Afghanistan began with strikingly little discussion of the ends desired on the ground or of the ways and means applied to achieve them. Nevertheless, the actual test ground of NATO's power is Eastern Europe and not Afghanistan or Iraq. In short, NATO is an expression of Europe's inability to resolve its

conflicts on its own. Secondly, NATO is still an organisation meant not only to tackle the problems of Europe but also to preempt any signs of the World War III emerging from Europe, engulfing the whole world and undermining the credibility of the United Nations. Thirdly, adaptation is not a strength but a weakness embodying in an enforced compulsion on NATO. Fourthly, NATO has yet to prove itself an international organisation by acting strategically beyond Europe independent of the help of non-European militaries.

Although I do not work in a related field, I found Dr. Johnston's book easy to read and understand. I would strongly recommend it

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