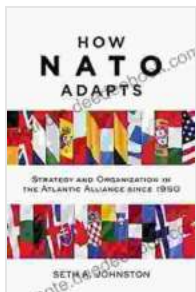


# Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance Since 1950: The Johns Hopkins University Press

By John Baylis, James Wirtz, Eliot Cohen, and Eliot Cohen



**How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance Since 1950 (The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science Book 132)** by Seth A. Johnston

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 1435 KB  
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Print length : 272 pages



This book examines the evolution of strategy and organization in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since its founding in 1949. It argues that NATO's success in deterring Soviet aggression during the Cold War was due in large part to its ability to adapt its strategy and organization to the changing security environment.

## The Early Years: 1949-1955

NATO was founded in 1949 in response to the growing threat of Soviet expansionism in Europe. The alliance's initial strategy was based on the

premise of "massive retaliation," which called for the use of nuclear weapons in the event of a Soviet attack. This strategy was designed to deter the Soviets from launching a major attack on Western Europe by threatening them with unacceptable levels of damage.

However, the massive retaliation strategy was soon seen as unrealistic. The development of Soviet nuclear weapons meant that any nuclear war would likely result in mutual destruction. In addition, the United States was reluctant to risk nuclear war over the defense of Western Europe. As a result, NATO began to develop a new strategy that focused on conventional deterrence.

### **The Flexible Response Strategy: 1955-1967**

The Flexible Response strategy was adopted by NATO in 1955. This strategy called for the alliance to maintain a wide range of military capabilities, including nuclear, conventional, and air defense forces. The goal of the Flexible Response strategy was to deter Soviet aggression by convincing the Soviets that NATO could respond to any type of attack with an appropriate level of force.

The Flexible Response strategy was a success in deterring Soviet aggression during the Cold War. However, it also led to a number of problems within NATO. The different member states had different views on the best way to implement the strategy, and there was often disagreement over how to allocate resources.

### **The Harmel Report: 1967**

In 1967, NATO commissioned a study of the alliance's future, known as the Harmel Report. The report concluded that NATO needed to adapt its

strategy and organization to the changing security environment. The report recommended that NATO adopt a more flexible and cooperative approach to security, and that it should focus on building bridges between East and West.

The Harmel Report had a significant impact on NATO's strategy and organization. The alliance adopted a new strategy that emphasized arms control, confidence-building measures, and dialogue with the Soviet Union. NATO also began to develop a more cooperative relationship with the Warsaw Pact, and it played a key role in negotiating the Helsinki Accords.

### **The End of the Cold War and the New Security Environment**

The end of the Cold War in 1991 led to a major reassessment of NATO's strategy and organization. The collapse of the Soviet Union removed the primary threat to Western Europe, and NATO began to search for a new mission.

In 1999, NATO adopted a new Strategic Concept that defined the alliance's mission as "to ensure the security of its members by political and military means." The Strategic Concept also called for NATO to play a more active role in promoting security and stability in Europe and beyond.

NATO has continued to adapt its strategy and organization to the changing security environment. The alliance has expanded its membership to include former Warsaw Pact states, and it has played a key role in peacekeeping and stabilization operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

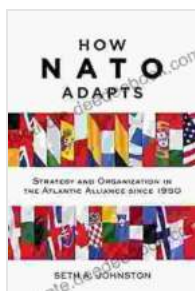
NATO has been a key player in ensuring the security of Europe for over 70 years. The alliance has adapted its strategy and organization to the

changing security environment, and it has played a vital role in deterring aggression and promoting security and stability.

The future of NATO is uncertain. The alliance faces a number of challenges, including the rise of new threats, such as terrorism and cyber warfare, and the changing security environment in Europe. However, NATO has a proven track record of adapting to change, and it is likely to continue to play a key role in ensuring the security of Europe for many years to come.

## References

- Baylis, J., Wirtz, J., Cohen, E., & Cohen, E. (2015). *Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance Since 1950*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- NATO (2019). *Strategic Concept*. NATO.

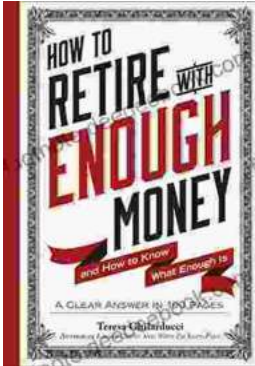


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