

FOERSTER, Schuyler. NATO's Return: Implications for Extended Deterrence. In R. R. MOORE & D. COLETTA. *NATO's Return to Europe: Engaging Ukraine, Russia and Beyond*. Georgetown University Press, 2017. ISBN 9781626164888.

CEJISS

1/2021

NATO's Return to Europe

Engaging Ukraine, Russia and Beyond

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The Ukraine crisis constituted both a watershed moment for European security and a moment of reflection for the Alliance's identity and its broader global ambitions, thus prompting various debates related to the role of NATO both within Europe and beyond. These debates inform the contributions to the volume *NATO's return to Europe: Engaging Ukraine, Russia and Beyond*. This book brings together a series of different perspectives that touch upon the role of the Ukraine crisis in the context of NATO's regional and global missions. The volume provides a valuable contribution in that several cross-cutting issues are highlighted to understand the consequences of this historical event for the evolution of NATO's policies in Europe and beyond in terms of three key aspects: the challenges faced by the organisation as a result of this crisis, the responses that it generated for its member states and the wider implications for NATO's identity.

In Chapter One John Deni provides an overview of the Alliance's evolution in the aftermath of Soviet demise and discusses the various trends in NATO's member states defence spending as well as the dif-

ferent forces that make up its structure. Deni highlights the enduring inadequacy of NATO's force posture, given important strategic policy differences that have pushed the Eastern members of the Alliance to seek bilateral security solutions outside of NATO when faced with ongoing commitments to NATO's Founding Act to avoid permanent deployment in the East following the Ukraine crisis.

This particular focus on NATO's role - not just as a military alliance but also a political one - is re-iterated in Chapter Two, where Schuyler Foerster provides a complementary understanding of the evolution of NATO's commitments to nuclear deterrence since the Cold War. Here, the political dimension of the Alliance is again mentioned as a reason for the limitations faced by the organisation when dealing with Russian aggression in Ukraine, with the author observing that 'one of the consequences of this crisis is to highlight the limits of NATO's own extended deterrent guarantee, especially as it applies to an enlarged NATO membership'.¹

Evaluating NATO's enlargement policy in Chapter Three, Andrew Wolff's emphasis is on the way the annexation of Crimea has not only weakened Ukraine's chances of becoming a member of the Alliance by provoking a territorial dispute that contravenes NATO's position on enlargement, but also provided an opportunity to rethink NATO's ideologically driven liberal-order building project in this country.

The extent to which NATO has addressed its changing missions is made clear by the book's emphasis of how the organisation has repeatedly sought to rethink its global and regional roles and provide adaptive responses to emerging threats. In Chapter Four Magnus Peterson stresses the challenges to adapt these missions in the context of various emerging threats ranging from Islamic terrorism to a resurgent Russia, while Chapter Five illustrates NATO's drive to learn and adapt its mission in the context of the Ukraine crisis based on the 'lessons learned' throughout its campaign in Afghanistan.

What distinguishes this book is its approach to analysing the Ukraine crisis as a test-case in the Alliance's history by stressing that alongside these outwards challenges the Ukraine crisis also brought with it a serious 'identity crisis' for NATO. In the wake of this, the Alliance was forced into re-thinking a series of aspects of its work, ranging from its enlargement commitments to its institutional and military capabilities, as well as its broader goals in sustaining the liberal security

1 Cited in (Foerster, 2017), p. 59.

order that has been alluded to. Thus, whilst NATO has seen various models of institutional partnerships in the aftermath of the Cold War, the Ukraine crisis has raised questions with regards to its commitment to develop these partnerships with the aim of consolidating the liberal European Security order. In Chapter Six Ivan Ivanov stresses that the enlargement policy that served to expand these partnerships has only served to provoke Russia and weaken the existing NATO-Russia partnership, prompting NATO to question enlargement into Russia's sphere of influence. Despite this tendency, in Chapter Seven, Rebecca Moore highlights the need to re-enforce NATO's commitment to use these partnerships not only as crisis management tool but rather as a means to strengthen the liberal democratic values guiding the Alliance's actions abroad and thus respond to Russia's challenges against this vision.

The final two chapters serve as a warning about the global implications of the Ukraine crisis, which has not only weakened NATO's relationship with Russia - an aspect addressed in Chapter Eight - but also stresses the uncertainties governing the Russia-China strategic partnership, analysed by Huiyun Feng throughout Chapter Nine. It is thus an understanding of this evolving strategic environment described towards the end of the book that provides a compelling description of the global context in which NATO's return to Europe is taking place.