

NATO – A MILITARY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, ALSO FOR ESTONIA¹

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in 1949 with the North Atlantic Treaty, which is also referred to as the Washington Treaty. **April 2019** is the **70th anniversary** of the establishment of NATO. It has 12 founding members: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, the United States of America.

In 1952, Greece and Turkey joined the organisation, in 1955 Germany, in 1982 Spain and in 1999, Czechia, Hungary and Poland.

The most recent enlargement of NATO took place in 2004 when Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the organization by depositing their NATO accession documents to the U.S. Department of the Treasury on 29 March 2004.

NATO is a military and political alliance of states, with 29 member states. Estonia has been a member of NATO since 29 March 2004. Active NATO membership is a long-term strategic priority of the Estonian security and defence policy which enables effective participation in international security cooperation and to ensure the defence of the Estonian state in the most effective and efficient manner.

Thanks to the NATO and EU membership the security of Estonia is assured better than ever before. NATO and the EU help to ensure the stability of the international status of Estonia and its integration in the democratic value space. NATO membership ensures credible military deterrence and collective defence for Estonia. Similar to other allies in NATO, Estonia focuses on the development of mobile and sustainable armed forces and on increasing its participation in international peace operations.

The basic principles of the security policy of NATO were amended and updated in 2010 when the new Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of NATO was adopted by heads of states. The document provides an assessment of the general security environment, covering both conventional and more recent risks (ballistic missiles, cybersecurity, accessibility of global goods and resources, and energy security) Also the strategic goals of NATO and the resources required for their achievement for the next 10 years. The concept sets the three essential core tasks (which help to ensure the security of allies):

- collective defence;
- crisis management and
- cooperative security.

¹ Note from the Chief Editor: the overview has been prepared by the Editorial Staff of the journal on the basis of different web sources on NATO in April 2019 (Google's search word "NATO"); (the texts have been simplified, adjusted and corrected at some places).

The international security environment has considerably changed in the recent years. Therefore the concept of security has become broader and security issues have arisen in several new areas, such as terrorism, energy security and cybersecurity, etc. This has changed the tasks of ensuring security both for NATO and Estonia.

The international security situation has considerably changed since the conflict in Ukraine broke out in 2014, therefore the NATO allies decided during their summit in Warsaw on 8–9 July 2016 to increase their presence in the Baltic Sea region. It was decided to deploy NATO battle groups to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to strengthen security in the region and increase deterrence and collective defence.

It was agreed at the meeting of NATO defence ministers in October 2016 to take measures for the expansion of NATO's presence in the Black Sea region, and several allies were ready to contribute with armed forces and other capacities on land, in the sea and in the air.

It was agreed at the meeting of NATO defence ministers in February 2017 to increase the presence of NATO navy on the Black Sea, including for training, exercises and raising the awareness of the situation, also coordination functions of permanent NATO naval units with other allied forces for activities in the Black Sea region.

The goal of NATO is joint defence of democracy. For Estonia, NATO is the main guarantee for external security. The aim of the Estonian security policy is to preserve the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, constitutional order and security of the people of Estonia. Therefore the main principle of the Estonian security and defence policy is to be an active ensurer of security and to participate in the crisis management and peace operations led by different international organizations (NATO, UN, OSCE, European Union).

Accession of Estonia to NATO and the EU considerably strengthened the security of Estonia and at the same time Estonia started to participate in the coordinated security and defence cooperation of these organizations in order to contribute to the creation of broader international peace and stability. Active NATO membership will always remain the main priority of the Estonian security and defence policy.

Estonia as a full NATO Member State since 29 March 2004 has actively participated in international operations. The success of NATO in international operations is very important for Estonia as it has an impact on the global security of our allies and several international organizations. In total, approximately 2500 Estonian servicemen have participated in international operations since 1995.

Estonian NATO membership is important also to ensure the security of economic activities of the Republic of Estonia and effectiveness of economic policy.

Editorial Team of the journal