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NATO PA's Role in Consolidating Article 2 of the Atlantic Alliance Treaty

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ABSTRACT

Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty, stipulates that international relations between member states should be conducted peacefully and with mutual respect, based on free institutions, thus creating conditions of stability, security, and satisfaction within the Alliance. It also promotes the elimination of opposition factors about international economic policies, which, in turn, are based on a collaborative foundation. Despite this more peaceful premise, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is, above all, a collective defence alliance, and over its 74-year history, there have been no further commitments that would allow for more integration despite the shared common values that were at its inception. The Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO PA) is an Interparliamentary Organisation (IPO) that acts independently of the North Atlantic Alliance but brings together parliamentarians from its member states and associates. Although its resolutions are merely recommendatory and advisory in nature, they have provided crucial strategic input into NATO's action, allowing parliaments to properly reflect on the organization's interests and strategies in national debates.

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Introduction

According to its founding treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) goes beyond the collective defence alliance referred to in Article 5 to become a community of values based on mutual respect, as enshrined in Article 2 of this treaty. (NATO, 2022). However, despite envisaging peaceful values based on common values, the North Atlantic Alliance has not gone beyond the materialization of a collective defence organisation between its member states, and there have been no additional commitments during its 74 years of existence that would allow for greater integration, despite the sharing of common values.

To address the role of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO (NATO PA), this essay aims to analyse its role and influence in promoting and preserving the values enshrined in the Washington Treaty (1949), especially those that include the development of international relations based on peace and respect between member states (NATO, 2022).

This is an Interparliamentary Organisation (IPO), which, like most of its counterparts, has no formal link with the corresponding Intergovernmental Organisation. However, as it comprises delegations from the parliaments of member countries, it acts within the framework of parliamentary diplomacy and can be configured as an instrument of soft power, a complement, or even an alternative to traditional diplomacy exercised within the government.

In this context, the first part of the essay deals with the Washington Treaty, focussing on the assumptions in question. The second part presents the Parliamentary Assembly, its genesis, mission, and objectives, followed by an analysis of its role in consolidating the alliance's values, with an appraisal of the existing bibliography and, finally, the concluding remarks.

The founding of the North Atlantic Alliance

NATO was founded with the signing of the Washington Treaty, also known as the North Atlantic Treaty, on 4 April 1949 (NATO, 2022). With only 14 articles, this document, which established the North Atlantic Alliance, provided for the sharing of risk, responsibility, and benefit of collective defence between the signatory states, the very concept of collective defence is the basic principle of the Alliance (NATO, 2022). The collective defence or mutual assistance pact to stop Soviet expansion is enshrined in Article 5 and was the objective that led to the creation of this International Organisation, and committed member states to protect each other (Mudge, 2022) (Eurocid, 2022).

Thus, since its creation, this Organization has consisted of a structure that allows the implementation of the objectives defined in its founding document without changing, even with the end of the Eastern threat (Eurocid, 2022).

As pointed out by Maria Cowles and Michelle Egan (2012), during the bipolar conflict, the North Atlantic bloc, led by the United States of America (USA), became a military and political counterweight to Soviet influence on the European continent. With its North American military forces stationed in Western Europe to deter potential Soviet aggression. This military presence materialised the US commitment to securing Europe and containing communism (Cowles and Egan, 2012).

Although, even with the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), some leaders of NATO countries questioned its continued existence, which was dedicated exclusively to the collective defence of its members, since this premise had become superfluous (Thompson, 2014). It was even suggested that NATO should evolve, even changing its area of intervention or geography. Given these circumstances, Senator Richard Lugar said in 1993 that "NATO must change its area or its business"¹, thus summarising the position defended by many member states (Rato, 1995: 765).

To this end, the Alliance has deployed forces and moved out of its area in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Gulf of Aden, and Libya, at the same time as it sought to establish more constructive relations with Russia and other countries that had previously belonged to the Soviet bloc. In this way, NATO has managed to maintain its relevance, transforming itself into a more flexible alliance and broadening its focus to include peacekeeping operations, crisis management and other missions outside Europe (Gheciu, 2009).

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was an event that had significant repercussions on international relations, including the position of the Allies, most of whose member countries condemned this unilateral Russian action as a clear violation of international law and a clear attack

¹ That year, during Bill Clinton's administration, Senator Richard Lugar of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee amended that with the dissolution of USSR, the Alliance needed to "get out of the area or get out of the business" (Thompson, 2014).

on the sovereignty and integrity of Ukraine's territory. This event has reinvigorated tensions between NATO and Russia, contributing to a period of more tense relations between the West and Moscow, with the Alliance taking steps to strengthen its military presence and security in the Black Sea region, reinforcing deterrence against aggressive actions. This tension had lasting impacts on geopolitical dynamics in Europe and security policies in the region (Oliveira, 2016).

The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by Russian troops significantly aggravated the tension and security situation in Europe. This aggression on Ukrainian territory reminded European countries of the importance of NATO as the main collective defence organisation for their security. United against Russia, the Alliance members have begun to strengthen their defences and have been providing material to support Ukraine, establishing a new strategic concept, approved in Madrid in 2022, to enhance the defence capacity and security of the Member States, as Russia has re-emerged as the greatest threat to stability in Europe. (Euronews, 2022).

With this new context, the North Atlantic Alliance regained its momentum and, in unison, condemned this Russian attack and repositioned itself on European territory, on the eastern flank, and realised the accession of countries from this region, such as Finland (Kauranen and Gray, 2023).

NATO Parliamentary Assembly

NATO PA is an international organisation of a parliamentary nature that brings together the parliaments of the member and associate countries of the North Atlantic Alliance (Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, 2016). Founded in 1955, at the height of the bipolar conflict, NATO's member countries sought to consolidate transatlantic values and relations between the Americans and Europeans (Brumter, 1986).

Bringing parliamentarians into the Alliance's collective deliberations only came about shortly after the Washington Treaty in 1951, when the Ottawa Session of the North Atlantic Council took place. The proposal was put forward by Norway and provided for the creation of a forum dialogue exclusively for parliamentarians within the central structure of NATO, which would, in turn, facilitate transatlantic interaction by strengthening interparliamentary cooperation (Šabič, 2016).

Harry Truman, then US president, was in favour of the initiative, as he considered that creating a platform for dialogue between European and American parliamentarians "could only be beneficial" (Šabič, 2016: 245). The US Congress was also in favour of founding this parliamentary dimension in the North Atlantic Alliance. At the time, Senator Fulbright² supported the idea of an Atlantic Assembly, an interparliamentary body that could bring together not only the parliaments of NATO member countries but also the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), two key transatlantic International Organisations (Šabič, 2016).

In May 1954, the NATO Canadian Parliamentary Association was created, in which all senators and members of the House of Commons interested in addressing North Atlantic issues could participate. Led by Senator Wishart McL. Robertson, President of the Senate, this association organised the first plenary session of Alliance parliamentarians in July 1955. Once up and running, the Canadian Parliamentary Association began to follow the North Atlantic Council's suggestion to develop interparliamentary relations with parliaments in other Alliance countries (NATOPA, 2022).

² Senator William Fulbright was a renowned US senator who, as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, was the author of the Fulbright Resolution, which supported international peacekeeping initiatives and urged the US to participate in what would become the United Nations. Later, he supported the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, and the creation of NATO (Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences, 2023).

The first "Conference of Members of Parliament from NATO Countries" took place in Paris between 18 and 22 July 1955 and brought together 158 parliamentarians from the 14 member states at the time (VIPCO, 2015). This conference contributed to discussions about NATO's potential role in the Alliance's economic relations. A draft resolution submitted to the Conference, although not adopted by the participants, emphasised the unique positions of the North Atlantic Alliance countries regarding the "invocation" of the provisions of Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty (Charman and Williams, 1982).

Referring to the 1955 Conference, British MP Geoffrey de Freitas, one of the founders of the NATO Conference of Parliamentarians (which in 1999 would adopt the name of NATO Parliamentary Assembly), wrote: "The Conference was founded by parliamentarians, for parliamentarians, and will only preserve its vitality as long as it remains essentially parliamentary" (NATOPA, 2022). This IPO³ was thus based on a matrix of security and economic issues promoted by the international parliamentary dialogue (Malang, 2018).

In short, while in 1955, NATO's objectives centred on establishing an effective system of collective defence for the parliamentarians who founded its Parliamentary Assembly, the Alliance should go beyond a strictly military interpretation of the treaty towards the development of a true "Atlantic community". However, the governments of the member states were slow to attach any importance to NATO PA (Hobbs, 2005).

In May 1956, the North Atlantic Council mandated the foreign ministers of Canada, Italy, and Norway, in what was known as the "Commission of Three", to prepare a report addressing the best way to extend cooperation to areas other than just the military as a way of strengthening unity within the Atlantic Community. This Commission requested input from the Conference of NATO Parliamentarians and, in the document called "The Report of the Three Wise Men⁴", approved in December of that year. It was clear that parliamentarians were among the prominent supporters of the Alliance, and in their contact between parliamentarians and the electorate, they contributed to the development of public support for the Intergovernmental Organization and solidarity among its members. In this sense, the report recommended maintaining a close relationship with NATO parliamentarians and continuing to support the development of the Conference that began in 1955 (Lunn, 2006).

Despite the importance attributed by the Commission of Three, it was not until 1974, on the occasion of the Ottawa Declaration on Atlantic Relations, specifically in the 13th paragraph, that the role played by NATO's PA and the North Atlantic Alliance's support for the parliamentary dimension was formally recognised, although not explicitly mentioned (NATOPA, 2022) (Šabič, 2016).

In this context, the Parliamentary Assembly has been institutionally separated from NATO since its inception, although today, it is a fundamental link between the Alliance and its member states (Walker, 2022).

³ International Parliamentary Organisations (IPOs) have existed since the 19th century. With the end of the Cold War, these parliamentary institutions gained greater international recognition and space for action (Costa, et al., 2013). The involvement of PIOs in international affairs generally takes place on three fronts: through their capacity to monitor or supervise the foreign policy of national governments; in the context of parliamentary diplomacy, the formation of diplomatic relations, especially in the fields of peace-building, crisis management and democracy promotion, at bilateral and multilateral level; and in the establishment and provision of positions in representative bodies of international or regional organisations (Malamud & Stavridis, 2011).

⁴ The Report of the Three Wise Men had an important impact on the Alliance and made it possible to introduce areas of co-operation beyond the military, encouraging political consultations between members and broadening NATO's strategic framework for action (NATO, 2022).

Regardless of this separation, the Assembly has a strong working relationship with the International Organization. The Washington Treaty makes no explicit mention of the existence of an Inter-Parliamentary Assembly. For this reason, NATO PA operates as a separate entity while still representing a tangible expression of its core mission. Formal recognition would imply amending the Washington Treaty, and not all governments and parliaments favour such a formal link (Hobbs, 2015).

NATO PA's activities are guided by the Standing Committee, which is made up of the Presidents of the national delegations. The Bureau has seven members: the President, four Vice-Presidents, and includes the Secretary-General and the Treasurer (NATOPA, 2022).

Its structure also includes five standing committees that deal with the following security-related topics: the civilian dimension; defence, economics, politics and science and technology (NATOPA, 2022). Other constituent bodies include the Special Group for the Mediterranean and the Middle East (GSM), which promotes interparliamentary dialogue with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the Interparliamentary Councils of Ukraine and Georgia⁵. Plenary sessions are held annually, on a rotating basis, in spring and autumn, at the invitation of the Parliament of the host member state. At each session, the Committees produce thematic resolutions expressing the Assembly's views in that area, which are then voted on and addressed to the North Atlantic Council in the form of recommendations (NATOPA, 2022).

Even with the enthusiasm at its foundation, NATO's PA was a marginal actor for much of the Cold War period. While at the time, the main focus was on the military and strategic dimensions of the alliance, led by the NATO Military Committee and the Supreme Allied Command in Europe (SACEUR), the Assembly acted more as a channel for communication and coordination between the legislatures of the member countries, allowing parliamentarians to exchange information, assess security policies and strengthen collective commitment to the principles of the alliance, especially in promoting deterrence and responding to the challenges of bipolar hostility (Šabič, 2016).

However, when the conjuncture of international cooperation changed with the end of this period of history, there was a willingness on the part of the countries that left the Soviet bloc, whose political systems were essentially autocratic, to transition to parliamentary democracy (Hobbs, 2015).

After the Cold War, the Parliamentary Assembly also had to reconsider its role, with the result that it now favours dialogue and cooperation⁶. Within this framework, new initiatives have been developed, with special emphasis on realising seminars and conferences aimed at supporting the development of parliamentary democracy in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the Rose-Roth Seminar⁷. NATO PA has thus taken on the new role of integrating into its activity members of the parliaments of Central and Eastern European countries, as well as those seeking a closer association with the Alliance. The support involves providing political assistance to strengthen democracy in the transatlantic region, thereby increasing and reinforcing NATO's programme of collaboration and cooperation (Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, 2016).

The Assembly was thus given a new mission: to assist in the processes of democratic transition in the newly independent countries of Eastern and Central Europe (Walker, 2022). One of these associated countries is Ukraine. One of the countries concerned was Ukraine, shortly after the country's

⁵ Its statutes also provide for the creation of new Committees, Subcommittees and Working Groups, depending on the international context (NATOPA, 2022).

⁶ NATO was also going through an identity crisis at this time, since the adversary, the USSR, and the Warsaw Pact, which had led to its creation, had been dissolved (Šabič, 2016).

⁷ The first edition of the Rose-Roth Seminar took place in December 1991 in Lithuania, in an atmosphere of clear tension with the Soviet troops still present in that country (Born, 2005).

independence in 1991. The Ukrainian parliament, the *Verkhovna Rada*, became an associate member of the NATO PA and has been a regular and active participant in the Assembly's work (NATOPA, 2022).

It is also important to mention the annual visits by parliamentarians to Allied military installations and the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) (NATOPA, 2022).

NATO PA's objectives at the time of its foundation were to facilitate dialogue between parliamentarians, especially on security issues; to promote parliamentarians' awareness and understanding of the most pressing security issues and the policies to be developed within the framework of the North Atlantic Alliance; to provide NATO and the governments of member states with a collective parliamentary opinion; to give the Organisation's policies greater policy transparency and a corresponding degree of collective responsibility; and to strengthen the transatlantic relationship (Brumter, 1986).

Nowadays, the Armed Forces play new roles, and their missions go beyond traditional warfare. The emergence of new types of threats, especially in cyberspace, highlights the need for reforms and restructuring in national defence. These changes necessarily require parliamentary involvement, and it has therefore become imperative within NATO to give new prominence to the role of parliaments in the areas of defence and security to the extent that the traditional parliamentary functions of overseeing government acts, approving budget expenditure, provide transparency and bring public opinion closer together. The candidate countries' commitment to setting up mechanisms and adapting their armed forces involved sharing best practices and training among parliamentarians (Walker, 2022).

Consequently, from the 1990s onwards, the following objectives were added to the initial ones already mentioned: establishing links based on parliamentary democracy throughout the transatlantic area; the integration of parliamentarians from third countries into the work of the Assembly and direct support for their parliaments if they wish to become members of the Alliance; to foster cooperation with states that wish to cooperate with the Alliance without seeking membership, including states in the Caucasus and Mediterranean regions; and to promote the training of parliamentarians in the essential principles of democratisation, including in the armed forces (NATOPA, 2022).

Throughout its existence, NATO PA has become a dialogue platform, unique to members of parliaments, for debating and influencing decisions on the security of the Alliance. Also acts as a facilitator and promoter of parliamentary awareness and understanding of the most pressing issues affecting the security of NATO countries and contributes to national parliamentary monitoring of security and defence issues (Walker, 2022).

Considering the most recent event of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Parliamentary Assembly, in May of the same year, at its Plenary Session in Vilnius, Lithuania, approved a declaration of full support for the Ukrainians and pledged unconditional support to Ukraine, increased military support and more severe sanctions against the aggressor, i.e., Russia. On the same occasion, this IPO recommended strengthening the defences of the eastern flank and supported Sweden and Finland's applications for membership (NATOPA, 2022).

In 2023, NATO PA adopted a series of political recommendations not only on strengthening support for the war effort and reconstruction in Ukraine and security and stability in the Black Sea but also on protecting allied democracies and partners from disinformation, implementing the new deterrence and defence base and protecting maritime infrastructure in Alliance countries (NATOPA, 2023).

The Parliamentary Assembly has always followed the key issues on NATO's agenda and its summits. Today, the parliamentary dimension does not need any sense of affirmation for its role to be recognised, having already demonstrated its independence from official constraints and its ability to perform the two functions for which it has shown itself to be uniquely suited: that of "critical observer of NATO policies and activities and forum for regular transatlantic exchanges at parliamentary level", as Geoffrey de Freitas argued in 1982, cited by Charman and Williams (1982) (Charman and Williams, 1982).

NATO PA in the security community

The creation of an Organisation made up of delegations from NATO parliaments, although formally separate from the intergovernmental dimension, reflected the desire of parliamentarians to give substance to the provisions of the Washington Treaty beyond the assumptions of collective defence. In other words, it aimed to establish a security community that shares and promotes common values, as provided for in Article 2 of this treaty (NATO, 2022).

This concept of a security community⁸, evident in Article 2, was introduced in 1957, in the middle of the Cold War, when Karl W. Deutsch tried to understand how countries could cooperate in an international environment characterized by intense ideological and military rivalries. According to this assumption, in a security community, states share not only interests but also a series of practices and institutions that promote mutual trust and cooperation. In this type of community, member states see their interests as interconnected to promote peace and avoid conflict between them. As Deutsch himself says, "a group of states that have integrated and in which there is an effective guarantee that the members of the community do not adopt hostile attitudes towards each other and resolve disputes peacefully. The members of this community are drawn together by a sense of belonging, mutual sympathy, trust, and common interests. (Deutsch and al, 1957).

The member states of the community are bound by a mutual commitment to intervene in collective defence against external threats, which implies a degree of integration associated with a "sense of belonging" in which the "expectation of peaceful transformation" in the relationship between states is guaranteed by the sharing fundamental values "relevant to the political decision-making process" (Deutsch and al, 1957: 140).

"(...) A security community (...) is a group that has become integrated - where integration is defined as the achievement of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices that are sufficiently strong and widespread to ensure peaceful change among the members of a group with reasonable security over a long period" (Deutsch, 1961: 98). The more integrated the peoples of a region are, the less likely war becomes between its states.

Considering NATO's context in the bipolar conflict, the security community makes it possible to transcend the "security dilemma" and break out of the vicious cycle of fear and the accumulation of power caused by uncertainty about the intentions of other states, which can lead to escalation and war (Hertz, 1950). However, what we have seen is that, internally, the security community has mitigated the security dilemma for the reason already described, while externally, it can increase the security dilemma of one or more states due to the insecurity and uncertainty resulting from their exclusion from the community.

Created during the Cold War (1955), the Parliamentary Assembly, in turn, although institutionally separate from NATO, has always sought to strengthen the relationship and follow the main issues

⁸The originality of this concept stems from the link between security and integration. Integration means building a "sense of community" that sustains "institutions and practices and practices strong enough to guarantee lasting expectations of peaceful change" (Deutsch and al, 1957: 5).

under discussion, as recommended in the “The Report of the Three Wise Men”, which praised the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in promoting public support for the inter-governmental organisation and a sense of solidarity between members. This document also suggested that the Alliance should cooperate in more diverse areas, going beyond political cooperation, i.e., also dealing with the economy, science, technology, and culture. NATO PA also shared this premise, arguing that the Alliance should go beyond security and defence issues under Article 2 of the founding Treaty, thus broadening the scope of the Organisation based on mutual respect and shared common values (Lunn, 2006).

In 1998, in a revision of Karl Deutsch's concept and considering the end of bipolarity and Russia's rapprochement with the West, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998) considered the security community as a "transnational region made up of sovereign states whose populations maintain sustained expectations of peaceful change" and understood that security communities are based simultaneously on "cooperative security", between member states, and "collective security", against an external threat (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 30).

The interconnection between these two types of security enhances the convergence of states through shared values, identities and meanings, direct relations in multiple contexts, reciprocity, and long-term interests. This security community is characterised by its normative nature, which is reflected in common values and norms, in particular, the ban on the use of military force to settle disputes between member states. A security community also shares a common ideational vision of the international order, which projects its normative model and identity beyond its domain and its domain and conditions the place occupied by the other powers in the system (Adler and M. Barnett, 1998: 31).

In short, despite having gone through some internal crises, which saw no purpose in maintaining the North Atlantic Alliance with the dissolution of the USSR, against all expectations, the transatlantic community has survived all the changes in the international system. Nowadays, too, the Parliamentary Assembly has taken on a new role by involving delegations of parliamentarians from countries seeking to move closer to NATO's values and strategic guidelines (NATOPA, 2022).

This context allowed the Parliamentary Assembly to develop a more critical role in that, when the communist threat was off the radar, the North Atlantic Alliance was able to maintain the status quo through the parliamentary aspect, not only as a bastion of liberal democratic values but also by legitimising the international preponderance of the USA. Closer relations between parliamentarians, who oversee and legitimise the actions of governments, promote the Alliance's good image in the eyes of public opinion in the member states, especially since it is parliaments that oversee and legitimise the actions of governments and can also serve as vehicles for promoting the Alliance's good image in the eyes of public opinion, especially when it began to act and project forces outside the area. (Šabič, 2016).

It should also be noted that the Eastern countries that resulted from the disintegration of the USSR showed a willingness to transition from autocratic political systems to parliamentary democracy. However, it was clear that this transition and rapprochement would have to take place in stages to deal with the enormous geopolitical vacuum left by the end of the Warsaw Pact (Hobbs, 2015). In this scenario, the role played by parliamentarians from NATO countries was fundamental, particularly in sharing best practices concerning Through the mechanisms of parliamentary diplomacy, NATO PA has fostered and promoted mutual understanding and the strengthening of parliamentary democracy not only among member countries but also among those who identify with its values and wish to participate in the Allies' partnership and cooperation programmes (NATOPA, 2022).

Notwithstanding the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, which put NATO back to business, the years leading up to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 were marked by many ups and downs in the organisation, with Donald Trump's administration and his "America first" policy and Brexit, which removed one of NATO's major donors from the European Union (EU), being particularly notable in the downward phase, the rise of populist and nationalist movements within the European bloc, the EU's Global Strategy, which revitalised the European role of the Atlantic Alliance, and the recognition of the rise of China as a strategic threat to the status quo and the international liberal order, which can only be sustained by an enlarged security community, which at this point is the most important (Deudney and Ikenberry, 2012).

NATO PA has followed this trend and has not only debated these issues at its meetings but has also involved the parliaments of the global partners in these meetings.

Indeed, through parliamentary diplomacy, the Parliamentary Assembly helps to promote a sense of Atlantic solidarity between the different legislative chambers, in line with the objectives of the Atlantic Alliance, while giving democratic legitimacy and greater transparency to the measures approved by governments within the framework of NATO and promoting a better understanding of its objectives and missions among the legislators and citizens of the Alliance (NATOPA, 2022).

This link was only further strengthened with the Ukrainian War, when the parliamentary dimension proved closer than ever to the intergovernmental organisation, carrying out exhaustive work on recommendations and also making parliaments aware of the need to approve not only support for the war effort and the reconstruction of Ukrainian territory (as well as the reception of refugees) and the reinforcement of defence investments in national state budgets but also to implement NATO's transformation and defend democratic values.

Conclusion

NATO is a security community of values united in its commitment to democracy, mutual respect, individual freedoms, human rights, and the rule of law (NATOPA, 2022). However, until recently, some thought the organisation was doomed to failure, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 reviving the Alliance's vigour in the face of the threat of Russian expansion on the European continent.

In the geopolitical context of the North Atlantic, NATO PA is not just a forum for interparliamentary dialogue but the materialization of mutual respect and democratic values promoted by the intergovernmental dimension. Although it is formally independent of the intergovernmental dimension, it is through it that the parliamentarians of the North Atlantic Treaty countries establish their interconnections (Born, 2005).

Parliaments are essential for ensuring that decision-making processes occur democratically and transparently and are responsible for overseeing the state's actions in all policy areas. Although constitutional provisions may vary from country to country, parliaments are traditionally the sovereign body that approves state budgets, which include items for national defence and the armed forces. Parliamentarians also analyse and authorise expenditures related to the deployment of military personnel on foreign territory, as well as integration and investment in the missions of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATOPA, 2022). Thus, through oversight and accountability mechanisms, national parliaments monitor the Alliance's activities, including military operations and associated spending and implementing policies, ensuring accountability.

It should also be noted that as representatives of the people, parliamentarians are also vital in building consensus and promoting public support for issues related to national and collective defence and security (Péjo, 2020).

By bringing together parliamentarians, the Parliamentary Assembly plays an important role in strengthening the broad political solidarity that underpins the North Atlantic Alliance and in promoting its mission and values, both within and outside the Atlantic community.

NATO PA's main objective has always been to obtain an advisory status, like that of the parliamentary assemblies of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) and the Council of Europe (PACE). In this sense, it is considered to have followed the right path. Since its foundation, there has been a desire on the part of the parliamentarians who make up this IPO to contribute to the success of the North Atlantic Alliance through the creation of cooperation mechanisms between the Atlantic countries in the application of the provisions of Article 2 (NATOPA, 2022). Through political dialogue, this Assembly provides a forum where legislators discuss issues of international security, military strategy, emerging threats, and global challenges and produce recommendations to governments and NATO's leadership based on debate and analysis, helping to shape the organization's policies and strategies (Hobbs, 2005).

Through these functions, this Assembly plays a significant role in promoting international cooperation, finding solutions to global security challenges, and ensuring the effectiveness of the alliance among member countries. Parliamentary diplomacy is, therefore, key to promoting dialogue, debating security and defence issues, and developing common policies among member states (Born, 2005).

The Parliamentary Assembly's relations with the Intergovernmental Organization have always been, and will probably continue to be, the solution to the Assembly's permanence in Atlantic relations as a parliamentary forum that reflects the fact that the Alliance is, first and foremost, a community of nations based on values. As the Secretary General of NATO between 1971 and 1984, Joseph Luns, described it, "The Assembly is fulfilling, in a practical way, a task that would not otherwise have been carried out and that is useful to the Alliance in its international context and to the governments that are members of the Alliance" (NATO PA, 2010).

Through this positive partnership, in which parliamentarians strengthen relations in a game of soft power, the idea is consolidated that NATO is more than a military alliance. It is a pluralistic security community based on the aspiration to strengthen democratic institutions and maintain Kantian peace among its members, as provided for in Article 2 of the Washington Treaty (Milloy, 2006). In this context, the Parliamentary Assembly has strategically relevant contributions in several areas: it allows NATO's objectives and interests to be properly reflected in national parliamentary debates, it acts as an indicator of public opinion, and it is a privileged means of communication that allows opinions and concerns to be shared directly with foreign counterparts.

Furthermore, as the only body that regularly brings together European and North American legislators, it has helped to sustain the transatlantic relationship, shaping itself into a successful network of cooperation that goes beyond the intergovernmental sphere, where dialogue is facilitated between member countries and the parliaments of partner nations, strengthening ties and promoting collaboration on security and defence issues (Šabič, 2016).

In addition, as the Assembly itself points out, the debates and discussions that take place in the parliamentary dimension make an important contribution to developing the consensus among member countries that must underpin the Alliance's policies and help to make the Alliance's functioning and policies more transparent and understandable to parliaments and their audiences.

Serving as a permanent reminder that intergovernmental decisions and recommendations ultimately depend on political support under the constitutional due process of democratically elected parliaments (NATO PA, 2022). Through these functions, NATO PA plays a significant role in promoting international cooperation, finding solutions to global security challenges, and ensuring the effectiveness of the alliance among member countries (Šabič, 2016).

For all these reasons, while over the years North Atlantic Alliance has spent too much time focussing on the military potential of Article 5 while forgetting the strategic political importance of other articles of the founding document, NATO PA has sought to go further in its action, focussing mainly on the importance of the non-military problems envisaged in the Washington Treaty, with emphasis on the economic, cultural and scientific issues which, over the years, were fundamental to its consolidation and its principles to this day.

By fostering dialogue and cooperation through parliamentary diplomacy, the parliamentarians of the member states and their associates establish relationships of mutual trust and synergies that extend to the intergovernmental dimension, and these links are, in fact, an aggregating and consolidating factor of Article 2 of the Washington Treaty, according to the premise that this essay set out to analyse and support, in clear support of what Geoffrey de Freitas defended in 1974 and which is still valid today: "The only forum where parliamentarians from both sides of the Atlantic meet regularly to discuss issues of common interest" (NATO PA, 1975).

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