NATO Structure and Decision-Making Process

Petru Culeac, Vienna School of Governance
What is NATO?

- NATO was created as a deterrence tool meant to discourage and combat any attempt of coercion, intimidation or attack to the address of any of its members from the Soviet Union and its potential allies.

**Mission:** “keep the Russians out, Americans in, and Germans down” - Lord Ismay, First NATO Secretary General
What is NATO?

It became a collective security club providing mutual defence against external threats and also serve as a tool for conflict prevention, peace making and peacekeeping.
Consensus decision making

The decision mutually accepted by all NATO member states is reached through consensus decision making, which is the main decision-making principle applied in the entire Alliance.
Consensus vs. Unanimity

- Unanimity requires a clear expression of the vote of all members in favor of a decision

- No voting in NATO

- Consensus decision making in NATO is reached through a process of discussions and consultations based on the expression of national interests of the member countries, designed at producing a mutually acceptable result.
Consensus

- The North-Atlantic Treaty does not mention how decisions have to be taken except for article 10 – unanimous agreement that is necessary when inviting new members.
- Thus NATO relies on customary practices developed over time.
Consensus

- Consensus rule reflects NATO structure as an alliance of independent and sovereign states.
- NATO decisions are thus the expression of the collective will of its member governments, arrived at by common consent.
Decision making process

Consultations, bilateral or multilateral discussions in NAC, NATO committees, working groups to identify possible concerns, objections, and to craft mutual accepted solutions.
„Silence procedure”

- When one or several Allies do not have a position at the time of a specific NAC or committee meeting – the Secretary General opts for the „silence procedure”.

- The proposals are circulated – and if no Ally breaks the silence (in other words no one notifies the IS about its objections before a deadline set by the Secretary General or committee chair – the decision is approved.
# NATO Structure

**North Atlantic Council**  
Defence Planning Committee  
Nuclear Planning Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civilian Structure</th>
<th>Military Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• National Delegations</td>
<td>• Military Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secretary General</td>
<td>• Strategic Commanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The International Staff</td>
<td>• Supreme Allied Commander, Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supreme Allied Commander Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Military Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• International Military Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Economic Dimension

• Two pillars of the economic dimension:
  – Article 2: „member countries will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration”
  – The 1999 strategic concept recognizes the importance of the economic factors in NATO's activities.
The Economic Dimension

- NATO Economic Committee – consultations on economic developments that directly affect security policies.

- The Defence and Security Economics Directorate (from the Political Affairs and Security Division of the International Staff) – a forum for sharing information on defence and security economic issues in areas of concern to NATO – such as the financial aspects of terrorism.