

NATO's Meaning and Existence

Within the Interstate Intersubjectivity

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Narziya ve Mıřık

This is the most anticipated book of 2026, capable of reanimating NATO's true potential: With its strong contextual framing and deeply contemplative and ontologically sound analysis, it has the potential to become a point of reference and a game-changer in the foreign policy community. Clearly, Turkey has more to offer than Ahmet Davutoğlu's "Strategic Depth", as Yunus Emre Ozigci's NATO's "Meaning and Existence" (2026) is about to take the policymaking community by storm. Ozigci's analytical prowess in policymaking and diplomatic pursuits resonates with his strategic insights. This publication can save NATO from its current Heideggerian phase of thrownness in the world by offering a profoundly contemplative inquiry into how this organization's identity is affected by an unstimulating, predictable bureaucratic status quo that still rewards obedience over originality despite facing geostrategic disaster.

This can be a playbook that might save NATO from drifting into irrelevance; ultimately, his diplomatic experience and philosophical insights have given Ozigci a rare capacity to playfully engage with, reformulate, and reconceptualize ideas in ways that should encourage future NATO leaders to embrace diverse, outside-the-box thinking to freely question policy and focus on its true defensive nature. The author grounds NATO's existence in intersubjective meaning rather than material objectivity, potentially reintroducing it to the broader academic and policymaking community worldwide.

This profound, artful reflection also offers a practical cognitive innovation that should surprise NATO's adversaries, even those who assume they can think nine steps in advance. Ultimately, this is also potentially the best philosophical insight into NATO's enduring capacity for adaptation to multilayered existential dilemmas arising from bipolar, unipolar, and multipolar systems of power.

Dr. Piotr Pietrzak
In Statu Nascendi Think Tank, Sofia, Bulgaria

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Introduction

Since its establishment in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has been a prominent figure in international relations as an institution of the “collective West,” mainly tasked with coordinating and conducting its collective defence during the bipolar era, to which cooperative security tasks and responsibilities were added in the post-bipolar security environment.

This may be considered a general definition of NATO. Another can be constructed from the elements under the title “What is NATO” on the organisation’s webpage: NATO is a political and military alliance. As a political alliance, it “promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and in the long run, prevent conflict”. As a military alliance, NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO’s founding treaty (Article V) or under a UN mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations. NATO is committed to the principle that an attack against one or several of its members is considered an attack against all of them. As an alliance of countries from Europe and North America, NATO provides a unique link between these two continents, enabling them to consult and cooperate in the field of defence and security and conduct multinational crisis management operations together.

A third definition may be found on the website of the US’s NATO Permanent Delegation: Formed in 1949 with the signing of the Washington Treaty, NATO is a security alliance of 30 countries (in fact, 32) from North America and Europe. NATO’s fundamental goal is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members through political and military means. NATO remains the principal security instrument of the transatlantic community and an expression of its common democratic values. It permanently ties the security of North America and Europe. NATO enlargement has furthered the US goal of a whole, free, and peaceful Europe.

The North Atlantic Treaty itself does not directly define what the entity named NATO “is,” but expresses the parties’ common aims in their coming together in the context of NATO. These include safeguarding the freedom, common heritage, and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of

democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law; promoting stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area; and uniting the members' efforts for collective defence and preservation of peace and security. These are followed by articles explaining how NATO members intend to pursue these aims.

The accuracy of these definitions or expressions may be debatable, since they include elements that go beyond the mere substance of the entity and into the sphere of values as they are attributed to the organisation. Therefore, they allow for alternative definitions and expressions, which are also extended to that sphere, with different value-attributions, made by actual or potential critics or opponents of NATO. Still, none of these definitions, their alternatives, or their positive or negative elaborations are unintelligible. They are grasped in this or that way by everyone who is somehow interested in the said entity. NATO is, as such, fundamentally "familiar": It is thought upon, referred to, analysed, criticised, evaluated, remembered, deliberated upon within a narrowly or widely defined context, in connection with other entities, events, phenomena, states of affairs, some of which are also included in the aforementioned brief definitions/expressions.

Yet, none of the things that are or could be mentioned in the previous paragraphs, be they related to NATO's substance or possible properties, are "real" in the narrow, strict sense of objectivity. NATO itself, State parties to the Washington Treaty, State or other kinds of "opponents" of them within the context of NATO, international/interstate relations or events, phenomena, states of affairs, and entities that are related to them, despite their familiarity and intelligibility, also in their interactions in various forms, "do not exist." In short, no one has ever seen "a" NATO or a State. Anything and everything pertaining to them is "objectively" something else: office buildings, official/legal documents, meetings, declarations, rituals, and officials are objectively what they "are," regardless of the meanings that are ascribed to them. They are buildings, documents, and persons in simple reality, objectivity as "is." Still, they appear otherwise, with meanings and as meanings, and they, as such, are "familiar" and intelligible to those taking an interest, any possible kind of interest, in them. Their meaning-content, which ensures familiarity and intelligibility, precedes and enables any ulterior definition, judgment, or emotion as the attribution of further meanings to the "thing." In fact, this preceding meaning-content itself makes the appearance of "buildings, documents, rituals, and persons" possible as they are related to it, which, otherwise, would not even exist as they are in the "objectivity."

Therefore, there are two kinds of "meaningfulness" pertaining to, in particular, things and entities such as NATO, which have no self-standing

objectivity, always in the narrow sense of it, as well as to events, states of affairs, and phenomena that are related to them and their “interactions.” One of them is subjective, be it individual or collective, collectivity not equating to universality here: They are “acts” of perceiving, judging, defining, predicating, anticipating, remembering, negating, correcting, altering, and so on, as related to those things. However, they are not self-standing. Their possibility of being performed subjectively depends on their referring to a preceding meaning ground of “familiarity” and “intelligibility” of these things and entities, as they appear and are recognised as “existing” universally, as part of the reality that is lived and lived within by all. It is in reference to that meaning ground that individual and/or collective subjective acts appear, with various further contents and forms, as part of the horizon stemming from these preceding contents, which constitute familiarity and intelligibility in universal terms.

Theorising is such a secondary act. Its secondary nature does not imply inaccuracy, arbitrariness, narrowness, or insufficiency in its attempt to explain or describe its study objects. It is, in fact, the individual/collective subjective act of thinking systematically, with all its possible forms and outcomes, on those objects. Theorising in the field of positive sciences, as related to the “objectively”, self-standingly present things, entities, events, phenomena, states of affairs has, however, a direct connection or accessibility to their familiarity and intelligibility ground: They are “there” in the objectivity, they are actually or potentially open to experience “as they are” or at least, they are universally recognised as such. Related studies are anchored to “facts” or to the universal recognition as “fact” of the objectivity of their objects. These objects are accessible to any and every study/theorising as they self-standingly “are,” and any individual/collective “subjective” effort on these lines is to refer to the said common and “objective,” self-standing ground. Against this ground and its accessibility, the assessment of theorising and the theoretical construct becomes possible, with “objective” results pertaining to accuracy and inaccuracy. In the field of social sciences, if the study objects are not objectively, self-standingly “there” like the things and interactions belonging to the sphere of positive sciences, the “subjects” are self-standingly present and accessible. The events, phenomena, states of affairs, and entities of social sciences, if they are not self-standing in the strict sense of “objectivity,” are nevertheless reducible to true subjects and their communities, which are. Social sciences may, if not always, replicate the anchor of the positive sciences from the “subject side”, as they are objectively accessible for study/theorising. The study

objects' familiarity and intelligibility contents in their universality may be pursued and assessed/reassessed from this angle of approach.

The peculiarity of international relations, more concretely of interstate interactions with their events, entities, phenomena, and states of affairs, appears here: They are not only "objectively absent", their subjects – as are familiarly, intelligibly, immediately recognised in universal terms – are not "there" in the strict sense of objectivity. Studies and theorising have no anchor of objectivity. These events, phenomena, states of affairs, and entities, such as NATO, are reducible to States themselves as "subjects" in their familiarity and intelligibility ground, and not directly to true subjects and their communities that are objectively present. Again, States have no objectivity in their direct, strict, and narrow sense.

This does not mean that States and events, phenomena, entities, and states of affairs that are reducible to them do not "exist." They certainly do, in a way "akin" to objectivity, which is a universal, intersubjective recognition of contents pertaining to them as their familiarity and intelligibility ground. The "existence" of events, phenomena, entities and states of affairs in which they "are involved" also refers to that meaning ground. This meaning ground forms an integral part of the reality lived and lived within, engenders objective events and states of affairs that refer to them. In a way, this non-objective but universally intersubjective meaning ground of familiarity and intelligibility "expands" the reality beyond the framework of strict objectivity. The intersubjective nature of the IR "subjects," entities, events, phenomena, and states of affairs, which form parts of an intersubjective stratum/intentional index/familiarity and intelligibility ground of this "existential" reality, shall be discussed as preliminary remarks pertaining to the study at hand in the first chapter.

The international relations/interstate interactions field's deprivation of an objectivity anchor in comparison with the spheres of positive and social sciences confines the act of theorising to the domain of secondary meaningfulness. IR theorising attempts to create its own "anchor" there, pre-defining its axioms/*a priori*, mostly borrowing those from the social sciences, and building its constructs upon them. The assessment ground of this kind of theorising becomes itself or other acts of theorising, which make their own ground of meaningfulness in terms of familiarity and intelligibility due to the apparent lack of a universal objectivity ground. This introduces flaws in IR studies. First, theorising tends to fit the events, phenomena, states of affairs, and entities into its own framework, rather than vice versa, on its own ground of familiarity and intelligibility. In particular, the pre-theoretical, intersubjective, immediate givenness of the State-

as-subject “suffers” from this approach, since it is often the first “study object,” together with its interactionality, to be dissected and redefined on the axiomatic/a priori grounds of this or that theoretical effort. Second, theorising tends to impose its own genetic narrative concerning entities, events, phenomena, and states of affairs on singularly and post-genetically given study objects. The theorising act’s narrative of the coming into being of its study objects needs to be repeatedly referred to within the study, explicitly or implicitly, to ensure consistency, particularly in the face of the post-genesis appearance of those objects in their singularity of givenness as events, phenomena, entities, and states of affairs, which are not necessarily identical to their coming to being as narrated. Theorising in the IR field is therefore prone to creating a multiplicity of narratives about its study objects, which replace or reshape, at varying degrees, the intersubjective ground of familiarity and intelligibility.

These “complications” do not invalidate theorising, in its entirety, in the field of international relations/interstate interactions. After all, within the reality lived and lived-within as an inquiring subject, in a state of immersion which is only natural and “existential,” theorising simply means thinking systematically on study objects. Yet, the complications are “there” without apparent remedies and safeguards, like positive or social sciences’ anchors to the self-standing reality. The second chapter discusses IR theorising on these grounds.

Still, as sketched in the first chapter, there is a familiarity and intelligibility ground akin to objectivity, an intersubjective stratum of the reality lived and lived-within, where subjects, entities, events, phenomena, and states of affairs that belong to the sphere of international relations/interstate interactions “exist,” or more clearly, “appear” as pre-theoretically and immediately given to intersubjective recognition. It constitutes, after all, the fundamental ground of reference for IR theorising itself (as ulterior acts of individual or collective subjectivity), and various approaches and constructs make up the horizon of possibilities stemming from this universal, intersubjective meaning ground. In other words, there “is” an anchor “akin” to that of positive and social sciences, which is the fundamental givenness of the subjects (the States-as-subjects) and “objects” of the IR field, which are not self-standing and objectively present. This universal and pre-theoretical stratum of givenness, the primary appearances of IR subjects and objects, therefore, needs to be elucidated within the study by separating them from ulterior individual/ collective subjective acts, including theorising and its constructs. Some basic notions of phenomenology, such as *epoché*, intersubjectivity, intentionality, and temporality/temporalisation, become useful at that point. Also, from the (existential) viewpoint of phenomenological

ontology, the corresponding concepts such as being-in-the-world, being-with, being-involved-with/“care” and ecstatic temporality/temporalisation offer, conjointly and in a complementary way,¹ as defining the existential interactionality of our study objects, the possibility to approach them in their pre-theoretical, immediate givenness. The concepts of phenomenology (and phenomenological ontology), which offer possibilities to anchor the study to its pre-theoretical, “given” meaning ground within the field, shall be discussed in the third chapter, based on the first.

The State as the subject (simulacrum) of international relations/interstate interactions, as well as its acts and communities, shall be debated in the fourth chapter. Without “denying” its nature as a collectively constituted entity, its post-genesis intersubjective givenness “as subject,” “as ascribed with subject acts” shall be discussed here. Its fundamental interactionality with its “similar” on the ground of the fundamental, intersubjective reference to its existential environment, which shall be expressed through the polarity terminology, and in particular its (ascribed, yet post-genetically “given” akin to objectivity) community-constitution shall be described in this chapter, in the forms of alliance and security community.

On these grounds, the fifth chapter will be reserved for the study of NATO’s coming-into-being within and with reference to a particular environment/meaning ground of interstate interactions, namely, bipolarity, which was reducible to a central dialectic between two “poles” with its peculiar alignment logic. NATO’s appearance in “identity” and “temporalisation” during its own formative phase, therefore, that of the bipolar appearance of the interstate environment, as well as “its” interactionality (as convergence of its constituent State subjects within and according to bipolarity) shall be discussed within this framework.

In the sixth chapter, NATO’s continuity in terms of its identity and temporalisation within and according to the evolution of the “bipolar” meaning ground of interstate interactions shall be discussed within the framework of three consecutive phases, which are named in this text as intermediate, transitory and terminal, toward the “unexpected” end of the bipolar state of affairs, therefore the

¹ The two separate thought processes, in contrast to their manifest differentiation regarding their approaches to the “true subject’s” nature, existence and mental processes, become complementary within the study of the derivative, “constituted” subject/subject-like entity (the State in the field of interstate interactions).

appearance of the possible fulfillment and invalidation of NATO's bipolar identity and temporalisation.

In the seventh chapter, the passage from bipolarity's familiarity/intelligibility ground, which was characterized by the centrality of the two poles' dialectic, to a post-bipolar one that was initially reducible to the intersubjective invalidation of it, and of the "pole" character of a State subject which was a constituent of bipolarity, will be discussed. Within this framework, the appearance and irreducible elements of unipolarity are described, and NATO's existential questions of identity and temporalisation within the unipolar appearance of the interstate environment are debated. Here, NATO's continuity instead of dissolution or diminishment to a husk of an international organisation shall be related to the reducibility of the actual appearance of unipolarity to a deficient, incomplete passage from bipolarity. Such deficiency consists of the retention of some of the basic normative, institutional, and "military" elements of bipolarity, which also continued to be irreducible constituents of the USSR's successor in its own interactionality, with the potential to be actualised on the anticipatory horizon of interstate relations.

The following chapter discusses NATO's continuity into unipolarity, with its inherent deficiency, as the intersubjective meaning ground of interstate interactions. Here, the collective/convergent intentionalities of the constituent State subjects of NATO have the organisation appear in dual identity and dual temporalisation: NATO is constituted and "acts" as an institution of the "unipolar" security community in reference to what we call the unipolar normative canon, which goes quite beyond its original, bipolar-type *sui generis* alliance identity, due to the actual absence of a bipolarity-like, central dialectic-referring, symmetrical "Other." Instead, NATO is re-identified and re-structured in the actuality of unipolarity in the face of the immediately present "new" threats and, moreover, in accordance with the normative canon that often supersedes the bipolarity-inherited interstate normativity. On the other hand, due to the inherent deficiency of unipolarity as well as the lack of absolute and universal adherence to the unipole's/unipolars' positions and unipolar normativity, NATO's original identity was "preserved" (together with its relevant structure and mechanisms) as temporalised on the anticipatory horizon, the actualisation of which was contingent on the actualisation of unipolarity's deficiency, in particular through Russia, which embodied it.

In the ninth chapter, NATO's being in the unipolar environment of interstate interactions in its identity and temporalisation (in actuality) as the institution of the unipolar security community shall be described. Here, NATO's and its

members' "interventions" in countries that adopted confrontational positions toward the unipole, unipolar security community, and its normative canon will be discussed as being reducible to "unipolar assertiveness." In addition, NATO's enlargement will be debated on the grounds of its reducibility to the "unipolar attraction," particularly in relation to the ex-Warsaw Pact and some ex-USSR State subjects' demands and positions.

The existential grounds of Moscow's dissent with the unipole, unipolar security community, and normative canon are discussed in the tenth chapter. The reducibility of Muscovite positions to the deficiency of the transformation from bipolarity to unipolarity, as it shaped the individuality of the Russian State subject within the unipolar environment, will be described here. Within this framework, unipolar assertiveness and attraction in the form of interventions involving NATO and NATO enlargement, inherent to unipolarity, and their fundamental contradiction with the Russian State subject's individuality will be underlined. In temporal terms, attention will be drawn to Russia's search for "coexistence" with the unipolars by actualising unipolarity's deficiency in the retentive-protentive actuality, and the unipolars' temporalisation of the said deficiency on the anticipatory horizon to perpetuate NATO's dual identity and dual temporalisation. The gradual erosion of the unipolar setup, which depended on the continuous omission and postponement of the Russian understanding of coexistence, is described here as the outcome of the existential incompatibility between the unipolars and Russia.

Russia's self-actualisation on the grounds of unipolarity's deficiency is discussed in the eleventh chapter, through a series of events including the Russian President's speech during the Munich Security Summit of 2007, the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008, Russia's "Vancouver to Vladivostok" proposal, and the Georgian War. During this relatively short time span, Russia's "push" for reversing unipolar policies of attraction and assertiveness and for asserting, in her turn, her own understanding of coexistence seemed to have found an echo from her counterparts. It is of note that these moves targeted first and foremost NATO, not only its enlargement but also its very identity and temporalisation as an institution of the unipolar security community. Russia's acts constituted a direct and determined challenge to unipolarity and NATO in particular (which had otherwise been quite inefficient and "dismissible" since the end of bipolarity), making the sustainability of NATO's unipolar era dual identity and dual temporalisation questionable.

The twelfth chapter mainly discusses the emergence of centrifugality among NATO member States in the face of Russian self-actualisation, which brought

forward NATO's bipolar-like alliance identity's re-temporalisation into the actuality as an issue. During the period following the 2007 Munich Security Summit, some NATO members seemed to have chosen the route of appeasement, at least to a degree, in the face of Russian demands. The NATO Bucharest Summit's avoidance of furthering NATO enlargement into the "Near-abroad" and the NATO members' more than mild reaction to the Georgian War displayed a tendency to maintain the organisation's dual identity and dual temporalisation "as they were," by tacitly recognising some main elements of the Russian "coexistence," for example the Muscovite preponderance in the "Near-abroad," which was contradictory with the essence of unipolarity, yet not with its deficiency. The situation further deteriorated as some European countries became responsive to Russia's "Vancouver to Vladivostok" proposal which was fundamentally against NATO's and the unipolar security community's existential elements. The unipole initiated the "Reset" at that time as a limited compromise with Russia, formulating and conducting a bipolar-like relationship on some issues of common concern (most of which had already been dealt with in a bipolar setup). The Reset served to mitigate centrifugality within NATO as it reassured allies by postponing NATO's re-temporalisation issue. As a result, the Russian proposal for a "new European security architecture" silently disappeared. Yet, the Reset seems to have engendered a serious misunderstanding on the Russian side about the establishment of (a bipolar-like) "coexistence," which apparently had a different meaning for the unipolars who referred to unipolarity itself and not to its "deficiency." The Reset collapsed during the Arab Spring as the unipole and NATO intervened or attempted to intervene in Libya and Syria, repeating the Kosovo episode with reference to the unipolar normative canon rather than bipolarity-inherited normativity.

The thirteenth chapter describes the "gradual" collapse of NATO's dual identity and dual temporalisation as unipolarity's inherent deficiency was decisively actualised, in particular as a result of developments in Ukraine, which had constituted a fault line between the unipolar security community and Russia for quite a long time. The post-2008 period's tacit recognition of Russian preponderance in the Near-Abroad disappeared in 2014, when the pro-Western faction in Ukraine overthrew, with visible support from the unipolars, the pro-Russian government that had come to power in 2010 at least partly because of the unipolars' attitude during the NATO 2008 Bucharest Summit and its aftermath. Russia's consequent intervention in Ukraine did not only consist of directly supporting the secessionist movements but also annexing

the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Here, the degree and efficiency of the unipolars' reaction in the form of sanctions as well as the attempts to actualise NATO's bipolar-like alliance identity, which overlapped the security community institution identity as a result, shall be discussed.

The last chapter's debate will be on the process that led to the war in Ukraine, on the grounds of the actualisation of unipolarity's deficiency, which evolved into a dialectical relationship between the unipolars and Russia. It presented a dynamic character, mainly due to the Ukrainian "fault line" remaining active. In this chapter, the event of war shall be described on the ground of Russia's "momentum" of her self-actualisation and the unipolars' increasing involvement in Ukraine/Near-abroad. Furthermore, the meaning of the (inevitably) upcoming peace in terms of the forms it could take shall be discussed in relation to NATO's identity and temporalisation and the possible shape of the interstate environment.

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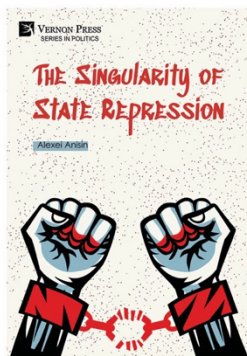
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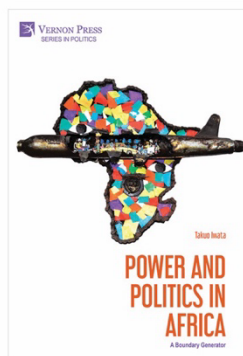
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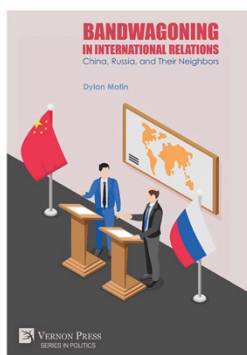
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