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# Trends. NATO, Numbers, and Numerology

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has recently accepted three new members: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Other Central and Eastern European countries have already queued up to be considered for membership. As well, there is ongoing discourse on the inclusion of the Baltic republics.

But to opponents of NATO expansion, the growing numbers can only engender pessimism. One argument raised by these opponents is that as numbers increase, the probability of reaching unanimous decisions decreases. Further, as this probability decreases, the very nature of NATO decision-making may need to change from unanimity to some other sort of majority vote. Why? If such a change does not occur, NATO may become a paralyzed giant--unable to effect decisions.

However, these opponents of NATO expansion are reifying statistics to the exclusion of dynamics. This is because ongoing changes in the (1) conscious and unconscious belief systems, ideologies, causal attributions, and other social cognitions making up the rationales for NATO membership of each participating country; (2) interactions that affect the organizational and social cohesiveness between and among members within and outside of the NATO political field; and (3) various individual differences and elements of national and organizational character of members can contribute to and/or detract from unanimous decision-making. One can even make the case that, as numbers increase, pressures may increase to dissuade members from deliberative nonconsensus and behavioral noncompliance.

In conclusion, going purely by the numbers--a too-frequent pursuit by social scientists, among others--may yield all the validity of numerology, a line of study that social scientists believe they have dismissed and left behind. (See Gruenfeld, D.H., Thomas-Hunt, M.C., & Kim, P.H. (1998). Cognitive flexibility, communication strategy, and integrative complexity in groups: Public versus private reactions to majority and minority status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 202-226; Kugihara, N., Sato, S., & Soejima, A. (1998). The process of achieving group uniformity. *Psychological Reports*, 83, 755-766; Maraun, M.D. (1998). Measurement as a normative practice: Implications of Wittgenstein's philosophy for measurement in psychology. *Theory and Psychology*, 8, 755-766; Sorkin, R.D., West, R., & Robinson, D.E. (1998). Group performance depends on the majority rule. *Psychological Science*, 9, 456-463.) (Keywords: Czech Republic, Hungary, NATO, NATO Expansion, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Numerology, Organizational Effectiveness, Poland.)