

NATO's Worldwide Expansion in the Post-Cold World Era

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Global Research, April 27, 2013

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One of the most significant developments of the post-Cold War era, and certainly the most ominous, is the transformation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military bloc created by the United States during the genesis of the Cold War in 1949, into one that has grown to encompass the entirety of Europe, has expanded military partnerships throughout the world and has waged war on three continents.

In 2006 Kurt Volker, at the time with the State Department and two years afterwards U.S. ambassador to NATO, boasted that the year before NATO had been “engaged in eight simultaneous operations on four continents.”

Two years later the State Department’s Daniel Fried told the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs’ Subcommittee on Europe:

“When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, NATO was an Alliance of 16 members and no partners. Today, NATO has 26 members – with 2 new invitees, prospective membership for others, and over 20 partners in Europe and Eurasia, seven in the Mediterranean, four in the Persian Gulf, and others from around the world.”

Although then-Secretary of State James Baker had assured Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the time of German reunification in 1990 that NATO would not be moved one inch eastward, the very act of merger occurring as it did led to the German Democratic Republic being absorbed not only into the Federal Republic but NATO and hence the latter immediately moving east to the borders of Poland and Czechoslovakia and closer to that of the Soviet Union.

The two invited nations Fried mentioned above are Albania and Croatia, which became full members of the military bloc in 2009, completing a decade of expansion that saw NATO membership grow by 75 percent from 16 to 28. NATO expansion to the east has provided the Pentagon and its Western allies with air bases and other military facilities in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Romania for wars to the east and south.

Macedonia, which would also have been absorbed in 2009 except for the name dispute with NATO member Greece, is now in a new category of nations being groomed for full NATO membership the alliance refers to as aspirant countries. The others currently are Bosnia, Georgia and Montenegro.

With the Partnership for Peace program that was used to promote twelve new Eastern European into NATO between 1999 and 2009 – every non-Soviet member of the Warsaw Pact and three former Soviet republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) – the Mediterranean

Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and, as of last year, the newly formed Partners Across the Globe (whose initial members are Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Korea), NATO members and partners number at least 70 nations, well over a third of those in the world.

In January of 2012 a meeting of NATO's Military Committee Chiefs of Defense Staff was conducted with top military representatives of 67 nations.

The Partners Across the Globe and longer-standing military partnerships are slated to grow in all parts of the world. Among the more than 50 nations that have provided NATO with troop contingents for the war in South Asia are additional Asia-Pacific states not covered by other international NATO partnership formats like the Partnership for Peace (22 nations in Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia), the Mediterranean Dialogue (seven nations in North Africa and the Middle East, with Libya to be the eighth) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which targets the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates).

Those Asian states – Malaysia, Singapore and Tonga – are likely the next candidates for the new global partnership, as are Latin American troop providers like El Salvador and Colombia. The inclusion of the last-named marks the expansion of NATO, through memberships and partnerships, to all six inhabited continents.

Iraq and Yemen are likely prospects for inclusion in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Mediterranean Dialogue members Jordan and Morocco applied for membership in the Gulf Cooperation Council (which is composed of the Arab world's other six monarchies) during NATO's war against Libya in 2011, for which Gulf Cooperation Council and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative members Qatar and the United Arab Emirates supplied dozens of warplanes.

If the West succeeds in effecting the overthrow of the Syrian government, Syria and Lebanon will be targeted for membership in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. (As will Palestine if and when it is recognized by the United Nations.) With the new administration in Cyprus confirming its intention to immediately join the Partnership for Peace, every nation in the Mediterranean Sea Basin will be a NATO member and partner. The integration of Cyprus will also complete the process of recruiting every European nation (excluding mini-states Andorra, Lichtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican) into the NATO orbit.

In the past three years there also has been discussion about NATO establishing a collective partnership arrangement, which could include individual partnerships as well, with the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which are, in addition to Malaysia and Singapore, mentioned above, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand.

Similar efforts have been made by NATO to forge a collective partnership with the 54-member African Union. All African nations are members of the African Union except for Morocco and the fledgling state of South Sudan. All African countries except Egypt are in the area of responsibility of U.S. Africa Command, which before achieving full operational capacity in 2008 was created and developed by U.S. European Command, whose top military commander is simultaneously that of NATO.

The current NATO secretary general has bruted the intention to cultivate formal relations

with India and China, likely to be based on the bilateral NATO-Russia Council model.

There has been discussion in recent years, including an explicit call by a Portuguese foreign minister for precisely such an initiative, for NATO to expand into the South Atlantic as well by building military partnerships with countries like Brazil and South Africa. (Six warships with the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 held exercises with the South African navy in 2007 in the course of circumnavigating the African continent. Also in that year the same NATO naval force conducted operations in the Caribbean, the first time alliance warships entered that sea.)

In conjunction with the U.S., NATO is striving to assemble the remnants of defunct or dormant Cold War-era military blocs in the Asia-Pacific region, all modeled after NATO itself – the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (ANZUS) – to replicate in the east against China what NATO expansion has accomplished in Europe over the past 14 years in relation to Russia: its exclusion, isolation and encirclement by military bases, naval forces and interceptor missile installations.

As the Pentagon and NATO are implementing plans to deploy land-based interceptor missiles in Romania and Poland and sea-based equivalents on guided missile warships in, first, the Mediterranean and plausibly afterward in the Black, Baltic and Norwegian Seas, so the U.S. has recruited Japan, South Korea and Australia into its global sea- and land-based missile shield grid, with a recent report indicating the Pentagon plans to add the Philippines to the list with the deployment there of an Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance interceptor missile mobile system of the sort already stationed in Japan, Israel and Turkey.

Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and other NATO leaders routinely assert that the European Phased Adaptive Approach missile system is aimed not only against Iran but North Korea – and Syria. In April of this year Rasmussen became the first NATO secretary general to visit South Korea. Days earlier his second-in-command, Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow, spoke of the possibility of invoking NATO's Article 5 mutual military assistance clause against North Korea.

Since 1999 the North Atlantic bloc has waged air and ground wars in Europe (Yugoslavia) , Asia (Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan) and Africa (Libya), as well as running comprehensive naval surveillance, interdiction, boarding and assault operations in the Mediterranean Sea (Active Endeavor) and in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean (Ocean Shield) and airlift operations for African troops into the Darfur region of western Sudan and into war-torn Somalia.

Post-Cold War NATO has repeatedly and without disguise identified its purview and its area of operations to be international in scope, and over the past 22 years its efforts to achieve that objective have steadily accelerated to the point where the military alliance is well poised to supplant the United Nations as the main, indeed the exclusive, arbiter of conflicts not only between but within nations throughout the world. A U.S.-dominated armed bloc which includes three nuclear powers and accounts for an estimated 70 percent of global military spending has expanded deployments, operations and partnerships around the planet.

Four years ago Hans von Sponeck, former UN Assistant Secretary General and UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, wrote a scathing denunciation called The United Nations

and NATO: Which security and for whom? for a Swiss journal in which, in a section called “21st century NATO incompatible with UN Charter,” he stated:

“In 1999, NATO acknowledged that it was seeking to orient itself according to a new fundamental strategic concept. From a narrow military defense alliance it was to become a broad-based alliance for the protection of the vital resources needs of its members. Besides the defense of member states’ borders, it set itself new purposes such as assured access to energy sources and the right to intervene in ‘movements of large numbers of persons’ and in conflicts far from the borders of NATO countries. The readiness of the new alliance to include other countries, particularly those that had previously been part of the Soviet Union, shows how the character of this military alliance has altered.”

“[T]he United Nations monopoly of the use of force, especially as specified in Article 51 of the Charter, was no longer accepted according to the 1999 NATO doctrine.

“NATO’s territorial scope, until then limited to the Euro-Atlantic region, was expanded by its member to encompass the whole world in keeping with a strategic context that was global in its sweep.”

For the past 18 years NATO has been attempting to supersede and ultimately replace the United Nations, as von Sponeck warned, initially by promoting itself as the military wing of the UN by leading multinational military forces under post-conflict mandates in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia – 60,000 troops in the first and 50,000 in the second case at peak strength. (The first two missions followed, respectively, a NATO bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serb Republic and 78-day air war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be sure.) A comparable situation existed in Iraq, with NATO supporting the foreign occupation of the nation from 2004-2011. In fact all the post-Cold War NATO inductees – Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – were compelled to supply troops for Iraq as proof of their loyalty to NATO before and shortly after their accession.

And for Afghanistan. But unlike the NATO missions in the above former Yugoslav territories, that in Afghanistan was to an active war zone, constituting NATO’s first ground war and first war outside Europe.

After the military alliance took over the International Security Assistance Force, it came to command almost all of the 152,000 foreign troops in the nation and soldiers from over 50 Troop Contributing Nations (the official designation) . Armed forces from that many nations had never before fought in one war, much less under a single command and in one nation.

Those nations are:

All 28 current NATO members: The U.S., Albania, Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

Partnership for Peace adjuncts: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Macedonia, Montenegro, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine.

Others: Australia (Partners Across the Globe), Bahrain (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative), El

Salvador, Jordan (Mediterranean Dialogue), Malaysia, Mongolia (Partners Across the Globe), New Zealand (Partners Across the Globe), Singapore, South Korea (Partners Across the Globe), Tonga and the United Arab Emirates (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative).

Several additional nations supplied military and security personnel to serve under NATO command in Afghanistan without being formal Troop Contributing Nations such as Colombia, Egypt (Mediterranean Dialogue), Japan (Partners Across the Globe), Moldova (Partnership for Peace) and no doubt others. Efforts were made by the U.S. and NATO to secure troop contributions from such nations as Bangladesh and Kazakhstan.

The governments and militaries of Afghanistan itself and neighboring Pakistan are linked to NATO under the Afghanistan- Pakistan- International Security Assistance Force Tripartite Commission.

NATO has air and other military bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Those three nations have also been used by NATO as part of the Northern Distribution Network and other transit routes that include as well Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Iraq, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Oman, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, etc.

The war in Afghanistan, the longest in the nation's history as well as in that of the U.S., has supplied NATO with an almost 12-year opportunity to consolidate an international military network and to develop the operational and command integration of the armed forces of almost 60 nations. This is the global NATO that among others the Obama administration's first ambassador to the alliance, Ivo Daalder, has openly touted under that exact name since the beginning of this century.

Many NATO members and partners, particularly former Soviet federal republics in the Baltic Sea region and in the South Caucasus, have used the Afghan war to gain combat experience for their armed forces to be used in conflicts in their own neighborhoods: Georgia, for example, in preparing for any resumption of armed conflict with South Ossetia and Russia such as occurred in August 2008.

Just as NATO has followed the U.S. into the Balkans and Afghanistan, into the global interceptor missile system and so-called energy security (in fact energy war) initiatives, so it has joined Washington in the new scramble in the Arctic Ocean, cyber warfare operations and the attempt to command the world's strategic shipping lanes and choke points.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, its name now archaic as most of its members and all of its dozens of partners do not border the Atlantic Ocean, north or south, is well advanced in its U.S.-crafted mission to expand into history's largest and first international military bloc and an unprecedented threat to world peace.

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