

# Global NATO

*Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier*

## REACHING OUT

WITH LITTLE FANFARE—and even less notice—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has gone global. Created to protect postwar Western Europe from the Soviet Union, the alliance is now seeking to bring stability to other parts of the world. In the process, it is extending both its geographic reach and the range of its operations. In recent years, it has played peacekeeper in Afghanistan, trained security forces in Iraq, and given logistical support to the African Union's mission in Darfur. It assisted the tsunami relief effort in Indonesia and ferried supplies to victims of Hurricane Katrina in the United States and to those of a massive earthquake in Pakistan.

NATO's expanded ambit is a result of the new global politics that emerged after the Cold War. Today, terrorists born in Riyadh and trained in Kandahar hatch deadly plots in Hamburg to fly airplanes into buildings in New York. Such interconnection means that developments in one place affect the security, prosperity, and well-being of citizens everywhere. NATO has recognized that the best (and at times the only) defense against such remote dangers is to tackle them at their source. Such forward defense often requires a global military reach: helicopters to deliver supplies to disaster zones and evacuate the injured; command, control, and reconnaissance capabilities to sustain peacekeeping missions; and experienced military officers to train local security forces. As the world's premier multinational military organization, comprising many prosperous nations with a vested

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interest in maintaining global stability, NATO is uniquely suited to meeting such demands.

At the same time, with U.S. forces stretched thin in Iraq and European states failing to invest enough to participate significantly in operations far away from home, NATO is struggling to fulfill even its current commitments. And while the alliance has increasingly recognized the necessity of operating far from Europe—or “out of area,” in NATO parlance—it has been limited by the requirement that its member states be North American or European.

NATO leaders are expected to address this problem at a summit in Riga, Latvia, in November. They will consider a proposal to redefine the alliance’s role by deepening relations with countries beyond the transatlantic community, starting with partners such as Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. A key part of this effort is the proposal by the United States and the United Kingdom to forge a “global partnership” between NATO and non-European states that will provide a forum for expanded dialogue with other major democratic countries.

Although this initiative is a good first step, it does not go far enough. NATO’s next move must be to open its membership to any democratic state in the world that is willing and able to contribute to the fulfillment of NATO’s new responsibilities. Only a truly global alliance can address the global challenges of the day.

FOR EURO EYES ONLY

THE CENTRAL strategic objective of U.S. foreign policy during the twentieth century was to prevent any one power from dominating Europe. That was the reason the United States fought two world wars on the continent and stayed engaged with it throughout the Cold War.

NATO, created in 1949, when communism threatened the security and stability of Europe, was an essential part of that effort. The signing of its founding North Atlantic Treaty represented both a direct commitment by the United States to come to Europe’s defense if the Soviet Union ever advanced across the continent and a way to persuade fragile European governments to resist the spread of communist ideology at home. The treaty’s European focus was underscored by Article 10,



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

*On the go: a British NATO soldier patrolling in Afghanistan, May 16, 2006*

which opened the door to future NATO membership only to European countries, and Article 6, which limited the alliance's geographic reach to being "on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer," and to "forces, vessels and aircraft" of the member states operating within these geographic perimeters. The treaty produced a strictly transatlantic community; collective defense commitments were not to extend to any colonial possessions or other affiliated territory beyond the immediate North Atlantic area. During the Cold War, the alliance expanded from 12 to 16 members—with Greece, Turkey, and West Germany joining in the 1950s and Spain in 1982.

Some 40 years after NATO's founding, the Iron Curtain that had divided Europe fell, and the continent began to be reunited. NATO was essential to this consolidation. It incorporated the unified Germany, helped put an end to a brutal war in the Balkans, and opened its doors to former foes from the Warsaw Pact. The alliance's ranks grew to 19 members when the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined in 1999 and to 26 members five years later with the addition of seven

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new democracies from central and eastern Europe. As it expanded, NATO helped the historically fractious Europe become a peaceful, united, and democratic continent.

#### MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

WITH THE emergence of a Europe whole and free in the 1990s, the strategic purpose of the United States' European engagement was essentially fulfilled. And so the United States spent much of the decade struggling to define how to use its power. Washington debated its role in preventing ethnic conflict and genocide and wondered whether the U.S. military should henceforth be used primarily for humanitarian intervention and postconflict stabilization. The attacks of September 11, 2001, put an abrupt end to that discussion; the global nature of the challenges confronting the United States had become obvious to its leaders and the public.

This new reality transformed not only U.S. foreign policy but also the role of history's most successful alliance. On September 12, 2001, NATO members took the unprecedented step of invoking the North Atlantic Treaty's collective defense provisions, under which an attack against one alliance member is deemed to be an attack against all of them. At first, the Bush administration rejected any direct NATO involvement in military operations in Afghanistan. But it later realized that such involvement was necessary to help it meet the challenges of the global age, particularly because the deployment of forces to Iraq left the United States needing more help in securing and rebuilding Afghanistan.

In August 2003, NATO formally took charge of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is tasked with helping to provide security in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Although the ISAF initially operated in the relative safety of the capital and its environs, the force has steadily expanded its responsibility and reach throughout Afghanistan, including into the dangerous southern section of the country. NATO's presence in the country has consequently grown from 5,000 troops at the beginning of operations to 9,000 troops today, and plans call for further expansion to 15,000 troops by the end of 2006.

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NATO's command of the operation in Afghanistan is by no means the only example of its current involvement outside of Europe. Despite divisions within the alliance over the war in Iraq, NATO forces have trained 1,500 Iraqi military officers and coordinated the delivery of much-needed military equipment to Iraq's security forces. NATO airlifted 5,000 African Union troops into Darfur and helped rotate the forces that are stationed there. It has provided training to AU officers and contributed technical assistance to the AU mission at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The United States and its European allies "now find that our entire agenda is pivoting from an inward focus on Europe to an outward focus," Nicholas Burns, the U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, said last December. "U.S.-European relations are increasingly a function of events in the Middle East, Asia and Africa."

As NATO's geographic range has expanded, so has the scope of its operations; the alliance now takes on jobs that are no longer strictly related to territorial integrity and security but pertain to international stability more broadly. Last year, for example, NATO airlifted 3,500 tons of supplies donated by alliance members and other countries into the earthquake-stricken region of Kashmir and provided medical and other relief. It also responded to the tsunami in Indonesia by donating material that was used in the construction of four new bridges, and it supplied relief items, such as food, water-purification units, generators, and helicopters, to the victims of Hurricane Katrina in the United States.

#### GROWING PAINS

CLEARLY, NATO is changing. But is it changing enough? If the point of the alliance is no longer territorial defense but bringing together countries with similar values and interests to combat global problems, then NATO no longer needs to have an exclusively transatlantic character. Other democratic countries share NATO's values and many common interests—including Australia, Brazil, Japan, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and South Korea—and all of them can greatly contribute to NATO's efforts by providing additional military forces or logistical support to respond to global threats and needs. NATO operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan have benefited greatly from contributions made by non-NATO members. Australia, Japan, and South Korea have sent

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substantial numbers of troops to Iraq in support of efforts by NATO members to stabilize the country. Together with other non-NATO democracies, such as Brazil, India, and South Africa, they have also contributed significantly to peacekeeping operations around the globe.

NATO has begun to recognize the need for strengthening and formalizing its relations with countries beyond the transatlantic community. NATO leaders began to discuss how to relate to nonmember countries at the alliance's meeting of foreign ministers in April. "Since NATO is having its operations over a strategic distance, it means that there is also the need for a dialogue with other interested nations," NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer declared. He suggested that NATO become "an alliance with global partners."

These remarks are a welcome sign that NATO recognizes the need to go global. But partners are not the same as allies, and dialogue is not the same as multinational planning, exercises, and operations. NATO should see these global partnerships not as a final objective but as a first step toward formal membership. The alliance adopted a similarly staggered approach in the mid-1990s when it began to work with former Warsaw Pact countries through its Partnership for Peace, which started out by allowing those countries' militaries to participate in training exercises and certain peacekeeping operations with alliance members. Although initially some saw the partnership as an alternative to NATO membership, it soon became a means to joining NATO. NATO's new global-partnership project should play a similar role by preparing the alliance to transform itself from a transatlantic entity into a global one. NATO need not decide in advance which countries it would invite to join its ranks; it need only decide that membership should in principle be open to non-European countries.

Broadening membership is preferable to creating ad hoc coalitions. For one thing, European militaries are stretched thin by the many new missions they are called on to perform in Afghanistan and in Sudan, Congo, and other parts of Africa. They would benefit from having more—and more capable—allies to share the increasing demand for military forces. For another, formal membership would strengthen the ability of countries to work together in joint military operations. It is precisely NATO's interoperability—the result of joint planning, training, and fighting—that allows its members to interact

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smoothly and efficiently when a crisis erupts. The United States has a huge technological advantage over its allies, but the potential of U.S. troops is maximized when they are involved in operations with other troops with whom they have trained on a regular basis.

In an expanded NATO, a U.S. general would continue to serve as the supreme allied commander, and a non-American, and perhaps in the future a non-European, would serve as secretary-general. To help make future enlargement possible, NATO should take intermediate steps, akin to those it took prior to welcoming new members from eastern Europe. These could include the proposed global partnership; the establishment of formal military liaisons between partner countries and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, in Mons, Belgium; and the creation of the NATO Global Partnership Council, which would be similar to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, a forum for regular dialogue between NATO members and 20 partner countries from Europe and Central Asia.

In considering how to enlarge NATO globally, there is no need to change the basic parameters of the structure that has served the allies so well for so many years. But the North Atlantic Treaty must be amended, particularly Article 10, which currently limits new membership in NATO to European countries. As of now, a number of countries with a questionable commitment to democracy and human rights, such as Belarus, are covered by Article 10, while stalwart democracies, such as Australia and Japan, are not. Yet a shared commitment to shared values should be a more relevant determinant of membership than geography. Any like-minded country that subscribes to NATO's goals should be able to apply for membership in the alliance—just as central and eastern European countries have been doing since the collapse of communism.

Some people fear that an enlarged NATO with a broader reach would struggle to reach a consensus about when and how to act. There may be some truth to this, but the difficulty should not be exaggerated. The addition of ten new members over the past decade has not affected NATO's ability to act, even though skeptics feared that it would. Part of the reason enlargement has not bred irresolution is that NATO has developed a decision-making process that allows for the emergence of consensus without agreement: rather than blocking a decision, dissenting member states may append a footnote to it or abstain from

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contributing to whatever operation may ensue. Such practices would continue and likely expand if the alliance's membership were to become larger and more global. The search for consensus can also be enhanced if the major countries, starting with the United States, invest the time and energy necessary to reach agreement. Leaders must try, and try again, to bring alliance members together rather than abandon the process and go it alone.

#### CORE COMPETENCIES

BESIDES RAISING questions of efficacy, changes in NATO's composition and scope will also raise questions about the alliance's core purpose. As was true when NATO expanded eastward, in the 1990s, the most controversial aspect of any effort to enlarge the alliance's membership will be how such enlargement might affect the security guarantee in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Some current NATO members, particularly some of the newer ones, might worry that geographic enlargement will weaken the existing collective defense commitments of the alliance. However, no NATO member currently faces a military threat from another country, much less the type of threat that led to NATO's establishment in 1949. In the unlikely event that such a threat did materialize, nothing about NATO's enhanced reach would in any way weaken its collective defense commitments.

The principle enshrined in Article 5, that an attack on one is an attack on all, must remain at the core of the alliance. For the United States, this may not be much of an issue, perhaps even less so than was its undertaking to defend Latvia and Poland, countries that prior to joining NATO were not covered by the U.S. security umbrella. After all, whether formally or informally, the United States already guarantees the security of countries such as Australia, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. But would Spain or Estonia want to make such a commitment to, say, Australia or Japan? Perhaps not. Then again, perhaps so. Even though Article 5 considers an attack on one member to be an attack on all members, each member is required only to take "such action as it deems necessary"—a provision that effectively ensures that the use of force is never automatic. In fact, Article 5 has only been invoked once—following



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9/11—and only a handful of NATO members participated in the subsequent military action (which was conducted under U.S. rather than NATO command). Article 5 is designed to apply only in exceptional circumstances—when an ally is attacked militarily—and one would hope that any NATO member would come to the assistance of a friendly country under attack, whether it was a formal ally or not. After all, in August 1990, all NATO countries contributed to the grand coalition that responded to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, a state that is not even a democracy.

And enlarged NATO would not undermine the United Nations or the European Union, neither of which has the kind of military capacity that NATO possesses. Because NATO essentially is a military alliance—albeit one with a democratic political foundation—even an enlarged alliance would not become another UN. Rather, NATO would become a more capable and legitimate adjunct to the UN by helping to implement and enforce its decisions. If, as in the case of Kosovo in 1999, the UN is unwilling to authorize action against a threat to international peace and security, NATO might have to act anyway. In such an event, a more global NATO, backed by the world's leading democracies, would enjoy greater legitimacy, and that should allay the fears of those committed to a strong international order. Nor is there any reason to worry that the expansion of NATO's operations and membership would undermine the EU's increasing global engagement. Not only does the EU lack the kind of military capacity that it needs to operate far from Europe, but much of its work in postconflict reconstruction and policing would complement rather than compete with a global NATO.

Creating a global NATO is not about saving the alliance from obsolescence. The issue is not whether NATO goes out of area or out of business. The issue is how the world's premier international military organization should adapt to the demands of the times in a way that advances the interests not just of the transatlantic community but of a global community of democracies dependent on global stability. Global threats cannot be tackled by a regional organization. NATO has worked well in the past because its founding treaty demands that members be committed both to the political and economic principles underpinning democracy and to the common security challenges faced by the alliance. It would be foolish not to welcome into the alliance other countries that can make the same commitments and help confront new global challenges. 🌐

