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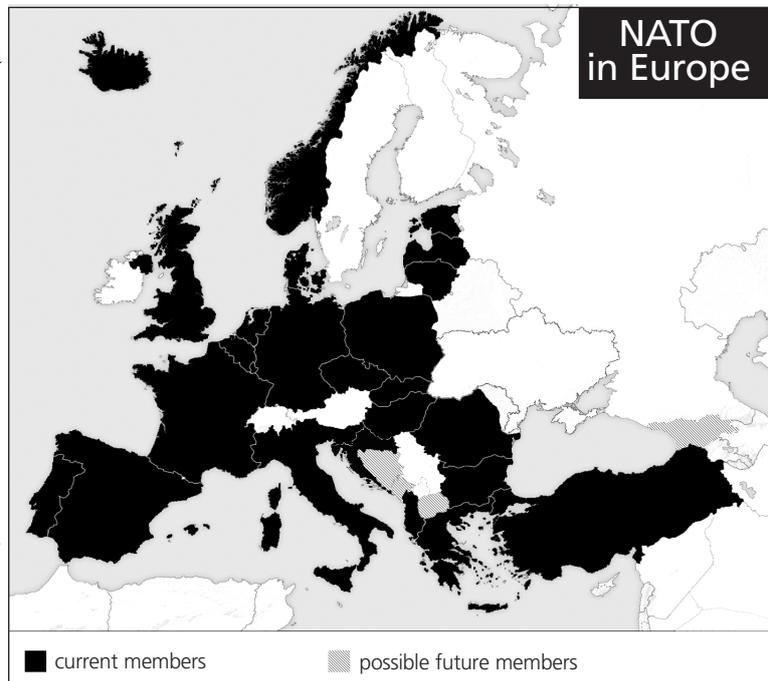
No to NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was founded in 1949, in the early years of the Cold War. Initially conceived as a defensive organisation, the founding members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the UK and the USA. The Warsaw Pact was established in response by the then Soviet Union and its allies in 1955. In the 1950s, Greece, Turkey and West Germany also joined NATO, followed by Spain in 1982.

At the end of the Cold War, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, but NATO was not. Hopes of a peaceful new world order were not realised. Rather than scaling back its global military presence, the US moved to fill the positions vacated by its previous rival. As the countries of eastern Europe embraced free-market economics and multiparty democracy, the US moved rapidly to integrate them into its sphere of influence via NATO. This would prove to be an effective strategy, as witnessed by the support of those countries for the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The 1990s saw NATO developing its regional cooperation forums and inviting new members to join the alliance. In March 1999, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic were all admitted as full members. Ten days later they found themselves at war with their neighbour Yugoslavia, as part of NATO's illegal bombing campaign. But developments at that time were not limited to expanding its membership. At NATO's fiftieth anniversary conference in Washington in April 1999, a new 'Strategic Concept' was adopted. This moved beyond NATO's previous defensive role to include 'out of area' – in other words offensive – operations, anywhere on the Eurasian landmass.

In March 2004, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were admitted to NATO – not only former Warsaw Pact members, but also former Soviet republics in the case of the Baltic states. In 2009, Albania and Croatia also became members. Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina are in various stages towards becoming members of the alliance. This scale of expansion has contributed to international tension as Russia sees itself increasingly surrounded by US and NATO bases. The increasing NATO presence in the region has been a contributory factor to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.



Out of area activity

Over the past decade, the US drive for global domination through military influence has become increasingly active, most notably in Afghanistan. NATO assumed control of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in 2003, marking NATO's first deployment outside Europe or North America. ISAF will transfer responsibility for the security of the country to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) by the end of 2014, which should signal the end of the NATO-led combat mission. However, NATO stated in a declaration following a summit in Chicago in May 2012 that it will establish a 'new post-2014 mission of a different nature in Afghanistan', thereby maintaining its influence in the region.

Recently, NATO has also undertaken operations in Libya and the Horn of Africa.



Global reach?

NATO adopted a new Strategic Concept at its summit in Portugal in November 2010, entitled Active Engagement, Modern Defence. It recommitted to an interventionist military agenda that set back the cause of peace and nuclear disarmament. This included an expansion of its area of work to 'counterterrorism, cyber-security, and the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons'. The summit also agreed to integrate the US missile defence system with a European theatre missile defence programme under the auspices of NATO. But concerns remain that missile defence will enable the US to attack another country without fear of retaliation.

Following its summit in May 2012 in Chicago, NATO reaffirmed its determination to retain and develop the capabilities necessary to promoting security in the world. At this summit, NATO declared that it had taken successful steps towards establishing a missile defence system. It also announced developments in its air command and control system, as well as plans for improved and more integrated armed forces. There seems no doubt that there is a long term plan for maintaining and extending its global influence.

A statement that a cyber-attack on any of its members would warrant a collective response from NATO is expected to be agreed at the Newport summit in September 2014, expanding the scope of when military action could be authorised.

Asian pivot

It is highly likely that this global influence will include Asia. The rebalancing of US foreign policy towards Asia could be described as one of President Obama's most significant acts in international affairs. This will undoubtedly have repercussions on NATO. This 'pivot' is already raising tensions and helping to militarise the Asia-Pacific region, a part of the world with four nuclear weapon states – India, Pakistan, China and North Korea. NATO's closest partners – Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea – are based in the region. With more US involvement in the Asia-Pacific, will NATO follow suit and deepen its cooperation with its partners there on perceived threats such as cyber-attacks and terrorism? This may well antagonise further relations with countries such as North Korea and China.

A nuclear-armed alliance

NATO is a nuclear-armed alliance and up to 200 US B61 nuclear bombs are stationed in five countries across Europe – Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy and Turkey. There is strong opposition to these weapons, including from the governments of some of the 'host' nations. Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands have all, unsuccessfully, called for the removal of US nuclear weapons from their countries.

NATO's nuclear policies conflict with the legal obligations of the signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Articles 1 and 2 of the NPT forbid the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states, but US/NATO nuclear weapons in Europe are located in non-nuclear weapons states. In spite of a commitment in its most recent Strategic Concept to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, NATO also reconfirmed that nuclear capabilities remain a core element of its strategy. The alliance rejects a policy of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons. In other words, NATO would be prepared to use nuclear weapons in a first strike.

The UK's nuclear weapons system has been assigned to NATO since the 1960s. Ultimately, this means that the UK's nuclear weapons could be used against a country attacking (or threatening to attack) one of the NATO member states since an attack on one NATO member state is seen as being an attack on all member states.

The government recently confirmed that the situation in Ukraine will have an effect on the next national security strategy. In all likelihood, this will mean that the government uses the crisis as justification for the replacement of Trident.

Wales Summit 2014

There have been twenty-five NATO summits since its foundation, the most recent one taking place in 2012. NATO members will next meet in Newport, Wales on September 4th-5th, 2014. The official theme for the conference is 'Building Stability in an Unpredictable World'. Heads of state and government from the NATO member countries will discuss its operation in Afghanistan, how it responds to Russia and defence spending. The US and UK is expected to put pressure on the majority of states who do not meet NATO's target of spending 2% of GDP on defence spending.

The way forward

CND believes that a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament would be achieved with the removal of all US nuclear weapons from European bases. Britain should also withdraw from NATO, and all foreign military bases on British soil should be closed. NATO should not be expanded but rather disbanded and the influence, resources and funding of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) extended towards a nuclear-free, less militarised and therefore more secure Europe.

CND will be showing its opposition to NATO during the summit in Wales this summer. We urge as many people as possible to join our protests there. There will be a counter-summit in Cardiff and Newport as well as demonstrations as part of a whole week of protest. See www.cnduk.org/notonato for more information.



