
NATO'S ROLE IN BRINGING SECURITY TO THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

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The threat to NATO today does not come from great powers, but from weak ones. The world does not have the luxury of choosing the challenges that it faces. Terrorism, poverty, endemic disease, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failing states, and protracted conflicts are complex and interrelated. The future success of NATO will be determined by its ability to deepen and expand cooperation in intelligence, law enforcement, economic, diplomatic, and humanitarian action, especially in the Greater Middle East.

The durability of the Atlantic Alliance begins with the shared values, interests, and destiny of its members. At its inception in 1949, Europeans and North Americans understood the common purpose of the Alliance. There was no significant debate about whether the Soviet Union represented a threat to security and world peace.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) became the most successful alliance in history because it matched purpose with power and served the interests of its members. And in building the Alliance, the Alliance helped build a better world.

The end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany raised new questions. Some argued that the European Union (EU) could not adjust to the reintegration of a united Germany into Europe. Some predicted that NATO could be a victim of its own success. In the absence of the threat from the Soviet Union, NATO's fate was uncertain. What now was its purpose?

The durability and vision of the Atlantic Alliance, however, was captured well by Henry Kissinger in his book, *Diplomacy*:

“The architects of the Atlantic Alliance would have been incredulous had they been told that victory in the Cold War would raise doubts about the future of their creation. They took it for granted that the prize

for victory in the Cold War was a lasting Atlantic partnership. In the name of that goal, some of the decisive political battles of the Cold War were fought and won. In the process, America was tied to Europe by permanent consultative institutions and an integrated military command system — a structure of a scope and duration unique in the history of coalitions.”

During periods of historic change, alliances and institutions must adapt to remain vital and relevant. During the 1990s, NATO began a process of adaptation as it sought to define a new role in world affairs — including an expansion of membership, welcoming new countries from Eastern Europe, and establishing a new relationship with Russia.

September 11, 2001, brought NATO's purpose into clearer focus. Today, the greatest threat to the Atlantic Alliance, NATO, and the world comes from international terrorist groups and networks, and the potential for these groups to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction.

The threat to NATO today does not come from great powers, but from weak ones. Terrorism finds sanctuary in failed or failing states, in unresolved regional conflicts, and in the misery of endemic poverty and despair. No single state, including the United States, even with its vast military and economic power, can meet these challenges alone.

The struggle in which we are now engaged is a global struggle that does not readily conform to our understanding of military confrontations or alliances of previous eras. It is not a traditional contest of standing armies battling over territory. Progress must be made in these countries with human rights, good governance, and economic reform, beyond military force, before we can expect lasting security and stability.

Military power will continue to play a vital role; however, the future success of NATO will be determined by its members' ability to deepen and expand their cooperation in the intelligence, law enforcement, economic, diplomatic, and humanitarian fields.

Adapting to this new strategic environment will not come easily or cheaply and will require a new NATO strategic doctrine. As the Alliance adjusts to both an expanded membership and a new global strategic environment, NATO must address the gaps in military expenditures and capabilities of its members. The tough decisions cannot continue to be deferred.

It is essential that NATO members not allow themselves to drift into adversarial relationships over disagreements. The challenges and differences that will always exist among members must be resolved inside — not outside — of NATO. NATO can only be undermined by its own internal distractions.

President Bush has offered a plan for the Greater Middle East that is potentially historic in scope, and conveys the strategic importance of this region for U.S. foreign policy. America's support for freedom in the Greater Middle East must be matched with operational programs of partnership with the peoples and governments of the region to promote more democratic politics and more open economies. NATO is critical to this success.

Let me suggest five specific areas where NATO can play a larger role in bringing security and stability to the Greater Middle East: Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Mediterranean, and the Israeli-Palestinian problem. Tom Friedman, the Pulitzer Prize winner columnist for the *New York Times*, has described this era in world

politics as a "hinge of history." And Turkey hangs on that hinge. Our course of action with Arab and Islamic societies must emphasize building bridges rather than digging ditches — and the NATO Alliance can provide that mechanism. As Europe and NATO have reached out to a united Germany and the states of the former Warsaw Pact, we must now ensure that we apply the same inclusive approach to Turkey. Turkey has been a vital member of NATO. Its government has been a strong and honest force for the people of Turkey. It deserves credit and recognition for this effort.

Turkey is also a cultural and geographic bridge to the Arab and Islamic world. By drawing Turkey closer, the Atlantic Alliance will have a better chance of encouraging continued political and economic reforms and improving the prospects for resolution of disputes involving that country. If we were to push Turkey away, we would jeopardize our interests in bringing peace and stability to the entire region.

In Afghanistan, the Loya Jirga recently completed drafting a new constitution that sets a course for elections later this year and holds the promise of a democratic transition and the rule of law. The government of President Hamid Karzai and the people of Afghanistan have come a long way in the past two years. But the job in Afghanistan is far from complete. Reconstituted Taliban and al-Qaeda forces continue to threaten the fragile progress that has been made there.

NATO has assumed leadership of the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Alliance's first mission beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. And NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has said more than once that "Afghanistan is the number one priority for the Alliance."

NATO's goal should be to eventually assume responsibility for all military and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan, including Operation Enduring Freedom. The expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul, and of NATO-led provincial reconstruction teams throughout the country, will strengthen efforts to manage the transition to stability and democracy in

Afghanistan. It is also critical that NATO assets promised for Afghanistan be there — on the ground and operational.

Third, NATO will need to play a significant role in helping bring security and stability to Iraq. Last year, NATO committed to providing support for Polish forces in Iraq. However, NATO should initiate discussions to take over the duties of the Polish sector in central Iraq, or possibly assume responsibility for a division in northern Iraq.

Bringing security and stability to Iraq is a shared global and regional interest for all NATO members. There may have been disagreements over how best to deal with Saddam Hussein's regime prior to the war, but that is behind us. The Alliance must be able to manage disagreements, as it has in the past. Suez, Vietnam, and the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Germany in 1983 come to mind. Iraq should be put in the same light.

If Iraq becomes a failed state, the liberation of Iraq will be a historic opportunity squandered — for Iraq, for the Greater Middle East, and for the world. Our common policies and interests throughout the Greater Middle East and the Islamic world — including the war on terrorism, resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and global energy security — will be directly affected by the outcome in Iraq.

There is limited hope for Iraq's future without the full support and commitment of the world community, especially the United Nations and NATO, during this critical transition period. The United States cannot sustain a long-term policy in Iraq without the active partnerships of the U.N. and NATO.

Fourth, NATO should expand and deepen its partnership with the countries of the Mediterranean. There have been some significant achievements in this area; however, we should consider a modified version of the Partnership for Peace program for this region.

Over the coming years the Mediterranean will take on even greater strategic importance for NATO. It

should be considered as a critically important geopolitical region with its own dynamics. Terrorism, illegal trafficking in narcotics and persons, and other threats from this region are major security concerns for Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. The Mediterranean draws together Europe, North Africa and the Middle East and is, therefore, influenced by political developments in each area.

There is tremendous potential for expanded security cooperation, especially intelligence gathering and sharing, and economic and trade development in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. These countries are taking important steps toward political and economic reform. They need to do more, but all three countries are moving in the right direction. This progress can be undermined by instability in West Africa and by radical Islamic groups and terrorists based in this region. These areas require more attention from the Atlantic Alliance.

Fifth, NATO should begin to plan for a role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I believe a NATO peacekeeping mission may eventually be called upon to help secure an Israeli-Palestinian peace. The day may come when NATO troops monitor the birth of a Palestinian state. NATO is the only institution with the credibility and capability to undertake such a critical mission. The time is not yet right for this development, but I believe we must begin to move our thinking, policies, and planning in that direction. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be separated from our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Change is difficult, especially for institutions. It forces us to re-examine the foundations of our identity, purpose, and policies. The world does not have the luxury of choosing the challenges that it faces. They are complex and interrelated — terrorism, poverty, endemic disease, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failing states, and protracted conflicts — and they do not lend themselves to easy solutions.

The future of NATO will be determined by the outcome in the Greater Middle East. This is a

historic burden for all of us in a region that is rich in culture and history, but, so far, at odds with modernity. Our approach requires subtlety and vision, as well as determination and purpose.

There has never been a partnership or alliance historically as well positioned or more politically capable of leading the change to a safer and better world than this institution called NATO.

One of the great achievements of the last half of the 20th century was a reshaping of world order, bringing new freedoms and prosperity to millions of people who had known neither freedom nor prosperity. NATO helped guarantee much of this progress.

And so it will be for the 21st century. NATO's mark has been set. Its responsibilities are clear. This is the nobility of its inheritance. This is the reality of its destiny. ©