

# NATO'S ENLARGEMENT POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

*The purpose of this article is not to address every aspect of the change taking place in NATO but rather to focus on the enlargement and globalization policy of NATO, which is one of the more important dimensions of the change it has undergone. NATO enlargement policies not only reunite a fragmented Europe that won its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and strengthen European security, but also create an environment of joint action against the threats listed above by encouraging partnerships, cooperation and dialogue in the areas of comprehensive peace and security with countries outside of Europe.*

Vahit Erdem\*



\* Vahit Erdem, member of the Turkish Parliament, serves as the Turkish Group Chairman of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The English translation of this article has been provided by TurkishEnglish.com

**T**he change that began at the end of the last century and has continued since the beginning of the 21st century can only be described as striking and dramatic. Why has the world, in every sense, faced change so rapid that no one can keep up with it?

The answer to this question might be summarized as a spark that ignited social, economic, and ideological problems that built up during the Cold War, which began in the late 1940s and continued until the 1980s when a relatively closed world began transitioning to a more open world order.

The Cold War period is recognized as one of the most static periods in world history. It was a bipolar world with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on one side and the Warsaw Pact countries on the other. It was a security system based on a symmetrical balance of power and deterrence. The Western alliance argued for values like democracy, human rights and the rule of law as well as an economic system based on free enterprise while the Warsaw Pact countries defended collectivism and communist ideology. This was not a sustainable balance. Establishing and maintaining a uniform ideal for human life, a uniform ideology and a uniform society is contrary to human nature. The increasingly serious inefficiency, economic stagnation, class differences and human unhappiness in the Soviet Union began to be felt by the country's leaders and the public. The development of communications technology was particularly influential in this regard. In addition to all of these developments, the strategic cooperation between Reagan in the U.S. and the Thatcher administration in England, as well as the "Strategic Defense Initiative", more commonly known as "Star Wars", which was implemented by the Reagan administration, forced the Soviet Union to adopt the "Glasnost" (openness) and "Perestroika" (restructuring) policies as they could not run the risk of competing in such a high stakes game, thus giving the first signs of Soviet Union's disintegration. In the end, the Berlin Wall was knocked down and the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. This heralded the beginning of a new world order and an unforeseeable process of change.

The security sector was one of those most impacted by this change. The Warsaw Pact collapsed and NATO was left without a counter balance. Naturally, a discussion ensued regarding what would happen to NATO since it had successfully completed its historic mission and now had no opponent. Countries that were members of the Alliance wasted no time in conducting this self-examination and the decision was made to continue with a new NATO.

The new NATO would remain faithful to the basic values outlined in the Washington Treaty but also change and develop in line with a more comprehensive security policy that is focused on the security of Europe and the Atlantic. The Allies reached a consensus on this new NATO concept.

I must point out that this new, more comprehensive NATO is the description of a new NATO that encompasses the change which has taken place from its inception in the late 1980s until today. In the beginning, no one could have predicted that a change of this magnitude would have happened in the time that has elapsed until now.

What are the fundamental elements of this new NATO structure? The new NATO was to be transformed into a political-military organization by adding a political dimension to the military structure; its military and command structure would go through a process of transformation to make it capable of responding to 21st century threats; it would become more global by winning new members and forging new partnerships and it would acquire new military capabilities.

NATO's process of change began with the decisions reached at the London and Rome summits in 1990 and 1991.

At the London and Rome Summits, the following policies were outlined in general:

- Renewal of NATO's strategic concept
- Dialogue with non-member countries
- Cooperation

The purpose of this article is not to address every aspect of the change taking place in NATO but rather to focus on the enlargement and globalization policy of NATO, which is one of the more important dimensions of the change it has undergone. The various fundamental issues raised above serve as an introduction to this issue.

First of all, it would be appropriate to focus on the fundamental philosophy of NATO expansion policy. From its inception up until the present time, NATO has experienced expansion in six different periods. Not all of these processes were for the same reasons. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded on 4 April 1949 with the signing of the Washington Treaty and emerged as a defensive alliance between 12 countries. From Europe there was Belgium, France,

*"The new NATO would remain faithful to the basic values outlined in the Washington Treaty but also change and develop in line with a more comprehensive security policy that is focused on the security of Europe and the Atlantic."*

Luxembourg, Holland, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Britain and Portugal, and from North America there was Canada and the United States of America.

The first three phases NATO's enlargement took place during the Cold War. In 1952, Turkey and Greece joined, followed by West Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. NATO was thus a 16-member alliance throughout the Cold War.

Turkey and Greece were added to the alliance to prevent communist ideology from infiltrating the West through Europe's southern flank. At the time, Turkey faced tremendous Soviet pressure. Factors that played an important role in Turkey's inclusion in the NATO alliance were: the fact that it sent troops to the Korean War, the success and heroism displayed by the Turkish Armed Forces during this conflict, and the goal of holding back the Soviets and communist ideology at the Turkish border with the powerful military might that Turkey possessed. Actually, the fact that Turkey was included in the NATO alliance was recognition that Turkey was a European country and that Europe's borders extended to the eastern borders of Turkey. The inclusion of West Germany in the NATO alliance was a normal process and Spain was only able to join NATO in 1982 because its transition to democracy was delayed.

NATO's post-Cold War enlargement policy is based on the goal of reintegrating a fragmented Europe and a strategy of establishing a wide base of supporters to counter newly formed and developing threats. At the NATO summits held in the early 1990s in London and Rome, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which had won their independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, were addressed as complementary parts of the alliance strategy.

One of the most important decisions that came out of these summits was the establishment of the "North Atlantic Cooperation Council." In 1992, 11 European countries which were former members of the Soviet Union were included in this process. Georgia and Albania participated in the council in 1992.

Then, at the Brussels Summit held in 1994, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) policy was introduced. In Paris on 27 May 1997, the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation was signed and in 2002 the NATO-Russian Council was established.

NATO's expansion and global cooperation policies following the Cold War can be divided into three categories. The first category includes countries which have begun the accession process for full membership in NATO. Countries in this category must be located on the boundaries of Europe and must express their desire for membership. Countries that initiate this relationship by indicating their political

will for membership and fulfill the criteria required in the “Membership Action Plan” process that leads to full membership have the right to full NATO membership. Within this framework, NATO was expanded on three occasions with full membership following the Cold War. The first post-Cold War enlargement wave took place at the Madrid Summit on 8 July 1997 when the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary were invited to the negotiations for accession to the Alliance, thus initiating the process. These countries joined the alliance on 12 March 1999 with the signing of the accession protocol in Washington.

The second enlargement decision was made at the Prague Summit on 21-22 November 2002. At this summit, it was decided that Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia would join NATO as full members, and their accession process began at the start of 2005.

The third phase of enlargement included Albania, Croatia and Macedonia. It was decided at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008 to grant these countries, which had fulfilled the membership criteria, full membership. Albania and Macedonia earned the right to full membership at this summit but Greece objected to the name Macedonia and so Macedonia’s membership was suspended.

At the Bucharest Summit, the principle of granting Georgia and Ukraine Membership Action Plan (MAP) status was adopted but the decision was postponed until the meeting of Foreign Ministers in December 2008. The war between Russia and Georgia which erupted in August 2008 led to an indefinite postponement of this decision. Russia was uncomfortable with the fact that NATO had expanded to the borders of the Russian Federation with the membership of the Baltic countries. NATO-Russia relations, which had been progressing well, began to sour and grow tense. With the areas of conflict it has created in the South Caucasus, Russia has hindered NATO from actualizing its vision of including the southern Caucasus in the Europe-Atlantic alliance.

Ukraine is divided between supporters of the Russian Federation and Western sympathizers. Currently, public support for NATO membership is quite low. NATO’s intensified dialogue continues with both of these countries. Belarus, on the other hand, is under an extremely totalitarian regime and has suspended relations with NATO.

The membership process will continue in the Balkans. MAP status has been granted to Montenegro, thus paving the way for membership. Negotiations are continuing with regard to granting MAP status to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbia is another of the countries that will be a member in the future. This would mark the fulfillment of the Balkan goal of full membership in NATO.

Pursuant to Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, NATO's open door policy to membership will continue until the aforementioned countries, which are considered European states, have full membership.

*"In the new world order that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union, ensuring European-Atlantic security has become much more difficult and complex."*

The second category in NATO's enlargement and globalization policy encompasses the PfP countries. There are no geographical boundaries for the countries in this category. With this status, OSCE member countries can cooperate with NATO. This status encompasses the Russian Federation, countries in the southern Caucasus and other European countries which have not yet attained full membership, as well as some other countries.

Countries in the third category are countries with which dialogue and contact are maintained. In 1994, NATO launched the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue Initiative. The essential goals of this initiative are encouraging dialogue with countries in the Mediterranean basin, including Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and Jordan, isolating hostility and misunderstanding, developing common understanding and contributing to reforms in the areas of good governance.

At the NATO Summit held in Istanbul in June 2004, the decision was made to bring more depth to the Mediterranean Dialogue and to create a mechanism for cooperation between countries of the Middle East through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. As a result, the Arab countries of the Gulf were included in this cooperation. Cooperation is being developed with these countries in the areas of military training and security. Furthermore, dialogue and cooperation is being conducted in these countries in areas such as women's rights, the rule of law and enhanced transparency.

There is also cooperation with many countries including Australia, South Korea and Japan under the status of "contact" country. These countries have made important contributions to NATO operations, especially the Afghanistan operation. For example, Australia's contribution to the Afghanistan operation has exceeded that of many member countries.

In the new world order that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union, ensuring European-Atlantic security has become much more difficult and complex. Complex, non-specific threats which are not foreseeable and are constantly

changing, such as regional crises, ethnic conflict, terrorism, the danger posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug smuggling, migration, piracy, energy security and cyber attacks, require comprehensive cooperation between states if they are to overcome them.

The terrorist attack carried out against the United States of America on 11 September 2001 caused many, especially the United States, to reevaluate the Alliance. These new threats have given added credence to the idea that no one country, including the U.S., or the Alliance, can deal with all of them and that comprehensive cooperation with states outside the Alliance is essential.

In conclusion, NATO enlargement policies not only reunite a fragmented Europe that won its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and strengthen European security, but also create an environment of joint action against the threats listed above by encouraging partnerships, cooperation and dialogue in the areas of comprehensive peace and security with countries outside of Europe.