

ENLARGED NATO AND ITS RELEVANCE IN THE POST-SEPTEMBER 11 ERA*

Islam Yusufi

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As the world faces the challenges of post-September 11th events and as time approaches to the Prague Summit, there are number of the issues that require further clarification. What has been the impact of September 11th events to the mission and function of NATO and its enlargement towards the East? What would be the impact of the Prague enlargement on the effectiveness and relevance of the Alliance?

The September 11th events has made clearer the necessity for more commitment on the part of the North Atlantic Allies for more defense capabilities, for new quality relationships and for new members. It has also pushed to move beyond the traditionalist selective and less criteria-abiding enlargement approach towards more inclusive and in detail reviewed enlargement of NATO.

The new situation calls for robust enlargement of NATO in the Prague Summit, despite the fact that none of 10 Membership Action Plan countries are ready to assume the responsibilities of membership, especially in the military sphere. However, their inclusion in NATO will not cause any harm to the Alliance, as neither Hungary, Poland nor the Czech Republic were ready to assume the military responsibilities of membership in 1999. The critiques put forward before the 1999 enlargement, that further enlargement will cause ineffectiveness in the decision making processes of NATO, were proven wrong with the continuous engagement of NATO to maintain peace and stability in South East Europe and with the support of the new members of NATO to the war against terror.

Greater diversity and more members will not strain political cohesion, will not weaken decision-making and will not hurt operational efficiency of NATO. Instead it will increase the relevance of NATO in the post-September 11th era for the preservation of the

* The views expressed here are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the organization that the author works for.

North American–European partnership, consolidation of democratic and liberal values, and maintaining the walls of the stability and peace against the new threats, such as terrorism.

Towards Prague Summit

Following terrorist attacks of September 11th, the alliance members have continuously been working on three issues to: - Deal with terrorist threats and close the gap in the military capabilities between U.S. and European allies; - Expand NATO membership to include new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe; and - Enhance the relationship with Russia, Ukraine, Central Asian and Mediterranean countries.

The aim has been to make NATO relevant to the new era now that with September 11th, new asymmetrical threats, such as the global terrorism has become a significant security threat. Those threats also include militant nationalism, weapons of mass destruction, the proliferation of ballistic missile technology, organized crime, and trafficking of people, drugs and arms.

The Prague Summit, which is the first NATO summit of the 21st century and the first summit following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, to be held in November, will be a summit of the evaluation of the work done so far and a summit that will give a new direction

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to the North Atlantic Alliance with regard to the new capabilities; new members and new relationships. Most importantly it will test NATO's open door policy by deciding on inclusion of the new member countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The decisions to be adopted will be the beginning of the new era that will be critical for the NATO's relevance and its significance for the maintenance of the peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

New members, new capabilities/adaptation to the new era and new relationships have already been at the forefront of the agenda of post-Cold War NATO in 1990s. The London Declaration of June 1990, the Roma Declaration of November 1991 and the Brussels Declaration of January 1994, to adapt the Alliance to a new era of uncertainties; the decision in the Madrid Summit in July 1997 to invite Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic as a first countries to join the Alliance after the end of the Cold War; the Washington Summit

Final Communiqué calling for the support of the New Capabilities Initiative for overcoming the gaps in the defense capabilities among the Allies; and the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security and the Permanent Joint Council with Russia of May 1997 and the Charter on Distinctive Partnership and the NATO-Ukraine Commission of July 1997, have all been pillars of the adaptation process of NATO to the new era.

However, one thing that is new in terms of NATO is that afore-mentioned changes have made the NATO to become more than that of the collective defense Alliance. NATO, as it stands now, is more than a mere Alliance. It is a *system* of a collective defense; cooperative security; cooperation and partnerships. This system to a great extent facilitates NATO's adaptation to the new circumstances created by September 11 and stands as a factor for NATO's relevance in the new era. But, what is NATO's role in the post-September 11th era? What it stands for in this new era? It survived the shock of the end of the Cold War, is it going to survive the shock of September 11th?

As Gaddis puts it, NATO is detached from the shocks and surprises that dominate most of history.¹ There have always been claims in the history of NATO that the Alliance stands at a crossroads or a turning point. However, so far the Alliance has not yet experienced a turning point, a point as again put by Gaddis,² a moment at which it becomes clear that the status quo can no longer sustain itself, at which decisions have to be made about new courses of action, at which the results of those decisions shape what happens for years to come.

NATO with the end of the Cold War did change some of its functions with regard to the *in-area* and *out-of-area* functions. However, its mission of collective defense - *Article 5* - has not changed, and therefore, there isn't any *transformation* of the Alliance. What we are witnessing is the *adaptation* of it to the new circumstances.

With the creation of this system and as NATO gets *bigger, wider and deeper*, the *specialization* has become as a new critical factor in the new era of post-September 11th. A specific security and defense contribution of a country, which is a part of a system of NATO,

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, "NATO's Past, NATO's Future," a paper presented at Joint Workshop on Europe and Transatlantic Security: Issues and Perspectives, Kandersteg, Switzerland, August 25-27 2000, CIAO, February 2002.

² Ibid.

in the Alliance's war against terror, is a crucial element for the evaluation of the relevance of the Alliance. This change has critically affected the NATO's approach towards its relevance and its enlargement.

The implications of this change will depend on what approach will NATO take in Prague for the next round of enlargement. Enlargement positively affected the Alliance in 1999 when it included Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. NATO has already digested these new comers and they have made considerable progress toward approaching the average standards of the NATO countries.³ The first enlargement of post-Cold War of 1999, proved the expectation that NATO in the post-Cold War stands for the restoring and widening a coherent space of democratic stability, security, and prosperity in Europe. This task has not been finished yet and it still stands as a major task of the Alliance in the Post-September 11th era.

Thus, the Prague Summit of November 2002, should provide a sense of perspective and hope to those nations striving to join NATO that are set to face major social and political challenges in the decades ahead.⁴ NATO for those countries stands as a model and measure for the continues economic, political and security reforms. Also, what is of major importance to the security and defense of the Euro-Atlantic region is that NATO should also continue to be of help to its members to gain strengthened legitimacy for their security and defense policies and the use of force where necessary. The enlargement to the Central and Eastern Europe can add new fresh capabilities to the Alliance to act successfully in preserving and enhancing peaceful and stable regional and global environment capable of improving the conditions for sustainable development and reforms in harmony with democratic values and the sustained freedom and prosperity that underpin them.⁵

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The nations of the Central and Eastern Europe are free, democratic and independent nations with long and proud histories. They desire to share in both the benefits and obligations of NATO in pursuing the development, growth and promotion of democratic

³ H. Binnendijk and R. Kugler, "NATO Enlargement After the First Tranche", Strategic Forum, No. 149, October 1998, p. 1.

⁴ Klaus Becher, "Organizing NATO for the Future," to be published by CSIS in a collection of essays based on the 24 June 2002 conference Beyond NATO's Prague Summit.

⁵ Ibid.

institutions and ensuring free market economic development.⁶ There shall not be allowed formation of "gray zones", which are left out of the Euro-Atlantic integrative road that can become source of the instability, crime, terrorism and economic misery. If any of the state of the region is left out from the Euro-Atlantic integrative processes, there is a danger of the creation of the new dividing lines in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Invitation to candidate countries to join NATO in Prague 2002 will provide a major incentive for the development of a new democratic societies and will also send an important message to other nations in the region that are performing their transition to democracy and a market economy. Bringing the candidates into NATO is the best way to make them see the value of the necessary and sometimes painful reforms the countries have been making. Their membership in NATO will validate the work they have done so far to develop democratic structures, market economies, and modernized militaries and to address the deficiencies, which NATO considers important for the collective and cooperative security.

The enlargement in Prague Summit will not only mean the highest degree of security for the countries of the region, but also the contribution for the international community's resolve for the establishment of the stability and security in the region. Membership in NATO ultimately will strengthen the basis on which these countries will not only be a consumer, but also will produce security. What is important is the sense of insecurity that exists and perceived in the minds of the non-NATO east Europeans. They need to be provided psychological reassurance and rebuild confidence among the Europeans.

They face the threat of being drawn into a security vacuum where the terrorism and other new asymmetrical threats can take root and attack the nations. Therefore, as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan did not suffice to restore self-confidence in Europe, so too, PfP and EACP are not enough to create stable and secure European continent. What is needed is robust enlargement of NATO in Prague with adherence to Article V.

Enlarging NATO can contribute to the security of the Alliance itself as well. By enlargement, the Alliance will limit and help eliminate a potentially destabilizing power vacuum in Europe, widening the circle of like-minded nations sharing common values and

⁶ Gale A. Mattox, "NATO Enlargement: A Step In The Process of Alliance Reform In The Post-Cold War," CIAO, Working Paper 5.71, October 1998.

willing to shoulder common responsibilities and burdens.⁷ It will contribute for the stability and will give strong encouragement for increased cooperation among all countries of region in the function of a response for new security challenges, for the war against terrorism, organized crime, smuggling of the arms, people and drugs.

Implications of the Second Enlargement Towards the Relevance of NATO

What sort of NATO will emerge after Prague? A bigger, wider and deeper? A more political NATO or more militarily capable one? This is the first challenge of NATO that will depend on what enlargement policy is to be pursued in the Prague Summit.

In Washington Summit of 1999, the Alliance agreed to a new Strategic Concept committing the allies to "contribute to building a stronger and broader Euro-Atlantic community of democracies - a community where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld; where borders are increasingly open to people, ideas and commerce; where war becomes unthinkable."

This new concept of NATO shaped the first enlargement of NATO to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. With that, NATO entered in a new phase of enlargement. Previous expansions, those in Cold War, were guided by geo-strategic rationale. With the 1999 enlargement, the expansion was political and NATO was transformed into a mechanism for spreading stability and liberal democratic values.

The dominance of this political premise in 1999 enlargement, with the effects of the September 11th events, is to shift towards more geo-strategic approach towards enlargement,

A political strategy pursued in the enlargement of 1999, is to shift to that of geo-strategic approach. Countries offering a little of geo-strategic gain, will be less favored in Prague Summit.

expected later this year. The countries seeking membership that meet political criteria of democracy, respect for individual liberty and the rule of law and a commitment to economic openness and free-markets - but offer a little geo-strategic gain, will not be much favored in the Prague. Ironically, those countries most needing stability or actual security guarantees would be left out of the geo-strategic concept

⁷ Robert N. Haass, "Enlarging NATO: A Questionable Idea Whose Time Has Come," Brookings Institution, October 1997.

of enlargement. This approach has been supported by the calls for the change in the strategic mission of NATO enlargement from extending security and stability in Europe, towards more specific purpose of the Alliance to fight the terrorism and other newly emerging asymmetrical threats.⁸ This change will make harder for the candidates to join the Alliance.

However, if the case is to fight the terrorism and other threats, such as organized crime, I do believe that there is a necessity for a special attention to be given to the Balkan-Caucasus-Middle East strategic triangle, a triangle from which is expected to come out greatest security challenges in the new era. The international military and civil presence in the Western Balkans, being paramount to preserve peace, is not at the same time sufficient to ensure conflict prevention, stability, and prosperity in the long term. This should be strengthened with NATO enlargement.⁹

If the first round of enlargement was designed to help stabilize Central Europe and prevent the emergence of a security vacuum that could rekindle historical geopolitical rivalries, the second round of enlargement should extend the zone of security further to the south and north and link them further with transatlantic security.

Besides this challenge, another challenge of the NATO in the Post-September 11th era is the relevance of NATO to US' military needs. How the second enlargement will affect the perception of the US towards the NATO's relevance? By allowing enlargement towards further East, does Washington signals a diminished interest in NATO military utility?

The critical solution here is to pursue the enlargement in such a way to strengthen the military foundations of NATO in order to strengthen its credibility as a political institution. If the 2002 enlargement fails to enhance alliance capabilities for meeting its post-Cold War missions, including fighting terrorism, this enlargement will not be of significance to increase the relevance of NATO in the new era.

The perception of the importance of military foundations of NATO and maintenance of NATO's cohesion and military effectiveness differs between the Allies and Partner Nations.

⁸ Senator Richard G. Lugar, "NATO's Role In The War On Terrorism," January 18, 2002, Brussels, Belgium, <http://store.yahoo.com/expandnato/lugardoc.html>.

⁹ Nikolai Svinarov, "The Southern Dimension Of NATO Enlargement: Bulgaria's Contribution," Statesmen's Forum. CSIS, April 11, 2002, Washington, D.C., http://www.csis.org/events/sf_020411svin.htm.

There are also differences among the Allies with regard to the implications of the second enlargement towards NATO's core competencies and military effectiveness.

There are concerns on the part of the Allies that no nation from the candidate countries can fulfill all military and political requirements of NATO and as a result, any future enlargement will loosen the cohesion of NATO and its military effectiveness. Critics feel that to extend new invitations to Slovenia, Slovakia, perhaps the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and possibly even Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia and Albania would inevitably dilute the alliance, turning it into more of a security talking-shop, to a 'OSCE with arms' or 'OSCE with a military committee' or to a 'League of Nations of Europe'.

Those critics have doubts about going much beyond the current 19 members. Even, Richard Lugar, in the past one of the US Senate's strongest supporters of a bigger NATO, now argues that, in the wake of September 11th, enlargement should be pursued only in a way that "strengthens not weakens" the alliance in its new military mission, and that new members must meet new NATO requirements.

Also, the current drift and disputes in the transatlantic relations,¹⁰ affects the perception and approach towards the enlargement and the effectiveness of the Alliance. While U.S. advocates more deepening in the Alliance by increasing the military capabilities of NATO, the European allies are for more loose cohesion. This drift has also been compounded by America's unilateral military response to the September 11th attacks. Although the alliance, for the first time in its history, formally invoked Article 5 of its treaty and thereby declared the attacks on America to be an attack on all, operation in Afghanistan was not of NATO. But this does not matter much as every member and would be member of NATO somehow was and is involved.

Towards Sustaining NATO's Relevance in the New Era

Security in Europe is indivisible. The fate of the old and new democracies in Europe are inextricably linked to each other. Their security and defense is indivisible. It is NATO

¹⁰ Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness: Why the United States and Europe see the world differently," Policy Review, Number 113, June-July 2002.

that provides umbrella and architecture for the sustainability of this indivisible collective and cooperative security in Europe. In the new era of uncertainties, NATO is an expression of the strategic unity for the collective security and defense against the common vulnerabilities of the western way of life and for the sustainability of the existing functioning of international economic and monetary system and the globalized markets.

NATO in its more than 50 years of history has not solely depended on the existence of enemy. It is a comprehensive alliance that has repeatedly evolved reflecting the wishes of its members, including its smaller and weaker members. Thus, in future the Alliance will depend on its more comprehensive approach by working on the security and stability of overall Europe, rather than focusing only on a single threat. Focusing on a single threat, will call for earlier demise of NATO. Therefore the enlargement is continuation of these evolutionary policies where the voices of small nations are also heard. Thus NATO must go out of area and include other new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Also, adapting NATO from an instrument of stability into a means of achieving justice and containing brutality provides a new reason for its relevance in the new era of post-September 11th.

Terrorism should not be the only focus of NATO. It should pursue a comprehensive approach by working on the overall stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic region.

NATO is needed to all its allies, although the battle lines have moved from the heart of Europe to its horizons and beyond. It is NATO that provides political support and additional capabilities to US action in Afghanistan. When US called for its allies and would be allies, they were there to keep peace and stability in Afghanistan. They have stood firm against the anti-democratic forces that challenge the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region.

By enlarging, NATO should maintain its ability to operate together, which is not just in the interest of the Allies, but also in the interest of those who seek NATO membership. Doing that would also require at least greater contribution of the Europeans, and other partner nations to the NATO structures to operate alongside the Americans in many different circumstances.

Its enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe can further strengthen the importance of NATO. Enlargement can become a foundation on which NATO enters the 21st century as a vigorous security institution. NATO can play an important role, in providing non-NATO

members with a framework for adapting their defense priorities and programs in an expedited, focused, and harmonized way, including shared acquisition and operation as well as role specialization for contribution to the US and NATO efforts to fight the new threats.