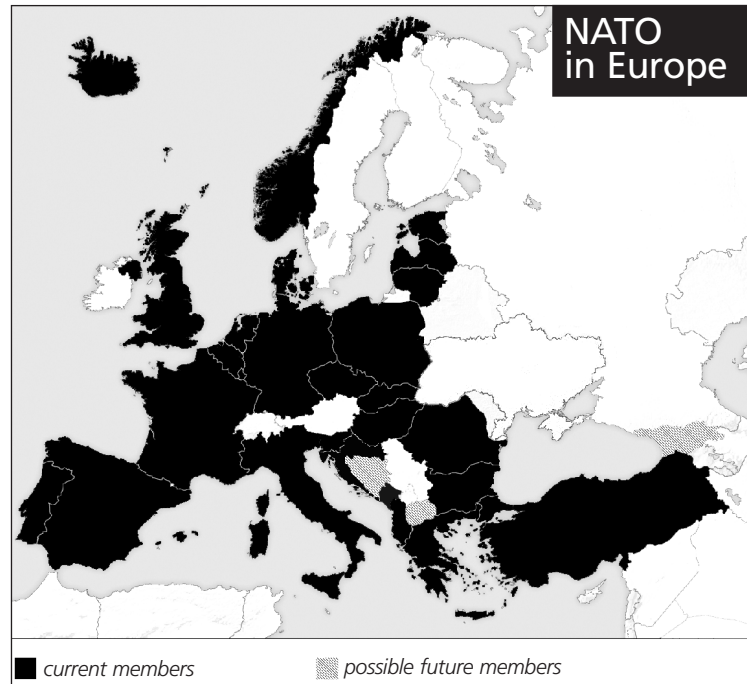# No to NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a nuclear-armed military alliance which is an obstacle to a peaceful world and global nuclear disarmament. It currently comprises 30 member states, including the United Kingdom. NATO was first established during the Cold War, and since its inception has expanded both its sphere of influence and the scope of its activity, destabilising international relationships as it does so.

How the alliance developed

NATO was founded in 1949, in the early years of the Cold War, by 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 joined NATO, followed by Spain in 1982. At the end of the Cold War, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, but NATO was not. 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.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were admitted to NATO in 2004 – not only former Warsaw Pact members, but also former Soviet republics in the case of the Baltic

NATO in Europe

■ current members   ▨ possible future members

states. In 2009, Albania and Croatia became members with Montenegro joining in 2017. North Macedonia was confirmed as the newest member in March 2020, while Bosnia and Herzegovina are also in negotiations to join 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.

In the past few years, NATO has exacerbated the situation by announcing new bases in eastern Europe. Deployments – including British troops – arrived in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland during 2017. In addition, the NATO Response Force was expanded in 2014 to include a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, with an ability to

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deploy at two days' notice. NATO has also opened a training centre in Georgia and will support the reform of Ukraine's military.

Out of area activity

A US drive for global domination through military influence was most notable 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. While NATO officially ended its mission in Afghanistan in 2014, it has since launched a new 'non-combat Resolute Support' operation, agreeing in 2017 to increase the number of troops in the country to 16,000.

A February 2020 agreement between the US and the Taliban should see all NATO troops leave the country, but there is still no end in sight to leaving the Middle East completely. Defence ministers agreed to expand NATO's anti-ISIS training mission in Iraq in February 2020 – this just weeks after the country's Parliament voted in favour of demanding that foreign troops leave.

NATO has also undertaken operations in Libya and the Horn of Africa over the last few years. At its 2019 summit, NATO even declared space 'an operational domain' extending the reach of the alliance still further.

Global reach?

NATO adopted a new Strategic Concept at its 2010 summit, 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.

At its 2012 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. Further developments in the system were announced at the 2016 summit. At the Wales summit in 2014 a statement was made that cyber-attacks on any NATO members could warrant a collective response, expanding the scope of circumstances under which military action could be authorised. This is particularly worrying because of the difficulty in determining the source of cyber-attacks and technical evidence of them is rarely shared or clarified.

The NATO summit in Poland in 2016 demonstrated that the alliance is set to continue to promote military intervention and posturing as the way to resolve international differences. Precisely at a time when what is needed between the alliance and Russia is cool-headed diplomacy and a thawing of relations, NATO is instead taking destabilising and provocative steps the other way.

NATO members recently announced the alliance would be 'stepping up the fight against terrorism'. There seems no doubt that there is a long-term plan for maintaining and extending NATO's global influence.

Military spending

NATO expects its members to spend 2% of national income on defence every year. NATO should not be in a position to impose spending guidelines on independent nations, which should be determining their own funding priorities based on genuine need.

Nine NATO countries met this target in 2019, including the UK. US President Donald Trump has now gone further and has called on members to actually spend 4% of their GDP on defence. Trump even threatened to withdraw the US from the alliance if members didn't spend more (although this would need to be approved by the Senate and Congress).

Asian Pivot

Former US President Obama's rebalancing of US foreign policy towards Asia undoubtedly had 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, NATO could follow suit and deepen its cooperation with its partners there on perceived threats such as cyber-attacks and terrorism, possibly antagonising further relations with China. In its 2019 summit declaration, NATO ominously referred to 'China's growing influence', a pretext for further activity in the Asian region?

A nuclear-armed alliance

NATO is a nuclear-armed alliance and around 150 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 recently restated its commitment to being a nuclear alliance and announced that the nuclear weapons under its umbrella will be upgraded to make them more usable.

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. The alliance rejects a policy of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons and maintains that nuclear capabilities remains a core element of its strategy.

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.

Expansion into Latin America

NATO and Colombia concluded a partnership agreement in 2018, 'with a view to strengthening dialogue and cooperation to address security challenges'. This despite the fact that the Latin American states and the Caribbean are a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone under the Tlatelolco Treaty, agreed in 1967.

There has been angry rejection of the NATO agreement from some of Colombia's neighbours, with Venezuela accusing Colombia of inviting 'external factors with nuclear capability to gain a foothold'.

70th anniversary

NATO marked its 70th anniversary in 2019 with two summits. Foreign ministers gathered in Washington earlier in the year while the leaders came to the UK in December for a very short formal summit. The final document reaffirmed the alliance's commitment to nuclear weapons. The next summit will take place in 2021.

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.