



## NATO'S PARTNERS IN AFGHANISTAN: IMPACT AND PURPOSE

**Rebecca Moore<sup>1</sup>**

*Concordia College, Department of Political Science*

### **Abstract:**

Since 2003, NATO's ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission in Afghanistan has relied on troop contributions, not only from NATO members but also from EAPC/PfP partners and so-called global partners—non-European states that have not been formally incorporated into NATO's formal partnership structures. The experience of working with these non-European allies, in particular, has been transformative as it has highlighted the need for cooperative relationships that extend beyond Europe if NATO is to function effectively in a world of increasingly global security challenges. This article explores the role of NATO partners in Afghanistan and their potential long term impact on NATO's future.

**Keywords:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization, International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, Partnership for Peace (PfP), Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), global partners.

### **Resumen:**

*Desde el 2003, la misión de la OTAN, ISAF (Fuerza de Asistencia para la Seguridad Internacional) se ha apoyado en las contribuciones en tropas no sólo de países de la OTAN sino también en socios EAPC/PfP y los llamados socios globales (países no europeos que no han sido incorporados formalmente en las estructuras asociativas de la OTAN). La experiencia de haber colaborado con estos aliados no europeos ha tenido necesariamente un carácter transformador en la medida que ha puesto de manifiesto la necesidad de que la OTAN se extienda fuera de Europa si pretende hacer frente a unos desafíos de seguridad crecientemente globales. Este artículo explora el papel de los socios de la OTAN en Afganistán y su impacto potencial a largo plazo sobre el futuro de la OTAN.*

**Palabras clave:** Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte, Fuerza Internacional de Asistencia de Seguridad, Afganistán, Asociación para la Paz (PfP), Consejo de Asociación Euro-Atlántica (EACP), socios globales.

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca R. Moore is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, Concordia College.



## 1. Introduction

NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan reflects, not only a recognition that NATO must broaden its focus beyond Europe if it is to meet the security challenges of the post-September 11 world, but also a growing awareness of the need to reach out to new, non-European partners if those challenges are to be addressed successfully. Indeed, non-European, non-NATO allies such as Australia, Japan, and New Zealand, although not part of any of NATO's formal partnership structures, share NATO's liberal democratic values and have been among the most significant contributors to the ISAF mission. The geography of Afghanistan has also prompted NATO to devote greater attention to the five Central Asian members of its Partnership for Peace (PfP) (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan), all of which have provided various forms of assistance that are critical to NATO's ability to operate in Afghanistan, including military bases, transit routes, and cooperation on border security. Increasingly, the Allies also now appear to recognize the need for closer cooperation with institutions like the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) as well as non-governmental organizations which possess the civilian expertise and resources crucial to stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan. In short, the challenges associated with operating in Afghanistan have fostered a broad and increasingly complex network of relationships for NATO—relationships which could prove useful in dealing with the increasingly global challenges that the Allies confront outside the context of Afghanistan.

NATO's recognition of the need to equip itself for an increasingly global array of threats and challenges, however, has prompted little thought as to just how these new relationships might serve NATO's interests beyond Afghanistan. The extent to which the ISAF mission has consumed the Alliance's time, energy, and resources is partly to blame, but it is not the only factor. Indeed, the growing diversity of NATO's partners and the challenges associated with maintaining a web of partnerships that now extends as far as Asia and the Middle East has exposed tensions within the Alliance over the proper form and function of NATO's partnerships, which are in turn a reflection of differences over the very purpose and identity of NATO itself. For some Allies, NATO must remain an exclusively Euro-Atlantic alliance focused on the territory of its member states. For others, the experience or working with non-European allies only strengthens the case in favor of a functional rather than geographic approach to partnership in which states' ability to contribute to NATO's missions becomes the most significant factor underpinning NATO's partnership frameworks.

The debate over just how global NATO should be is not a new one. Indeed, the so-called "out-of-area" debates began in the early to mid-1990s when NATO first confronted the question of whether to admit new members from Central and Eastern Europe. The debate then shifted to the issue of whether NATO should take on military missions outside its territory (e.g. Bosnia and Kosovo) and, ultimately ---in the case of Afghanistan---outside Europe. NATO's reliance on a wide range of partners in Afghanistan, including non-European allies, adds a new dimension to the continuing debate about just how global NATO's reach should be. The Alliance must now confront the reality that some of the most significant contributors to the ISAF mission and ardent defenders of NATO's values are neither European nor formal Alliance partners. At the same time, NATO must reconcile the need for closer cooperation with partners in Central Asia and the Middle East, which despite their partnership status do not share the liberal democratic values that have been so central to NATO's transformation since the end of the Cold War.

Although NATO's new missions and to some degree its new partners suggest that the Alliance has adopted a more functional approach to addressing the security challenges of the



post-September 11 world, the reluctance of some members to embrace partnerships structured along functional rather than geographic lines suggests that, for all of their success in transforming NATO for a post-Cold War world, the Allies have yet to achieve a consensus on the fundamental question of NATO's core identity and mission. The process of drafting a new Strategic Concept launched at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in April 2009 offers an opportunity for NATO to think more broadly about how it might cooperate with partners around the globe in fulfilling its larger strategic vision. Achieving a consensus on that subject, however, will require that the Allies first reach agreement as to what that larger vision should be and the extent to which shared liberal democratic values rather than geography or historical experience should ground an Alliance which now confronts a strategic environment characterized by a growing number of challenges that cannot be confined to any particular geographic space.

## **2. The Beginnings of Partnership**

NATO's collaboration with partners in Afghanistan represents the logical progression of a process begun during the early 1990s when the Allies first invited their former Warsaw Pact adversaries to establish diplomatic liaisons to NATO and later established institutional frameworks for dialogue and military cooperation in the form of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which ultimately became the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). These institutions constituted an essentially political means of encouraging the growth of liberal democratic values beyond NATO's borders and building a new, more unified and democratic Europe. The PfP/EAPC framework would also serve to promote interoperability and training with NATO forces and permit participation by non-member states in NATO's post-Cold War peacekeeping/stabilization missions, including Bosnia, Kosovo, and, more recently, Afghanistan.

Although NATO's early partnership initiatives focused on the integration and stabilization of Europe, the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 prompted a new phase in NATO's thinking about the role of partnership. In an ever more globalized world, instability, even well beyond Europe's borders, was now understood to constitute a threat to the Allies' security, just as potential and realized instability in Central and Eastern Europe threatened it during the 1990s. Threats to the North Atlantic area would now likely stem from areas to the south and east of NATO, a reality that prompted former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson to declare in 2002 that NATO must shift from a "geographic" to "functional" approach in addressing new challenges.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, NATO foreign ministers agreed in Reykjavik in May 2002 that the Alliance must develop the capacity to mobilize forces "quickly to wherever they are needed" and "sustain operations over distance and time."<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, the role of NATO's partnerships also shifted. Although partnership remained an important vehicle for the integration of Europe, it also came to be recognized as a means by which NATO could "project stability" outside of Europe, in part by encouraging partners—both those with and those without membership aspirations—to contribute in some

<sup>2</sup> Lord Robertson: "NATO: A Vision for 2012", Speech of NATO Secretary General, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), GMFUS Conference*, Brussels, Belgium (3 October 2002).

<sup>3</sup> "Final Communiqué", Press Release, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Ministers' Meeting, North Atlantic Council, M-NAC-1 (2002) 59*, Reykjavik, Iceland (14 May 2002), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr2002/p02-059e.htm>.



capacity to NATO's military missions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and even Iraq. This new partnership function overlapped with the earlier integrative mission in so far as prospective member states were put on notice that they would be evaluated based on their willingness to behave as security producers and not simply consumers of NATO assistance.<sup>4</sup> NATO was now focused as much on what partners could do for the Alliance as it was on what NATO could do for partners.

As NATO's missions began to shift away from Europe, the Alliance also began to pay more attention to existing and potential partners in Central Asia, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and even Asia by creating new partnership initiatives, including the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). The extension of the partnership concept beyond Europe represented a continuation and broadening of the process begun during the early 1990s, but these partnerships were fundamentally different from the partnerships that NATO had established with the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Although NATO continued to identify liberal democratic values as central to its partnership efforts, partnership initiatives in Central Asia, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East clearly did not have the same potential for democracy promotion demonstrated in Central and Eastern Europe through PfP and the EAPC. The fact that few states in these regions aspired to membership meant that NATO would not enjoy the same degree of leverage with them that it had with the governments of Central and Eastern Europe, virtually all of which sought full membership in the Alliance. Rather, these partnerships were primarily about equipping NATO for the increasingly global threats of the post-September 11 world, although a consensus as to just how global NATO missions should be still eludes the Allies. The political, geographical, historical and cultural diversity of these newest partners, however, generated controversy within the Alliance regarding both the structure and function of NATO's various partnerships and the extent of NATO's involvement in some regions. In the context of Afghanistan, NATO's partners currently fall into four principal categories: the Caucasus and Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan)—all of which border Afghanistan and have been members of NATO's PfP and EAPC; the so-called "global partners" which are not currently members of any of NATO's formal partnership structures, but include important ISAF contributors such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan; international institutions such as the European Union and United Nations; and, finally, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### **3. Central Asia and the Caucasus**

To date, none of the Central Asian states has contributed troops to ISAF. Since 2002, however, all have to varying degrees offered the United States and NATO other assistance critical to the Afghan mission, including the provision of military bases, transit rights, and refueling facilities as well as co-operation on border security.<sup>5</sup> To a significant degree this cooperation has been facilitated by political and military ties developed through PfP, which

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<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of the evolution of NATO expectations for partners, see Moore, Rebecca R. (2007): *NATO's New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World*, Westport, Praeger Security International, pp. 83-86.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Jones, A. Elizabeth, Assistant Secretary of States for European and Eurasian Affairs, Testimony, *US House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia*, Washington DC (29 October 2003), at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/25798.htm> See also "Frequently Asked Questions about U.S. Policy in Central Asia", Fact Sheet, *U.S. Department of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs*, Washington DC (27 November 2002), at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/15562.htm>.



all of the Central Asian states joined in 1994, with the exception of Tajikistan which was admitted in 2002. In this context, NATO forces had conducted training exercises in the region and become familiar with local facilities. As former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Robert Bradtke put it in testimony before the U.S. Congress in 2004: “The war in Afghanistan proved the value of relations with the Caucasus and Central Asia. Ties forged with those countries through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) facilitated the establishment of a U.S. military presence in the region that has been one of the keys to success in Operation Enduring Freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, as NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan grew between 2003 and 2004, so too did the geostrategic importance of the Caucasus and Central Asia to NATO. As NATO international staff member Robert Weaver explained it, the fact that NATO was operating in Afghanistan, outside its traditional defense perimeter, had necessitated more attention to the needs of the Central Asian states. “Relationships developed through the Partnership for Peace,” Weaver observed, had “laid the basis for the Allies to draw up bilateral agreements for the transit of material across these states and the basing of forces and supplies on their territory.”<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly then, NATO’s 2004 summit in Istanbul, which focused on renewing and expanding NATO’s partnerships, began with a “special focus” on partners “in the strategically important regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia.”<sup>8</sup> Toward this end, NATO agreed at Istanbul to send two liaison officers to the region—one to be assigned to the Caucasus and the other to Central Asia—and to designate a NATO special representative for the region.

NATO also agreed at Istanbul to elevate its seven-member Mediterranean Dialogue (Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Algeria, and Jordan) to the level of a full NATO partnership aimed at strengthening practical cooperation with the region, and to launch the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)—a new program aimed at developing practical bilateral security cooperation between NATO and the states of the Greater Middle East.<sup>9</sup> NATO’s efforts to revitalize its partnerships with the Central Asian and Caucasus states and extend the partnership concept to the south stemmed in large part from a belief in the success of PfP and a determination that the events of September 11 had only made the argument for partnership with states along NATO’s periphery more compelling.<sup>10</sup> Partnership constituted an increasingly important means of facilitating the practical cooperation necessary to address the challenges of Afghanistan, and, more broadly, the increasingly global threats of the post-September 11 world.

At the same time, the new partnership initiatives reflected a recognition that NATO’s existing partnerships needed to be expanded or adapted so as to better serve the interests and

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<sup>6</sup> Bradtke, Robert A., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs: “U.S. Initiatives at NATO’s Istanbul Summit”, Testimony, *US House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Europe*, Washington, DC (16 June 2004), at <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/33701.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Weaver, Robert: “Continuing to Build Security Through Partnership”, *NATO Review*, no.1 (Spring 2004), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue1/english/art/pr.htm>. See also “Alliance Partnerships: Projecting Stability Beyond NATO’s Central and Eastern Borders”, Report, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), NATO Parliamentary Assembly Subcommittee on Central and Eastern Europe, 153 PCCEE04 E* (13 May 2004), at <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=358>.

<sup>8</sup> “Istanbul Summit Communiqué”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Istanbul Summit, PR/CP (2004) 096* (28 June 2004), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/po4-096e.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> On this point, see Simon, Jeffrey: “NATO’s Partnership for Peace: Charting a Course for a New Era,” *RFE/RL East European Perspectives*, vol. 6, no. 16 (7 August 2004), (obtained via email subscription at <http://www.rferl.org/reports>).



needs of both Allies and Partners. Indeed, NATO had recognized for some time that the enlargement process was having problematic implications for the EAPC. The accession of seven new members in March 2004 left behind two diverse groups: the European neutrals (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden and Finland)—all of them well-established liberal democracies—and the Central Asian and Caucasus states—all significantly less advanced in terms of their political and economic development.<sup>11</sup> The division only enhanced the EAPC's already existing reputation as a forum with little capacity for dialogue or practical cooperation.

NATO had made some effort to address this concern during its 2002 Prague Summit by approving within the EAPC a Partnership Action Plan Against Terrorism (PAP-T). The plan committed EAPC members to cooperate against terrorism in a variety of areas, including political consultations and information sharing, civil-emergency planning, force planning, air defense and airspace management, border control, arms control, non-proliferation, and training exercises related to terrorism.<sup>12</sup> At Istanbul in 2004, NATO launched a second PAP—the Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB). Targeted specifically at Central Asia and the Caucasus, the new plan focused on defense reform and reflected NATO's conviction that bringing defense institutions under firm civil and democratic control was “fundamental to stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and essential for international security cooperation.”<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, both plans constituted part of a larger effort to enhance political dialogue and practical cooperation with partners on a range of international and domestic issues, including terrorism, democratization, and partner participation in NATO-led operations.<sup>14</sup>

In the larger effort to engage the Central Asian partners, NATO would also come to rely heavily on both its Planning and Review Process (PARP)—the process by which PfP members identify and evaluate capabilities to be made available to PfP for multinational training and operations conducted with NATO forces—as well as a program introduced during the 2002 summit in Prague known as the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The IPAP initiative constituted an attempt to build on the success of NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP)—the program NATO has used since the late 1990s to evaluate and provide guidance to prospective member states regarding their progress toward meeting NATO's membership expectations. Partners who had expressed a desire for closer cooperation with NATO, but had not been deemed ready for participation in the MAP would be eligible for an IPAP. Like MAP participants, they would be expected to draft national plans detailing specific reforms that they planned to implement.<sup>15</sup> NATO would then provide country-specific advice and assistance on meeting reform objectives. Although IPAPs carry no expectation of membership, they do include—as do the MAP annual plans—a political chapter through which NATO may seek to foster reforms in the domestic political as well as defense sectors.

<sup>11</sup> Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia acceded to NATO in March 2004.

<sup>12</sup> “Partnership Action Plan Against Terrorism (PAP-T)”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Prague Summit*, Prague, Czech Republic (22 November 2002), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_19549.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19549.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB), *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Brussels Summit*, Brussels, Belgium (7 June 2004), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_21014.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_21014.htm).

<sup>14</sup> “The Euro-Atlantic Partnership - Refocusing and Renewal”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Istanbul Summit*, Istanbul, Turkey (23 June 2004), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_21015.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_21015.htm).

<sup>15</sup> IPAPs are drafted every two years rather than annually as is required under MAP.



As of mid-2009, however, the only Central Asian partner participating in the IPAP program was Kazakhstan. Although Uzbekistan had initially sought to take advantage of this opportunity for closer cooperation with NATO, it suspended that effort in 2005 following a brutal government crackdown on anti-government demonstrators in Andijan, which prompted NATO and bilateral criticism of the Tashkent government's handling of the incident and led to U.S. support for an airlift of over 400 Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania. Uzbekistan then evicted the United States from an airbase at Karshi-Khanabad (K-2), which had played an important role in supporting U.S. operations in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> In a further effort to distance itself from NATO and move closer to Russia, Uzbekistan also re-joined the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2006.<sup>17</sup>

Although NATO's relations with Uzbekistan have since improved, this experience highlights the extent to which the absence of democratic reform and instability in the region has made the Central Asian states problematic partners in the context of Afghanistan. Indeed, the lack of political reform and continuing human rights abuses, not only in Uzbekistan, but throughout the region prompted critics during the George W. Bush administration to charge that the United States and NATO were shoring up repressive regimes with economic and military assistance in exchange for their cooperation in the war on terror.<sup>18</sup> One particular incident fueling this charge occurred during former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's visit to the region in May 2006. During a speech in Vilnius, Lithuania, Cheney had strongly criticized Russia's democratic failures, but then traveled on to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan where he failed to denounce publicly the even more repressive regimes of those states.<sup>19</sup> Although liberal democratic values remain at the core of PfP/EAPC framework documents—a point the NATO Secretary General sought to emphasize during a trip to Central Asia in the fall of 2004, telling his listeners at several stops that NATO's liberal democratic values were “not only for the Allies but also our Partners”—in reality the Central Asian states have never demonstrated any clear commitment to those values.<sup>20</sup> Yet their cooperation remains essential to the ISAF mission.

Tense NATO-Russia relations have also complicated NATO's engagement in the region. On the one hand, Russia, which is linked to NATO through the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), has an interest in the stability of Afghanistan and agreed in July 2009 to allow the United States to transport military equipment and personnel to Afghanistan through Russian air space.<sup>21</sup> That agreement followed a Russian offer in April 2008 to permit the land

<sup>16</sup> For more on this topic, see Cooley, Alexander: “Base Politics”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6 (November/December 2005), pp. 79-92.

<sup>17</sup> Uzbekistan had been a member of the Collective Security Treaty, which was first signed in 1992. It withdrew in 1999 as part of an effort to move closer to the West. In 2002, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan attempted to revitalize the group and focus on regional collective security through the establishment of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). See “Uzbekistan Rejoins CSTO,” *RFE/RL Newslines*, 18 August 2006, at <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1143698.html>.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Wishnick, Elizabeth: “Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia”, *Strategic Studies Institute*, October 2002, at <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pdf/PUB110.pdf>; Luong, Pauline Jones and Weinthal, Erika: “New Friends, New Foes in Central Asia”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 2 (March/April 2002), p. 69; and Cooley, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-92.

<sup>19</sup> Lieven, Anatol: “A Hypocritical Approach to Russia”, *Financial Times*, 31 May 2006. For further commentary on the United States' alleged hypocrisy in the region, see Peel, Quentin: “America's Muddle in Central Asia”, *Financial Times*, 1 April 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Scheffer, Jaap de Hoop, Speech by NATO Secretary General, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Visit to the Kyrgyz Republic*, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic (19 October 2004).

<sup>21</sup> “U.S. and Russia Agree on Military Transit for Afghanistan”, *USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter, Transatlantic Focus* (10 July 2009), at [http://nato.usmission.gov/Newsletter/transatlantic\\_focus\\_newsletter\\_071009.htm](http://nato.usmission.gov/Newsletter/transatlantic_focus_newsletter_071009.htm).



transit of non-military equipment by ISAF contributors into Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> At the same time however, Russia dislikes the presence of U.S. and NATO forces in a region that it views as properly within the Russian sphere of influence. Its inclination to view NATO as a competitor in the region is also evidenced by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which was officially established in 2001 as an antiterrorism partnership between Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, but was also likely designed to limit U.S. influence in the region.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the SCO called for the United States to close its military bases in Central Asia in 2005—the same year that the United States was evicted from its K-2 base in Uzbekistan.<sup>24</sup>

More recently, Kyrgyzstan, presumably under pressure and promises of economic aid from Russia, announced in early 2009 that it would close a U.S. airbase at Manas that was considered to be a vital refueling and transit point for ISAF.<sup>25</sup> The base had been open since 2001 and its importance had grown after the United States lost the Uzbekistan base. Then, in June 2009, Kyrgyzstan reversed course, announcing that it would allow the base to remain open for an additional year with a one-year renewal option, although rent for the base would increase significantly under the new lease. Kyrgyzstan also tentatively agreed at roughly the same time to allow Russia to establish through the CSTO a second military base on its territory for a period of up to 49 years.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, however, the desire of the Central Asian states to assert some degree of independence from Russia has produced a willingness to engage in varying degrees of practical cooperation with NATO.<sup>27</sup> Given that armed insurgents from Afghanistan have taken advantage of relatively porous borders to infiltrate into Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, the Central Asians understand that the stability of their own states is at least partly tied to the fate of Afghanistan. Consequently, border security is one area in which NATO has enjoyed relatively good cooperation with the Central Asian regimes.<sup>28</sup>

Of these five states, NATO currently enjoys the greatest level of cooperation with Kazakhstan, which, as noted earlier, is the only Central Asian state that currently maintains an IPAP with NATO.<sup>29</sup> Kazakhstan has participated in and hosted PfP training and exercises, and, as a member of NATO's PARP, has been working toward interoperability between its forces and NATO's.<sup>30</sup> The government is also reported to be considering a possible deployment of troops to ISAF in addition to the bilateral assistance it provides for reconstruction purposes.<sup>31</sup> Notably, Kazakhstan volunteered to host the EAPC Security Forum

<sup>22</sup> "NATO's Relations with Russia", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO) (18 March 2009) , at <http://152.152.95.200/issues/nato-russia/topic.html>.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Berman, "The New Battleground", pp. 67-68; Blagov, Sergei: "Nay to NATO in Central Asia", *Transitions Online*, 12 July 2004; and Luong *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>24</sup> Dyer, Geoff and McGregor, Richard: "Opposition to U.S. Inspires 'NATO of the East'", *Financial Times*, 22 June 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Barry, Ellen and Schwirtz, Michael: "Kyrgyzstan Says It Will Close U.S. Base", *New York Times*, 4 February 2009.

<sup>26</sup> "Russia, Kyrgyzstan Sign Base Deal at CSTO Summit", *RFE/RL*, 1 August 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Author telephone interview with former NATO diplomat, 5 August 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Author telephone interview with Department of Defense officials, 19 August 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Author telephone interview with NATO official, 7 August 2009.

<sup>30</sup> "NATO's Relations with Kazakhstan", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO) , updated 24 February 2009, at <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-kazakhstan/index.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Author telephone interview with NATO official, 7 August 2009.





in June 2009. This was the first time that the forum, which focused on Afghanistan, energy security and Central Asian security, had been held outside Europe.<sup>32</sup>

NATO's cooperation with the remaining four Central Asian states is more limited. All, however, are engaged in some level of practical cooperation with the Alliance through PfP and their Individual Partnership Programs (IPP) in the areas of crisis management, civil emergency planning, border security and counter-terrorism cooperation. These partners have also supported the ISAF mission by providing reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, including funding various infrastructure projects.<sup>33</sup> Consistent with decisions reached during the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons works to facilitate cooperation through regular visits to the region where he meets with high-level government officials. NATO also continues to maintain liaison officers for both the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, from NATO's perspective the geostrategic significance of the region to the ISAF mission makes continued cooperation an imperative.

Constructive multilateral political dialogue, on the other hand, has proven to be more challenging. Although NATO does hold so called 28+5 (the 28 NATO members plus the 5 Central Asian states) meetings to discuss Afghanistan, the EAPC remains a highly problematic institution whose ministerial meetings are viewed even by EAPC members themselves as of little utility given the diversity of political systems, interests, and needs currently represented by the individual members of the partnership. As a result, U.S. and NATO relations with Central Asia are largely bilateral despite the existence of the multilateral framework.

NATO also enjoys relatively close cooperation with the Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, although, again, this cooperation takes place largely in a bilateral context. All three states are members of the PfP and EAPC, and all have agreed to contribute or are already contributing troops to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan, which also participates in the NATO stabilization mission in Kosovo has actively supported the ISAF mission from the beginning and, as of July 2009, had approximately 90 troops in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan also maintains an IPAP with NATO and participates in the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism (PAP-T). Armenia, which has contributed troops to both KFOR and Iraq and is also an IPAP participant, announced in July 2009 that it too will send troops to Afghanistan to participate in ISAF. Although the troop contributions of these states are relatively small, both continue to work through PARP toward interoperability with NATO forces and cooperate with NATO in developing crisis management and civil emergency response capabilities.

More recently, Georgia offered in early December 2009 to send nearly 1,000 troops to Afghanistan to serve alongside NATO forces.<sup>35</sup> Although the Obama administration had appealed for more European forces and Georgia's troop contribution will be larger than that

<sup>32</sup> Author telephone and e-mail interviews with members of NATO's international staff, June and August 2009. See also "Security Forum Discusses Key Challenges in Central Asia", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Security Forum*, Astana, Kazakhstan (24-25 June 2009) at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_55920.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_55920.htm).

<sup>33</sup> For further discussion of NATO's cooperation with the 5 Central Asian states, see "Partners in Central Asia", NATO Background, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)* (November 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Author telephone interview with NATO official, 7 August 2009.

<sup>35</sup> See Saakashvili, Mikheil: "Why Georgia Sends Troops to Afghanistan", *Telegraph.co.uk*, 14 December 2009 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/6809222/Why-Georgia-sends-troops-to-Afghanistan.html>.



of any of the Caucasus or Central Asian states as well as that of many NATO members, the administration's decision to accept even an earlier offer of approximately 500 troops was surprising in so far as Georgia's desire to join NATO has been a particular sore point in NATO's relations with Russia, whose cooperation in the region it also needs. Moreover, despite a NATO agreement in late 2008 to establish a NATO-Georgia Commission to assist Georgia in preparing for full membership, NATO-Georgia relations have also been a source of tension within NATO itself. Although the Alliance issued a statement during the 2008 Bucharest Summit declaring that Ukraine and Georgia will ultimately become NATO members, the Allies have been deeply divided over whether these two aspirants should be invited to join MAP.<sup>36</sup>

#### **4. "Other Partners across the Globe"**

The most significant partner contributions to the Afghanistan mission, however, have come not from the existing partnership frameworks that NATO has fostered since the mid-1990s, but rather from non-European allies who are not actual members of any of NATO's formal partnerships, including Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Japan. Frequently referred to as "global partners" (although the official NATO term is now "other partners across the globe," following the brief use of the term "contact countries"), these states have emerged as key contributors to ISAF at a time when many NATO members have been reluctant to provide the troops and other resources deemed critical to the success of the mission by NATO commanders. Australia in particular, has contributed troops at roughly the same level as NATO's own primary contributors.

Although the nature of their contributions has varied, the importance of these non-European allies to the ISAF mission prompted NATO during its 2006 Riga summit to declare that it would now actively seek to enhance its relations with these non-traditional partners. Notably, ISAF was not the first NATO mission in which these global partners had participated. Australia and New Zealand had both contributed troops to NATO's missions in the Balkans, while Japan had served as a major donor in the region. It was participation in the ISAF mission, however, that prompted Australia, in particular, to seek closer relations with NATO, including a greater voice in NATO's decision-making and operational planning for Afghanistan.

In fact, Australia, which has had a strategic relationship with NATO since the 1990s, is the largest non-NATO contributor to ISAF. Its commitments in Afghanistan currently include a Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force tied to a Dutch-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) at Tarin Kowt in Oruzgan Province, a Special Operations Task Group also deployed to Oruzgan province, an Air Force Control and Reporting Centre at the Kandahar airport, and a medical treatment facility, which also supports the Dutch in Tarin Kowt.<sup>37</sup> In late April 2009, Australia announced that it would increase its troop contribution to Afghanistan by 450 soldiers, from 1100 to 1550. The government has also signed an agreement with NATO on the protection of classified information and maintains a defense attache in Brussels, in addition to exchanging high-level visits with NATO. Although New

<sup>36</sup> The United States under the Bush administration supported the invitations while France, Germany and some other Allies opposed them.

<sup>37</sup> "Operation Slipper", *Australian Department of Defence*, at <http://www.defence.gov.au/opEx/global/opslipper/index.htm>; See also "Australia in Afghanistan Briefing Book", *Global Collaborative*, 21 June 2009, at <http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/afghanistan>.



Zealand has deployed a much smaller contingent of troops (160 troops as of July 2009), its contribution to ISAF is also close to or greater than that of many NATO members. Since September 2003, it has led a PRT in Bamian, which was originally under the command of the United States' Operation Enduring Freedom but became an ISAF responsibility in 2006.<sup>38</sup>

South Korea currently has no combat troops in Afghanistan, but it did lead a PRT in Parwan Province under the command of Operation Enduring Freedom until late 2007 when it withdrew all of its military forces. The withdrawal was reportedly part of deal negotiated with Taliban militants aimed at winning the release of South Korean missionaries, who they had taken hostage in the summer of 2007, and occurred just before the Parwan PRT was to be transferred to the ISAF command.<sup>39</sup> Although South Korea has not yet agreed to redeploy combat forces, the government did announce in late October 2009 that it would expand the number of South Korean civilians engaged in reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan and send troops and police officers to assist in the protection on these aid workers.<sup>40</sup>

Japan's contribution is unique among the principal non-NATO, non-partner contributors to ISAF. Although Japan has not committed troops to ISAF, Japanese Maritime Self Defense Forces beginning in 2001 conducted an 8-year refueling operation in the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom---the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. In March 2007, Japan also finalized with NATO a framework for cooperation under which it would provide financial support for humanitarian projects in Afghanistan, with priority given to healthcare and education projects proposed by ISAF PRTs.<sup>41</sup> The commitment followed an address to NATO's North Atlantic Council by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in January 2007. In his speech, Abe had declared that, in the interests of "international peace and stability," Japan would "no longer shy away from carrying out overseas activities involving the SDF" (Self Defense Forces). He also pledged to strengthen cooperation between Japan and NATO with a particular focus on Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup> Since then, the Japanese government has appointed a liaison officer to the office of the NATO Senior Civilian Representative to assist in the screening of potential projects as well as the administration of those approved.<sup>43</sup> Japan's relations with NATO and the United States, however, have cooled significantly since the August 2009 legislative elections, which produced a new governing coalition led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), but which also includes the Social Democratic Party, a firm opponent of international activity by the SDF.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the new government within just

<sup>38</sup> Pan, Esther: "NATO Takes on Afghan Security", *Council on Foreign Relations* (27 July 2006), at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11166>.

<sup>39</sup> "South Korean Hostages Head Back Home from Afghanistan", *New York Times*, 31 August 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Sang-Hun, Choe: "South Korea Says It Plans Afghanistan Deployment", *The New York Times*, 1 November 2009.

<sup>41</sup> "NATO Cooperation with Japan," updated 9 March 2009, NATO Topics, at [http://www.nato.int/issues/nato\\_japan/index.html](http://www.nato.int/issues/nato_japan/index.html).

<sup>42</sup> Abe, Shinzo: "Japan and NATO: Toward Further Collaboration", Statement by Japanese Prime Minister, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), North Atlantic Council*, 12 January 2007, at <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2007/s070112b.html>. For further insight into the thinking underpinning Japan's interest in NATO, see Tsuruoka, Michito: "NATO as a Partner: Multifaceted Motivations and Expectations Outside", *NATO Review*, forthcoming 2010.

<sup>43</sup> "NATO/Japan Cooperation in Afghanistan" Fact Sheet, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Media Operations Center, Press and Media Service*, NATO HQ Brussels, Belgium (October 2008), at [http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/factsheets/nato\\_japan\\_coop.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/factsheets/nato_japan_coop.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Easley, Leif-Eric; Kotani, Tetsuo and Mori, Aki: "Japan's Foreign Policy and the U.S. Alliance", *Real Clear World*, 23 September 2009, at [http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2009/09/23/japans\\_foreign\\_policy\\_the\\_us\\_alliance\\_97196.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2009/09/23/japans_foreign_policy_the_us_alliance_97196.html).



weeks of taking power announced that it would end its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean.<sup>45</sup>

While each of NATO's global partners has its own particular reasons for cooperating with NATO, they all share with the Allies a number of common security challenges, including terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and the dangers of failed states. Not insignificantly, they also share NATO's liberal democratic values. As Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe put it in his address to NATO's North Atlantic Council in January 2007: "We have in common such fundamental values as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is only natural that we cooperate in protecting and promoting those values."

Indeed, the fact that the NATO Allies share both interests and liberal democratic values with these so-called global partners constitutes further reason for them to consider how these relationships might be utilized not only to combat shared threats but also to enlarge further the liberal democratic security order that NATO set out to construct in the early 1990s, beginning in Central and Eastern Europe. To date, however, there has been little progress in this direction largely because the nature of NATO's cooperation with global partners has been a source of controversy within the Alliance itself. In part the controversy is linked to a proposal advanced by the United States and Britain during the 2006 Riga summit calling for the creation of a new political framework or "stability providers forum" designed to draw allies such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea closer to NATO. Although the proposal did not specify the states that would comprise the forum or even utilize the term "global partnership," former U.S. Undersecretary for Political Affairs and Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns, in a press briefing just prior to the Riga summit, gave the impression of a new, narrowly defined political framework on a par with NATO's existing partnerships in characterizing the Alliance "as 26 members and then a mosaic of partnerships in NATO," including PfP, the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the "global partners," which he explicitly identified as Japan, Australia, South Korea, Sweden and Finland.<sup>46</sup> According to one State Department official familiar with the proposal and the discussions surrounding it, while the administration was indeed advocating a new political forum, the intent was not to promote dialogue as an end in itself, but rather to focus on the need for practical cooperation and to recognize formally the extent of NATO's existing cooperation with its non-European allies.<sup>47</sup> The proposal also recognized that despite significant contributions on the part of these states to NATO's military missions, they had no voice in NATO's operational planning in Afghanistan. Nor had they been invited to participate fully in PfP activities and training as had other NATO partners.

The new partnership initiative was also designed to enhance NATO's ability to operate effectively in contexts other than Afghanistan on the assumption that the principal threats to the Alliance would now stem from "complex and unpredictable challenges," including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and failing states, which could emerge "far from member states' borders and arise at short notice."<sup>48</sup> The proposed new framework represented a departure from NATO's existing partnerships in that it constituted a

<sup>45</sup> "Japan to End Afghan Refueling Mission", *RFE/RL*, 13 October 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Burns, R. Nicholas: "Briefing on NATO Issues Prior to Riga Summit", *US Department of State*, Washington DC (21 November 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Author telephone interview with Department of State official, January 2007. On this issue, see also Johnson, David T., Minister: "The New NATO: World Class Capabilities in Global Partnership", Remarks, *UK Defence Forum* (December 2006).

<sup>48</sup> "Comprehensive Political Guidance Endorsed by NATO Heads of State and Government", Riga, Latvia (29 November 2006), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_56425.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_56425.htm).



functional rather than geographical approach to partnership. However, as evidenced in part by former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's repeated assertions that NATO was not becoming a "global alliance," but rather an "alliance with global partners," many Allies were uneasy with the prospect of deepening political ties between NATO and states well beyond the transatlantic area, even though the Bush administration had stressed repeatedly that it was not pushing for the admission of non-European partners into NATO.

To a significant degree, this uneasiness reflected continued internal divisions over just how global NATO's reach should be. The Bush administration had already sought in the aftermath of September 11 to move NATO in a less Euro-centric direction by encouraging the European Allies to engage in an effort to project stability beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, beginning with the Central Asian and Caucasus states but ultimately extending to the Middle East as well. Indeed the administration had sought during the 2004 Istanbul Summit to use the partnership concept to focus greater attention on both regions, ultimately leading to the creation of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. The partnership initiative was intended to complement a broader administration agenda, centered on what the Bush administration initially labeled its Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI). Put forward initially as a set of guidelines for promoting political and economic reform in the Greater Middle East in cooperation with the G-8, the proposal was later revised in a process of consultation with Arab and European governments, ultimately emerging as the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENI). Despite the consultation process, however, key NATO Allies remained uncomfortable with this foray into a region already deeply divided over the Iraq war. Concerns that NATO was already overextended and had lost sight of its core collective security function thus formed part of the backdrop for the 2006 Riga Summit and the controversy that would ensue over the global partners initiative.

The fact that the Bush administration had identified as part of the proposed new consultative framework two states (i.e. Sweden and Finland) that were already members of the EAPC also generated a related concern among some Allies that the United States, by appearing to preference some NATO partners over others, was undermining the EAPC in favor of a more functional partnership structure. In fact, then U.S. Ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland, in calling for the reform of NATO's existing partnerships, including potentially the dissolution of the EAPC, had floated the idea of a new political framework for global partners during NATO's annual partnership conference in Oberammergau, Germany in January 2006.<sup>49</sup> Although the challenges facing the EAPC were well understood, some Allies resented what they perceived as a unilateral effort on the part of the Bush administration to restructure NATO's existing partnerships.<sup>50</sup>

In part the idea of a global partnership was controversial because of a fear on the part of some Allies that global partners were simply a first step toward a global NATO or a NATO with members from outside Europe. Indeed, a number of commentators including the current U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, had explicitly called for opening NATO's door to any liberal democratic state willing to contribute to NATO's responsibilities.<sup>51</sup> Advocacy of a

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<sup>49</sup> Author interview with Department of State official, January 2007. On Nuland's speech, see also Kamp, Karl-Heinz, "'Global Partnership': A New Conflict Within NATO?", der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, *Analysen und Argumente*, no. 29 (2006), p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Author e-mail interview with NATO international staff member, January 2007.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Daalder, Ivo and Goldgeier, James: "Global NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 5 (September/October 2006), p. 10; and "NATO: An Alliance for Freedom: How to Transform the Atlantic Alliance to Effectively Defend our Freedom and Democracies", *FAES (Fundacion para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales)* (2005), p. 40.



more global NATO has also been linked to calls for a Concert of Democracies, an idea first proposed in 2004 by Daalder and James Lindsay.<sup>52</sup> Although controversial, the proposed concert has attracted a substantial following, including the support of 2008 Republican presidential candidate John McCain.<sup>53</sup> The idea was also endorsed in a 2006 report stemming from the Princeton Project on National Security, a bipartisan initiative aimed at developing a “sustainable and effective” U.S. national security strategy for the United States.<sup>54</sup>

Support for a Concert of Democracies rests in part on the assumption that an organization comprised exclusively of liberal democracies would not suffer from the divisions over humanitarian intervention that precluded the U.N. Security Council from responding to a series of crises dating back to the early 1990s, including Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and Darfur. Yet key NATO Allies—while not necessarily opposed to closer cooperation with global partners—have expressed concern that formalizing political ties with non-European allies would undermine NATO’s political cohesion and transform the very nature of the alliance. Former French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, for example, argued in late 2006 that, while the Alliance should try “to improve the practical modalities” of NATO’s relationships with non-NATO states such as Australia and Japan, “the development of a global partnership” could potentially “dilute the natural solidarity between Europeans and North Americans in a vague ensemble.” Then French President Jacques Chirac also argued that cooperation with global partners should be “confined to practical matters and focused on situations that may require military intervention by the alliance and its partners” so as not to distract the Alliance from its central mission as a “guarantor” of members’ collective security.<sup>55</sup>

Like France, Germany also favored greater cooperation with global partners, but with the shared caveat that this cooperation should occur on a “case-by-case” basis and should be driven by expressions of interest from the global partners themselves.<sup>56</sup> A global partnership, both states feared, had the potential to distract the United States from NATO’s collective defense mission and enable it to circumvent the task of developing a consensus within NATO by forming coalitions with like-minded allies outside of NATO.<sup>57</sup> Both France and Germany also expressed concern that a more formal consultative framework would, in the words of Alliot-Marie, “send a bad political message: that of a campaign launched by the West against those who don’t share their ideas.”<sup>58</sup> Germany similarly suggested that transforming NATO

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<sup>52</sup> Daalder and Lindsay’s original proposal called for an “Alliance of Democratic States” that would address challenges ranging from terrorism to weapons proliferation, to global warming in addition to working to advance liberal democratic values. They later adopted the term “Concert of Democracy” to describe the proposed institution. See Daalder, Ivo H. and Lindsay, James M.: “An Alliance of Democracies,” *The Washington Post*, 23 May 2004 and Daalder, Ivo and Lindsay, James: “Democracies of the World Unite,” *The American Interest Online* (Winter 2006-07), at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/aiz/article.cfm?ID+219&MIId=6>.

<sup>53</sup> McCain, John: “An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom,” Speech, *Hoover Institution, Stanford University*, Stanford (May 1, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Ikenberry, G. John and Slaughter, Anne-Marie, (co-directors) (2006): *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security*, The Princeton Project Papers, Princeton, Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

<sup>55</sup> Chirac, Jacques: “France’s Vision for NATO”, *Christian Science Monitor*, vol. 99, no. 2 (28 November 2006).

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Ambassador Dr. Duckwitz, Edmund: “NATO After the Riga Summit”, Speech, *Konrad Adenauer Foundation, European Affairs Office*, 6 December 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Riecke, Henning and Koschut, Simon: “NATO’s Global Aspirations”, *Internationale Politik*, vol. 63, no. 3 (Summer 2008).

<sup>58</sup> Alliot-Marie, Michele: “Don’t diminish NATO’s effectiveness”, *The Washington Times*, 20 October 2006.



into a bloc of “like-minded countries” had the potential to “set a ‘global NATO’ against the rest of the world.”<sup>59</sup>

Europeans were not alone in resisting the creation of a new political forum for global partners. In fact, it appeared that even those most likely to be included in the new framework were not necessarily in favor of the idea. Rather, for a variety of reasons, NATO’s global partners have generally expressed a preference for continuing their cooperation with NATO through more informal mechanisms, although they have continued to seek enhanced dialogue with NATO, including a voice in operational planning.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the absence of consensus on the global partners framework, however, the Allies did agree “to fully develop the political and practical potential of NATO’s existing cooperation programmes” and “increase the operational relevance of relations with non-NATO countries” in two particular ways: First, it was agreed that NATO could “call ad-hoc meetings as events arise” with contributors or potential contributors to NATO missions, including interested “contact countries,” utilizing flexible formats...based on the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and self-differentiation.”<sup>61</sup> The Allies also agreed to make established partnership tools more widely available to interested contact countries and members of the Mediterranean Dialogue and ICI, on a case-by-case basis. Characterized as a move to open up NATO’s “toolbox,” the decision meant that states such as Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, and Japan, would now have greater access to those partnership tools and activities currently available to NATO’s PfP/EAPC members, including training and other educational opportunities at NATO schools.<sup>62</sup>

By the time the Allies met in Bucharest in 2008, they had agreed on Tailored Cooperation Packages (TCPs) with four of the states now referred to as “other partners across the globe;” namely, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. Similar to the individual cooperation programs offered to MD and ICI partners, the TCPs are essentially lists of cooperation activities that have been “tailored” to the individual states based on NATO’s priorities and the particular interests of the partner states.<sup>63</sup> Although the scope and number of activities included in the TCPs are more limited than is true of the cooperation programs offered to other NATO partners, they cover a fairly broad range of activities, including training and education, crisis management, civil emergency planning, and consultation on WMD proliferation. Ultimately, TCPs are intended to promote broad cooperation between NATO and global partners and are not directly tied to involvement in

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<sup>59</sup> Duckwitz, *op. cit.*

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, by the Australian Foreign Minister Downer, Alexander: “NATO in the Age of Global Challenges” Speech, *Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Munich, Germany (10 February 2007), at [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/GCLO6/upload\\_binary/gclo63.pdf;fileType=application/pdf#search=%22P52%20media%20lpa%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/GCLO6/upload_binary/gclo63.pdf;fileType=application/pdf#search=%22P52%20media%20lpa%22).

<sup>61</sup> “Riga Summit Declaration”, Press Release, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*, *Riga Summit*, (2006) 150, Riga, Latvia (29 November 2006).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*; “NATO After Riga: Prevailing in Afghanistan, Improving Capabilities, Enhancing Cooperation”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*, *NATO Public Diplomacy Division*, p. 6; and author telephone interview with U.S. Department of State official, January 2007. See also Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Erdmann, Martin: “The PfP Planning Symposium”, Interview, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)* (16 January 2007), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2007/s070116a.html>.

<sup>63</sup> “Bucharest Summit Declaration”, Press Release, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*, *Bucharest Summit*, (2008) 049, Bucharest, Romania (3 April 2008), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm?selectedLocale=en) and author e-mail interview with NATO international staff member, 20 January 2009.



Afghanistan. To date, however, the focus has been on Afghanistan with a particular interest in promoting interoperability with NATO forces.<sup>64</sup>

No additional TCPs had been agreed as of fall 2009, but NATO officials note that more are possible. One of the most likely candidates at present is Singapore, which agreed during NATO's 2008 summit in Bucharest to send a small number of troops to Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> NATO, in fact, cited Singapore, along with Australia, Japan and New Zealand, for a "significant contribution" to the ISAF mission in the declaration issued at the conclusion of the summit.<sup>66</sup> In short, there continues to exist strong support within the Alliance in favor of increased practical cooperation with other partners across the globe as long as it takes place on a case-by-case basis rather than through new institutions or political frameworks.<sup>67</sup>

That said, NATO has perhaps been less successful in engaging global partners in dialogue utilizing flexible formats than was envisioned in the Riga communiqué. The term consultations "in a flexible format" refers to meetings that occur between the 28 NATO members plus various groups of partners, including the EAPC, ICI, MD or subgroups of these partners. Although NATO had hoped to use this format to respond to the appeals of some global partners for a greater say in NATO decision-making, to date meetings with the global partners have largely been limited to an ISAF context or format — specifically troop contributors meetings at the level of defense minister and ambassador. Although such meetings occur fairly regularly —approximately once a month—and provide an opportunity for policy coordination, the global partners seeking a larger role in NATO's decision making have not been completely satisfied.<sup>68</sup> Global partners who are KFOR contributors also meet with NATO in KFOR format, but these contributors' meetings preceded the Riga summit and would have occurred even without the additional efforts to enhance engagement with global partners. NATO officials also acknowledge that, aside from the contributors' meetings, there currently exist no other forums in which global partners might meet collectively.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, although former NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer spoke in mid-2008 of NATO's cooperation with global partners as a "model for the future," very little attention has been devoted to these relationships outside the context of Afghanistan.<sup>70</sup> As one Pentagon official responsible for NATO policy observed, the attention devoted to these relationships has not yet been very "forward looking." Rather all relationships have been viewed through the lens of Afghanistan with a focus on "what can you do for us now?" as opposed to how NATO might shape relations with global partners over the long term.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Author telephone interview with Pentagon officials, 19 August 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Author telephone interview with member of NATO's international staff, July 2009.

<sup>66</sup> "Bucharest Summit Declaration", *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, "Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, PR (2009) 044*, Strasbourg-Kehl, France-Germany (4 April 2009), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease).

<sup>68</sup> Author interviews with former NATO diplomat, 5 August 2009, and NATO official, 7 August 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Author interviews with NATO officials and diplomats, August 2009.

<sup>70</sup> NATO Secretary General, Scheffer, Jaap de Hoop: "NATO: The Next Decade", Speech, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Security and Defence Agenda*, Brussels, Belgium (3 June 2008), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2008/s080603a.html>.

<sup>71</sup> Author telephone interview Department of Defense official, 18 August 2009.





## 5. Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and India

NATO's tendency to direct partnership activities toward Afghanistan is also evident in a recent decision to offer both Pakistan and Afghanistan additional access to NATO's "toolbox" or partnership activities—just as it has done with MD and ICI partners. NATO already maintains strategic partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan through the Tripartite Commission, which brings together representatives from ISAF, the Afghan National Army and the Pakistan Army to discuss military and security issues in four principal areas: intelligence sharing, border security, countering improvised explosive devices, and initiatives related to information operations. The commission holds regular meetings at various levels and offers an opportunity to exchange views, discuss security matters of mutual concern, and coordinate operations. It also maintains a joint intelligence center at ISAF Headquarters in Kabul for the purpose of facilitating coordination between its members.<sup>72</sup>

NATO's cooperation with Pakistan dates back to October 2005 when the Alliance deployed its new NATO Response Force to provide humanitarian assistance following a devastating earthquake. NATO has maintained high level exchanges with Pakistan since former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's visit there in May 2007 and has allowed Pakistani officers to participate in select NATO training and education courses in the areas of peace support operations, civil-military cooperation and defense against terrorism.<sup>73</sup> According to NATO officials, it was in part Pakistan's considerable appetite for NATO assistance that prompted the Allies to agree to make additional partnership activities available.<sup>74</sup>

NATO also maintains an informal dialogue with China, although high level contacts remain limited. According to NATO officials and diplomats, even though China has demonstrated considerable interest in learning more about NATO initiatives, that interest falls short of desiring real partnership with NATO.<sup>75</sup> Efforts to develop closer NATO-China relations could also prove divisive within the Alliance. Yet, given NATO's involvement in Central Asia and the increasingly global nature of the challenges NATO confronts, including the threat posed by North Korea, enhanced dialogue between NATO and China could potentially be useful. Similarly, there is a good case to be made for closer ties between NATO and India, particularly given the stake that India has in the outcome of events in Afghanistan and Pakistan. To date, however, there exists no formal contact between NATO and India.

The above suggests that the experience of conducting a military mission in Afghanistan has fostered a growing awareness of the need for a broad range of partners, including global partners, if NATO is to enhance its capacity to address global threats. Indeed, troop contributions from Australia and other global partners have proven themselves essential to the ISAF mission given the reality that many NATO Allies have been unable or unwilling to produce the number of troops recommended by NATO commanders and the fact that caveats

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<sup>72</sup> "Border Security: Promoting Cooperation Between Afghanistan and Pakistan", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*, at <http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/border-security/index.html>, and Ross, Mike: "Pakistan: A Test of Transatlantic Co-operation", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 034 PCTR09 E*, at <http://www.nato.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1775>.

<sup>73</sup> "First Visit by Top Pakistani Officer to NATO," *NATO News*, 17 November 2006, at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_22086.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_22086.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>74</sup> Author telephone interviews with NATO officials, August 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Author interviews with former NATO diplomat, 5 August 2009, and former Department of Defense official, September 2009.



remain with respect to where many of the troops that Europe has produced can be deployed. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that those who have pushed for NATO's partnerships to become more functional and less focused on geography have prevailed. Although the ISAF mission has fostered a recognition of the need for further discussion regarding the role of global partners, it has also precluded that debate from taking place in any meaningful way, in part because NATO's time, energy, and resources have been focused on Afghanistan.

## **6. Institutional Partners**

NATO's experience in Afghanistan, along with its missions in the Balkans and Iraq, has also been instrumental to the evolution of its new Comprehensive Approach, which seeks to enhance the civil-military cooperation that has proved so vital to the stabilization and reconstruction missions that NATO has undertaken since the 1990s. In so far as it involves the expansion and deepening of NATO's relations with other international institutions and organizations, including the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the Arab League, as well as a wide variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Comprehensive Approach is itself a partnership initiative, which recognizes the deficiencies of a purely military approach to dealing with 21<sup>st</sup> century threats. First promoted by Denmark in 2005, the initiative was formally placed on NATO's agenda at the 2006 Riga summit, where the Allies then agreed to consider how NATO might create a framework for a more comprehensive approach to crisis management and conflict resolution operations.<sup>76</sup> Underpinning the decision, was an assumption that NATO will continue to be engaged in stabilization and democratization missions for the foreseeable future, coupled with a realization that the successful conduct of such missions will require close coordination with other institutions that possess relevant expertise and resources. As U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has observed, "war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century does not have stark divisions between civilian and military components. It is a continuous scale that slides from combat operations to economic development, governance and reconstruction—frequently all at the same time."<sup>77</sup>

In 2008 at Bucharest, NATO then endorsed an Action Plan aimed at developing and implementing a Comprehensive Approach. The Action Plan, which NATO tasked the NAC with implementing, comprised a set of proposals aimed broadly at enhancing practical cooperation at all levels with other actors/institutions that have experience and skills in the areas of institution building, development, governance, judiciary, and police.<sup>78</sup> Although development of the Comprehensive Approach is considered a long-term, ongoing effort that will be subject to regular review, NATO is currently developing proposals in five areas: improved practical cooperation at all levels with relevant organizations and actors in the planning and conduct of operations; the development of joint training of civilian and military personnel to promote sharing of lessons learned and build confidence between NATO, its partners and other international and local actors; extensive civil-military interaction with other relevant organizations and actors on a regular basis; efforts to ensure that the public information strategies of main actors complement each other; improved military support of stabilization and reconstruction at all phases and better coordination of NATO's military

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<sup>76</sup> For more on Denmark's role in promoting the Comprehensive Approach Initiative, see Fischer, Kristian and Christensen, Jan Top: "Improving Civil-Military Cooperation the Danish Way," *NATO Review* (Summer 2005).

<sup>77</sup> Gates, Robert, Speech by US Defense Secretary, *Munich Conference on Security Policy*, Munich, Germany (10 February 2008).

<sup>78</sup> "Bucharest Summit Declaration, Press Release", *op. cit.*



efforts in this area with those of partners and other international and non-governmental organizations.<sup>79</sup>

One essential element in the development of the Comprehensive Approach will be a stronger partnership between NATO and the EU. Since 2001, the two organizations have worked together to facilitate military cooperation, first by ensuring that the EU would have access to NATO's planning capabilities in conducting its own military operations and later permitting the EU access to NATO assets and capabilities for EU-led operations under what became known as the "Berlin-Plus rules."<sup>80</sup> These rules, however, are not particularly relevant to Afghanistan because the EU's contributions there have been of a purely civilian nature.

This is not to suggest, however, that the EU's role in Afghanistan is without implications for the ISAF mission. To the contrary, the success of ISAF mission depends upon the civilian resources the EU has committed to Afghanistan. In November 2005, the EU signed with the Afghan government an EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration in November 2005 through which the EU committed itself to work toward consolidating a democratic political system, including "responsible and accountable government institutions, strengthening the rule of law, and safeguarding human rights (including the rights of women) and the development of civil society."<sup>81</sup> In June 2007, the EU also began a Rule of Law mission (EUPOL), followed by efforts to promote judicial reform and funding for civilian projects being conducted by EU-member state-led PRTs under the command of NATO.<sup>82</sup>

Recognizing the need for NATO-EU cooperation in Afghanistan, NATO included the EU in its ISAF contributors' meeting in Bucharest in 2008, and the two organizations have held regular ministerial meetings. What cooperation exists on the ground in Afghanistan, however, is largely informal, and NATO's new Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has called for the EU to do more to assist the process of civil reconstruction in Afghanistan.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the conflict stemming from the division of Cyprus, and Turkey's continuing refusal to recognize the Republic of Cyprus, which is an EU member, continues to stand as an obstacle to closer NATO-EU cooperation in so far as Turkey typically blocks within NATO any initiatives requiring cooperation with Cyprus. Disagreement also persists among the Allies as to what tasks properly belong to NATO and which belong to the EU. As Stephanie Hofmann and Ken Weisbrode have put it, "NATO and the EU now coexist with a confusing and ambiguous set of overlapping tasks, with no clear functional or geographical division of labor in the cards anytime soon."<sup>84</sup>

NATO has also explicitly recognized that development of the Comprehensive Approach depends upon close cooperation between NATO and the United Nations. In fact, ISAF is a

<sup>79</sup> "A Comprehensive Approach", NATO Topics, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_51633.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_51633.htm); For a thorough discussion of the evolution of the Comprehensive Approach by two of its strongest advocates, see Petersen, Friis Arne and Binnendijk, Hans: "The Comprehensive Approach Initiative: Future Operations for NATO", Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, *Defense Horizons* (September 2007), p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> See "NATO's Relations with the European Union", *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO), at <http://www.nato.int/issues/natu-eu/index.html>.

<sup>81</sup> "EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration: Committing to a new EU-Afghan Partnership", *European Union* (UE), *Council of the European Union*, 14519/05 (*Presse* 299), Strasbourg, France (16 November 2005).

<sup>82</sup> "NATO's Relations with the European Union", *op. cit.*

<sup>83</sup> Kennedy, Stephanie: "NATO Chief Wants More EU Help in Afghanistan", *ABC News*, 3 August 2009, at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/04/2645454.htm>.

<sup>84</sup> Hofmann, Stephanie and Weisbrode, Ken: "EU and NATO: Interlocking or Interblocking?", *World Politics Review* (1 May 2009), at <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articlePrint.aspx?ID=3680>.



U.N. mandated force, which has enlarged its presence in Afghanistan through a series of U.N. resolutions. NATO has pledged to support the U.N. Mission in Afghanistan's lead role in coordinating the civilian effort in Afghanistan, and invited NATO Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, along with his special representative for Afghanistan, to its 2008 Bucharest summit.<sup>85</sup> Not long after that summit in September 2008, NATO and the UN issued a Joint UN-NATO Declaration through which they agreed to establish a framework for expanded consultation and cooperation in areas such as communication and information-sharing; capacity-building, training and exercises; and operational coordination and support.<sup>86</sup>

## **7. The Role of NATO's Partners**

As suggested above, the experience of conducting a mission in Afghanistan has magnified the importance of establishing cooperative working relationships with partners outside of Europe. Indeed, the increasingly global reach of NATO's partnerships is understood to be vital to addressing global challenges, and the persistent widening of NATO's circle of partnerships is, itself, a testament to the perceived success of the concept. Yet, as NATO's partnerships have multiplied and expanded beyond Europe, the growing diversity of their members has also served to generate important questions about the structure and purpose of these relationships, including NATO's very first partnerships: the Partnership for Peace and the EAPC. Although these institutions once played a key role in preparing aspirants for membership, three rounds of post-Cold War enlargement have led to significant changes in both their membership and function. None of the Central Asian states have demonstrated any interest in NATO membership and most would not qualify because of their lack of democratic credentials. Moreover, while the EAPC and PfP remain multilateral frameworks, NATO's relations with the Central Asian partners are essentially bi-lateral relationships, with NATO's interest in continued partnership driven largely by the proximity of these states to Afghanistan. NATO's mission in Afghanistan has also generated, not only significant interest in developing relations with partners outside of Europe, but also new questions as to whether the role of these so-called global partners should be limited to contributions of troops or other military capabilities on an ad hoc basis, or whether non-European states who share NATO's values should play a larger role in shaping a global order more favorable to NATO's interests and values. As Ronald Asmus has put it, the Allies must ask whether partnerships with Australia or Japan are "really just about squeezing more troops and money out of them for NATO-led missions" or whether they should "be about building strategic relationships in new and important regions."<sup>87</sup>

Ultimately, one of the key questions that arises in any discussion about the future of NATO's relations with its partners is whether the Alliance should move toward a partnership model that is grounded on functional considerations rather than regional identity. Indeed, NATO's interest in partners in Central Asia has been less about integration than about acquiring capabilities and access to a particular geographic location. NATO's efforts to

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<sup>85</sup> "ISAF's Strategic Vision", Press Release, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*, (2008) 052 (3 April 2008), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-052e.html>.

<sup>86</sup> "NATO's Relations with the United Nations", NATO Topics, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)*, updated 25 September 2009, at [http://www.otan.nato.int/cps/en/SID-0B464EE4-6CD3D483/natolive/topics\\_50321.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.otan.nato.int/cps/en/SID-0B464EE4-6CD3D483/natolive/topics_50321.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>87</sup> Asmus, Ron: "Bucharest: the Place Where Answers Take Place?", *NATO Review* (March 2003), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2008/03/ART4/EN/index.htm>.



enhance cooperation with global partners suggest an even stronger shift in the direction of a more functional and less regional approach to partnership.

Yet, despite a broad consensus regarding the need for all partnerships to become more functional, as evidenced by the controversy over global partners at Riga, many of the Allies have been leery of attempts to emphasize the functional attributes of partnership at the expense of a regional focus. In fact, intra-alliance discussion of the topic has to date largely been avoided. Rather the prevalent assumption has been that NATO works better in practice than in theory, and the United States, in particular, has tried to push NATO in an increasingly global direction by focusing on opportunities for practical cooperation rather than encouraging intra-alliance discussion regarding the larger vision NATO's partnerships are intended to serve.

The reluctance to engage in such conversation has been partly driven by a belief that practical cooperation and initiatives have outpaced where NATO is at theoretically. As then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State for European Affairs Daniel Fried put it in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in June 2007: "The tools that NATO needs to succeed in Afghanistan—from combat forces, to peacekeeping, to global partners, to coordination with civilian donors and institutions largely define the directions in which NATO must grow in the future."<sup>88</sup> Former U.S. Ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland made essentially this same point just prior to the Riga summit. In her words:

"When Allied Heads of State meet in Riga they will contemplate an Alliance that has grown stronger both politically and operationally because, in large measure, of NATO's commitment in Afghanistan. This has resulted in a powerful irony. While the North Atlantic Council documents reflect continuing disagreement over the nature and extent of the Alliance's power, the demands of everyday operations have forced NATO to blow past the theoretical limitations on its missions. For example, the concept of NATO global partnerships—indeed, the very term—has been controversial. The practice of global partnerships, however, is a reality today on the ground."<sup>89</sup>

Yet, practical cooperation can only go so far without a core consensus about the structure and purpose of these partnerships. Indeed, Rasmussen stated in his first speech as NATO Secretary General that "the moment has come for the theory to catch up with the practice."<sup>90</sup> A senior level U.S. official responsible for NATO policy also suggests that there is now a consensus emerging across the Alliance that the existing "alphabet soup" of partnerships "needs to be streamlined" and that NATO can no longer ignore the question of how to structure NATO's relationships with new partners like Australia.

The fact that there may be a growing consensus in favor of taking a more strategic perspective on the issue on NATO's partnerships, however, does not mean that the ongoing debates will be easily resolved. In fact, NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels in December 2009 declared that, while they intended "to work towards enhancing [NATO's] partnership policy," they were also committed to "preserving the specificity of each

<sup>88</sup> Fried, Daniel: "The Future of NATO: How Valuable an Asset?", Testimony, *US House Committee on Foreign Relations* (22 June 2007).

<sup>89</sup> Nuland, Victoria: "NATO's Mission in Afghanistan: Putting Theory into Practice", *NATO Review*, no. 4 (Winter 2006), at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/issue4/english/art3.html>.

<sup>90</sup> Rasmussen, Anders Fogh: "The New NATO", Press conference by NATO Secretary General, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation* (NATO) (3 August 2009), at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_56776.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_56776.htm).



partnership.”<sup>91</sup> This caveat suggests a continued reluctance on the part of at least some Allies to abandon the regional nature of NATO’s existing partnerships. Indeed, given that NATO’s partnerships currently all have a geographical basis, one particularly difficult issue that will need to be addressed if the debate is to move forward has to do with the importance of a common regional and cultural identity to the continuing appeal and cohesion of the partnership concept.

In this context, it’s notable that, beginning in the early 1990s, NATO increasingly identified itself, not so much as an Alliance devoted to a specific piece of territory but rather as an ever-widening community of liberal democratic states. That trend prompted Ron Asmus to ask at the time of the Riga Summit: “Will NATO...continue to see itself as an exclusively American-European alliance that increasingly works closely with non-European partners? Or should NATO define itself as the military arm of the Western democratic world and, therefore be open to close partnerships with other non-European democracies that could eventually become strategic in nature and even grow into membership at some point in the future.”<sup>92</sup>

Ultimately, however, this is a debate that extends beyond partnership issues to the very purpose and identity of NATO, including—as evidenced by debates over NATO’s role in Afghanistan—a long-standing division over just how global NATO’s reach and composition should be. Indeed, as one member of NATO’s international staff put it, the continuing controversy over NATO’s partners—its global partners in particular—is in effect a “proxy war” over the very nature and future direction of the Alliance.<sup>93</sup> For some members, NATO’s decision to take on Afghanistan was a move in the right direction, although the Alliance has a long way to go in achieving the global force and counterinsurgency capabilities necessary to meet the challenges posed by Afghanistan and other potential conflicts. For others, however, NATO has gone astray; the Alliance must return to basics and refocus its attention on its Article 5 commitment to the collective defense of NATO territory. Until the missions that partnership is intended to serve are clarified, the controversies over the form and function of NATO’s partnerships will continue.

The process of drafting a new Strategic Concept, which NATO formally launched on July 7, 2009 presents an opportunity to begin to address the issue of NATO’s larger strategic vision and the role of partnership in facilitating that mission. As one Obama administration official observed, the tendency at NATO since September 11 has been to focus on capabilities, but the time has now come to take a step back and consider the future of NATO from a more strategic perspective.<sup>94</sup> Ironically, the demands of Afghanistan have both precluded this debate, and, at the same time, highlighted the need for NATO to articulate a longer-term vision and align its theory with its practice. How much of a role NATO’s partners—formal and informal—will have in shaping that vision is yet unclear, but Secretary General Rasmussen has pledged that the process of drafting the new Strategic Concept will be an open and transparent one and that all of NATO’s partners will have a voice in it. In fact, NATO invited all of its partners—including the global partners—to the July 7 meeting launching the process. As NATO’s 2010 Summit in Lisbon approaches, the Alliance should

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<sup>91</sup> “Final Statement of the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers”, Press Release, *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), North Atlantic Council, Foreign Ministers*, (2009) 190, Brussels, Belgium (4 December 2009).

<sup>92</sup> Asmus, Ronald D.: “Introduction to NATO and Global Partners, Views from the Outside”, *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, Riga, Latvia (November 27-29, 2006), p. 2, at <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/article.cfm?id=238>.

<sup>93</sup> Author interview with a NATO international staff member, January 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Author interview with Department of Defense official, August 2009.



seize the opportunity to contemplate in a careful and comprehensive fashion how NATO's own interests might be served by working with a broad array of partners in contexts outside of Afghanistan.

## **8. Conclusion**

At this juncture of NATO's post-Cold war evolution, it is reasonable to assume that, as the Allies confront an increasingly global array of new threats, the need for cooperation with an increasingly diverse pool of partners will only grow. Additionally, the Afghanistan experience highlights the extent to which NATO's partnership model has set new international standards for interoperability. As Damon Wilson of the Atlantic Council observed, "NATO often should be the organizing core around which broader coalitions are built."<sup>95</sup> Moreover, NATO has now proven in Afghanistan its ability to work with like-minded allies as well as partners that do not share its values, despite the challenges such relationships present.

At the same time, however, this experience strongly suggests that NATO's partnership structures are in need of an overhaul. NATO must now think carefully and comprehensively about how it can best structure partnerships with an increasingly diverse set of partners and what the principal objectives of these partnerships will be. On the one hand, it makes sense for NATO to strengthen its relations with partners who share its values and consider how they might together work to promote shared values and interests even beyond the context of Afghanistan. The ISAF experience, however, also highlights the need for NATO to establish functional relationships with non-liberal partners such as Pakistan, the Central Asian states and possibly even China. The vast majority of NATO's MD and ICI partners already fall into this category. Moreover, Rasmussen has now identified enhanced engagement with the MD and ICI partners as one of his top three priorities.<sup>96</sup> As suggested earlier the extent of NATO's involvement in this region has been a source of disagreement within the Alliance, but key Allies, including France and Germany now appear more willing to play an active role in the Middle East, partly in exchange for Turkey's reluctant support of Rasmussen's selection as Secretary General.

These developments only further the need for NATO to think seriously about how to promote interoperability and dialogue with partners across a wide range of areas of mutual interest and geographic space. At the same time, NATO will almost certainly have to recognize different categories of partners, think seriously about the purposes or functions these various partners might serve, and then consider what sort of structures best facilitate those goals. In some cases, bi-lateral frameworks will likely make more sense than multi-lateral frameworks, even though NATO's experience with partnership during the 1990s suggests that a common identity can serve as a powerful source of cohesion and attraction.

The experience of working with global partners in Afghanistan should also force NATO to contemplate seriously its own identity and purpose. Indeed, NATO's growing network of partnerships is already contributing to changing perceptions of who properly belongs to the NATO community. Should NATO remain an exclusively Euro-Atlantic alliance when there exist non-European allies who share its values, and, in some cases, are more willing than

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<sup>95</sup> Wilson, Damon, Testimony by the director of the Atlantic Council's International Security Program on the Future of NATO, *US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Europe* (6 May 2009), at <http://www.acus.org/highlights/damon-wilson-congressional-testimony-future-nato>.

<sup>96</sup> Rasmussen, *op. cit.*



existing NATO members to deploy troops in defense of those values? Although much of the interest in global partners has been driven by their capacity to contribute much needed troops or other material resources to ISAF, allies such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan are also full-fledged liberal democracies who are not only well-positioned to cooperate on other issues such as counter-terrorism and non-proliferation, but could also potentially play a role in furthering the liberal international security order that NATO has sought to construct since the end of the Cold War. Interestingly, in his confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee the new U.S. ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, characterized NATO as “an Alliance of Democracies, of like-minded nations that share common values, and are willing, if necessary to fight for these values—as we and our Allies are doing right now in Afghanistan.”<sup>97</sup> That reality alone should encourage the Allies to consider seriously how the fact, that NATO’s values have now been embraced well beyond the borders of Europe, should affect its sense of self and purpose.

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<sup>97</sup> Ivo H. Daalder, Testimony, *US Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (22 April 2009).