

NATO: WORLDWIDE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY

THE FUTURE OF NATO LIES IN FUNDAMENTAL EXPANSION

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The primary problem that NATO faces two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union is a lack of clear and pertinent purpose. With the increasingly popular, shared belief that true democracies do not fight each other and with no apparent reason to doubt the enduring stability of this “liberal zone of peace,” NATO must redefine its purpose as the protector of “individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law,” as outlined in NATO’s New Strategic Concept, by admitting its closest partners from around the world as full members of the organization. These values will better be protected and NATO’s purpose better received by the public if NATO shows a true commitment to democracy in general by expanding beyond the transatlantic alliance to incorporate our longtime partner democracies, including Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand.

I understand that the purpose of NATO was originally to embody the transatlantic alliance in a militarily influential manner and to strengthen the bond between the United States and Europe so as to promote the security of both. However, in a time when our values of democracy and human rights have the potential to expand beyond their traditional Western sphere of influence and establish roots in the Middle East and the Far East, a concrete alliance that includes democracies worldwide who are committed to the same objectives as the current NATO members is exactly what we need to promote a lasting peace and to create a solid alliance that goes beyond continental bounds. The fact that the foundation of NATO is rooted in democratic values must be proven by NATO’s openness to the inclusion of members whose governments have consistently reflected the same values, regardless of their geographic location. At the point at which all nations fighting for a common cause come together as equal members and the identification between the nations becomes the common cause, as opposed to the outdated purpose for the foundation of the organization, NATO will prove its commitment to democratic ideals.

Such expansion of the alliance would not only create a greater pooling of resources and stronger support for NATO in otherwise “out-of-area” regions, but it would also transform the solely European sentiment, take the focus off of the fact that the organization began as a means for American presence in Europe, and modernize the mission and identity of NATO. If NATO is to serve any purpose in the world today, if its enormous potential is to be realized, then divisions between member countries (or continents, rather) must be dissolved and support for the objective of protecting and promoting democracy and human rights must be emphasized so as to create unity and garner public approval. NATO has the capability to

create stability in otherwise very destructive conflicts, and expanding its membership will only enhance its ability to do so—partially because having NATO presence in all areas of the world is advantageous, but primarily because to include other democracies and create continental diversity will convey a new message to the public of relevant unity and thus mobilize their support behind NATO’s mission.

Wherein lies the future of NATO? It seems quite obvious based on the current trend of the inclusion of countries in Eastern Europe, the worldwide spread of democracy and liberalism, and the trends of globalization: NATO’s natural course is one of expansion. The organization’s literal and symbolic acceptance of democracies beyond the borders of Europe and the United States will enter the alliance into the new age in which democracies across the world unite to promote our cause, strengthen our mutual security, heighten our global awareness, and enhance our ability to respond to crises and threats.

NATO’S EASTWARD EXPANSION

The U.S.-backed membership bids of Ukraine and Georgia irk Russia and divide Europe.

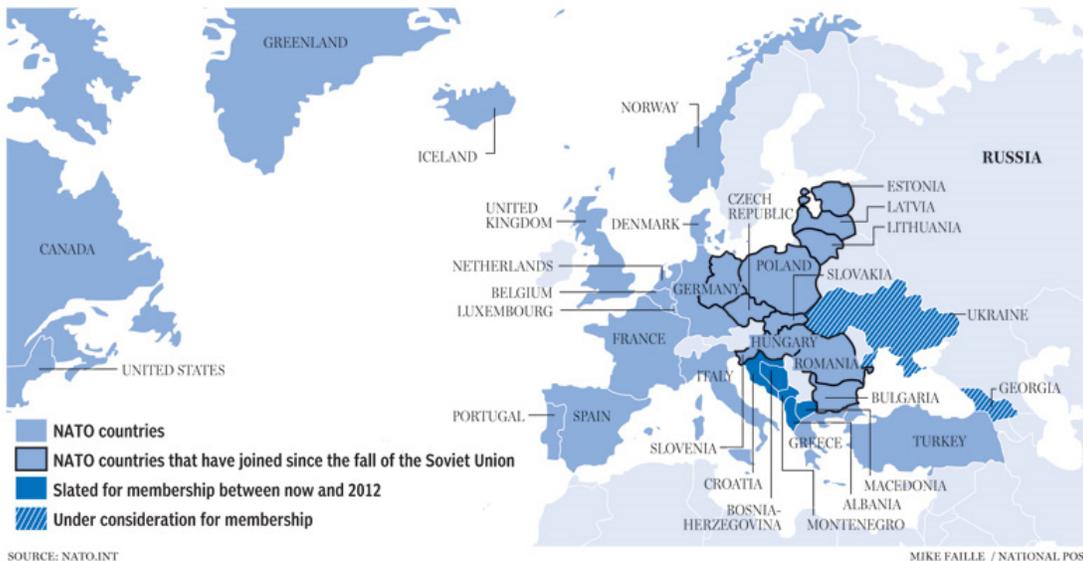


Fig. 1: (Berry, 2002)