



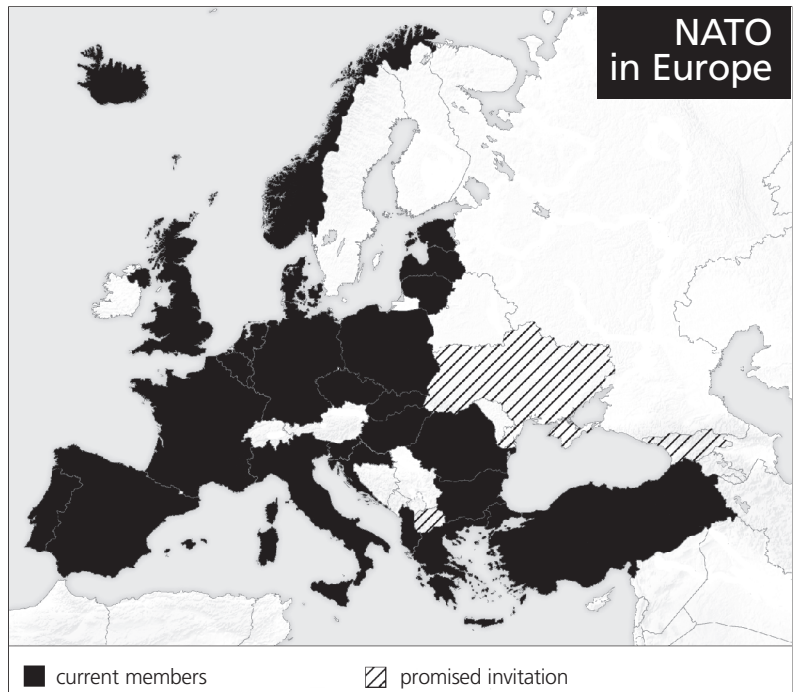
No to NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was founded in 1949, as a defensive organisation, in the early years of the Cold War. Its initial members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the UK and the USA. The Warsaw Pact was founded in response, by the then Soviet Union and its allies, in 1955. In the 1950s, Greece, Turkey and West Germany also joined NATO, followed by Spain in 1982.

At the end of the Cold War, the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, but NATO was not. The hopes of many people at the time – that a peaceful new world order would develop – were not fulfilled. Rather than scaling back its global military presence, the US moved to fill the positions vacated by its previous rival. Nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than with the expansion of NATO. As the countries of eastern Europe embraced free market economics and

multiparty democracy, the US moved rapidly to integrate them into its sphere of influence via NATO. This was an effective strategy – indicated by the ‘new Europe’ issue at the time of the war on Iraq – with Poland vigorously backing the US, against the ‘old Europe’ of Germany and France.

The first steps towards new full-membership were taken via the Partnerships for Peace programme from 1994. In March 1999, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic were all admitted to full membership. Ten days later they found themselves at war with their neighbour Yugoslavia, as part of NATO’s illegal bombing campaign. But the change at that time was not limited to NATO expansion. At NATO’s fiftieth anniversary



conference in Washington in April 1999, a new ‘Strategic Concept’, was adopted. This moved beyond NATO’s previous defensive role to include ‘out of area’ – in other words offensive – operations. The geographical area for action was now defined as the entire Eurasian landmass.

In March 2004, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were admitted to NATO – not only former Warsaw Pact members, but also former Soviet republics in the case of the Baltic states. In 2009, Albania and Croatia also became members. This scale of expansion has contributed to



international tension as Russia sees itself being surrounded by US and NATO bases, including in the Balkans, the Middle East and central Asia. Potential membership for Georgia and the Ukraine, pursued by President Bush, was extremely controversial, contributing to a conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008. Whilst NATO still states its openness to their membership, no recent steps have been taken to that end.

Out of area activity

Over the last few years, the US drive for global domination has become increasingly active in military terms. NATO has become a vehicle for this process, in particular with the war on Afghanistan. This has been a NATO-led war since 2003, when NATO assumed control of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), established in 2002. By the end of 2010, there were over 130,000 troops from 48 countries in Afghanistan under the auspices of ISAF, with NATO members providing most of the force.

Global reach?

NATO released a new Strategic Concept at its summit in Portugal in November 2010, entitled *Active Engagement, Modern Defence*. It recommits to an expansive and interventionist military agenda with a projected global reach that sets back the cause of peace and nuclear disarmament. This includes an expansion of its area of work to ‘counter-terrorism, cyber-security, and the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons’ and, in the words of David Cameron, ‘securing failed states on the other side of the world’. The Summit also agreed to integrate the US missile defence system with a European theatre missile defence programme under the auspices of NATO. But concerns remain that missile defence will enable the US to attack another country without fear of retaliation. Attempts are currently being made by NATO to secure closer relations with Russia to remove its opposition to missile defence and gain its cooperation over Afghanistan and Iran.

A nuclear-armed alliance

NATO is also a nuclear-armed alliance and up to 200 US B61 nuclear bombs are stationed in five countries across

Europe – Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy and Turkey. There is strong opposition to these weapons, including from the governments of some of the ‘host’ nations. This has created tension within the NATO leadership as the US has refused to remove the bombs but the issue will continue to be controversial until they are taken away.

NATO’s nuclear policies conflict with the legal obligations of the signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Articles 1 and 2 of the NPT forbid the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states, but US/NATO nuclear weapons in Europe are located in non-nuclear weapons states. In spite of a recent softening of language on nuclear issues, and verbal gestures towards a nuclear-free vision, NATO continues to assert its need to retain nuclear weapons. As the new Strategic Concept states: ‘The supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces’. It rejects a policy of ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons. In other words, NATO would be prepared to use nuclear weapons in a first strike.

The UK’s nuclear weapons system has been assigned to NATO since the 1960s. Ultimately, this means that the UK’s nuclear weapons could be used against a country attacking (or threatening to attack) one of the NATO member states since an attack on one NATO member state is seen as being an attack on all member states. Potentially, since the 1999 rewrite of NATO’s mission, they could also be used outside the NATO area in a first strike capacity.

The way forward

CND believes that a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament would be achieved with the removal of all US nuclear weapons from European bases. Britain should also withdraw from NATO, and all foreign military bases on British soil should be closed. NATO should not be expanded but should be disbanded and the influence, resources and funding of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) extended towards a nuclear-free, less militarised and therefore more secure Europe.

