

NATO at 60

Disbanding is the only option – not expanding or rebranding

Vijay Mehta
vijay@vmpeace.org

NATO was formed in 1949 to defend Europe against the growing power of the Soviet Union. The original members were Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Canada, Portugal, Italy, Norway, Denmark and Iceland.

The first secretary-general of the alliance, the British General Hastings Ismay, joked that the purpose of the organization was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

Proponents of disbanding the alliance say that purpose was fulfilled in 1991, with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the alliance of the former Soviet Union and its satellite states. From then onwards NATO has been trying for the past 20 years to re-purpose itself for some other mission. It is called NATO yet it is called for military incursions in places like Afghanistan serving mainly US interests.

FOR the past six decades, the pledge by America, Canada and their European friends that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" has kept the West together. That vow—in Article 5 of NATO's charter—helped to see off Soviet communism. That purpose is lost. Now it is fighting a war in Afghanistan yet this is not the reason it should exist.

Framework for cooperation

NATO and EU officials meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common interest. Meetings take place at different levels including at the level of foreign ministers, ambassadors, military representatives and defence advisors. There are regular staff contacts between NATO's International Staff and International Military Staff, and the European Union's Council Secretariat and Military Staff as well as the European Defence Agency.

Permanent military liaison arrangements have been established to facilitate cooperation at the operational level. A NATO Permanent Liaison Team has been operating at the EU Military Staff since November 2005 and an EU Cell was set up at SHAPE (NATO's strategic command for operations in Mons, Belgium) in March 2006.

An exchange of letters between the NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency in January 2001 defined the scope of cooperation and modalities of consultation on security issues between the two organizations. Cooperation accelerated with the signing of the NATO-EU Declaration on European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in December 2002 and the agreement, in March 2003, of the framework for cooperation.

NATO creates threats wherever it goes. That is its business. Whether in Afghanistan or in Strasbourg, the foreign military presence provoked violent rebellion, during its lavish celebration of its 60th anniversary, especially from concerned citizens who feel challenged by its ambitious military capabilities and war policies. So what are the celebrations for as NATO has been progressively transformed into a foreign expeditionary force, from the bombing of Serbia ten years ago to Afghanistan today.

NATO losing its role

It was the main forum for strategic dialogue between America and Europe. Now the economic crisis is being dealt with in the G20; the threat of a nuclear Iran is being handled by a small club of six powers; the security of energy supplies from Russia is better addressed by the European Union; and intelligence co-operation against terrorism is done bilaterally. So military operations have become its *raison d'être*. Furthermore, NATO's policies of minimum nuclear deterrence, nuclear sharing and the first use of nuclear weapons makes the world a dangerous place.

EU-UN Agreement

Another disturbing fact is that in September 2008, an accord was signed between the United Nations and NATO Secretaries General, Ban Ki-moon, and Jaap de Hoop-Scheffer. This took place without any reference to the United Nations Security Council. Both secretaries general committed themselves to acting in common to meet threats and challenges.

In these current times of confrontation, one expects from the United Nations secretariat an especially high level of political neutrality. The UN/NATO accord is anything but neutral and will thus not remain without serious consequences. The United Nations was created to promote and maintain worldwide peace. NATO exists to assure the self-interest of a group of 26 UN member countries. Its mandate, grounded in the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, originally dealt with the defense of its member states.

Several important questions thus arise: Is the United Nations accord with NATO – a military alliance with nuclear weapons – in contradiction with Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, which requires that conflicts be resolved by peaceful means? Can UN and NATO actions be distinguished when three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are also NATO members? How can future violations of international law by NATO be legally prosecuted? Is an institution like NATO, which in 1999, without a UN mandate, unlawfully bombed Serbia and Kosovo, a suitable partner for the United Nations?

It is urgent that one or several member states petition the International Court of Justice to rule on the interpretation of the UN/NATO pact of 23 September 2008, in conformity with the Courts statutes.

Conclusion

It is time for NATO to stop being the military arm of the European Union, disband its operations like the Warsaw Pact.

So we need to:

- expose the militaristic role of NATO
- reveal the de-stabilising effects of NATO expansion and its nuclear policies.
- condemn its military operation in Afghanistan
- stop NATO being the military arm of the European Union

Till such time that it is not disbanded:

- its troops should be deployed as a Rapid Reaction Unit of peacekeepers to help countries in need.
- stop having confrontational policies with Russia
- stop claiming nuclear weapons are needed to preserve peace
- stop military adventures across the globe to justify its existence

Vijay Mehta is chair of Action for UN Renewal and co-chair of World Disarmament Campaign.

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