

From [Project Censored](#) | Original Article

Source:

Rick Rozoff, "Afghan War: NATO Builds History's First Global Army," *Global Research*, August 9, 2009, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14707>.

Student Researcher:

Dani Wright (Sonoma State University)

Faculty Evaluator:

Peter Phillips (Sonoma State University)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has become history's first global army. Never before have soldiers from so many states served in the same war theater, much less the same country. At the eighth anniversary of the United States' invasion of Afghanistan, the world is witness to a twenty-first-century armed conflict waged by the largest military coalition in history.

With recent announcements that troops from such diverse nations as Colombia, Mongolia, Armenia, Japan, South Korea, Ukraine, and Montenegro are to join those of some forty-five other countries serving under the command of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), there will soon be military personnel from fifty nations and five continents serving under a unified command structure.

NATO's fiftieth anniversary summit in Washington DC in 1999 welcomed the first expansion of the world's only military bloc in the post-cold war era, absorbing former Warsaw Pact members such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Two years later, after the 9/11 attacks in New York City and Washington DC, NATO activated Article 5—in which the “Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.”

The main purpose of invoking NATO's mutual military assistance clause was to rally the then nineteen-member military bloc for the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and the stationing of troops, warplanes, and bases throughout South and Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Flyover rights were also arranged with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and newly acquired airbases in Bulgaria and Romania have since been used for the transit of troops and weapons to the Afghan war zone.

The 1999 war against Yugoslavia was NATO's first “out of area” operation—that is, outside of North America and those parts of Europe in the alliance. The war in Afghanistan, however, marked NATO's transformation into a global war fighting machine. NATO officials now employ such terms as global, expeditionary, and twenty-first century to describe NATO and its operations.

NATO members who have deployed troops to Afghanistan include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, as well as ten European nations that had never before been part of a military bloc—Austria, Bosnia, Finland, the Republic of Ireland, Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Serbia, Sweden, and Switzerland. The twenty-eight full original NATO members all have troops there as well.

All of the new members were prepared for full NATO accession under the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which demands weapons interoperability (scrapping contemporary Russian and old Warsaw Pact arms in favor of Western ones); increasing future members' military spending to 2 percent of their national budget no matter how hard-hit that nation is economically; purging of “politically unreliable” personnel from military, defense, and security posts; training abroad in NATO military academies; hosting US Alliance military exercises; and instructing the officer corps in a common language—English—for joint overseas operations.

In calendar year nine of the war in Afghanistan, and now with the expansion into Pakistan,

NATO has built upon previous and current joint military deployments in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Sudan, and off the coast of Somalia. In Camp Lemonier in Djibouti, NATO has conducted maritime surveillance and boarding operations, and in the autumn of 2009, NATO deployed its first naval task force off the coast of Somalia.

At the 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul, Turkey, NATO upgraded its Mediterranean Dialogue, whose partners are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, with the so-called Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which also laid the groundwork for the military integration of the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The last named is the only Arab state with troops in Afghanistan to date.

The Afghan war has also led to another category of NATO partnership, that of Contact Countries, which so far officially include Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea.

NATO also has a Tripartite Commission with Afghanistan and Pakistan for the prosecution of the dangerously expanding war in South Asia, and defense, military, and political leaders from both nations are regularly summoned to NATO headquarters in Belgium for meetings and directives. Afghan and Pakistani soldiers are trained at NATO bases in Europe, and from July 20 to 24, 2009, senior leaders of the American and Pakistani armed forces met in Atlanta, Georgia, at a counterinsurgency seminar. The director of the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, Colonel Daniel Roper, said of the proceedings: "This week we presented some lessons learned in counterinsurgency. We used those lessons to stimulate conversation and took our previous experiences in Iraq and applied them to our current status. We exchanged our viewpoints on the challenges in Afghanistan, Pakistan and South Asia at large." South Asia at large includes not only Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Included in the West's Greater Afghan war is not only "South Asia at large," but also Central Asia and the Caspian Sea Basin. In both instances nations already involved in providing bases for US and NATO forces (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) and those supplying troops and ancillary services are being pulled deeper into the NATO web. On August 7, 2009, Pentagon chief Robert Gates expressed his gratification that Kyrgyzstan, which earlier that year evicted US and NATO troops from the air base at Manas, had proven susceptible to bribery and allowed the US military to conduct transit again through the same base. The new arrangement "will enable the US and Kyrgyzstan to continue their highly productive military relations created earlier."

Additionally, the penetration of Kazakhstan, a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace, by the Pentagon and NATO would simultaneously insert a hostile Western military presence onto both Russia's and China's borders.

In Kazakhstan's Caspian neighbor to the south, Turkmenistan, the Pentagon has been no less active of late. At the end of July, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns announced plans for what was described as an intergovernmental commission for regular consultations with Turkmenistan which "marks progress in . . . the contribution to stability in Afghanistan and across the region." Turkmenistan is quietly developing into a major transport hub for the northern supply network, which is being used to relay nonlethal supplies to US and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

It was recently announced that Mongolia was sending an initial contingent of 130 troops to serve under NATO in Afghanistan. Mongolia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has helped cement its alliance with the United States. The South Asian war is being exploited by Washington and Brussels to intrude their military structures into Mongolia and other nations neighboring Russia and China, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, to further encircle two of the West's main competitors in that region and the world.

The Afghan war is no ordinary war. The German army has engaged in its first combat operations since the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945. Finnish soldiers have engaged in combat for the first time since World War II, and Swedish forces for the first time in almost 200 years. The only beneficiary of this conflagration is a rapidly emerging global NATO.