

NATO was “born” on 4 April 1949, ostensibly formed to stem a feared invasion of Western Europe. The Treaty that binds the countries belonging to NATO cautiously avoids reference both to the identification of an enemy and to any concrete measures of common defense, according to Wikipedia. Thus, when I was asked to pen an opinion piece regarding NATO, I facetiously asked myself: “Is there still a NATO?” For the past few years, NATO has generally been able to remain out of mainstream headlines.

Thus, as a prerequisite for writing anything about NATO, I thought I would investigate as to what NATO has been up to these days. First, the organization boasts 26 members: Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France (whom I thought dropped out years ago; it has remained solely a member of NATO’s political structure), Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States. It is interesting to note how many ex-Warsaw Pact nations have joined NATO since the recession of the Soviet Union from Europe and its eventual transformation into the Russian Federation.

A review of NATO’s military involvements include enforcing the UN no-fly zone over central Bosnia and Herzegovina (1994), its first broad-scale military engagement in the Kosovo War (1999) and helped established the KFOR, a NATO-led force under a United Nations mandate in Kosovo. After 9/11, NATO agreed to take command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the first time in NATO’s history that it took charge of a mission outside the north Atlantic area.



Regarding the picture above, blue-colored countries are NATO member states, green-colored countries participate in Partnership for Peace, and red-colored countries participate in Mediterranean Dialogue.

The **Partnership for Peace (PfP)** program was established in 1994 and is based on individual bilateral relations between each partner country and NATO: each country may choose the extent of its participation. The PfP programme is considered the operational wing of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership.

The **Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council** on the other hand was first established on 29 May 1997, and is a forum for regular co-ordination, consultation and dialogue between all 46 participants.

The 20 partners in the PfP include twelve former Soviet republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), five militarily neutral countries (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and Switzerland), and three nations that were formerly Communist (Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, and Albania).

The Mediterranean Dialogue is a forum of cooperation between NATO and seven countries of the Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Marutitania, Morocco, and Tunisia.

In 1997, NATO and the Russian Federation made a reciprocal commitment “to work together to build a stable, secure, and undivided continent on the basis of partnership and common interest.” This commitment was strengthened with the establishmen of the NATO-Russia Council, whose purpose is to identify and pursue opportunities for joint action.

In April 2005, Australia signed a security agreement with NATO on enhancing intelligence cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand also have some various cooperative agreements with NATO.

Potential members being considered as members of or partners with NATO are Israel, Japan, Australia, India, and Colombia.

This first post is written as a background piece for future discussion. While Ryan Ruck has kind of stolen a bit of my thunder in his 17 June post, I hope to continue to expand the news on NATO’s activities with a bit of some analysis (open to vigorous but not inflammatory discussion) Also, it is hoped that some cross-ties can be made, especially in those other areas under discussion that are clearly slanted towards the belief that the Russian Federation is transforming into an active military adversary and not-so-future threat.