



NATO Partnerships: Strengthening Ties with Asia

Atlantic Community members call upon NATO to strengthen its existing partnerships and develop new collaborative ties in Asia to remain effective in an increasingly multi-polar world. In particular, outreach to China and India will help address shared challenges such as piracy and cyber security. Dirk Brengelmann, the NATO Assistant Secretary General Political Affairs and Security Policy, affirmed that the Alliance's new partnership policy allows for more flexibility in its external relations than in the past.

1. Strive to make China more partner than rival.

Increased NATO cooperation with China, with its wealth of human and material resources, would help improve global governance and address complex and multiplying challenges across the world. Allied engagement with China would be more effective than the current "brittle" bilateral US-China dialogue, and should assess shared security challenges such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, piracy and cyber security, as well as deepen military cooperation in humanitarian aid operations, peacekeeping, and maritime security. Open dialogue is needed to build the mutual trust that both China and the transatlantic actors desire, but each area presents challenges. China's growing military capacity allows it to secure its sphere of influence on its own terms, limiting Beijing's potential for maritime engagement with NATO. Partnership in cyber security is also uncertain, as the government's role in several attacks originating in China remains suspect, and Chinese approaches to counter-terrorism are very different from those of the Alliance. The potential for enhanced cooperation between the two sides remains, but these specific differences must first be resolved (Seidler).

In addition to direct outreach to China, NATO should also identify collaboration partners under the multilateral framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Christman). The SCO has shown promise as a stabilizing force in Central Asia and has enhanced its profile with countries like Pakistan and India eyeing SCO membership. NATO and China may both benefit from closer cooperation in addressing regional challenges with implications that are increasingly global in scale (Titoff).

2. Develop a multilateral plan for stability in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

NATO's diplomatic efforts in Central Asia are hindered by a lack of cooperation with the SCO and another regional initiative, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Invigorating these relationships would lend more transparency to NATO activities in the region and help stem the growing drug trade from Afghanistan, a major source of tension between the Alliance and regional states. If NATO does not improve security in Afghanistan ahead of its withdrawal, regional states will increasingly seek closer ties with Russia and China (Shilibekova).

Strained relations with Pakistan and the Central Asian republics require more than a short term fix, and sustained cooperation with Russia and India will be paramount to stabilizing this volatile region. One way for NATO to enhance its relations with these two powers would be to engage with them jointly, in a new trilateral group, and develop shared strategies for this region (Straus).

3. Strengthen existing regional partnerships.

Every region presents unique challenges, so NATO and the United States should embrace a global security architecture based on regionalism, not pretensions to universalism. While NATO should limit future full-scale military interventions to Europe (Lawson), better cooperation with its Contact Countries – Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand – along with emerging states like Brazil, India and South Africa would help ensure the safety of the seas, cyberspace, and the security of resources (Seidler). A wide, flexible network of global partnerships will help add both "legal and moral legitimacy and operational efficiency" to NATO undertakings in the future (MacLachlan).

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