

Nato looks to expand its reach

By [Kate Hudson](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Nato leaders will be gathering for their summit meeting in Lisbon later this week and no doubt Afghanistan will be at the top of the agenda.

The big question will be how to get out of the disastrous mess they have made with minimum loss of face.

Nato secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and US Defence Secretary Robert Gates have been putting heavy pressure on Britain to keep up military spending. It's clear that Afghanistan is the reason why.

The bill for the war is mounting – as is the death total – so the US wants Britain's input of blood and treasure to continue. But Afghanistan won't be the only talking point at the summit.

Also being discussed will be a new "strategic concept," a document which outlines Nato's "enduring purpose."

The last one was launched in 1999 while Nato was waging its illegal war on Yugoslavia.

On that occasion the remit was changed from the supposedly defensive posture of the cold war to one of offensive operations, engaging in "out-of-area activities."

The war in Afghanistan is the result of that strategic concept.

But what will the new one bring in a time of rapid global change, where the very nature of security threats is being constantly redefined?

We've seen it in our own national security strategy recently, where "cyber warfare" has shot up to the top tier of threats that we face.

No doubt Nato wants to redefine itself too. And expanding global reach is a central goal.

That was made clear last month by US ambassador to Nato Ivo Daalder. Putting it bluntly, he said: "We're launching Nato 3.0."

That sounds like bad news and it is.

"It is no longer just about Europe – it's not a global alliance but it is a global actor," Daalder said, confirming many people's fears about Nato's aspirations.

"We need to look for opportunities to work with countries we haven't worked with before,

like India, China and Brazil.”

But what exactly does it mean for Nato to “work” with a country? Is Nato “working” with Afghanistan?

Or is the remit of Nato to extend into non-military areas? Is it now to be a military/economic/political bloc with global reach?

Daalder has actually identified three of the four most rapidly growing economies in the world – Russia being the fourth. And Russia has already been invited to the Nato summit.

It seems clear that these issues are now being intensely debated in the US.

A recent Washington-based think tank report, covered in *The Economist*, recommends developing partnerships with countries such as India, Brazil and Australia, which are located in parts of the world that have more relevance for contemporary security issues than the traditional Atlantic-European focus of Nato.

Secretary general Rasmussen offers a different but also very worrying angle on future intervention.

“I would not exclude the possibility that we can get engaged in coming years if we see failed states being a potential threat because they offer a safe haven for terrorists.”

News of other internal debates has also broken out into the open.

The question of US nuclear weapons in Europe under the guise of Nato is now hotly contested by a number of European states.

Germany, whose Foreign Secretary Guido Westerwelle is extremely anti-nuclear, has recently demanded that US nukes are taken out of Germany.

The US has said No, claiming that it has to be a unanimous Nato decision. You can imagine how that has gone down in Germany.

Tensions are also high with Nato-member Turkey. Barack Obama, following his cancellation of Bush’s plans for missile defence in central Europe, has come up with a new missile defence scheme that he wants Nato to embrace.

The trouble is that campaigners kicked the proposed radar out of the Czech Republic, and now the US wants to put it in Turkey.

Turkey does not want to host the system and it also has other problems with Nato’s orientation in the Middle East.

It opposes Nato sharing intelligence with Israel – not surprising after the Mavi Marmara attack – and it insists that Nato strategy should not describe Syria and Iran as threats, when it sees them as its neighbours with which it wishes to retain good relations.

With Nato seeking to redefine and reposition itself in a rapidly changing global situation, the peace and anti-war movements need to be alert to these strategic developments.

The summit must be closely observed and analysed, not least because of Britain’s

continuing central role in Afghanistan.

David Cameron's stated timetable is to withdraw British combat troops by 2015. But this timeframe is five years too long.

A significant majority of the British population oppose the war in Afghanistan. Too many lives have been lost already. This is a war that must end and our government must bring pressure at the Nato summit to bring it to a rapid conclusion.

Kate Hudson is general secretary of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

As Nato leaders gather in Lisbon for their summit, join CND, the Stop the War Coalition and the British Muslim Initiative this Saturday November 20 to call for Troops out of Afghanistan. Noon at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, London, marching to a rally in Trafalgar Square. For more information visit www.cnduk.org

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