

Transforming NATO and the OECD into a World Community of Democracies

Chris Hamer

The iron is hot and the time is ripe for the establishment of a World Community of Democratic Nations based upon NATO and the OECD, as the first step toward an eventual democratic world federation.

The world's people, regardless of nationality, face enormous common problems:

- the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMD;
- global warming and other environmental damage;
- famine, disease, and war, especially for the world's poor;
- and widespread human rights violations, among others.

These problems can only be solved if the peoples of the world work together to construct a system of democratic global governance and binding international law. But how do we get there from here? World federalists have been grappling with this problem ever since World War II ended with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Efforts have often focused on reforming the UN; but given the failure of the 2005 Summit on UN Reform, it's time to take stock and re-appraise strategies.

Uniting seven billion people in two hundred countries – each jealous of its sovereignty – is an enormous task. Like climbing Mount Everest, it will not be achieved in a single giant bound. We will only get there gradually, in a series of stages.

Jean Monnet and his friends showed the way in Europe, starting the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with just six of the more progressive countries. The Treaty of Paris, which established the ECSC in 1951, was followed by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, and various other treaties along the way. These steps led to the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which yielded the European Union we see today. The recent Treaty of

Lisbon aims to move the process still further.

Similarly, at the world level, we could start with an association with strictly limited aims linking some of the more progressive nations – e.g., the NATO/OECD democracies – and then build from there, progressively expanding functions, developing institutions, and including more members, until a democratic world federation is eventually achieved.

Democracy is a basic principle of modern government, and only democracies should be accepted as member states, thus forming a community of democratic nations, distinct from, but complementary to, the UN. If it promotes mutual economic growth, then its success could provide an incentive for non-members to democratize in order to join, as has happened with the EU.

In his book *Union Now*, Clarence Streit advocated a full federal union of democracies in 1939 to combat Nazism. The movement he began – originally called Federal Union, Inc., and later the Association to Unite

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the Democracies (AUD) – continued after WWII as a means to combat communism. The Streit Council continues to advocate a union of democratic nations today as a stage along the way toward eventual democratic world federation. But again, a

full union is not going to be achieved in a single giant bound. James Huntley recently published an article in *Freedom and Union* arguing for a Community of Democracies as a preliminary step, along very similar lines to ours.¹

AUD's main focus was always on NATO, the alliance of the Atlantic democracies against the Soviet Union. Merging the OECD with NATO would transform it into an economic community as well. The OECD has a

very similar membership to NATO, though somewhat broader, including, for example, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Could NATO be recast as the common security arm of the stable democracies, already linked economically through the OECD? This would turn the separate military and economic structures into a joint economic-military community with a single unified identity, able to grow quite strongly. NATO has already an incipient form of a representative body, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and would only need the addition of a court to have embryonic forms of all the organs of government.

Role and Structure of a World Community of Democratic Nations

Much as for NATO and the OECD at present, the aims of the Community could include:

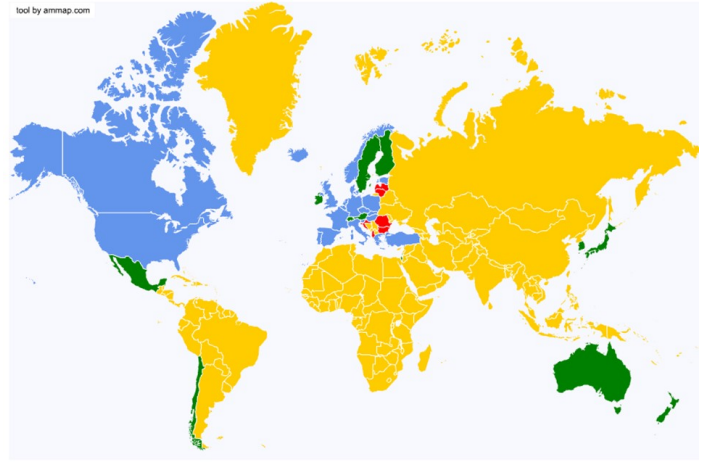
- to guarantee the security of each member against external attack;
- to undertake peacekeeping operations, under the aegis of the UN;
- to promote mutual economic development;
- to provide a framework for coordinated action on other common issues, such as global warming; and
- to serve the common global and diplomatic interests of its members.²

Membership of the Community should be opened to any stable, democratic nation, subject to suitable criteria laid down by the existing member states.

The Community should possess at least rudimentary forms of all the necessary organs of an eventual federation:

- an executive, such as NATO's Secretary-General and associated staff;
- a body representing the member states, such as NATO's North Atlantic Council;
- a parliamentary assembly, such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly; and
- a court (which NATO does not have) empowered to adjudicate disputes among the member states and to interpret the founding treaties, which could provide the nucleus of an eventual legal system.

To avoid indecision and deadlock, decisions on functional matters within the agreed competence of the organization must be made by some form of qualified-majority voting (perhaps with an opt-out clause)



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– unlike the consensus which is customarily required in NATO today. In the 1969 book *Freedom in a Federal World*, Everett Lee Millard discusses a possible voting system, known as the Penrose voting system or the “Jagiellonian compromise,” which is very similar to the scheme in use by the European Union today.³

From the Perspective of NATO members

The collapse of the Soviet Union deprived NATO of the original popularly understood motivation for its existence. Since then it has been slowly developing a new one, still acting as an umbrella organization for the defense of the Atlantic democracies, but now also as their “out of area” peacekeeping arm, first in the Balkans and then in Afghanistan. This is entirely consistent with the Community aims outlined above. Members of the EU are still debating whether they should continue to rely on NATO for their collective defense, or establish their own European armed forces, or both. A streamlined, expanded, and strengthened defensive community derived from NATO would probably swing the balance toward the Atlantic side.

There is, however, room here for constructive compromise: a streamlined decision-making system, with the flexibility of opt-outs, would render NATO fully compatible with a strong autonomous Europe within it. A number of Eastern European countries have recently joined NATO, which now has 28 members. This puts the old consensus model of decision-making under even greater strain. At his parting session with the Atlantic Council, General James Jones, at the time the outgoing Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, called for a stronger political structure for NATO:

“Sooner or later, NATO will have to address whether you want 350 committees all acting on the rule of consensus,” he said.⁴ “What’s the logic of one or two countries being able to block action by the remaining 24 members? Why not have a system where they can just opt out?”⁵ Certainly NATO needs to do something about this problem in the near future.⁶

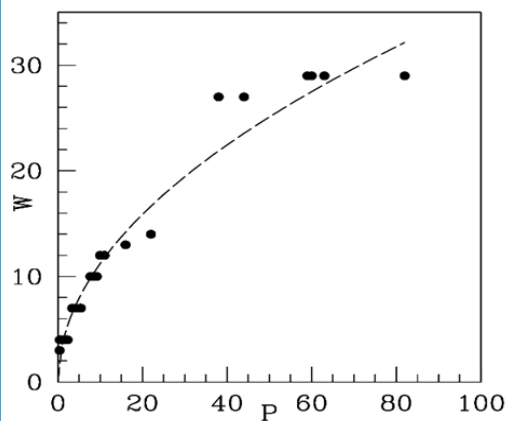
More recently, a group of five very distinguished military men have put forward a “Grand Strategy” for renewing NATO, echoing General Jones’ call.⁷ They are all former chiefs of staff in their respective countries – the US, Britain, France, Germany and Holland – and are headed by General John Shalikashvili of the U.S. Among many other suggestions, they have also demanded a shift in NATO decision-making from consensus to majority voting, and the abolition of national caveats in operational matters. This change alone would transform NATO from a mere alliance into a genuine Community.

Along with new members, many countries further afield have become NATO “partners,” including Russia. It is therefore not a huge step to envision expanding NATO membership to democracies outside the traditional boundaries of Europe and North America. Former Spanish Prime Minister Aznar advocated such an expansion.⁸ Emphasizing the new threat of Islamist terrorism, he argued that NATO should develop a new dimension of homeland security to counter it, including the integration of intelligence information and security services across all the democracies. He thus concluded that stable democracies such as Israel, Japan, and Australia should be invited to join.

The Political Opportunity

One of the Republican contenders for the U.S. Presidency in 2008, John McCain, caused quite a stir when

The Penrose Voting Structure



Number of votes, W , allotted to each member state in the European Council of Ministers as a function of population, P , (in millions), according to the Treaty of Nice. Germany is the largest state with 82 million, Malta the smallest with 410,000. The ideal Penrose formula is shown as a dashed line (W proportional to square root of P).

Source: Courtesy of the author

If decision-making is changed from consensus to qualified-majority voting, and if stable democracies worldwide are allowed to join, the “World Community of Democracies” would be an important first step toward democratic global governance.

he proposed the formation of a “League of Democracies” in order to build an enduring peace based on freedom.⁹ “We Americans must be willing to listen to the collective will of our democratic allies,” he said. On the Democratic side, Ivo Daalder, currently the U.S. Ambassador to NATO, together with James Lindsay, proposed a “Concert of Democracies” in order to form an “international institution capable of prompt and effective action both to prevent, and where necessary respond to threats to international security.”¹⁰ So it seems there is support for such ideas from both sides of politics in the U.S.¹¹

The Obama administration has been keen to strengthen multilateral institutions and seek more cooperation with America’s friends and allies. Even in the later days of the Bush administration there were moves in this direction.

“Unilateralism is out, effective multilateralism is in,” said David Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs.¹² “The hope is to see NATO as the core of a global security community,” according to Victoria Nuland, U.S. Ambassador to NATO under Bush.¹³

Europeans have already had long experience with transnational cooperation through the EU. The Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, is very much in favor of multilateral cooperation, as is the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy. An ex-prime-minister of France, Edouard Balladur, has gone so far as to suggest a union between the USA and Europe to deal with the full range of global foreign policy issues.¹⁴

Stanley Sloan has argued for an expanded Atlantic Community – and a new Atlantic Community Treaty – to encourage cooperation among all NATO members on non-military aspects of their security.¹⁵ In the same issue, Tiziana Stella summarized the proposals for reforming NATO which are on the table at the moment, including:

- reform of decision-making procedures;
- enhanced common funding;

- development of a common foreign policy;
- achieving a unified view on the global role of NATO;
- increased cooperation between Atlantic and global institutions¹⁶

Many of these changes have also been called for by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (Resolution 337), as well as by former NATO commanders.

Conclusion

If decision-making is changed from consensus to qualified-majority voting, and if stable democracies

worldwide are allowed to join, the “World Community of Democracies” would be an important first step toward democratic global governance. One point of crucial importance is that non-members of the Community should not regard it as a threat or an enemy. □

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NOTES

1. James Huntley, “The Democratic Peace,” *Freedom and Union* 4, no.2 (2010): 11-19.

2. The first three of these goals are in the NATO Treaty, Articles II, IV, and V. The last three are permissible under the Treaty but not mandated. The fourth and fifth have been taken up gradually by NATO since 1991. The last in principle already exists, broadening NATO from a security alliance into a general purpose diplomatic community; it was embraced by NATO in the 1990s NATO’s limitations have never been for want of sufficient goals, but for want sometimes of sufficient instruments and procedures to carry them out. In the 1950s NATO appointed a committee of three “Wise Men” to develop means of implementing its goals of closer political and economic cooperation. While their report was officially adopted by NATO by consensus, only some portions of it were put into practice. The economic implementation was deliberately left to a separate organization, the OECD, formed at the beginning of the 1960s as the successor to the implementing structures of the Marshall Plan; it was able to include neutral European democracies, and bring in four Pacific allies: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea. The Atlantic world thereby took on a dual, split-level identity: the Atlantic-only level and the Atlantic-Pacific level, or “Atlanticism” and “Trilateralism.”

3. Voting would no doubt be an evolutionary adaptation, as it was in the EU, with consensus remaining the usual *modus operandi* for years and voting used as a last resort when consensus seems unduly blocked. Experience from EU history shows that simply having this option legally in reserve, even if rarely used, serves to make it easier to reach prompt consensus decisions that have real substance; it puts obstructionists on notice that they could lose their chance to bargain for realistic

compromises if they do not use it.

4. James Jones, “Stronger Political Structures for NATO,” *Freedom and Union* 2, no.1 (2007):10-11.

5. At that time NATO had 26 members

6. The European Union has struggled with the same problem of consensus decision-making, and partially solved it by introducing a system of qualified majority voting on functional issues (as opposed to major policy changes). The reformed NATO would presumably do the same. It might reserve to members an opportunity to opt out of implementing the majority decision if they feel it is contrary to their interests, particularly if the measures are military; it might however require in some cases a procedure to avoid arbitrary political abuse of the opt-out, such as a vote of their domestic parliament.

7. Klaus Naumann et al., *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World – Renewing Transatlantic Partnership*, 2007, accessed April 24, 2011, [http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/documents/3eproefGrandStrat\(b\).pdf](http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/documents/3eproefGrandStrat(b).pdf)

8. Jose Maria Aznar, “NATO: An Alliance for Freedom,” RUSI 151, no.4 (2006), accessed: 29 April 2011, http://www.rusi.org/go.php?structureID=articles_journal&ref=A44DCA72D99D0C.

9. John McCain. “McCain Remarks – Hoover Institution” (speech, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, May 1, 2007), accessed April 28, 2010, http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/McCain_05-01-07.pdf.

10. Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, “Democracies of the World, Unite,” *The American Interest* 2, no. 3 (2007): 5-15, accessed April 28, 2011, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=220>.

11. It might be thought that the U.S. Congress would be against voting in NATO as a threat to national sovereignty. However, this has not been the case. When approving the previous

round of expansion of NATO membership, Congress adopted a resolution calling for exploration of moving away from consensus in NATO. The resolution was watered down to mere exploration, because the State Department opposed the resolution and felt the consensus system was working well. To be sure, there would undoubtedly be an opt out provision, so the issue is one of pooling only a small part of sovereignty -- probably less than the other members pool already in the NATO Integrated Command -- yet an important part of it, as it lies in the military and foreign policy sphere. Apparently Americans do not have the same hyper-sensitivity about loss of sovereignty when it comes to NATO, a grouping of fellow advanced democracies, as when it comes to UN-level institutions.

12. Vince Crawley, “State’s Fried Says NATO Not ‘Counterweight’ to United Nations,” *U.S. Department of State International Information Programs*, May 3, 2006, accessed April 28, 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/05/mil-060503-usia02.htm>.

13. Frederick Kempe, “NATO, Israel Draw Closer,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 14, 2006, accessed: April 29, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB113987680406772930.html?mod=world_news_featured_articles<a%3E.

14. His main immediate proposal is to upgrade U.S.-EU summits into a U.S.-EU Council; at the same time he advocates reform of NATO and specification of rules for using NATO resources without consensus among the allies. See: Edouard Balladur. *Pour une Union occidentale entre l’Europe et les Etats-Unis* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

15. Stanley Sloan. “Taking the Atlantic Community beyond NATO Transformation.” *Freedom and Union* 1, no.2 (2006): 6.

16. Tiziana Stella, “Global Threats, Atlantic Structures.” *Freedom & Union* 1, no.2 (2006): 9-15.