

## The strategic importance of the Middle East in future approach of NATO

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**Abstract:** Position importance of the Middle East isn't only limited to its strategic position. Although after Soviet decline geostrategic value of this place has been decreased. But regarding to change in nature of power relation in the international system that it may displace the light policies based on the economical power in the acute policies based on the military force, the geopolitical situation of the Middle East has been changed and as it was before, this geographical area is valuable for the industrial world. So in the past and now conditions, the great part of the ultra-regional reaction of this area with the great powers has been from this position. Features and advantages have provided presence, influence and interference of powers in this area and caused to prolong the disputes and crisis. Terrorism has provided this opportunity and also threat for NATO to explain another identity. The security environment change and the new actors appearance in the international system need to create the quantitative and qualitative changes in NATO structure and using its ability to create changes in strategic areas of different points of world. The Middle East is one of the strategic areas that have an important role in collecting the future strategies.

[NASSER ESKANDARI. **The strategic importance of the Middle East in future approach of NATO.** *Life Sci J* 2013;10(3s):396-402] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 59

**Keywords:** strategic situation of the Middle East, NATO, NATO approach to the Middle East, future strategy of NATO, terrorism, security

### 1. Introduction

Today, world confronts set of more complex and fluid international alignments than formation time of North Atlantic contract (NATO) in 1949. NATO was formed with the defensive goals and for injecting U.S.A power to the disorder environment era after the Second World War and response to Soviet threats. After Cold War, the serious problems related to existing necessity and survival of NATO was mooted. So during 1990 decade and new century, attracting support of European allies for developing and making modern the power tools related to it especially the military tools in order to use potentially in another areas (but Europe) was very difficult for U.S.A. Accidents after 1991 in Persian Gulf war and changes in the great Middle East was from usage cases of these tools. In the middle of 1990 decade, NATO wanted going higher than determined areas to avoid being usefulness. Of course, out of area term was applied to Bosnia and Kosovo in spite of that both of them were located in Europe. NATO behaved in own new instruction so in case of having the international lawfulness for own policy decisions is able to act equal with charter of UN. Accident of 11 September 2001 created the new international environment throughout world. NATO for the first time, resorted to fifth article of own constitution and suggested U.S.A to cooperate with that country for war against terrorism. During 2002, NATO collected doctrines, designs and the essential military structures for possible world interferences, command structure, new rapid reaction force and so on. Such action was a great and irrevocable step in getting away from the collective defensive system as the first function of this organization. After that, NATO agreed with own

greatest development and multilateral growth of own military role, especially when all members accepted undertaking coordinator role for ISIF forces in Afghanistan and even agreed with possible accepting the peaceful role in Iraq in the future. After Cold War, George Bush and Clinton pretended that nothing has been changed, but indeed, everything has been changed. There was no harmony in a vast strategic concept and only one person was stage manager. Even if NATO is developed as a political organization, it finds authenticity with the strategic consideration of U.S.A less than always. In this frame, Americans define a new role for this organization in Eurasia and the Middle East. Following such policy by U.S.A has been challenged by another powers such as France that resisted against presenting more active role of NATO in Iraq (Jean-Loup Samaan, 2012). Development process of NATO began in the beginning 1990 decade and with change of North Atlantic cooperation council. The first movement i.e. spread to the Middle and Eastern Europe began from the end of 1991 and was continued in partnership for peace term as step before the formal membership from the beginning of 1994 and then it developed completely from 1995 until 1999. In this step, U.S.A was limited to Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. It is said that NATO development is completed by creating process of the free and complete Europe that makes smooth the way to rebuild significantly the security substructure of Europe and causes that U.S.A pays attention to another areas of world. In new international condition by presenting the new definitions from threats against own members, NATO has recognized a vast spectrum of world subjects such as: increasing massacre weapons, the tribal and racial differences, the

international organized crimes, terrorism, migration and etc as the new sources of threat against members benefits and has provide background to perform own role in those cases not only in two sided of Atlantic, but also in any area of world that its members benefits require. Regarding to that East often is bed of the abnormal social factors (unemployment, poverty, hunger), environmental problems, narcotic substances, terrorism, extreme nationalism, nationality, power attrition, the nuclear weapons publication and human massacre. These factors has provided totally special conditions for NATO presence in East and this presence is in some cases military (fighting against terrorism and massacre weapons) and in some cases it is non-military and cultural (environmental problems, fighting against poverty and hunger). Anyway, 2004 meeting of NATO heads in Istanbul emphasizing on the Middle East conditions changed formally NATO spread to this area to one of its strategic priorities. Goal of NATO spread to the Middle East was fighting against the international terrorist and fundamentalist development and massacre weapons development.

### **1.1. Importance of the Middle East for NATO:**

The geopolitical and geographical situation of the Middle East is so that it attracts look of the great actors of the international field. With happening accidents of 11 September, the international security scene confronted very basic changes. Spreading NATO activity area to outside of Europe geographical area is one of the most important changes that are forming in the international and regional security area. NATO authorities have tried to present a new definition from NATO duties in the new international environment following the international changes. NATO has wanted find the new identity and responsibility area. After 2004 meeting of NATO in Istanbul, cooperation discussion of NATO with countries of the Middle East and especially members of cooperation council of Persian Gulf has been noticed. In that meeting, subjects were discussed such as the collective security, membership conditions e.g. making democracy of the volunteer countries and the military reform. Of course, in that time the great Middle East plan was mooted and democracy approach and constancy in the new Middle East policy of U.S.A was prominent. But now cooperation and trust subjects of NATO are spreading the similar partnership process for peace against Middle and East of Europe and also Ukraine and Moldavia. NATO heads met cooperation with members of cooperation council in Persian Gulf in Istanbul meeting in 29 June 2004. Of course they mentioned this cooperation related to passing standard process of membership steps (Espen Barth, Eide; Frédéric Bozo (Spring 2005). NATO subject in the Middle East is very important with establishing the

public relations offices of NATO in Qatar and Bahrain with celebrating a common press conference between the public relations office of NATO and royal informing ministry of Bahrain in 5 and 6 June 2007 in Manama, sending a specialized anti-radioactive team of NATO in 6 and 7 May 2007 and the formal application of NATO assistant about cooperation with Arabia and meeting of 50 members of NATO parliament with Pakistan and Afghanistan and also the serious presence of NATO in Afghanistan, forming part of unified body in Lebanon from NATO and Israel interest in becoming member in that organization because of the strategic connections with U.S.A.

### **2.1. NATO role in the greater Middle East:**

After event of 11 September 2001 that fighting against terrorism became a prevailing concept in the foreign policy and the national security of U.S.A, the Middle East changed to relations focus and centre of gravity of the international system. Decision-takers and diplomats of U.S.A creating connection between Islamist and Islamic fundamentalist with terrorism in addition to resort to the military power or violence against terrorism wanted the political, economical and social reforms via the social-political engineering and religious reform of the Middle East societies as the international terrorism source. General Kaline Paul minister of foreign affairs of U.S.A announced formally for the first time plan of this country for the Middle East based on the economical, political and instructional reforms in own lecture in Heritage institution in 12 December 2002. Also establishing pattern government in this country for development and spread democracy in area according to democratic domino logic besides fighting against terrorism and massacre weapons were announced as from triple attack of U.S.A to Iraq. It seems that with forming plan of the great Middle East, U.S.A tries to make involved NATO in performing this plan or at least coordinates it with the great Middle East and new challenges in area. For example Nicholas Burns representative of U.S.A in that time in NATO in own lecture in October 2003 in Prug said that yet NATO duty is defending from Europe and North America. Though, we don't believe that we can do this duty with sitting down and becoming limited to West or Middle Europe and or North America. We must spread own mental attention and military forces concentration to east and south. In our belief, NATO future is in east and south or in the great Middle East. Forming NATO role in the great Middle East plan began with event of 11 September 2001 and consequently attack at Iraq and in 2004 became more formal in form of cooperation plan of Istanbul. This plan presented in NATO meeting in Istanbul in March 2004 invites countries of the great Middle East area especially members of cooperation

council of Persian Gulf to the practical cooperation with NATO. The new duty of NATO within cooperation plan of Istanbul is recognition and fighting against risks threatening the member countries in the great Middle East area especially actions such as: **1-** Fighting against terrorism. **2-** Fighting against massacre. **3-** Cooperation in border security affairs in order to fight against smuggling the narcotic substances, smuggling weapon and human. **4-** Providing the common programs to fight against the great difficulties and emergency conditions. **5-** The military and security instructions. **6-** Participating in NATO practices. **7-** Presenting services and technical helps to do reforms in the military systems and military-civil relations. **8-** Coordinating systems and the military equipment's in order to omit disagreements and facilitating the common actions. Now three countries i.e. Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain have jointed to cooperation plan of Istanbul, also the common actions have been done in above fields. Also Turkey government is very eager that play an important role in cooperation plans of Istanbul and the great Middle East in area. Indeed, Turkey government knows staying this country out of the great Middle East plan different from the strategic benefits of Turkey.

### **3.1. Spread pivots of NATO to the Middle East:**

Bush government is following practically a new NATO plan with new partners, new members, new military abilities and a new ambitiously and altercation plan of U.S.A for the future role of NATO in the great Middle East in NATO heads meeting in Istanbul (2004). In this field, U.S.A wants the spread role of NATO with centralization in the Middle East, Middle and South Asia and North Africa and also Washington wants play a future role in NATO with partnership of Mediterranean Middle Asia countries and maybe even peaceful role in the Middle East. Indeed, Istanbul meeting and selecting this city has been a show and symbolic action from U.S.A and NATO to access the Middle East that will perform with three main goals: **1-** Democracy development. **2-** Establishing the moderate governments and creating the civil society. **3-** Developing the economical opportunities. Mark Grusman assistant of foreign affairs minister of U.S.A in the political affairs draws insight and perception of this country for the future of NATO: Threat against security welfare of Atlantic unity can appear from everywhere, so NATO must have such forces to be ready in order to prevent threats resources until the beginning 90 A.D. decade giving an opinion about NATO role in the Middle East showed off unreasonable, because in that time NATO was involved only in south-eastern Europe and its future seemed very ambiguous. In August 1995 after four years doubt and discussion about operational area

development subject of this defensive unity, NATO authorities for the first time decided to the military interference in Bosnia. Anyway, this interference was done after attempt defeat of organizations such as UN and WEU and this duty wasn't considered as an antecedent for the next actions in the Middle East or Asia. In that time, a little number of persons supposed that NATO in the next decade develops nearly 30000 forces and so own political and military cooperation council of Persian Gulf. Anyway, this condition is current role of NATO in world changes. In this direction during past years, Atlantic contract has done these actions: **1-** Resorting to article 5 of constitution of this organization for the first time after attacks of 11 September in U.S.A. **2-** Establishing peace keeper force in Afghanistan and obligation to develop this duty geographically and quantitatively. **3-** Instruction of Iraqi forces with 9 million dollars cost. **4-** Creating a rapid reaction force (NRF) consisting of 25000 forces that can be established everywhere in short-time. **5-** Using rapid reaction force in earthquake aid operation in Pakistan. **6-** Creating an air bridge to send soldiers from Africa union for peace maintaining duty in Sudan. **7-** Beginning cooperation innovation plan of Istanbul in order to develop cooperation and the military and political relations with members of cooperation council of Persian Gulf. **8-** Developing Mediterranean conversation plan in order to facilitate the political conversation with the Middle East countries such as Egypt. **9-** Expanding the political discussions area in North Atlantic council in order to involve the Middle East and world affairs. **10-** Creating a rapid chemical, microbe, radial and nuclear reaction team in order to confront with possible attack of massacre weapons. According to that, we observe that development process of NATO interference in the Middle East is increasing. We must notice that in spite of disputes of NATO members, U.S.A and Europe have the common security benefits in area and NATO is the best mechanism to coordinate their policies and operations. There are many crisis in the Middle East area and if NATO as a security organization follows continuing own life, it must confront the security challenges own members facing. In this direction, reporter of NATO parliamentary assembly policy committee writers in a report in this case: Persian Gulf area has a strategic importance because of the geographical situation, the permanent instability and its energy resources. World economy is strongly related to energy resources of Persian Gulf and will be related to it until future decades. Instability and insecurity have increased in area in shadow of new security threats such as the terrorism threats and massacre weapons publication affecting the stability and security of whole Middle East (Ayubi, N.1995).

#### **4.1. Presence motives of NATO in the Middle East:**

NATO presence in the Middle East is considerable within pivots such as fighting against terrorism, massacre weapons publication and energy security subject. In this direction, the general secretary of NATO in own travel to Persian Gulf in 30 November 2005 in Doha Qatar considered the new security environment, new NATO and new dynamism in area as one of the most important reasons of NATO and area countries cooperation necessity and explained that the first reason is the changing security environment. Threats that today we meet them aren't only from one country, but they are universal and common and no country is secure from them. Threats such as terrorism, massacre weapons, human smuggling has a universal nature. The second reason is change of NATO nature. Today NATO with 26 members has involved in a spread spectrum of duties that regarding to own valuable experiences can help significantly to supply the security in the farthest reaches of the world such as Persian Gulf. The third reason of NATO attention to the Middle East is the new appeared dynamism in area. During the last years, area countries have appeared individually and collectively within cooperation council of Persian Gulf as important actors. This area confronts the important security challenges. On the other side, during the last years NATO has considered significantly energy security subject that is needed because of important affecting oil zone countries of Persian Gulf on supplying energy universally. Also supplying energy exports security is one of worries of Persian Gulf countries. This subject was noticed in Riga meeting. In this frame, when energy wars are discussed, NATO role as a suitable choice to prevent using energy tools for the political goals is appeared. Changing area to one of benefits domains of NATO in area, presence of terrorist groups such as Alquida in the Middle East and possibility of happening conflict in area can be from the most important motives of NATO to guarantee and supply energy security of the Middle East, because west is strongly dependent on energy sources of this area.

#### **5.1. NATO duty in Iraq:**

Being active NATO in Iraq is result of increasing security benefits of this organization in the Middle East. NATO decision based on interference in Iraq affairs was result of consultations and discussions that NATO members began in 2002. In November of that year heads of NATO member countries in Prug conference joined demanding Iraq based on the immediate delivering against council of Iraq military and police forces instruction organization. He announced these statements in meeting with NATO general secretary in Bruksel. Now some NATO

members are educating Iraq troops and police personnel outside of land of that country i.e. Jordan and Kuwait with sending 70 trainers from Italia, Hungary, Norway and Canada. NATO want send 250 trainers to Iraq. NATO formed an instruction team in Italia in response to this demand. But the security conditions in Iraq caused that in the first instruction camp out of Baghdad and then instruction centres out of Iraq located in neighbour countries such as Kuwait and Jordan and also Norway were established. The successive disagreements of France and Germany had prevented presence and deep activity of NATO in Iraq. These two countries want instruction of Iraq forces by NATO out of Iraq. NATO and U.S.A agree about war strategy against terrorism. This agreement is followed in the strategic relations of two sides of Atlantic. The identical symbol of this agreement is observed in Afghanistan. Article 5 of NATO constitution makes obliged that organization to support members within the collective defensive. After 11 September, NATO announced own collective defensive support from U.S.A. But it confronts the serious disagreement of some powerful members such as France and Germany about presence in Iraq similar to Afghanistan model. Sending instruction trainers, armament and equipping Iraqi forces by NATO are the positive steps from that organization in new duties of NATO after 11 September such as instruction, making secure and peaceful. It is possible that some members of new Europe such as Rumania, Poland, Hungary and Czech agree with more presence in Iraq, but NATO presence in Iraq isn't met. U.S.A supported NATO presence in Iraq in 2003 meeting in Prug, but the powerful members such as France and Germany emphasized on necessity of approving the declaration of Security Council based on maintaining the international peace and security about Iraq security and constancy similar to Afghanistan model. They notified that NATO is able to enter the field as the military arm of this declaration with the international authority. Otherwise it will only educate and equip Iraqi forces out of Iraq. The political disputes of U.S.A with some NATO European members stopped this process. Antecedent of these disputes had been observed between members of NATO and U.S.A. NATO European members especially France and Germany follow the common European security, foreign and defensive policy. Disagreements of two sides of Atlantic about the national armed disputes management in the Balkans led finally to send units of NATO under leadership of U.S.A in fight with Milosovich regime and then peace and security duty in the former Yugoslavia. Now European countries maintaining the political, security and military independence follow being active NATO in making secure, army and rebuilding Iraq coincided with Istanbul and Riga approvals based on instruction,

equipping and making modern the troops and police of that country. In the middle of NATO heads meeting in Riga, a work group from 15-17 (CSIS) strategic and international studies centres in September 2006 gathered together in order to discuss and examine new duties such as making secure, army and rebuilding NATO in disturbed areas of world and also NATO and Europe relations. The most main discussions of this group were:

- 1- The operational obligations of NATO in these areas are justifiable within supplying security members. This obligation is running now in Afghanistan. Today NATO confronts ultra-border threats. NATO can proceed to peace and making secure duty in countries located in these areas. NATO duty in Afghanistan is in this direction. NATO is able to provide tools and organizations to make secure and educating police forces of these countries e.g. Iraq.
- 2- Now NATO is involving in 7 types mentioned operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Darfour, Macedonia, Kosovo and Dialog following instruction of Iraq forces by NATO instruction team. NATO forces will be increased from 16000 to 20000 persons in Afghanistan. Now 12000 European which 9000 persons of them are English are settled in Iraq. They are from Hungary, Poland, Czech and Britain and NATO members.
- 3- NATO success in doing devolved duties in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon that NATO members form a part of unifel body, promote NATO credit. Protection area of NATO duty in the Middle East has knotted to energy security. Energy demand will increase from %50 to %80 in 2035. In current century NATO security dependence to members and other interested countries is company with distance dimension from Mediterranean, Persian Gulf until East of Asia. Energy security lines pass these areas. Then Arabia, Pakistan and Iraq can be very important for NATO because of playing the regional role especially production and transportation of energy. Then interests and benefits of Saudi Arabia need more attention because of the sensitive benefits in Iraq after war 2003. Arabia is head of cooperation council countries of Persian Gulf that its observer membership is mentioned in NATO. Alexander Minotoriso the general secretary assistant of NATO in visit from Riaz asked Arabia that examines observer membership subject and entering to cooperation contract with this organization. He emphasized that NATO grant much value for Arabia. He pointed to Istanbul plan in 2004 based on NATO cooperation with the Middle East countries. Apart of plan 2003 of

Malek Abdollah king of Arabia based on solving the historical dispute of Palestinians and Israelites is related to the common management of the regional crisis. The political and commercial relations of Persian Gulf cooperation council and Europe union since 1997 until now can be an acceptable justification for NATO European members in the formal cooperation between NATO and cooperation council of Persian Gulf. About Persian Gulf countries, NATO innovation in meeting of heads in Istanbul was resolving many problems and justified NATO presence in Persian Gulf. Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait were the first countries that joined to this plan formally in beginning of 2005. Then Arabia joined to plan in June of that year. According to cooperation plan of Istanbul the security cooperation between NATO and the Middle East countries will be performed based on bilateral contract and according to interests of countries

#### **6.1. NATO strategy in the Middle East:**

All members of NATO IN Istanbul meeting in 2004 emphasized on developing NATO responsibilities in the Middle East area. Shifer the general secretary of NATO suggested the security conversations of NATO and the Middle East countries. NATO considers constancy and security in this area as a key for peace and constancy in the whole of world. The perennial presence of NATO security policeman forces in Afghanistan and the last agreement of NATO members in Istanbul based on aid to new government of Iraq via instruction of the security forces of that country can follow more playing role of NATO in different regional problems. European members of NATO will not accept direct military presence of NATO forces in area with knowing presence antecedent of U.S.A in area and its costs that U.S.A was following it about Iraq, but countries such as France and Germany were disagree with it. NATO cooperation with area countries consists of the military instructions, information exchange, celebrating the common maneures, fighting against smuggled band and narcotic substances, cooperation in the international crimes field and fighting against terrorist operations. NATO look at the Middle East countries in Mediterranean shores is a special look. NATO since 10 years ago has begun own conversations about different security affairs with 7 countries of the Middle East and North of Africa in Mediterranean area continuing own cooperation about different affairs (Dehghani, strategic researches centre). Cooperation program for peace mooted in 1994 was following increasing allies of NATO in collection of non-west countries. NATO cooperation with this program is continuing. Importance of these cooperation is so that Shifer the

general secretary of NATO has announced that in spite of that colleague countries of NATO haven't good standards in human rights and democracy fields, but NATO continues own cooperation with them in fighting against terrorism. Developing Islamic fundamentalist and necessity of fighting against increasing massacre weapons and possibility of using those weapons by some countries of area or ultra-national organizations such as Alquida are main worries of NATO for own influence development in the Middle East in the future. Presence quality of NATO in different geographical area is follower of the security-political conditions of that special area. NATO activity in Iraq and Afghanistan is considerable as two examples of NATO presence in area. As NATO develops own activity area, it avoids accepting direct presence in Iraq and even sends out some members of own forces from that country. In the future, NATO will increase own information and security cooperation with countries of area for fighting and suppression of fundamentalist terrorists. NATO has begun own cooperation with Arabic governments of Persian Gulf area. In the common conference of NATO and cooperation council of Persian Gulf that was celebrated in April 2004 in Doha, some agreements were obtained about information exchange, presenting the military instructions and anti-terrorist operations.

### **7.1. Different approach of NATO members to the Middle East:**

We aren't able to consider NATO as a single collection that all members have common goals, benefits and approaches. U.S.A, the former and new Europe is three variables in NATO collection with different approaches and goals. U.S.A is one of NATO members that with choosing one sided policies during the last years without considering other world powers and own west allies proceeded to achieve own special benefits. All members of NATO don't agree with U.S.A unilateralist. Germany and France are opposed with America policies and absolute hegemony of U.S.A, while countries that have become newly member in Europe union and NATO contract have proceeded to cooperate with hegemony in the last years. So we can say that although NATO collection agree with together in goals such as creating constancy and security in the Middle East via fighting against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism and preventing massacre weapons development, but they act differently in used methods and tools. Look at the Middle East is different for several countries that are NATO member. Approach that France and Germany follow in the Middle East is different with approach that countries such as Poland, Czech, Hungary or countries of Baltic area follow it. Great European powers try to access more benefits in area, while

countries that have joined newly to NATO, want obtain hegemony supports to progress own internal policies via cooperation with U.S.A. The second unity of 11 September event and terrorism conversation prevalence, threat and violence in the international system besides of massacre weapons development in 21 century as two indexes and criteria of partnership creating and unity between U.S.A, Europe union and NATO have provided again background for coalition and union in west area. After the military actions of U.S.A and success of that country in depriving Taliban and Baas regime of Iraq, Europe confirms hegemony and higher role of U.S.A more than past and admits the military, economical and technical abilities of U.S.A. In the last meeting of Istanbul, members agreed about NATO development and the future activities quality of NATO forces in different areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq and also necessity of fighting against terrorism and attempt to confront with massacre weapons development, but they disagreed about quality and form of NATO development. Resistance into European area of NATO to make rapid and basic changes is such that flexibility and fluidity of new policies have challenged conservatives dominant on Bush government. U.S.A is looking for use more change power and creating change of NATO in areas full of challenge of the Middle East and North of Africa. What is considerable about look of NATO collection to Afghanistan is that there is no difference between European members of NATO and U.S.A in achieving the goals supplying the industrial benefits of west not being separate from democracy liberal values of west. Kerri democrat competitor of Bush attacks to republicans from this corner and announces that U.S.A shouldn't offend allies. He believes that Europe and U.S.A follow the common goals in the Middle East

### **2. Discussions**

NATO is a clear sample of constant and long-time unity in the collective security area that countries with certain military, security and political criteria are accepted for membership in it. During Cold War and according to NATO charter, this organization had a military, security and political approach, but with Soviet decline, NATO wanted find a new identity and responsibility area. NATO heads gathered together in the end of June 2004 in Istanbul that Europe and U.S.A rebuild relations that had been damaged during attack at Iraq. Regarding to that west has transferred threats from communism to terrorism, Islamic radicalism and massacre weapons danger, so necessity of NATO survival within developing its geographical area has been changed to a necessity for NATO. Attention to the Middle East is one of the future strategies of NATO in look of ultra-Atlantic of this organization because of excellent and important position of this area

for west. But we can say that in the final conclusion, NATO members have different viewpoint in the Middle East. U.S.A is one of NATO members that proceeded to achieve own special benefits by choosing unilateral policies during the last years without considering other world powers and own west allies. Unilateralism of U.S.A couldn't be agreed by all members of NATO. Germany and France are opposed with America policies and U.S.A absolute hegemony. While countries that have become newly member of Europe union and NATO contract, they have cooperated with hegemony in the last years. So we can say that although NATO collection are agree about goals such as creating constancy and security in the Middle East area via fighting against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism and preventing massacre weapons development, but they act differently in used methods and tools.

1/18/2013

**Acknowledgements:**

Author is grateful to person for support to carry out this work.

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