

1797

Colonel William Tate and his force of 1000–1500 soldiers surrender after the Last invasion of Britain.

1831

Battle of **Olszynka Grochowska**, part of Polish November Uprising against Russian Empire.

1836

Samuel Colt is granted a United States patent for the Colt revolver.



1843

Lord George Paulet occupies the Kingdom of Hawaii in the name of Great Britain in the Paulet Affair.



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01



During his speech at the #NamasteTrump programme, @POTUS @realDonaldTrump highlighted aspects of his vision for USA. He also spoke at length about India's greatness as well as the greatness of our culture, ethos, people and more. I thank him for his kind words.

@narendramodi

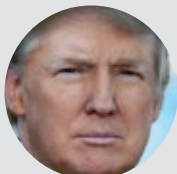
02



Wow! A sea of over 100K people wearing #NamasteTrump hats! What a sight to behold! Well done, India, well done!

@WayneDupreeShow

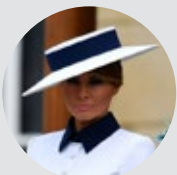
03



Our two national constitutions both begin with the same three beautiful words: "We the people." That means that in America and India alike, we honor, respect, trust, empower, and fight for the citizens we proudly serve!

@realDonaldTrump

04



Our First Lady looks absolutely STUNNING in India today! Melania Trump is wearing a beautiful white jumpsuit from Atelier Caito for Hervé Pierre in crème crêpe. The look also features a green silk sash with gold metallic thread.

@MELANIAJTRUMP

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

How Nato's Iraq expansion is a test for its Middle East plans

Buffeted by internal divisions and pressure from Washington, the Atlantic alliance's Middle Eastern objectives look uncertain



Iraqi foreign minister Mohamed Ali Al Hakim and his German counterpart Heiko Maas meet at the 2020 Munich Security Conference in Germany.

Jean Loup-Saaman

This month, Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced that the Iraqi government has approved an expansion for the Atlantic alliance's mission to train the Iraqi armed forces.

The operational contours of Nato's work in Iraq remain uncertain. Mr Stoltenberg has refrained from specifying the number of advisers expected to deploy. In fact, it seems that a substantial portion of what would go under the Nato label consists of resources already committed by European nations through the global coalition against ISIS.

Despite speculation in the region, the implications of Mr Stoltenberg's statement are more political than military, and the politics behind the decision have less to do with the Middle East itself than with the fragile state of European politics and US-European relations.

Nato officials have indicated that this expansion in Iraq is meant as the first measure in a broader re-envisioning of the alliance's engagement with the Middle East. This comes after three years of intense US lobbying in that direction. After calling Nato an "obsolete" organisation during the 2016 elections, US President Donald Trump urged the other member states to adapt by contributing more to counter-terrorism operations – the biggest priority, in Washington's view. Mr Trump repeated that view last January after the killing of Iranian Gen-

eral Qassem Suleimani, when he called upon Nato partners "to get more involved in the Middle East".

The narrative being conveyed by the alliance's representatives in Brussels of a larger Middle Eastern engagement is therefore intended primarily for an American audience.

However, there are two reasons to remain cautious about interpreting this narrative as involving major military changes: the endurance of disagreements among Nato members regarding their strategic priorities and the mixed record of the alliance in the region so far.

First, Nato nations do not all agree on prioritising counter-terrorism in the Middle East. This matters for a military alliance in which any major decision requires consensus among all 29 member states. The membership as it stands can generally be divided into an 'eastern camp' and a 'southern camp'. The former comprises the countries who believe that Nato should focus on the alliance's eastern border with Russia, while the latter sees the security crises across the Mediterranean, from North Africa to the Levant, as their most pressing challenges.

Typically, Nato member states like Poland or Estonia believe the Middle East to be a distraction. They would rather remain committed to the alliance's historical mission of defending Europe against Moscow's assertiveness. Meanwhile, Southern European countries like Italy and Spain may feel that this "Russian threat" is inflated

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by their Eastern European colleagues and view the migrant issue and political instability in the Middle East as clear and present dangers.

But even within the member states who prioritise the Middle East and counter-terrorism, there are divisions. At last December's Nato summit, Turkey tried and failed to get the alliance to endorse its view that Syrian Kurdish fighters were terrorists. Moreover, Ankara's disputes over the last decade with several of Nato's strategic partners in the region – in particular, Israel and Egypt – have had direct consequences for the alliance's ability to deepen its engagement there.

These political obstacles within Nato have played a key role in turning its overall contribution to the region into a very modest enterprise. It is unlikely that the expansion of the training mission in Iraq will break that mould.

Initiated in 2004, the training mission was then largely

dependent on the presence of American forces in Iraq and was actually disbanded following the 2011 decision of the United States' then-president Barack Obama to withdraw those forces. The mission eventually resumed in 2018. However, the resources provided by Nato – approximately 500 advisers – hardly match the demands of building the new Iraqi army. Given the political mood in Brussels, it is unlikely that Nato members are ready to commit to much more than a symbolic level of growth.

Beyond its Iraqi engagement, Nato has used two main partnerships in the region – the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative – to cover the Middle East and North Africa, including the Arabian Gulf. Notably, in 2017 Kuwait opened the first regional centre dedicated to joint military training for Nato and Gulf officers. Since its creation, the centre has enabled officials from Brussels and Gulf capitals to enhance their co-operation at the operational level.

While Nato has long undertaken similar defence co-operation initiatives, including tactical training and military education, with Middle Eastern allies, the alliance's political dialogue with these partners has been slow-moving for more than a decade. That is a concrete consequence of the internal disagreements between Nato members.

In the Gulf, for instance, Nato has refrained from qualifying Iran as a major threat. Back in

2010, France's then-president Nicolas Sarkozy triggered uproar from Nato partners – particularly Turkey – when he publicly declared that the group's missile defence systems were targeting the "Iranian threat". Since then, Nato officials have constantly elided the Iranian question in their exchanges with Gulf counterparts.

Likewise, the Mediterranean Dialogue was created after the Oslo Accords to support multilateral security engagement between six Arab states and Israel, but it petered out when the Oslo framework collapsed. Once again, a lack of consensus among Nato members – this time concerning solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis – have resulted in the alliance's leadership strictly maintaining that it should have no active role in a major regional dispute.

This state of play is likely to generate frustration from those advocating more active involvement from Nato in the Middle East. But all these limitations highlight the real meaning of Mr Stoltenberg's latest announcement, which is that the training mission in Iraq and the talks of a broader engagement in the region have less to do with the Middle East than with the internal politics of the alliance and the attitude of European nations towards Washington's priorities. Until the alliance's divisions are resolved and it figures out a way to defend to Washington its relevance, the policy implications of any expansions in Iraq or elsewhere in the region are likely to be modest.