Strategic Military Partners Conference 2015
TO WARSAW AND BEYOND: PARTNERSHIP—A CRITICAL ENABLER IN A WORLD OF CHANGE
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WHITE PAPER

KEY FINDINGS

1. Partners broadly support the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII). Furthering PII will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of partnership by helping partners determine their preferred level of cooperation with the Alliance. Partners agree that there is no need for new partnership tools but more emphasis on furthering their alignment and coherence.

2. Partners believe that Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation (ETEE) programmes remain the cornerstone of military partnership. NATO and nations are working in close cooperation with the new Partnership Interoperability Advocacy Group (PIAG) to overcome coordination issues and further enhance partner’s awareness, by making its numerous activities more predictable to partners.

3. Alliance and Partner nations further support the use of Individually Tailored Roadmaps to plan ETEE efforts over a longer-term horizon. A ‘Recognized Partner Picture’ could provide an overview regarding the Level of Ambition that partners have with NATO.

4. There was general acknowledgement that NATO’s Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) efforts contribute to long-term stability and security. Effectiveness and efficiency could be improved with deeper involvement of partners and enhanced coordination between NATO and bilateral national DCB efforts.

5. SMPC provided CHODs and SMEs the opportunity to reflect together on the benefits of innovation. Partners welcome the idea of an innovation strategy that incentivizes nations to invest wisely, which can lead to greater interoperability and readiness with less risk of leaving any nation behind.

6. As the Alliance confronts regional hybrid security challenges along Europe’s southern and eastern peripheries, partners reiterated their importance in enhancing NATO’s hybrid warfare and regional engagement. In particular NATO’s strategic partnership with the European Union was regarded as vital as NATO addresses shared security challenges.
INTRODUCTION

This White Paper is an opportunity to take stock of the multiple and sometimes disparate strands of effort that the Alliance uses to bolster partnership. It frames the key themes that were discussed at the annual Strategic Military Partners Conference (SMPC) in Tbilisi, Georgia that took place in June 2015. The theme of the SMPC was “Partnership as a Critical Enabler in a World of Change.” The discussions focused on the outcomes of the Wales Summit, notably the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative, and the Defence Investment Pledge. The ideas contained in this White Paper do not constitute official policy in NATO per se, but are conceptual areas that help to define the military transformation of partnership today and set the stage for fruitful cooperation in the future. The intended audience for this White Paper is thought leaders throughout allied and partner states, as well as those in international and non-governmental organisations and industry, who are responsible for advancing partnership in, and with, the Alliance.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

As the Alliance confronts regional hybrid security challenges along Europe’s southern and eastern peripheries, partners are an important part of NATO’s strategy in regards to hybrid warfare and regional engagement. NATO’s strategic partnership with the EU is vital for NATO to address shared security challenges. Allies and partners recognise that regional challenges and potential solutions carry global implications. A core implication is that even partners with regional security concerns see the need for greater global cooperation. Specific instances that participants highlighted were NATO’s relationship with Russia, mechanisms for engagement in the Greater Middle East and North Africa region, and interest in improving cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, regarding hybrid warfare, longer-term implications are becoming clear, especially considering Russian actions in Ukraine that warrant further consideration vis-à-vis the role of partner nations as part of NATO’s development of a strategy to counter hybrid threats.

One aspect of partnership is its ability to provide the leadership of NATO greater choice. Partnership broadens the options for crisis response and enduring strategy for both allies and partners. Partners help NATO offset gaps, vulnerabilities in defence posture and help the Alliance improve situational awareness. In particular, partnership with the EU and likeminded regional powers is a requirement for NATO as it works to assure access to the global commons, support economic ties amongst allies and partners, as well as manage the humanitarian crises that stem from both natural and man-made catastrophes.

Over halfway between the Wales and Warsaw Summits, it is clear that the duality of NATO’s functional and geographic frameworks strike a balance between how best to incentivise interoperability and reconcile geography as a determining factor in security affairs. Thus, the Alliance requires a broad mix of partnerships including: states, international organisations—notably the EU and UN—and non-governmental organisations, as well as entities in the private and public sectors. The challenge for the Alliance will be how to further develop and sustain the means to manage these relationships over the long term.
Given the array of partnerships available to the Alliance, the question remains, are we optimised to tackle the shared security challenges of today and tomorrow? If not, then the Alliance—notably the Strategic Commands—working with partners must determine how to maximise the value of partnership over the long term. This means identifying priority areas of cooperation, developing the right capabilities, and innovating prudently to the fullest extent possible. Moreover, it is critical that ACT determine its role above and beyond its current efforts to help develop roadmaps for partners that bolster training, education, and exercise participation enabling partner involvement in multinational initiatives, like Smart Defence, and when possible, defence planning efforts to promote interoperability within the Alliance.

**EDUCATION, TRAINING, EXERCISES AND EVALUATION (ETEE)**

ETEE opportunities are a range of activities that are designed to bolster interoperability amongst allies and partners. The efforts conducted are clear expressions of military transformation and range from the implementation of lessons learned and best practice, to testing new concepts and capabilities that create cutting edge asymmetric advantages on the battlefield. The continued success of the Alliance and its network of highly capable partners that share interests and values demands coherent improvement through tailored ETEE activities.

NATO’s fundamental ETEE policy (MC 458/3) establishes the framework to enhance partner’s participation in NATO’s education and training opportunities. In particular, it facilitates the participation of partners and Non-NATO entities, such as the International Organisations or Non-governmental Organisations, in NATO exercises. It has proven efficient in identifying training and education requirements for allies and partners alike.

ACT is implementing a global approach to training, with the principle of a centralised management and a decentralised execution. Education and training programmes are delivered by the NATO Training Facilities, the Centres of Excellence, the Partnership Training and Education Centres and some national facilities, complied in the Training and Education Opportunity Catalogue. The annual Training Synchronisation Conference, organized by ACT, enables allies and partners to align national long-term training objectives with NATO-led or supported joint training and exercises.

While NATO ETEE policy gives more predictability and facilitates the cooperation with partners, the recent focus on realistic scenarios, including Article 5 responses and cyber defence have ushered in new limits regarding the participation of partners in such ETEE exercises. Indeed, North Atlantic Council approval is required, on a case-by-case basis. While inherently reasonable from a security perspective, NATO’s strict controls on the classification and release of information to partners often limit interoperability. One practical step to bolster interoperability would be to properly classify documents and, when possible, use “NATO Unclassified Publicly Released” information exchanges to communicate requirements for forces participating in exercises and pools of forces. This has already been taken into consideration in the implementation of the Federated Mission Networking concept.
Moreover, ACT is improving the standards of education and training by implementing a Quality Assurance policy. It is NATO requirements driven and promulgates internationally – recognized standards. Additionally, Training facilities are encouraged to develop a lessons learned process, with the aim of improving NATO’s ETEE tools on a rolling basis. Lastly, NATO should further enrich its database of subject matter experts, who are resident within allied and partner nations that can serve as custodians of institutional knowledge particularly in Defence and related security Capacity Building (DCB) programmes.

ACT should set requirements to develop partner tailored roadmaps that maximise the use of varied sources of training facilities to include external subject matter experts, new training technologies, and customized apps to distribute training packages at a reduced cost. The Alliance could explore how allies and partners can develop multi-sourced and joint training modules to increase the relevance of programs for participants.

Moreover, allies and partners should further build and exploit corporate knowledge, including lessons identified and learned in both operations and in training and education, in freely-accessible databases and libraries. Projects listed in the Smart Defence database with a focus on joint education, training and exercises should be used as a vehicle for allies and partners to generate leaders who are capable of operating in complex and austere environments as part of a joint and multinational coalition that forms NATO’s military contribution to a Comprehensive Approach. In this spirit, the NCI Agency in collaboration with ACT is looking at initiating a feasibility study to address how nations can better exploit multinational Collective Training and Exercises events as a way to improve cross-command interoperability and cost-efficiency.

**CONNECTED FORCES INITIATIVE (CFI) AND PARTNER INTEROPERABILITY ADVOCACY GROUP (PIAG)**

Standardization is a mechanism aimed to achieve and maintain compatibility, interoperability, interchangeability or commonality of concepts, doctrines, procedures and designs in the fields of operations, administration, training, education, and materiel. Interoperability enables allies to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives. It enables forces, units and/or systems to operate together and allows them to share common doctrine and procedures, each-others’ infrastructure and bases, and to be able to communicate. Interoperability reduces duplication, enables pooling of resources, and produces synergies among allies, and whenever possible with partner countries.

Standardization and interoperability are at the heart of military transformation efforts, the most important include: CFI, Smart Defence projects, and capability development. These activities support standardization and interoperability, and are foundational elements for both allies and
partners as they work to achieve interoperability in the military domain and to achieve the goal of 'NATO Forces 2020'. Interoperability has many levels, from technical to procedural, and the movement and control of information is equally important. If CFI is to be successful, it will need to have political support and be implemented in a sequential plan based on established priorities, reinforced by the findings in the Framework for Future Alliance Operations, which capture how the Alliance expects to operate in the 21st Century.

The efforts of NATO and ACT to promote interoperability have improved greatly in the last decade. Although the Alliance has a plethora of tools to further develop and achieve interoperability with partner nations, there are potential initiatives within the existing toolbox that can further enhance interoperability, such as a review of the procedures for the acceptance of troop contributions to NATO-led operations from Non-NATO nations (MC 567/1), as well as the Operational Capabilities Concept E&F. The Alliance could reinforce its holistic approach to partnerships by defining existing interoperability gaps between NATO and partners, and identifying solutions to bridge them. The interoperability gained in operations must be maintained post-ISAF, and interoperability is critical for partnership if NATO expects to remain effective in an increasingly interconnected world. Interoperability goals must include all partners that will be even more critically important if the Alliance is to be successful in contributing as part of a comprehensive approach to future crisis management efforts and conflict prevention activities.

For example, the Federated Mission Networking concept approved by the Military Committee in 2012 can be seen as the practical demonstration of Allies, partners and NATO entities to establish an enduring capability for enhanced Command and control and decision-making in future operations and achieve interoperability ‘from day one’. Both Strategic Commands and the NATO C&I Agency have developed a toolset of processes, organisations, training, instructions and standards that captures the needs of all affiliates to generate a common platform for unprecedented information exchange and interoperability in mission environments.

The new Partnership Interoperability Advocacy Group (PIAG) can help overcome coordination issues and enhance partner awareness. One area of potentially significant improvement is the proposed use of Individually Tailored Roadmaps (ITRs) to plan ETEE efforts with partners over a longer-term horizon. Allies and partners see the benefits of using roadmaps to optimize cooperation. ITRs can match short-term and long-term goals with specific ETEE activities, policy work, or capability development efforts to help meet identified goals. The advantages of an ITR are threefold. It enables NATO and partners to identify specific requirements and prioritize them accordingly. ITRs provide a means to forecast the military transformation of partnership that is tailored to the needs of each partner. Last, roadmaps provide a framework to help plan and coordinate cooperation beyond the short term horizon.

ITRs can help generate and prioritize common lines of effort between allies and partners to reach interoperability goals. Roadmaps can offer partners guidance on engagement with NATO, and provide opportunities for input into exercises based on partner level of ambition. Additionally, partners are able to move past geographical constraints by capitalizing on technological innovation and using distributed and live training and virtual exercises.
Another type of roadmap is an Area Specific Roadmap. The genesis of Area Specific Roadmaps comes from the need of partners to plan comprehensively for participation in the NATO High Visibility Exercise 2018 (HVE 18). In doing so, partners identified similar areas that stood to benefit from greater coordination, notably contributions to the NATO Response Force. In cases like these, the intended effect is to optimize the use of NATO’s partnership tool box in ways that translate into valuable deliverables for both allies and partners alike. The Area Specific Roadmap concept highlights the procedural aspects of the NATO toolbox and aligns the tools with the aims of the partner. The roadmap provides a way ahead to reach given objectives and the overall aim. Roadmaps are comprehensive and consider a variety of issues.

The roadmap is a living document providing both NATO and partners the means to follow and measure the level of cooperation between the Alliance and individual partners. Allies and partners can connect political guidance, Country Specific Plans, and existing Roadmaps and, as a result, develop a tailored tool that not only tracks cooperation, but enables increased situational awareness and a longer-term comprehensive perspective as well. Through the use of Interoperability Roadmaps, the Alliance can find synergies and maximize the efficient use of resources. A Recognized Partner Picture could provide an overview regarding the Level of Ambition that partners have with NATO, as well as requirements, gaps, surpluses and tools used to cooperate with NATO. The Alliance could provide immediate benefit if it developed a policy to identify commonalities between all stakeholders, highlight areas of redundancy, and prioritize efforts, especially in the world of training and exercises.

After more than two decades of partnership in the Alliance, the time is right to review the array of partnership tools to identify potential redundancy, inconsistency, and duplication of effort. By doing so, NATO/ ACT and partners can streamline policies and identify programs as part of tailored interoperability roadmaps. In addition, new areas of cooperation, like modelling and simulation, academic outreach, and the development of strategic issues and concepts should be explored. All of these efforts can support intensified dialogue at the political and military levels.

One year after its introduction, PII is viewed by allies and partners as a good step forward in the field of NATO’s partnership and outreach. Partners see PII as the best non-operational means to improve cooperation with the Alliance and a useful, functionally aligned format, which allows partners most interested in interoperability to further specific objectives. However, there are several roadblocks that need to be addressed. The procedures for the acceptance of troop contributions to NATO-led operations from Non-NATO nations (MC 567/1) were driven by ISAF and no longer meet partners’ requirements as they ready their forces to participate in operational exercises. Moreover, PII often limits partner contribution to exercises by bounding participation to authorized resources. Doing so has the unintended effect of hampering interoperability, as most partner nations have limited budget authority and find in year re-appropriation difficult.
DEFENCE AND RELATED SECURITY CAPACITY BUILDING

NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) efforts, properly resourced, can contribute to long-term stability and security of recipient partners and regions. Partners view DCB efforts taking place in Jordan, Georgia—and potentially in Moldova and Iraq—as areas of opportunity, but remain mindful that DCB effort is resource intensive. As NATO decreases its operational footprint, there is an opportunity to enhance the Alliance’s role in DCB and to reinforce its commitment to partners. Also, this contributes to projecting stability without projecting large combat forces as part of NATO’s contribution to international security and conflict prevention.

There are specific areas where NATO can improve DCB in order to achieve maximum potential. There is an expectation that DCB will produce constructive results within 2-3 years. However, while short-term production is important, DCB should be viewed as a long-term investment. At the national level, timely manning of defence experts is essential. In support, the DCB Military Hub can assist with the coordination of DCB assessments; help build networked support; provide individual training and education, and encourage the use of mobile training teams that are resident within the Joint Force and Component Commands.

NATO/ACT can optimize its support for DCB efforts in key areas. DCB’s success is about allies’ long-term commitment, combined with the support of the DCB recipient country. Improved and early engagement of partner countries is a necessary measure to make DCB planning and implementation phases successful, e.g. allocation of financial resources and the identification of subject matter experts. It is also vital to align and coordinate NATO’s bilateral and international efforts when it comes to DCB initiatives for individual countries. This avoids duplication and will assist in resource optimization. Successful DCB requires resources that are tailored to accommodate country-specific needs.

Overall, DCB should contribute to the improvement of NATO’s toolbox. For stakeholders this includes using OCC evaluations as a feedback mechanism to support partner DCB needs; tailoring DCB packages with clearer goals and exit strategies; identifying appropriate points of contact for the diverse DCB needs of partners; institutionalising the knowledge of a recipient’s culture and political issues. These efforts reinforce the point that DCB and the Comprehensive Approach remain interdependent Alliance efforts. Both pursuits could be improved if stakeholders identify roadblocks, synergies, and areas of shared interest.

Between NATO and the European Union (EU), mapping efforts could address both regional and functional approaches, i.e. per region such as the Middle East and North Africa; and per domain, such as defence sector reform. This work would be complementary with the mapping efforts underway in the International Staff regarding NATO and EU commitment in Security Sector Reform. NATO and United Nations (UN) should continue with targeted interaction through liaison officers as projects arise, mindful that the UN could play an enhanced role in implementing DCB packages in recipient countries. Cooperation between NATO and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) could increase in areas such as operational
humanitarian dialogue lessons learned, training and exercises, and strategic issue development; notably with the Strategic Foresight Analysis programme resident in ACT.

Existing formal partnerships frameworks should be further leveraged to increase cooperation in DCB-related tasks. NATO and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) partners play an important role in regional stability. Each ICI partner enjoys strong bilateral relationships with specific allies, despite the limited participation of ICI partners in NATO activities. NATO and the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) should also keep strong ties in order to protect the regional stability along NATO’s Southern Flank. Currently, through Operation Active Endeavour, Morocco and Israel are MD partners that support an operation of the Alliance.

The future challenges of DCB centre around the ability of the Alliance to develop a partnership strategy that clearly defines how to maximise the use of existing partnership tools, as well as facilitates policy coherence that underpin DCB packages. The Alliance will need to prioritize DCB vis-à-vis other tasks. A pool of NATO experts could bolster the efficiency and effectiveness of DCB efforts, mindful that coordination with multiple stakeholders and national points of contacts is required to ensure success across a broad range of activities, e.g. training and education, capability development, and strategic policy.

DEFENCE INNOVATION

Partners supported the idea of an Alliance innovation strategy that can incentivize nations to invest wisely, which can lead to greater interoperability and readiness without leaving any nation behind. Moreover, partners can enhance defence innovation taking place throughout the Alliance. As allies develop new ways to gain asymmetric advantages against potential adversaries, partners—particularly the EU—can introduce new breakthrough concepts and capabilities. The historical record on innovation is clear, running through military history from the age of Ancient Greece. Militaries that innovate might not win on the battlefield; however, militaries that do not innovate, will not win. Defence innovation enables the Alliance to sustain the strategic and operational advantage the Alliance has enjoyed since its inception. Innovation is a range of activities that includes lessons learned and best practices on one end, and ground-breaking research on the other. It includes technology, but cuts across all lines of development (DOTMLPFI¹).

The Defence Innovation Initiative, also known as the Third Offset Strategy, is an effort undertaken by the United States to create asymmetric advantages in defence capabilities that can counterbalance anticipated material and technological advantages held by potential adversaries in the coming decades. SACT is committed to ensuring that allies can share new concepts and ideas for the benefit of the Alliance and has been especially keen to highlight the importance to NATO of contributing to the Third Offset. Partners have a role to play in defence innovation as well.

The proliferation of new advanced technologies now open to a wide range of actors - from nations to non-state actors and individuals - means that there is a proliferation of inexpensive

¹ Doctrine, Organisation, Training, Material, Logistics, Personnel, Facilities and Interoperability
precision munitions, cyber capabilities, unmanned systems, and other tools that are available internationally and on the grey market. The spread of such technologies, once solely in the domain of nations and a virtual Western monopoly, has eroded operational advantages long enjoyed by allies and partners.

While the Third Offset Strategy is in an early stage of development, some key elements have emerged that can help allies and partners. These include: the training and education at all levels of the military to operate in complex and hybridised environments that are different in character—if not fundamentally than previous battlefields; long-range and basic technological research to advance breakthrough technologies; war-gaming and modelling platforms to test assumptions about the future security environment; revising old and developing new operating concepts; improving acquisition and defence planning processes; and introducing benchmarking and internal reviews to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

ACT, the NATO Science & Technology Organisation, and the NATO Communications and Information Agency are key stakeholders that possess the means to capture, improve, and disseminate new ideas that pertain to defence innovation. Moreover, innovation is not “someone else’s business”. While not all allies and partners are equally capable of contributing to major innovation, nevertheless most are able to understand, emulate, and accommodate military adaptation. Military and security doctrinal, cultural, and organizational innovation – which are equal parts of the technology-doctrine-culture-organization innovation construct – should be within the purview of any and all nations and partners.

In an age of technology and connectivity, the development cycle of innovation is compressing, perhaps drastically. In the past, cycles of innovation took decades and were preserved for nearly as long. Now, cycles are compressed, with inflection points occurring with unprecedented rapidity in every military domain. This places a premium on a culture of permanent, rather than episodic, innovation and demands that political and military leaders stay attuned to new requirements and demands. To optimize the oftentimes disparate efforts that span the Alliance, NATO needs a strategy for innovation. This strategy could focus priorities for innovation and ways to increase networked collaboration amongst the Strategic Commands, NATO HQ, NATO Agencies, allies, partners, the EU, IOs, NGOs and industry. One example is the “cyber incubator” created by the NCI Agency in collaboration with industry and a wide range of NATO stakeholders to share best practices and innovative concepts in the cyber domain.

SMPC also brought to light the little knowledge of or experience held by participants from a broad array of nations with innovation. It was especially noteworthy that few had ever heard of the Third Offset Strategy process underway in the United States, or of its Cold War First and Second precursors. This presents a significant challenge, both internally and with partners, for Alliance-led education and familiarization regarding the concept of major innovation, its history, and implications.
CONCLUSION

As the Alliance prepares for the Warsaw Summit, the discussions and reflections on NATO partnership during SMPC are supporting the belief in a holistic and synchronized approach to foster partnership that is built on enhanced ETEE activities, PII and DCB initiatives, and defence innovation efforts. It includes new nations when and where appropriate, international and non-governmental organizations, and also the public and private sectors that can strengthen NATO and enhance our military transformation efforts.

This year’s SMPC was an important opportunity to highlight the multiple and sometimes disparate strands of effort that the Alliance uses to bolster partnerships. Increased functional focus on partnerships, transparency regarding the tools available to partners, and willingness to make key planning and transformational areas available to partners bodes well for the health of military cooperation in the Alliance. As we work toward the Warsaw Summit, partners will be continue to seek deeper, more constructive levels of cooperation with the Alliance, mindful of the adage that overnight successes are 20 years in the making.