CHIEFS OF TRANSFORMATION CONFERENCE: SYNDICATE SESSION 4
"Human Capital- Decision Making in a Complex Security Environment"

Premise:

"We continue to ensure the Alliance's political and military responsiveness, including through more regular exercises. To this end, we will continue to actively and coherently manage the Alliance's overall posture, and to enhance our intelligence, strategic awareness, advance planning, and decision-making. To face evolving security challenges, we have taken steps to ensure that NATO can continue to act at the speed required."

—2018 Brussels Summit Declaration

The interconnected world brings enormous complexity linking millions of individual entities resulting in a complex, adaptive environment with unpredictable behaviours. This phenomenon presents large-scale challenges and opportunities. It simultaneously empowers and threatens both civilian populations and the States in which they live, meaning it has never been more important to understand all dimensions of the security environment in which missions and operations are conducted and the second and third order effects of decisions before NATO chooses to act and during the conduct of operations.

Whilst technology has and always will play an integral part in how we fight, emergent and disruptive technologies can and do change the dynamics of the security landscape asymmetrically. This is exacerbated by some States and armed actors who intentionally and consistently violate international norms, including International Humanitarian Law (IHL), as well as those who seek to undermine the rule of law and good governance. Furthermore, with increasing globalisation, interconnectedness and urbanisation, the impact of the asymmetry on the civilian population is a security dynamic that must be considered.

Future conflict will be further characterised by increasing peer, or near peer, competition and complex networks of proxy actors, many not necessarily immediately obvious. The use of asymmetric tools and hybrid warfare will increase and inevitably result in adversaries exploiting civilian populations and infrastructure as a strategy of war. Furthermore, diverse, interconnected, multipolar populations will result in increasingly blurred boundaries between combatants and non-combatants, especially in the cyber domain, but also by the dual-use of facilities such as transportation networks and utilities.

Adversaries will compete with the Alliance, using increasingly sophisticated tools to support and inform their own decision making and leverage the cyber domain and the information domains to deliver tactical-through-strategic-effects amongst the civilian population as a strategy that increasingly blurs the threshold of what constitutes an armed attack.

These strategies will include a more capable intelligence-gathering apparatus using complex forecasting and predictive tools built on Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning supported by broad data analytics. NATO must leverage these same technologies to develop its Human Capital and enhance their decision making.

Aim:
- To exchange ideas/views on how NATO leaders can adapt their approach to decision making to meet future complex security challenges and;

- Build common understanding/consensus that investing in Human Capital is a critical capability in warfare development.

Why we should be concerned about decision making in complex security environments: In today's security environment, complex and dynamic decision making cycles are being continually compressed. Furthermore, our adversaries invariably have the advantage of unity of purpose which puts a consensus based organization at a disadvantage. Therefore NATO's leaders need to seek innovative approaches including leveraging advanced technologies now in order to mitigate these challenges.

How this Syndicate Session approached these challenges: The session was moderated by Major General (Ret) Roger Lane CBE FCMI, Royal Marines, a former Senior Mentor to ACT and Senior Exercise Advisor to Joint Warfare Centre as well as a leader in the field of human capital development. The interactive session focused on how NATO leaders can adapt their approach to decision making using a complex security environment as a scene setter and analyzing the different aspects of the decision making process.

Questions this Syndicate Session answered:

- Are the processes and tools that support today's strategic decision makers fit for purpose?

- How can NATO integrate technology into the decision making processes; what obstacles need to be overcome?

- To what extent can, and should, technology be used to help understand the 2nd and 3rd-order effects of strategic decisions?

- How can NATO develop future strategic leaders through innovation in education, training and exercises?

Syndicate Discussion Main Points:

- Educating and training leaders is critical before integrating technologies into the decision making cycle which will also build the leaders trust in using the data/information the technologies provide to support decision making. Creating an environment where leaders can learn from failure.

- Information sharing barriers across Nations could hamper the ability to fully integrate technology into the decision making process.

- Improve decision making at the speed of relevance by improving data analytics to include storage, processing and the sharing of information.

- There is a lack of clarity regarding NATO's role in developing strategic leaders.

- The human capital development process is too linear and lacks agility to adapt to the speed of relevance.

- Lots of data potentially available, but challenging to transform into knowledge and decision support: organisation, skills, processes and tools.

- Technology offers many opportunities but considerable challenges: resistance to change, trust, interoperability and data governance.

- Need better tools to characterise crises/potential crises and anticipate the spectrum as to how they might evolve.

- Human capital has also the aim of bridging the military and civilian world. There is room for improvement in this regard within NATO.

Syndicate Actionable Items:

- NATO should create a culture of continuous learning among NATO leadership to effectively integrate technologies to maintain our competitive edge in a complex security environment.

- NATO should improve interoperability with regards to technology since it is critical to ensuring relevant data and information is available in support of strategic decision making.

- Create a NATO strategic leadership development programme that prepares potential candidates for future NATO appointments.

- Accelerate the introduction of technology with a focus on data collection, processing and exploitation in order to support enhanced decision making.

- Research to understand the second and third order effects of military operations better in order to sustain a campaign focus by strategic leaders.

- NATO must set up definition and a common language so that Nations can have more answers and less questions.

Syndicate Closing Plenary Slides

"Human Capital" - Summary / Outcomes:

- Lack of clarity as to NATO's role in developing strategic leaders.
- Processes too linear and lack agility to adapt to speed of relevance.
- Lots of data potentially available, but challenging to transform into knowledge and decision support: organisation, skills, processes and tools.
- Technology offers many opportunities but considerable challenges: resistance to change, trust, interoperability and data governance.
- Need better tools to characterise crises/potential crises and anticipate the spectrum as to how they might evolve.

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"Human Capital" - Way Ahead/Future Actions:

- Create a NATO strategic leadership development programme that prepares potential candidates for future NATO appointments.
- Accelerate the introduction of technology with a focus on data collection, processing and exploitation in order to support enhanced decision making.
- Research to understand the 2nd/3rd effects of military operations better in order to sustain a campaign focus by strategic leaders.
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