

# DYNAMIC CHANGE

RETHINKING NATO'S CAPABILITIES,  
OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

NATO ALLIED COMMAND  
TRANSFORMATION

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# Dynamic Change

## Rethinking NATO's Capabilities, Operations and Partnerships

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# Introduction

Riccardo Alcaro and Sonia Lucarelli\*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has much to boast about. For forty years it successfully sheltered its member states from aggression by a powerful foe, the bloc of countries revolving around the Soviet Union. In the meantime, it contributed to healing the wounds that centuries of wars had inflicted on European nations, also offering the likes of (West) Germany and Italy the chance to re-enter the international stage as responsible players rather than would-be conquerors. Crucially, the Alliance cemented the bonds of mutual solidarity between Western Europe and the United States (US), not only because it created a common purpose – defense against Soviet aggression – but also because it generated a sense of reciprocal belonging and shared identity. Protection from a common enemy might have been its main task, but it was never NATO's only *raison d'être*. The Alliance saw itself as a community of democracies, founded on common values as well as interests.

History proved this assumption right when NATO, defying expectations, survived after the existential Soviet threat had faded away. In fact, NATO has shown greater activism after the end of the Cold War than before it. A number of missions have been undertaken – some of them of great scale, others far less relevant geopolitically. New tasks have been added to collective defense, most notably crisis management. New members have been accepted, whereby Europe is more united today than it has been in centuries. Partnerships with other countries or groups of countries have been established, to the extent that NATO is increasingly integrated in the system of international organizations.

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Contrasting with this rosy picture, post-Cold War NATO has also been the target of increasing skepticism about its role, purpose, and relevance. Talks about its eventual demise may have remained academic – as was said above, the Alliance actually expanded both its membership and range of action at a time when it was supposedly bound for extinction. Yet, the challenges it has been confronted with in the last twenty years are all too real – in fact, real enough to justify part of that skepticism. Simplifying a bit, such challenges can be subsumed under two very broad categories: tasks and capabilities.

Three times – in 1991, 1999 and 2010 – NATO leaders felt compelled to convene in order to work out an upgraded strategic concept detailing the Alliance's fundamental tasks. While the process has not always been smooth and consensual, substantial agreements have nonetheless been reached, signaling the resolve by NATO member states to maintain the Alliance's relevance. Agreements, however, have resulted from compromises, and compromises have often implied a multiplication of tasks. This, in turn, has created both a political problem – multiple tasks imply decisions about which ones should be given priority – and a practical problem – more tasks involve the development of more and more diverse and expensive instruments to cope with them.

Allies have tried to address this latter challenge by agreeing on a set of general objectives – concerning, for instance, the proportion of deployable troops from their armed forces – as well as broad lists of capabilities tailored to the complex 21<sup>st</sup> century threat environment. However, only a handful of them have met the goals set at the NATO level, and the development of capabilities has been, to say the least, very irregular. While the US has been constantly modernizing its armed forces, NATO European states, with the partial exception of the United Kingdom (UK) and France, have lagged far behind (even if one factors in the differences in resources). When pondering on how much and on what to spend public money, European governments are invariably driven by domestic considerations – which for Europeans rarely revolve around military issues – rather than NATO commitments. As a result, a growing imbalance has ensued, with certain allies proportionally contributing to Alliance activities much more than others. While this problem is anything but new in NATO's history, its proportions

– augmented by the economic crisis, which has led to cuts in military spending in most NATO member states – have now acquired an unprecedented scale.

This is the point of departure of the first two contributions to this volume. Bastian Giegerich, senior researcher at the Bundeswehr Institute for Social Studies and an affiliate with London's International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), warns that the amount of European defense spending reductions is such that they can jeopardize the ability of several NATO members to provide security for the Alliance. Nonetheless, Giegerich points out that the current critical budget juncture could also be an opportunity for NATO planners to get rid of redundant military assets while concentrating spending where it is most needed, particularly on making more troops deployable.

As a matter of fact, Giegerich argues, defense cuts in themselves are less of a problem than the fact that they are uncoordinated. The severity of budget constraints makes it impossible for European military planners to equip their armed forces for a wide spectrum of contingencies, despite the fact that this would be the wisest course of action given the unpredictability of today's threat environment. Military planners are therefore compelled to seek second-best strategies, which are likely to involve reducing military assets thought to be of secondary importance compared to the fundamental mission of any military, territorial defense. If this approach is unilaterally and uniformly followed by each and every NATO European ally, the result will be a collection of downsized European militaries, each of which less able to contribute to military interventions outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Former US secretary of defense Bob Gates referred to this possible – and indeed probable – scenario as the 'de-militarization of Europe', which is set to limit NATO's ability to perform collective action and therefore make the Alliance less relevant to US policymakers, particularly in Congress.

NATO planners are not unaware of the challenge posed by uncoordinated cuts. Convening for their regular summit in Chicago last year, allied leaders endorsed a broad 'smart defense' agenda aimed at fostering maximization of resources through joint development of military platforms and capabilities. It seems a bit of a paradox that NATO leaders agree upon an initia-



tive whose rationale is offsetting something of their own making, that is, the negative effects of uncoordinated cuts. Yet, in democracies governments take decisions on the basis of multiple considerations that often imply tradeoffs between conflicting priorities. Rarely do cuts to public spending reflect only a functional logic, as policymakers take account of issues as diverse as the perceived need to maintain an autonomous military capacity or the effects of public spending cuts on wages, pensions and benefits of people employed by defense ministries (the result often being that the axe falls on equipment and research & development rather than personnel costs). Giegerich makes therefore a compelling point when he warns against considering smart defense as a 'silver bullet'. The supposed function of smart defense is not that of solving the budget problem but rather that of making NATO's potential for collective action one of the key factors upon which European allies must rely when conducting their military spending review. In these terms, pointing to resource maximization through the pooling of assets may at least compensate the most harmful implications of military spending reductions.

It is in light of this sober assessment that Giegerich makes his suggestions as to how the smart defense agenda can realistically be implemented, such as the '2+ principle' (according to which a multinational option to develop new capabilities, involving at least two NATO members, should be given priority over a national option), the NATO 'reinvestment fund' (involving that savings coming from multinational cooperation should be reinvested in defense), and others.

While seemingly sharing Giegerich's main concerns, Daniel Keohane from the Madrid-based FRIDE think tank looks at the challenge of smart defense from a different angle, and outlines a more ambitious, albeit not unrealistic, cooperation agenda. Given that NATO's imbalance fundamentally reflects the huge capability gap between US and European forces, the key to a successful smart defense lies in Europe or, more precisely, in the European Union (EU). Certainly, thanks to US military might, NATO is an incomparably more effective military player than the EU. But the Alliance's cooperation mechanisms are much less advanced than the EU's combination of intergovernmental and supranational decision-making proce-

dures, which make the Union a more functional locus for carrying out defense cooperation effectively.

Of particular importance for achieving the goals of smart defense is, Keohane notes, the unexploited potential of a single EU defense market. Notoriously the framers of the EU originally left defense out of the single market due to its sensitivity. Decades of EU integration, however, coupled with the rising costs of military assets and the unique circumstance of the gravest financial crisis in the EU's history make bold moves towards the integration of EU defense markets not only possible, but an imperative. Keohane points to some recent initiatives by the European Commission to foster liberalization of intra-EU defense trade as an encouraging sign. He takes care to emphasize though that EU governments, particularly the six big spenders the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, should seize on the Commission's efforts to start thinking beyond simply agreeing upon common goals. They should instead lay the foundations for an EU integrated defense market, including by consolidating production of defense goods. Bold moves in the direction of greater liberalization would reduce the dispersion of public military spending in a fragmented market – which Keohane equates to outright waste of public money – as well as boost the development of a common logistic support system and intra-EU military interoperability.

Keohane remains quite pessimistic about the actual ability of European governments to address American concerns about their declining military spending. He is adamant however in stressing that greater defense integration at the EU level is the only way for at least containing the most damaging effects of European dwindling defense budgets. Thus, the one positive thing that Europe's growing reluctance to commit resources to defense has resulted in is that it has made it plain that a more integrated EU is an objective to which even die-hard Atlanticists should give their full support, since a weak EU means a weaker NATO.

The centrality of the capability issue also shines through Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) research fellows Riccardo Alcaro's and Alessandro Marrone's article on the lessons from NATO's operation in Afghanistan.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which NATO has been leading since mid-2003, has been the Alliance's most challenging out-of-area mission, and not only because of its long duration (when it ends in 2014, ISAF will have been in place for thirteen years, eleven of which under NATO's command). Deployed in a country thousands of miles from the Atlantic area, and involving up to 135,000 troops fighting an insidious enemy engaging in guerrilla warfare, ISAF has given rise to a significant rethinking of crisis management techniques at NATO's headquarters.

The extent of this exercise becomes evident if one looks at the list of assets that, according to Marrone, ISAF has made imperative for NATO to acquire: military capabilities specifically tailored to counterinsurgency campaigns; large-scale military and police training capacity; strong civil-military cooperation as well as the ability to engage with local, national and regional actors (the so-called 'comprehensive approach'); and tested platforms for involving non-NATO members in NATO-led military operations. While the need for developing these assets has been generally uncontested (at least at the level of NATO governments), implementation has eventually been unsatisfying. In fact, ISAF has exacerbated NATO's internal imbalances, with only a handful of countries willing to spend more money and energy in sharpening their militaries' expeditionary capabilities.

Yet, as Alcaro argues, for all its difficulties ISAF has also proved NATO's resilience, as the mission has basically recorded no true defection (withdrawal of Dutch and French combat troops occurred at a late stage only, in 2010 and 2012 respectively) and has been steadily supported by European governments in spite of growing popular discontent. However paradoxical it might seem at first sight, the hard experience of ISAF has therefore demonstrated that NATO is still highly regarded by its member states because it allows for crucial tradeoffs. More specifically, the US has found out that channeling support to its security priorities – as the fight against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan certainly is – through NATO is a better option than relying on coalitions of the willing. Indeed, the Alliance has ensured ISAF's sustainability in a way which an ad hoc coalition would have struggled to emulate. For their part, Europeans are willing to envisage a NATO acting far away from the Atlantic area because of what they



get in return, notably the US' lingering commitment to the defense of Europe.

Alcaro's bottom line is that the pact of reciprocal solidarity and interest underlying NATO is still strong enough to endure the heavy strain that a mission such as ISAF has caused. The critical element – and this is what creates a direct link between Alcaro and Marrone's work and the contributions by Giegerich and Keohane – is whether the allies have the resources and capabilities to support multiple security agendas. From this perspective, the risk for NATO is not so much that of being disposed of by its member states because no longer needed, but rather that of sliding into inaction – and consequently irrelevance – because no longer capable.

The fourth contribution to this volume, authored by Trine Flockhart from Copenhagen's Danish Institute for International Affairs (DIIS), also dwells on NATO's involvement in Afghanistan. Flockhart's focus however is not so much on the big picture – the strategic implications of ISAF for the Alliance – as on one key development which Marrone also alludes to in his contribution: NATO's training capacity. While maintaining a sobering assessment of ISAF's ability to achieve the goal of a fully stabilized Afghanistan, Flockhart is more positive about NATO's ability to learn from past mistakes and improve the performance of its training mission of Afghan armed and police forces.

To illustrate her point Flockhart borrows from social psychology the concept of ontological security, meaning a condition in which individuals derive a comfortable degree of self-fulfillment from their ability to connect positively with their social and work environment. As ontological security is heavily dependent on individuals' perceptions, Flockhart notes that the ability of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) to build a positive narrative about the role of Afghan security forces has been key in ensuring greater participation and commitment. Nevertheless, a narrative cannot be sustained by words alone, and Flockhart points to NTM-A's greater investment since 2009 in activities aimed at strengthening individual ontological security and can consequently bring about positive change in the performance of the group or corps to which the more ontologically secure individuals belong.

Flockhart singles out two specific actions taken by NTM-A: efforts at providing training

through partnering, whereby Afghan forces have been increasingly embedded in ISAF operations; and an investment in ensuring a higher degree of literacy among Afghan security forces. She warns however that the improvements achieved by an ontological security-focused NTM-A are dependent on variables which NTM-A is not able to influence. Particularly if Afghanistan's political system sinks in never-ending quarrels among factions, corruption and vote-rigging, whatever achievement NTM-A might have reached in the last three years can easily be lost.

A further area of profound transformation of NATO's international stance concerns its partnership initiatives. The articulated network of partnerships launched by NATO at the end of the Cold War has evolved responding to newly emerged security imperatives. In chapter five Gülnur Aybet, from the University of Kent, identifies four phases of such evolution.

The first phase, launched in 1990, aimed at 'projecting stability' in the post-Communist space by means of diffusing Western liberal norms. The final prospect for the partners was one of membership in NATO. The second phase took place in the second half of the 1990s and was characterized by a wider involvement of the partners in peace operations (notably in Bosnia and Kosovo), which raised NATO's legitimacy as a collective security provider. NATO's policy after the terrorist attacks of September 2001 marked a sharp change in NATO's partnerships, opening a third phase. There was a geographic extension of partnerships to 'global' partners (Australia and Japan) and to new regional frameworks (e.g. the 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative aimed at Persian Gulf states). Partnerships ceased to be necessarily a pathway to membership or a vehicle to transfer Western values and became more functional and practical in nature (including crime and border control and cooperation in counterterrorism). In other words, Aybet argues, "partnerships had become an essential component of a new kind of collective defense function for NATO: a borderless collective defense".

A decade ahead, however, NATO's system of partnerships looked inefficient to face the challenges ahead. New global and regional security challenges requested a new partnership policy, which was launched in 2011. The main characteristics of this fourth phase of partnership are 'efficiency' and 'flexibility' and apply to old and potentially new partners in the

world. The aim is to both deepen and broaden partnerships in terms of partners and themes. Contrary to previous initiatives, sharing NATO's values is not a prerequisite and cooperation is not limited to a few areas. New areas of cooperation have been added, which include non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), cyber and energy security and antipiracy. NATO's partnership mechanisms, however, might not be fit for all areas of the world, as Aybet notices with respect to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). On the basis of her analysis, the author provides advice for NATO's partnerships with Middle Eastern states, suggesting the opening of a broader strategic dialogue with prospective partners. NATO also needs to clarify its agenda of global and regional security, as well as the purposes of partnerships; it should hold multilateral strategic dialogues between MENA countries and NATO, disentangle its role of party to a strategic dialogue from its role as a regional security provider, cooperate with other regional powers and institutions (the EU and Turkey in primis), and finally avoid reference to its normative power in the negotiations with partners.

In chapter six Jeffrey Reynold, Dick Bedford, Tracy Cheasley and Stella Adorf from NATO Supreme Allied Command Transformation (SACT) in Norfolk, take on the same topic, providing a guide for policymakers to decide on the future of NATO's partnerships. The authors suggest, first, that partnerships should include both state and non-state actors "with which the Alliance cooperates to achieve mutual benefits based on shared risk and gain". Due to the globalized nature of emerging threats, NATO needs relationships with a broad range of actors. Second, when evaluating partnerships NATO should also consider (mainly) non-geographic factors of distance/closeness such as culture, administration, economics, and functionality. The authors suggest that NATO should "prioritize partnerships with actors that score higher across these five areas". This implies that if an actor is close to the Allies in these four respects, its geographic distance is not relevant. Third, the Alliance should "re-marry economics & security". The authors suggest that the Alliance must evaluate its position in the world's economic balance as the economy can be a tool to shape security. Fourth, NATO should embrace clusters, of both a geographic and a functional type that would pull a wide range of diverse actors, with NATO as a central hub. Fifth, the Alliance needs to minimize



the commitment-capability gap. One way to do this in times of shrinking military resources is accepting and promoting a larger role for the partners. Ultimately, the path NATO chooses for partnerships will determine its ability to play a key role as leader and integrator of a community of networked clusters; the alternative would be a “fragmented free-for-all with NATO lurching from crisis to crisis.”

We can draw a simple conclusion from the picture outlined above: contrary to what many international relations theorists and foreign policy experts thought in the early 1990s, post-Cold War NATO has been confronted not so much with the challenge of survival, as with the challenge of adaptation or, better, transformation: of its threat environment, of its own members and consequently of the Alliance’s structures and assets themselves. ‘Transformation’ is nonetheless a vague concept which needs constant theoretical work to be given a direction. It implies a regular intellectual exercise aimed at taking stock of what has actually been achieved through it as well as determining what still needs to be done for NATO to be prepared to face the future.

The cycle of Academic Conferences that NATO’s Allied Command Transformation, in cooperation with the University of Bologna and IAI of Rome, inaugurated in 2011, is an important instance of such an exercise. The 2012 edition, which focused on three broad patterns of transformation – capabilities, operations, and partnerships – saw the participation of around fifty security and defense experts from both America and Europe, as well as a number of NATO officials. The event offered the chance to exchange views and establish personal contacts. The debate was lively, intense and, while certainly not always consensual, provided all attendees with substantial food for thought. Six draft papers were presented, discussed, and reviewed in light of the discussions. By presenting the revised versions of the papers in a single publication, together with a report of each of the working groups in which the papers were debated, the organizers aim to expand the debate from the halls of an ancient university building in Bologna to the – arguably much wider – international and security studies arena.





*Focus Area I*

# *Smart Defence and the Capability Challenge*



# NATO's Smart Defence Agenda: From Concepts to Implementation

Bastian Giegerich\*

Defense spending by the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) fell 7% in real terms between 2006 and 2010. In 2010 and 2011, the last year for which reliable data is available, a further real term reduction of 2.8% took place.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, also under financial pressure, the US has been shifting its defense commitments towards the Asia-Pacific region, raising the specter of increased responsibilities for Europe. Measured in constant 2010 prices/exchange rates, the extremes between 2006 and 2010 ranged from defense cuts of 50% in Latvia to increases in defense spending of over 22% in Poland. Furthermore, it is astonishing to see how little money European governments invest together. A quick glance at basic spending data across Europe demonstrates the potential for doing much more: according to the European Defense Agency (EDA), some 77% of all defense equipment procurement by EU member states in 2010 was spent on national programs that do not involve international collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

The defense economics picture becomes even more alarming than these figures suggest by themselves if one considers that whatever countries do, most of them continue to do it in an uncoordinated fashion. Unilateral cuts, rarely discussed with partners, run the danger of undermining multinational security, both in NATO and the European Union (EU). Nick Witney,

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1 IISS, The Military Balance 2012. Abingdon, Routledge for the IISS, 2012.

2 EDA, Defense Data: EDA Participating Member States in 2010, March 7, 2012, [http://www.eda.europa.eu/publications/12-03-07/National\\_Defense\\_Data\\_2010](http://www.eda.europa.eu/publications/12-03-07/National_Defense_Data_2010), .

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\* Bastian Giegerich is senior researcher at the Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences and consulting senior fellow for European Security at the London-based International Institute for Security Studies (IISS). This paper was prepared in a personal capacity and does not necessarily reflect the views of the German armed forces or the German ministry of defense.

former head of the EDA, makes a similar point, arguing “what is worrying is not so much the scale of the cuts as the way they have been made: strictly on a national basis, without any attempt at consultation or co-ordination within either NATO or the EU, and with no regard to the overall defense capability which will result from the sum of these national decisions.”<sup>3</sup> In theory, capability gaps created by cuts on the national level can be plugged by other partners in the Alliance and NATO as a whole would still have a chance to provide a balanced capability portfolio in relation to its level of ambition. However, for this to work in practice there needs to be coordination and cooperation to an extent we are not seeing so far. At current trajectories it is much more likely that uncoordinated national attempts to manage available resources and obligations will produce unbalanced multinational capabilities, ultimately putting NATO’s ability to do its job in jeopardy.

Some countries have already adjusted their levels of ambition. A study conducted by the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has noted that “current defense reforms more often than not include the complete abandonment of some capabilities.”<sup>4</sup> What NATO has come to call ‘specialization by default’ is thus already under way by means of such uncoordinated defense cuts. Specialization by default is likely to degrade the collective capability of the Alliance and might undercut common security. Unilateral, uncoordinated cuts will, moreover, increase the burden on those countries that still possess the capabilities in question, thereby testing allied solidarity and conceptions of appropriate burden-sharing. To be clear: not all cuts are harmful. If governments were to use the financial pressure to retire obsolete equipment and balance cuts in a multinational and complementary framework, the crisis could be a blessing in disguise. Up to this point, however, the balance of evidence suggests that the usability and deployability of European armed forces has not improved over the past few years and is set to deteriorate further.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Nick Withney, *How to Stop the Demilitarisation of Europe*, London, European Council on Foreign Relations (Policy Brief; 40)). [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR40\\_DEMILITARISATION\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR40_DEMILITARISATION_BRIEF_AW.pdf)

4 Stephen Flanagan, T.J., Cipoletti, Alessandro Scheffler, “Outlook for Defense: Doing Less with Less?”, in: Stephen Flanagan (Ed.): *A Diminishing Transatlantic Partnership? The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Defense and Foreign Assistance Capabilities*. Washington CSIS, May 2011, pp. 15-28 [http://csis.org/files/publication/110427\\_Flanagan\\_FinancialCrisis\\_web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/110427_Flanagan_FinancialCrisis_web.pdf)

5 John Gordon et al, “NATO and the Challenge of Austerity”, in *Survival*, Vol. 54 Issue 4), pp. 121-142 (August 2012); Stephen F. Larrabee et al., *NATO and the Challenges of Austerity*. Santa Monica , RAND, 2012. It also has to be admitted that even a process in which cuts and austerity measures are closely coordinated in multinational frameworks might not turn this trend around, because it could turn into a framework to

Military planners always run the risk of building a force that is unable to meet future contingencies. To mitigate this risk, they have several strategies available. For example, they can choose to prepare for all contingencies or they can try to build a force optimized for a limited range of contingencies. A third strategy is to be somewhat prepared for a broad range of tasks. The budget pressure sketched above will lead defense planners to look for specialization and optimization strategies. However, the deep uncertainty of the international security environment, in which the only safe prediction seems to be that one cannot predict the shape and size of what is around the corner, makes this a high risk option. In fact, uncertainty calls for a “prepare for everything” approach – exactly the kind of strategy that is not affordable. This tension is, and in fact has been for a long time, at the root of the long-term capability challenge. As the military historian Sir Michael Howard has argued almost forty years ago, the task of the strategist is “to not get it too far wrong”<sup>6</sup> so that adjustments can be made in light of new developments. It is this long-term challenge rather than ‘just’ the immediate context of austerity and fiscal constraints that smart defense will need to help address.

### **Smart Defense: Ambition and Progress**

At the NATO summit held in Chicago on May 21-22, 2012, leaders pledged to create “modern, tightly connected forces equipped, trained, exercised and commanded so that they can operate together and with partners in any environment.”<sup>7</sup> NATO will look to generate such forces, NATO Forces 2020, through the building blocks of smart defense. In Chicago it was suggested “smart defense is at the heart” of NATO Forces 2020 and represents “a changed outlook, the opportunity for a culture of cooperation in which mutual collaboration is given new prominence as an effective option for developing critical capability.”<sup>8</sup> In short, the message was the three-pronged task of balancing budget austerity, addressing on-going operational challenges, and preparing for a security environment characterized by deep uncertainty.

At the Chicago summit, leaders adopted a defense package consisting of several specific

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rationalize extensive defense cuts. Furthermore, some countries might be tempted to disinvest from frontline combat capabilities which would of course yet again raise a burden- and risk-sharing problem.

6 Michael Howard, “Military Science in an Age of Peace”, in *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 119 No 1 (1974), pp. 3-9.

7 NATO, Summit Declaration on Defense Capabilities: Toward NATO Forces 2020 (Press Release 064) May 20, 2012, par. 5. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87594.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87594.htm?mode=pressrelease),

8 Ibid., par. 7 and 8.



smart defense projects. The package included some twenty projects covering, for example, the pooling of maritime patrol aircraft and improving the availability of precision weapons. Each project will be taken forward by a volunteering 'lead nation', while the list of active projects is slowly growing as individual proposals in a pool of some 150 potential projects are maturing. The number of active projects stood at twenty-four by October 2012. Former Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), general Stéphane Abrial, suggested that the total might grow to more than thirty by the end of 2012. He said "NATO must continue to provide the framework and be a catalyst for multinational projects, wherever nations wish it, but also serve as a promoter of coherence and a source of strategic advice, to help inform national decision-making."<sup>9</sup> On the capability side, NATO leaders pointed to an interim missile defense capability, progress on the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system, and an agreement to extend allied air policing in the Baltic member states as the three flagship projects of smart defense. While some of these measures do implement principles akin to what is being advanced under the smart defense headline, all of them have been in the works for a long time and are thus unlikely to serve as a lasting inspiration for smart defense as a whole. On the contrary, as one commentator suggested, "the story of NATO AGS is well known: a program characterized by delays, disagreements and budget cuts."<sup>10</sup> Hence, there is a danger that smart defense is increasingly judged by a significant group of observers to fail to rise to the challenge.

In addition to smart defense, NATO will seek to improve the interoperability of its forces through the so-called 'connected forces' initiative. Then SACT Abrial explained that the initiative was designed to be "the framework for unified efforts to make sure [NATO] forces, and those of our partners, are optimized for working collectively and also that [NATO] forces maintain the strong coherence that they have developed during operations."<sup>11</sup> Thus in a post-ISAF environment, the connected forces initiative is likely to concentrate on combat effectiveness, in particular by focusing on training and exercises.

The three components of smart defense are prioritization, cooperation, and specialization.

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9 NATO, Press briefing by General Stéphane Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), September 12, 2012, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_89944.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_89944.htm).

10 Andrew D. James, "Smart Business Models: Industry's Role in Efficient Multinational Development and Procurement", in RUSI Briefing Document for the NATO ACT Industry Day, Riga, October 2012.

11 NATO, Press briefing by General Stéphane Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), cit.

Prioritization implies that NATO member states align their national capability priorities more closely with NATO's capability goals. Cooperation is in effect an attempt to induce the pooling of military capability among allies in order to generate economies of scale and improve interoperability. Specialization is by far the most difficult of the three elements because it directly impacts on member state sovereignty. It would entail member governments investing in existing areas of excellence and in turn giving up capability in other areas.

It is easy to criticize smart defense for being a fancy term for old ideas and an opportunity to repackage projects to create the illusion of progress. There are also plenty and severe obstacles for its successful implementation. In part, such criticism is valid. But even critics have to acknowledge that the challenge outlined above remains: how to make better use of scarce resources in the context of great uncertainty? This is, in fact, how NATO's Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen described the ambition on the eve of the October 2012 defense ministerial: "More multinational teamwork can help us spend our scarce resources more effectively."<sup>12</sup>

The smart defense concept is not primarily about saving money, but rather about creating value in defense. Value can come in several guises: as costs savings, as capability and interoperability increases; or even in more intangible forms, such as mutual trust and understanding. Achieving all of these benefits is possible as existing examples of cooperation prove. The European Air Transport Command (EATC),<sup>13</sup> to name one example, has increased effectiveness in multiple areas ranging from information exchange among participating countries to providing more options in terms of the type of available aircraft, in particular for smaller nations. Working together on a daily basis in EATC has increased mutual understanding and acceptance among national staffs. Officers and enlisted staff routinely solve joint problems together, which is a basic requirement for successful cooperation. Daily cooperation also facilitates the exchange of 'best-practices' between nations.

The EATC achieves efficiency also through a reduced footprint in terms of personnel and

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12 NATO, Opening remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Defense Ministers session, October 9, 2012, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-620B48E0-C560591F/natolive/opinions\\_90576.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-620B48E0-C560591F/natolive/opinions_90576.htm).

13 For more on this case study see: Philipp Gallhöfer, Bastian GiegerichWolfgang Ischinger et al., Smart Defense after the NATO Summit – Aspirations, Added Value, Implications for Europe, Berlin, Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, (Policy Brief 1/12)

infrastructure compared to the parallel national structures that would be needed in its absence. More impressive, however, is the increased performance a structure like EATC might generate at no extra cost. In this particular case, efficiency gains were achieved through the exchange of flight hours – this exchange increased by a factor of five from 2010, when the EATC started operating, to 2011. Three types of efficiency can be achieved through the exchange of flight hours. The first is the ability to better manage aircraft loads (i.e. fewer aircraft will fly with partial loads); between the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2012, the average load per EATC flight doubled (from about 3.5t to 7t). Additionally, the percentage of empty flights sunk from roughly 22 per cent to 14 per cent. Finally, the exchange of flight hours has allowed for flights which would have otherwise only been possible on a national basis or not at all. It is difficult to put a price tag on these benefits, but the latter alone generates a sizeable annual value.

The aspiration behind smart defense is a positive step, independent of the immediate budget pressures and cuts. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that while smart defense might help protect existing capability and help spend – or rather allocate – money more wisely, it is unlikely to create new capabilities by itself. The hope was that smart defense would help allies to do more with less. The trends suggest that at the moment they are “doing less with less”.<sup>14</sup> On paper, smart defense covers a potentially wide-ranging ambition: to change the way NATO members design, operate, maintain and discard military capabilities. This means playing a long game. The willingness of individual allies to take over lead nation status for concrete smart defense projects (Tier 1 projects) is still the clearest sign of engagement. Without additional progress on this matter, smart defense is a pool of ideas that might never produce a strategic result.

Smart defense as a shift in mindsets has to penetrate thinking in all member states and thus NATO as a whole. In practice, however, smart defense projects will further strengthen the tendency for NATO member states to work together in small groups on specific problems, rather than mobilizing the Alliance as such. But NATO can reduce the transaction costs of such vari-

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14 Stephen Flanagan, T.J., Cipoletti, Alessandro Scheffler, “Outlook for Defense: Doing Less with Less?”, cit Bastian Giegerich, Alexander Nicoll “The Struggle for Value in European Defense”, in *Survival*, Vol. 54 Issue 1, pp. 53-82.

able intra-Alliance cooperation by acting as a facilitator, providing advice and establishing mechanisms to ensure transparency and realistic expectations. Another important element of NATO's role will be to stop member states from using smart defense as an excuse for further cuts. The secretary general is already engaged accordingly: "We need smart spending. And even more, we need sufficient spending. I know that, right now, the priority for many countries is to balance their budgets. That's understandable. It is necessary. And it is a vital part of maintaining a healthy and secure economy. But we also need to prepare the ground for when our economies improve. Because security is the basis of prosperity."<sup>15</sup> In their search for efficiency and effectiveness, governments in the Alliance must not forget the need to engage electorates on defense in general and explain why defense remains an important policy arena even in the absence of a clearly identifiable existential threat – this includes a conversation on the question of what the armed forces are for and how they fit into the broader toolbox of national and multinational security instruments.

### **Persistent Obstacles and Thoughts on the Way Forward**

Past experience provides plenty of material to analyze the many hurdles that have stood in the way of successful efforts to cooperate, prioritize and specialize. However, three stand out for being fundamental obstacles: national concerns about the loss of sovereignty; defense industrial concerns; and lack of trust.

Countries that implement the principles behind smart defense will inevitably become more dependent on each other – obviously in military terms but ultimately also in political terms. It seems hardly possible to reap the benefits and the value of closer cooperation without accepting some of the associated costs in terms of reduced national autonomy. Countries that are mutually dependent on each other will always worry that they are being asked to provide, for example, a pooled or shared capability for operations that they do not want to conduct, or that they might be abandoned by their partners in an operational context.

Furthermore, several NATO member states have significant defense industrial concerns relating to smart defense. If resources are being used more efficiently and economies of scale

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<sup>15</sup> NATO, Press conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen following the first meeting of Ministers of Defense, October 9, 2012, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-130E60B2-FD9E6AFA/natolive/opinions\\_90575.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-130E60B2-FD9E6AFA/natolive/opinions_90575.htm?selectedLocale=en).



are exploited, it is likely that it will lead to defense industrial consolidation in Europe. In other words, some jobs and skills in defense industry might be threatened – another risk that needs to be addressed among partners. Defense industry itself is an important stakeholder in the smart defense concept, and one that needs to be convinced of its benefits. Smart defense implies more collaboration on defense equipment programs, but experience has taught the defense industry to equate collaboration with program delays and the market-distorting *juste retour* (fair return) principle. If it is to play its part, industry will need to understand the business case for the smart defense initiative. If smart defense contributed to increased harmonization of military requirements and made them stick throughout procurement projects, for example by freezing designs once they are agreed among participating governments, the benefits would be easy to see for industry.

Successfully implementing smart defense demands that NATO member states trust each other. In practical military terms, this means that all partners involved have to have high levels of certainty regarding the availability of any capability provided or generated through smart defense mechanisms. In other words, access has to be guaranteed. These three obstacles are real risks, political and military, for smart defense. No matter how creative the smart defense design ultimately turns out to be, they will not be eliminated completely in the foreseeable future. However, much can be done to mitigate their impact.

One dimension worth considering in this regard is what could be termed the ‘organizing principle’. There is widespread agreement among experts that when it comes to specific projects, cooperation in small groups of countries is more promising than to attempt to cooperate ‘at 28’. The central idea behind the small group approach to smart defense would be to create several mutually supporting clusters of cooperation with varying, and often overlapping, circles of membership.<sup>16</sup>

Several ideas have been put forward regarding how such cooperation clusters should be constructed. The first approach would be to build clusters according to the regional approach. Neighboring countries, possibly benefiting from low language barriers and geographic con-

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<sup>16</sup> See for example: Tomas Valasek, *Surviving austerity. The case for a new approach to EU military collaboration*, London Centre for European Reform, April 2011 [http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/rp\\_981-141.pdf](http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/rp_981-141.pdf)

nectedness, are assumed to share a sense of regional identity which in turn produces high levels of trust, making shared autonomy and mutual dependency acceptable. A second idea is to organize collaboration based on what has been termed 'strategic proximity'. Strategic proximity does not assume proximity in a geographic sense, but rather refers to countries having similar strategic cultures and therefore a similar outlook regarding the missions they are likely to conduct and the role they would like their armed forces to play in support of security policy priorities. According to the logic of strategic proximity, a similar level of ambition and security policy orientation will be helpful to create stable and reliable expectations in relation to each other. A third option would be to group countries together that want to pursue similar benefits as a result of cooperation, in other words to focus on the intent. Do countries want to generate efficiencies (save money), create higher levels of effectiveness (improve interoperability and capabilities), or build confidence and trust (promote integration)?

Even if such clusters successfully form, there is likely to be a demand for mechanisms to provide assured access to capabilities in case of NATO operations.<sup>17</sup> The easiest way to give such guarantees is to allow for redundancies in those capabilities affected. In this way, the Alliance would still be able to provide needed capabilities even if certain countries opted out of a given engagement. To be sure, determining the minimum winning coalition within NATO while balancing assured access, redundancy, and the need for greater efficiency in spending will be a huge challenge for planners. This balance can only be determined on a case-by case basis for individual capabilities.

A more difficult, but economically more efficient, way to guarantee access would be for countries to enter into legally binding agreements. The goal of assured access must be to provide a predetermined capability after receiving notice that it is required. This implies the availability of assets at a predetermined level of readiness, with fully trained personnel and support, mandated to conduct a predetermined range of missions for a defined period of time. In addition to rules regulating contribution, access and operation, a credible (ideally NATO-run) certification process to ensure the deployability and readiness of capabilities would be a good addition, because it would help to generate transparency and trust.

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<sup>17</sup> The following points are examined at greater length in: Bastian Giegerich, "NATO's Smart Defense: Who's Buying?", *Survival* Vol. 54 Issue 3, pp. 69-77.

## Conclusion

Smart defense will not be a silver bullet and it would be dangerous to think it can be. It will not allow governments to avoid difficult political choices about capabilities. It will actually require political commitment and financial investment and will not simply be a vehicle for cost-cutting. From this long-term perspective, a number of principles for the implementation of multinational initiatives under the smart defense heading can be put forward.

For all new capability initiatives member states might want to adopt a “2+ principle”. This would imply that options to involve at least one other ally are by default assessed before a national solution is even considered. In effect, this would be the comprehensive application of multinational force goals.

Multinational capability developments could be governed by a commitment to freeze designs and to ring-fence funding for such projects from future budget cuts. Any financial savings generated because of multinational cooperation need to be reinvested in defense, for example through a NATO reinvestment fund. This is important to prevent cooperation from becoming an excuse for cuts, but also for those in charge of implementing and living cooperation on a daily basis to see a greater purpose than ‘just’ efficiency.

Industry cannot be expected to be altruistic, but can well be expected to make good business decisions based on allocated funds. To secure industry engagement, business leaders have to be shown that specific and funded projects exist – in other words, that there is a market that only exists because of smart defense. Then governments should encourage supplier consortia made up of complementary industrial partners rather than make direct competitors work together, which ultimately only entrenches duplication and inefficiencies. This way, the value added by cooperation takes center stage and discussions about work-shares are mitigated.

NATO as an organization should be empowered to reduce the transaction costs of cooperation by improving transparency and predictability. In practice this will be difficult to achieve because it would mean, among other things, more intrusive NATO defense planning and guaranteed access obligations. A small group or mini-lateral approach offers a fair chance to generate effective multilateralism in smart defense. The risk of fragmentation needs to be monitored constantly and coherence has to be ensured on the NATO level, however.

If smart defense is presented as the ultimate answer to the defense budget crunch, hopes will be dashed quickly. The need to save money is one compelling argument, but it is just as important for governments to show a clear and shared sense of purpose in building capabilities. A central element of the narrative behind smart defense is the promotion of transatlantic solidarity and common security in times of austerity. NATO member states will need to understand that smart defense is a tool to reorganize the way the Alliance produces common security.

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# Smart Defense and the Capability Challenge: Why NATO Needs the EU

Daniel Keohane\*

It has become a cliché to observe that Europe's armies need many new military capabilities. But European governments are still doing very little to remedy the problem. European armed forces struggled to fight alongside the United States (US) during the Kosovo war in 1999 because they lacked sophisticated equipment, and they needed US help again in Libya in 2011. After Kosovo, European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) governments signed up to a number of 'headline goals' and 'capability commitments' to improve their military prowess. But it is hard to find much concrete evidence of real improvements in European military equipment over the last decade. Moreover, the budgetary challenge faced by European defense ministries is great. The cost of defense equipment is rising by 6 to 8% a year – whereas defense budgets are falling rapidly – and the growing number of operations is consuming money that had been set aside for buying new equipment.

Given that defense budgets are falling, and that the cost of new military technologies is soaring, governments will need to extract more value out of each euro they spend. It therefore follows that they need to pay more attention to improving European cooperation on developing military capabilities. An effort in this direction should lead to significant benefits, including better value-for-money for taxpayers; greater harmonization of military requirements and technologies, which help different European forces to work together more effectively; and a

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more competitive European defense industry. It is this policy and budgetary context that explains the inspiration for NATO's 'Smart Defense' initiative – a new plan to encourage allies to work more closely on military capabilities. But NATO is not alone in having such plans, nor is the basic idea behind 'Smart Defense' especially new. The EU, alongside NATO, has long been trying to convince European governments to 'pool and share' their capability efforts. Furthermore, the EU's comparative advantage in this area is that it can link military equipment goals and projects to European defense industrial policies.

### **Too Much Process, Not Enough Product? Past EU and NATO Capability Plans**

In the early years of its existence, both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations in Washington were especially concerned about how EU defense policy – now known as the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) in EU jargon – would affect European planning for military capabilities. The 1999 Kosovo war had exposed huge equipment gaps between US armed forces and European armies, one reason why the US initially spurned most European offers of military help for its operation in Afghanistan immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Furthermore, the massive hikes in US defense spending after 2001 – especially on new technologies – exacerbated American concerns on the growing transatlantic military capability gap.<sup>1</sup>

Some US officials and academics feared that CSDP would be more about demonstrating deeper European integration than developing useful military capabilities, which NATO would also need if it was to remain a relevant alliance in US planning.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Helsinki Headline Goals, agreed by EU governments in December 1999, did not exactly match the higher-end equipment goals that NATO agreed the same year (known as the Defense Capabilities Initiative). Some Americans questioned if EU commitments would mean that Europeans would spend their much lower defense budgets on lower-end peacekeeping priorities rather than try to keep up with US capability plans.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler, 'Transforming European Forces', *Survival*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Fall 2002), p. 117-132.

2 Philip Gordon, 'Their own army?', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4, (July/August 2000).

3 Kori Schake, *Constructive duplication: Reducing EU reliance on US military assets*, London, Centre for European Reform, January 2002.

At the EU Helsinki summit of 1999, EU governments committed themselves to a 'headline goal' (a force of 60,000 troops known as the European Rapid Reaction Force – ERRF), plus supporting naval, aerial and civilian capabilities, that were supposed to be ready by the end of 2003.<sup>4</sup> EU governments committed 100,000 troops, 400 combat planes, and 100 ships to the force. Although these figures looked impressive, all of those troops and assets already existed, and were also available for NATO or UN missions. What was more important – and more difficult to show – was what new equipment governments had purchased due to EU requirements. The former chair of NATO's Military Committee, General Klaus Naumann, observed at the time that the EU would not have a real military intervention capability until at least 2010.<sup>5</sup> By 2001 the 'Helsinki Headline Goal' had produced only meager results. To improve their performance, in 2002, EU governments agreed on a new implementation program – the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) – which aimed to focus European efforts on acquiring particular crucial assets.<sup>6</sup> Equally significantly, the EU's equipment goals complemented NATO's in most areas except for some advanced network-centric warfare capabilities.

NATO members had also agreed on a program – a list of 58 priorities – in April 1999, called the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), to focus European procurement efforts on particular needs.<sup>7</sup> By 2002, the DCI had proved to be a failure as less than half of the programs were funded. At the NATO summit in Prague of November 2002, NATO governments agreed on a new, smaller, and more precise procurement program – the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC).<sup>8</sup> The PCC – a list of eight requirements – focused on critical areas such as secure communications, precision-guided weapons, air and sea transport, and air-to-air refueling.

The ECAP did introduce two important ideas that were later adopted by NATO members at the 2002 Prague summit. The first idea was the concept of a 'framework nation' to take the lead on procuring a particular common asset – the Netherlands, for example, led a collective

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4 Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions, Annex I to Annex IV, 'Presidency Progress Report to the Helsinki European Council on strengthening the common European policy on security and defense', Helsinki, December 10-11, 1999.

5 Cited in Douglas Hamilton, 'European Rapid Reaction Force Unlikely by 2003', Reuters, March 29, 2000.

6 Council of the European Union, General Affairs Council, Statement on improving military capabilities, Brussels, November 19-20, 2001.

7 NATO, Washington Summit Ministerial Communiqué, Defense Capabilities Initiative, April 25, 1999 ([NAC-S\(99\)69](#)).

8 NATO, Prague Summit Declaration, November 21, 2002.



effort to acquire precision-guided munitions, and Spain did the same for air-to-air refueling planes. The second ECAP innovation was that governments should come up with interim arrangements to fill their capability gaps, if their products were scheduled to arrive years down the line. The first deliveries of the A400M transport plane were not due to arrive for some years, and in the meantime some EU defense ministries explored the option of leasing transport planes from other countries – the German Ministry of Defense used Ukrainian planes to take its troops to Afghanistan in 2002.

At the 2002 Prague summit NATO members also agreed to increase their military might by creating a NATO response force (NRF) of 21,000 elite troops, backed by supporting air and sea components, which would be mainly European. However, given their scarce defense resources, some analysts argued that European governments may have to choose between the NRF and the ERRF agreed in the Helsinki Headline Goal in 1999.<sup>9</sup> There was some debate over whether Europeans could expect to get two sets of forces for the price of one. But the EU later decided to adopt the same shift in approach to capability priorities as NATO, from larger peacekeeping forces to smaller more capable military units able to carry out the most demanding types of military mission. At a Franco-British summit in Le Touquet in February 2003, the British and French governments proposed that the EU should be able to deploy nine ‘battle groups’, consisting each of 1,500 troops, and deployable within two weeks.

The battle group plan was formally endorsed by EU heads of government at their summit in June 2004 as part of a new ‘Headline Goal 2010’ for military capabilities.<sup>10</sup> The Headline Goal 2010 contained six capability categories: (i) mobility and deployability; (ii) sustainability; (iii) engagement; (iv) strategic transport; (v) command, control and communications; (vi) intelligence and surveillance. However, a new ‘Declaration on strengthening capabilities’ during the French presidency of the EU in December 2008 was honest about the EU’s failure to meet previous headline goals, albeit ambitious for what EU governments should be able to do in the future.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Barry Posen, ‘Europe cannot advance on two fronts’, *Financial Times*, April 24, 2003.

10 Council of the European Union, General Affairs and External Relations Council, Headline Goal 2010, Brussels, May 17, 2004, endorsed by the European Council, Brussels, June 17-18, 2004. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/2010%20Headline%20Goal.pdf>

11 Council of the European Union, Declaration on strengthening capabilities, Brussels, December 11, 2008.

A comparison of EU governments' military capabilities between 1999 and 2009 showed that some success had been achieved in reforming Europe's armies, even if much more could have been done.<sup>12</sup> Today's twenty-seven EU governments spent just over €160 billion on defense in 1999, which rose to almost €210 billion in 2008. However, this apparent rise is misleading, since defense expenditure as a percentage of GDP fell from 2.1 % in 1997 to 1.7% in 2007. In 1999 EU governments (including those which were not yet part of the EU) had almost 2.5 million personnel in their collective armed forces, including more than 1.1 million conscripts. In 2008, they had reduced their armed forces to 2 million personnel, and just over 200,000 conscripts. Data collected by the European Defense Agency (EDA), the intergovernmental body established in 2004 to encourage cooperation on capability acquisition, research and development, and the convergence of national procurement procedures, showed that in 2007 the twenty-six member states of the EDA (Denmark is not a member) could deploy 444,000 soldiers, but could only sustain 110,000 on operations.<sup>13</sup>

For different types of equipment, there were similar trends. In the land equipment sector, the total inventoried numbers of main battle tanks, armored fighting vehicles and personnel carriers all fell, but their numbers were still high. For instance, although the number of tanks had almost halved, it was still close to 10,000. For aircraft, the number of fighter jets fell from 3,800 to 2,400. Helicopters were also reduced from 4,700 to 3,500, although the number of utility helicopters – a category which includes vital transport helicopters – doubled. In all, between 1999 and 2009 there was some progress in cutting personnel and inventories of outdated equipment, but there were still a number of key capability weaknesses, such as strategic transport assets.

### **From Reform to Austerity**

Military reform is not easy, and it encompasses a number of areas, such as types of troops, equipment acquisition and development, and doctrine. European defense ministries have only slowly woken from the slumber of Cold War military thinking over the last decade, and

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12 Charlotte Blommesteijn and Daniel Keohane, *Strength in numbers? Comparing European military capabilities in 2009 with 1999*, Paris, European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2009 (Policy Brief).

13 European Defense Agency, *National Defense Expenditure in 2006 and 2007*, December 11, 2008. <http://www.eda.europa.eu/defensefacts/default.aspx?Year=2007>

some countries are more awake than others. But the impact of the economic crisis has been deeply felt across European defense ministries since 2008. The figures are sobering. According to NATO data, the US spent a whopping \$785 billion on defense in 2010, accounting for around 75% of NATO defense spending (up from 60% in 1990). Furthermore, while NATO-Europe spent some \$275 billion in 2010, collectively Europeans can barely deploy and sustain 100,000 soldiers for external operations; in contrast the US has a deployable capacity of around 400,000 troops (plus vast numbers of so-called 'strategic assets' and other technologies that Europeans lack, such as long-range transport planes and ships, air tankers, precision-guided-munitions etc.).

The Pentagon will have to cut its budget by some \$489 billion over the next ten years. But the ratio with NATO-Europe will likely remain very lop-sided for the foreseeable future, since most European defense ministries also have to cut their budgets in the coming years. In real terms, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data, budgets will go down 7.5% in Britain by 2014-2015 and 10% in Germany by 2015, while France will remain roughly constant until 2013.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, four countries provide roughly 75% of EU defense spending – Britain and France (45 per cent) and Germany and Italy. Add the Dutch and Spanish defense budgets to the four bigger countries, and those six account for around 85 per cent of EU spending. Even if the other 21 EU countries re-program their defense spending and focus on 'niche' activities, how the six largest (and richest) countries spend their defense budgets has an enormous impact on overall EU figures.

Despite NATO's success in Libya in 2011, these deep European defense spending cuts explain why the Alliance is increasingly criticized in the US. Obama's first defense secretary, Robert Gates, warned in his 2011 farewell speech that "if current trends in the decline of European defense capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders...may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost". Similarly, EU officials are also critical of the European failure to combine forces. In September 2012, Hakan Syren, the then chair of the EU Military Committee said: "We have to stop pretending that we are safeguarding national sovereignty by maintaining illusory national independence. Yes, Mem-

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14 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Yearbook 2012, <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook>

ber States will be sovereign to stay out of involvement, but will be lacking capabilities to act either alone or with others”.<sup>15</sup>

Already before the economic crisis a massive 70% of Europe’s land forces were unusable outside national territory, according to the former chief executive of the EDA.<sup>16</sup> If cuts in national budgets and capabilities continue, then most national EU forces will probably become little more than “bonsai armies”, hollowed-out forces in nice uniforms with little capability to offer in the future.<sup>17</sup> All this suggests a much deeper problem in European defense. European governments do not agree on how or when armed force should be used. Roughly, the Europeans can be split into three groups: activists, defenders and free-riders. Activists are prepared to use force abroad; defenders, partly because of austerity, prefer to focus on territorial defense; while free-riders spend little and do less. NATO’s recent Libya operation is a case and point: only six European countries (all from Western Europe) deployed fighter jets to bomb ground targets. And it is sobering to consider what might have happened if neither US nor NATO assets had been available for the Libya operation – some estimates claim that 90% of NATO operations in Libya required American military help.<sup>18</sup>

EU defense ministers did agree a new “pooling and sharing” initiative at their meeting in Ghent in 2010 to help save money and increase the efficiency of their armed forces. This led to the identification in December 2011 of eleven ‘specific concrete’ projects, including air-to-air refueling, smart munitions, intelligence, surveillance & reconnaissance and military satellite communications.<sup>19</sup> To its credit, the EDA has pushed its member states to develop an air tanker project, and in November 2012, ten EU governments signed a letter of intent to work together to acquire new tankers by 2020. Even so, there are many similarities between the EU’s ‘pooling and sharing’ initiative that came from the 2010 Ghent meeting and NATO’s Smart Defense agreed at the Chicago summit in May 2012 – and both are correspondingly criticized.

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15 Keynote speech by General Hakan Syrén, Facing realities – in search of a more European mindset!, Cyprus EU Presidency High Level Seminar, Brussels, September 19, 2012.

16 Nick Witney, Re-energising Europe’s security and defense policy, London, European Council on Foreign Relations, July 2008, (Policy Paper) p. 20.

17 Christian Mölling, Europe without defense, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, November 2011 (SWP Comments 38).

18 Claudia Major, Christian Mölling and Tomas Valasek, Smart but too cautious: How NATO can improve its fight against austerity, London, Centre for European Reform, May 2012 (Policy Brief).

19 Sven Biscop and Jo Coelmont, Military capabilities: From pooling & sharing to a permanent and structured approach, Brussels, Egmont, September 2012 (Security Policy Brief No. 37).

Christian Mölling from the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) in Berlin points out that ‘pooling and sharing’ in both the EU and NATO context has so far “only been a catchphrase for the defense cooperation that EU and NATO states have been practicing for decades. Around a hundred projects currently exist. Some 20% involve bilateral cooperation; 60% involve five or fewer partners”.<sup>20</sup> Nick Witney from the European Council on Foreign Relations adds that “so much rhetorical effort and so much staff time have been expended over the past dozen or more years, with so little to show for it...that a growing fatalism is increasingly detectable whenever the idea of some new effort to advance the policy is broached”.<sup>21</sup> Jolyon Howorth, from the University of Bath, goes further, suggesting that since “the EU is a global political project, whereas NATO deals “merely with security...the role of the EDA should be central and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) should be transformed into an agency which ensures liaison with the US defense industrial base”.<sup>22</sup>

Although, as part of the Ghent initiative, EU governments have made some progress on concrete projects, in particular on air-to-air refueling, there is growing recognition in national capitals that ‘pooling and sharing’ (whether through the EU or NATO’s Smart Defense initiative) may no longer be enough. Eleven EU foreign ministers produced a report in September 2012 that said: “Our defense policy should have more ambitious goals which go beyond ‘pooling and sharing’. The possibilities of the Lisbon Treaty, in particular the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation, should be implemented”.<sup>23</sup>

Europe’s lack of useful military resources formed a major part of the inter-governmental discussion of the defense-related provisions of the Lisbon Treaty (which entered into force at the end of 2009) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) would make it easier for a subset of EU countries to work together more closely on military matters.<sup>24</sup> Those EU governments which meet a set of capability-based entry criteria can choose to cooperate more closely

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20 Christian Mölling, Pooling and sharing in the EU and NATO, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, June 2012 (SWP Comments 18).

21 Nick Witney, How to stop the demilitarisation of Europe, European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2011.

22 Jolyon Howorth, CSDP and NATO Post-Libya: Towards the Rubicon?, Brussels, Egmont, July 2012 (Security Policy Brief No. 35).

23 Foreign Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain, Final Report of the Future of Europe Group, September 17, 2012.

24 Article 28 A and 28 E TEU, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty.



after securing a majority vote. This clause makes a lot of sense, since military capabilities and ambitions vary widely among EU members. Indeed, to be useful beyond ‘pooling and sharing’, PESCO implies forms of military integration – not only cooperation – between the participating governments.

However, given the lack of useful military resources in the EU, the criteria for permanent structured cooperation should be ambitious and testing enough to encourage much closer and more effective cooperation on developing military capabilities. But the criteria should not be so stringent that most EU governments are excluded, especially those who have contributed significant numbers of peacekeepers to CSDP military operations. Defining the entry criteria for the core group, therefore, may prove difficult, especially finding a balance between effectiveness and legitimacy.

### **The Supply and Demand Challenge**

The European ‘pooling and sharing’ debate has sometimes focused too much on equipment goals and not enough on other important aspects such as pooling and sharing production alongside procurement. National rather than European priorities have largely been reflected in equipment procurement programs. In 2010, the EU member states spent just over €34 billion on investments in equipment procurement, but only €7.5 billion on collaborative programs, barely more than 20% of the total.<sup>25</sup> There is tremendous waste in European defense spending. For instance, there are thirteen producers of aircraft, ten of missiles, nine of military vehicles and eight of ships; by contrast, the US – with double the market size – has twelve producers of aircraft, five of missiles, eight of military vehicles and just four of ships.<sup>26</sup> The result of this national fragmentation is a duplication of development and production and different standards of equipment. This fragmentation also hinders the development of common logistic support systems and diminishes military interoperability.

In general terms, those countries with a significant defense industry are much more likely to participate in a cooperative program than those countries which do not have a large de-

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<sup>25</sup> European Defense Agency, *Defense Data 2010*, Brussels, 2011.

<http://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/publications/publication-details/pub/defense-data-2010-booklet>

<sup>26</sup> Giovanni Faleg and Alessandro Giovannini, *The EU between Pooling & Sharing and Smart Defense: Making a virtue out of necessity?*, Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies, May 2012 (Special Report).

fense sector. The six major European arms-producing countries (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sweden) account for more than 90% of defense equipment production in the EU. This means that most European countries are primarily consumers rather than producers – although many smaller countries are major sub-contractors and component suppliers. The large number of different defense equipment programs and producers in Europe shows that European governments do not yet coordinate much of their demand for defense products, despite their shared capability goals. The task for European governments in the future is to coordinate more of their demand and to spend their defense budgets more efficiently, if they wish to acquire the full range of required capabilities.

In theory, a more integrated European defense market would allow free movement of most defense goods amongst EU member-states. Greater cross-border cooperation would allow larger economies of scale, increased industrial competition, and thus lower prices, particularly for more advanced equipment. Defense ministries would be able to purchase equipment from the company that offered the best financial and technical package, regardless of its national origin. Keith Hartley of York University estimated that a single defense market could save EU governments up to 20% of their procurement funds.<sup>27</sup> On average, EU governments spend over €30 billion annually on purchasing defense equipment (out of almost €200 billion in total on defense). Thus, a single defense market could save defense ministries over €6 billion a year.

The European Commission has taken on the task of regulating a European defense market to a large degree. Defense goods related to the ‘essential interests of security’ – as stipulated in Article 346 of the EU treaties – were one of the notable exclusions from the Commission’s regulation of European industry. Previously, the Commission’s role in the defense market was confined to ‘dual-use’ products that are components of both civilian and military equipment. But the defense market would clearly benefit from the Commission’s experience in policing the single market for commercial goods and services. NATO, in contrast, cannot play any legislative role in regulating more open European defense markets.

Given the sensitive nature of the defense market, some arms-producing countries were

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<sup>27</sup> Keith Hartley, “The future of European defense policy: an economic perspective”, *Defense and Peace Economics*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (January 2003), p.107-115.

reluctant to give much new regulatory power to the Commission. The main arms-producing countries in Europe traditionally adhered to a strict interpretation of Article 346 (formerly Article 296). This prevented the Commission from having a meaningful involvement in the defense market, with the result that governments could protect their national companies from foreign competition.

Yet, this has changed due to two factors: the defense budget crunch and the Commission's new approach to defense market rules. The Commission did not propose changing Article 346, as appeared to be the case with its past legislative initiatives. Instead, the objective of the Commission's 2008 'defense package' was to set up a new legal framework for security- and defense-related procurement and intra-EU trade of defense equipment. The legislative aspects of the 'defense package' contained two proposals for directives on procurement and trade which were passed into legislation by EU governments and the European Parliament (EP) during 2008 and 2009.

The procurement directive has established four types of procedures to help streamline national procurement procedures. These are: restrictive calls for tender; negotiated procedures with publication; competitive dialogue; and negotiated procedure without publication. If the Commission suspects malpractice, it can take an EU member state to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to investigate if the new procurement regime is respected. The proposal seems both fair and sensible, because it strikes a balance between opening defense markets to allow more industrial competition and the sovereignty imperatives related to defense procurement that governments worry about. Moreover, the text includes not only defense but also security equipment tenders. This is important because the frontier between 'defense' and 'security' equipment is blurring. In time the procurement directive should encourage the opening of European defense markets, but with a broader approach (including security products) and it will be legally binding.

The trade directive aims to liberalize the trade of defense goods within the EU (also known as intra-community transfers). Currently, intra-community transfers follow the same rules as those regulating exports of European defense goods to governments outside the EU. Each year, between 11-12,000 export licenses are requested for defense transfers between EU gov-

ernments, and almost all get clearance. However, this fragmented system causes extra costs and many delays, undermining European industrial competitiveness. More broadly, such practices constitute a barrier to creating a more integrated European defense equipment market, as they affect both large transnational defense companies and small and medium-size enterprises further down the supply chain.

Practically, the Commission proposed to replace the system of individual licenses (whereby an individual license is required for each transaction), by a system of general licenses covering several different transactions for those intra-community transfers where the risks of undesired re-exportation to third countries are firmly controlled.<sup>28</sup> Member states agreed to this directive because, although it aims to harmonize the rules and procedures for intra-community transfers, it leaves governments room for maneuver. Governments would still have the responsibility to allocate licenses, and in no way would it give the Commission the competence to regulate defense exports to countries outside the EU.

### **Conclusion: Sink or Swim Together**

European public support for international peacekeeping is falling, for a few reasons. The Iraq war in 2003 greatly damaged the credibility of international military interventions, and since then, NATO's Afghanistan campaign has become unpopular in most of Europe. Moreover, public apathy in Europe increasingly extends to defense policy in general, not only international peacekeeping. Understandably, most Europeans currently do not seem to feel militarily threatened by a non-EU state – albeit they still care for non-military threats to their livelihoods such as terrorist attacks, gas cuts, cyber-attacks, organized crime or the potential security implications of climate change. The economic crisis makes it even more difficult for politicians to explain why defense policy matters relative to jobs, pensions, health or education.

Because of austerity, even if Europeans had more appetite for international peacekeeping, they will not be able to greatly improve their military capabilities in the coming years. At best

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<sup>28</sup> This encompasses: purchases by armed forces of other EU member states; transfers to certified companies of components in the context of industrial cooperation; transfers of products necessary for cooperative programs between participating governments.

some badly-needed equipment programs will be delayed or reduced, and some will be cut altogether. American complaints about Europe's lack of military capabilities will not be addressed in the coming years. Indeed, because of public apathy towards peacekeeping, European governments may increasingly invest scarcer defense euro in national and/or homeland defense capacities instead of equipment useful for external deployments.

Atlanticists should worry more about EU weakness rather than strength. Given the combination of emerging changes in Washington's strategic focus, some diverging transatlantic security priorities, and the growing relative weakness of European military power, NATO will not have much of a political future unless the EU becomes a stronger security and defense policy actor. If the EU remains weak, then the European parts of NATO will remain weak, and everyone loses. Both the EU and NATO need to think harder and together about how to reinvigorate European defense policies.

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# Report on Working Group I

## Smart Defense and the Capability Challenge

Clara Marina O'Donnell\*

### Summary

The discussions of Working Group 1 revolved around two themes: the challenges facing smart defense and possible solutions to those challenges. The challenges identified included the lack of consensus amongst allies regarding the military capabilities required for the future; the reluctance of European governments to trust each other, the fragmentation of the European defense market; and – most importantly – the lack of political will amongst European governments to spend their defense budgets more efficiently.

The solutions identified included the creation of a NATO fund to offset the start-up

costs of joint capability projects; the introduction of regional NATO capability targets; seeking assistance from the private sector; and requiring NATO allies to explore co-operation as the default option when acquiring new military capabilities. There were also suggestions for new EU initiatives, including joint funding for EU deployments.

Unfortunately participants could not identify solutions to the largest challenge identified – the need to convince politicians and public opinion of the merits of smart defense. The following report will overview the various arguments put forward within each theme

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## Challenges

### The definition of the concept of 'smart defense'

At the request of the chair, the session began with each participant providing their thoughts on the meaning of 'smart defense'. Answers were wide-ranging, highlighting that the first challenge facing NATO in relation to smart defense was the difficulty of explaining the concept to different interlocutors.

Some participants described smart defense in terms similar to those used by the Atlantic Alliance: an initiative designed to allow allies to get more value out of their defense spending through strengthening prioritization, collaboration and specialization. Some suggested smart defense could help European NATO allies develop additional military capabilities. According to one participant, the concept might allow for more consolidation of allied defense industries. Others argued smart defense was designed not to increase Alliance capabilities but merely to help countries preserve and optimize their current assets despite their fiscal pressures, notably through strengthening interoperability.

For some, the concept of smart defense was an excuse for European governments to justify their military spending cuts. And several

participants – including Spyros Economides in his opening remarks – stated that they did not actually know what the concept entailed because its definition was too vague.

### Trends in European military capabilities

Participants reflected on the disconcerting trends in European military capabilities. As Bastian Giegerich's paper outlined, in recent years budgets of many ministries of defense have come under increasing strain. Defense spending by the European members of NATO fell 7 percent in real terms between 2006 and 2010. And a further real term reduction of 2.8 percent took place between 2010 and 2011, the last year for which reliable data is available.

In addition, governments spend much of their funds inefficiently. According to the European Defense Agency (EDA), some 77 percent of all defense equipment procurement spending by EU member states in 2010 was spent on national programs that do not involve international collaboration, reducing the scope for economies of scale. In response to the current economic crisis, European countries have been cutting military capabilities with little allied coordination. As a result, according to Giegerich, European countries are preventing other allies from plugging the

capability wholes created by their cuts, jeopardizing NATO's ability to fulfill its level of ambition.

Other participants echoed Giegerich's concerns. According to one participant, nineteen European NATO allies spend very little on defense, and to make matters worse, they spend these limited resources badly. Another stressed that specialization was taking place by default rather than design. This was of great concern as NATO risked facing an unbalanced portfolio of military capabilities. Another participant pointed out that as a result of the reluctance of many European countries to modernize their armed forces, the United States (US) was increasingly struggling to communicate with these countries on the battlefield. If Europeans did not change their ways, the US was likely to start focusing its military cooperation with the few allies who were modernizing their forces.

### **The lack of consensus on future military capabilities**

Participants agreed that for smart defense to be effective, there needed to be a consensus amongst NATO governments on which military capabilities were required to address future threats. There also needed to be a more

general consensus on what NATO armed forces were for. Unfortunately, it was broadly recognized that this consensus did not currently exist and would be difficult to reach.

When presenting his paper, Geigerich argued that the uncertainty of the current international environment made it difficult for NATO allies to predict future threats. According to him, the only safe prediction governments could make was that that one cannot predict the shape and size of what the threat which is around the corner.

In his opening statement, Marcin Terlikowski remarked that the NATO countries which wanted the Alliance to focus on territorial defense were unhappy with smart defense. For them, the concept focused excessively on capabilities for expeditionary operations.

Some participants highlighted that NATO is struggling to determine its priorities beyond Afghanistan. Many Europeans do not share America's strategic culture and its assessment of the military capabilities required for the future. For several participants, transatlantic disagreements about the merit of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) multi-role aircraft highlighted the lack of consensus within the Alliance about what it wants to do and how

it should do it.

In his remarks, Economides argued that when reflecting on the future of European armed forces, NATO allies also needed to reflect on the likely shape of the EU once the Eurozone crisis had been overcome. What would this transformed Europe look like, and what military capabilities might it aspire to yield?

One participant argued that NATO allies should accept the fact that continental Europe had no interest in further expeditionary operations.

### **Limited trust amongst NATO allies**

There was a large consensus within the group that smart defense would only succeed if NATO allies trusted each other sufficiently. Otherwise governments would remain unwilling to specialize in selected military capabilities. In addition, ministries of defense needed to be assured that their access to shared military assets was guaranteed.

Some participants argued that in order to overcome the trust deficit, treaties should be introduced. These treaties would codify the rights and obligations of countries participating in pooling and sharing initiatives. Others disagreed. One participant argued that

the academic literature on trust suggests that initiatives requiring trust are more successful when their codification is limited. According to the literature, the fact that parties subscribing to a joint initiative do not delve into the details of their agreement is itself a signal of trust.

Some participants – including Terlikowski in his remarks – suggested that NATO was incapable of generating the trust required for smart defense to be effective. Terlikowski argued that the EU was a more promising framework to facilitate such trust, particularly if permanent structured cooperation, the legal mechanism contained in the Lisbon Treaty allowing for small groups of member states to move defense integration forward, were to be implemented. Other participants disagreed. The participant who had alluded to the academic literature on trust suggested that on the contrary, NATO was a more promising framework than the EU. According to this participant, the level of detail within the legislation required to join the EU highlighted a lack of trust, while the brevity of the Washington Treaty (NATO's founding treaty) implied a stronger sense of mutual confidence.

One participant suggested that although it

might be true that codifying arrangements in pooling and sharing might indicate a level of distrust amongst governments, this was the situation that NATO allies were in. Therefore it might still be best for governments to codify arrangements which implemented smart defense.

When making his remarks, Daniel Keohane argued that Europeans were unwise to reject multinational defense cooperation out of concerns for their sovereignty. He suggested that the desire of many European governments to maintain full sovereignty over their armed forces was an illusion. In many countries such sovereignty had long been lost as a result of the sustained underfunding of their armed forces which had hollowed them out.

### **The fragmentation of the European defense industrial base**

Several participants argued that for smart defense to be effective, and more generally for NATO to be able to field effective future military capabilities, European countries needed to integrate their defense industrial base. Participants acknowledged that market integration would not be easy for governments, not least because of the job losses such a process would entail. Nevertheless indus-

trial consolidation was required if European defense companies were to remain globally competitive. In addition, as one participant mentioned, a consolidation of the supply of military equipment would facilitate a consolidation of demand.

Several participants stressed that the failure of the merger talks between BAe Systems, the British defense company, and EADS, the Franco-German aerospace and defense giant, was unfortunate. For one participant, the merger would have facilitated transatlantic defense trade, as such trade is easier when defense companies have less direct government ownership. In addition, future mergers amongst European defense companies were now less likely to trigger a reduction in government ownership. Indeed if Paris and Berlin had been unwilling to compromise on their control of EADS during the merger talks with BAe – a deal which brought the prospect of significant commercial gains – they were even less likely to do so when the potential commercial gains were more modest.

One participant welcomed the failure of the merger between BAe and EADS. According to this participant, such a merged entity would have created a tension between the United Kingdom's security strategy (which



is to work as closely as possible with the US) and its defense industrial strategy (which would have developed a stronger European focus).

### **Top down vs bottom up**

Participants disagreed about whether pooling and sharing initiatives are more effective when they develop from the bottom-up, or when they are encouraged from the top-down. For some, pooling and sharing initiatives are more effective when they originate from amongst military services, as – according to one participant – has happened in the Netherlands. For these participants, the most promising approach for smart defense was for clusters to form naturally, with NATO serving only as a network linking the various clusters together.

Others argued such an uncoordinated approach ran the risk of NATO allies developing military capabilities which were not necessarily what the Alliance required or could afford. To avoid such a scenario, several participants argued, a top down approach was therefore required and NATO had to be heavily engaged. For others, uncoordinated clusters also risked strengthening the perception that NATO was a coalition of the willing. This

in turn risked undermining the cohesion of the Alliance.

### **Lack of political support**

There was a large consensus amongst the group that the biggest challenge facing smart defense was the difficulty of convincing politicians to implement the concept.

Participants recognized that economic pressure and military needs were necessary conditions for countries to move from national to multinational defense planning. But these two conditions were not sufficient. For smart defense to succeed, it would require political will and legitimacy, and currently this was still lacking.

Several participants pointed out that smart defense remained a buzz word for many governments. One participant mentioned that a European ministry of defense had recently admitted to him that it had no desire to seek partners when acquiring new military capabilities.

A number of participants argued that the failure of the merger talks between EADS and BAe highlighted the limited commitment from European governments to the ideas underpinning smart defense. Short term economic interests continued trumping long

term strategic considerations.

According to a few participants, the need to convince governments was urgent because the window of opportunity for European countries to salvage some of their military equipment was closing. The window had been getting progressively smaller over the last four years – each time ministries of defense had introduced new spending cuts, they had reduced the amount of capabilities which they could pool or share with allies. According to some participants, the closing window was not a linear process. Instead the image of falling off a cliff was more appropriate: after a certain point even though European countries would still have some capabilities left, they would not actually be able to use them effectively because those capabilities had been excessively hollowed out.

More optimistically, one participant suggested that at times equipment cuts could actually lead to the window of opportunity re-opening. He highlighted the case of the Netherlands which after eliminating its battle tanks was reflecting on integrating the associated troops with German units.

Several participants, including Keohane in his introductory remarks, suggested that governments – and voters – needed not only to

be convinced of the merits of smart defense.

They needed to be convinced of the merit of European armed forces and defense policy more generally, and this was a daunting task.

## **Solutions**

Focus on a ten year timeframe: In his opening remarks Economides suggested that because the future was so unpredictable, NATO allies should focus only on the next decade when attempting to predict future threats, and the military capabilities required to tackle them.

Adopt a 2+ principle: In his opening remarks, Giegerich proposed that NATO allies should adopt a “2+ principle”. For all new capability needs, ministries of defense should by default explore whether they can develop the asset with at least one other ally before considering a national solution. The idea was supported by other participants.

Strengthen the financial incentive for joint capabilities programs: Giegerich also proposed that funding for military capabilities developed multinationally should be ring-fenced so that such projects could be protected from future budget cuts. In addition, any financial savings generated through multinational cooperation should be reinvested into

the defense budget.

Widen the focus of smart defense: According to one participant, smart defense should give more prominence to securing savings through joint tasks between European militaries – replicating initiatives like Italy’s patrol of Slovenian airspace. Another participant suggested that smart defense should give a stronger focus to developing enablers – such as maritime patrol aircraft.

More daring exercises: One participant suggested that as part of smart defense NATO should increase challenging joint exercises and training. Allies should not be afraid to devise training scenarios in which they could lose.

Regional capability targets: One participant argued that NATO should give member states regional capability targets, in addition to national ones.

NATO reinvestment fund: Another idea was for transatlantic allies to create a NATO reinvestment fund. This fund would offset the start-up costs entailed by joint initiatives.

Assistance from the private sector: One participant suggested that NATO allies should explore whether private banks could provide financing for large capability programs.

NATO should help countries identify spe-

cific pooling and sharing ventures: According to another participant, many ministries of defense lack the technical expertise to identify the various financial gains and costs which specific pooling and sharing ventures might entail. He suggested that NATO did have such technical knowledge, and it should therefore assist member states identify the most appropriate projects. (Other participants had doubts that NATO possessed the technical knowledge to play such a role.)

EU contributions to smart defense: Although the focus of the Working Group was NATO’s role in supporting smart defense, several participants offered ideas for EU initiatives which could also help Europeans stem the deterioration in their armed forces. One suggestion was for EU states to explore joint financing for EU operations. Another was for European ministries of defense to take advantage of the research budgets available from the European Commission for dual use technology. One participant argued that the EU could facilitate the liberalization of the EU defense market. He suggested that if European governments failed to fully implement the EU directives on defense procurement and intra-EU exports of military equip-

ment, the European Commission should take them to court. Another participant suggested that European governments should exploit the potential of the EDA in multinational capabilities programs management.

How to induce change in government behavior – unresolved: As was pointed out by

one participant at the end of the working session, the discussions had failed to identify solutions to the largest problem facing smart defense, and European militaries more generally: the need to convince politicians and publics of their merit.

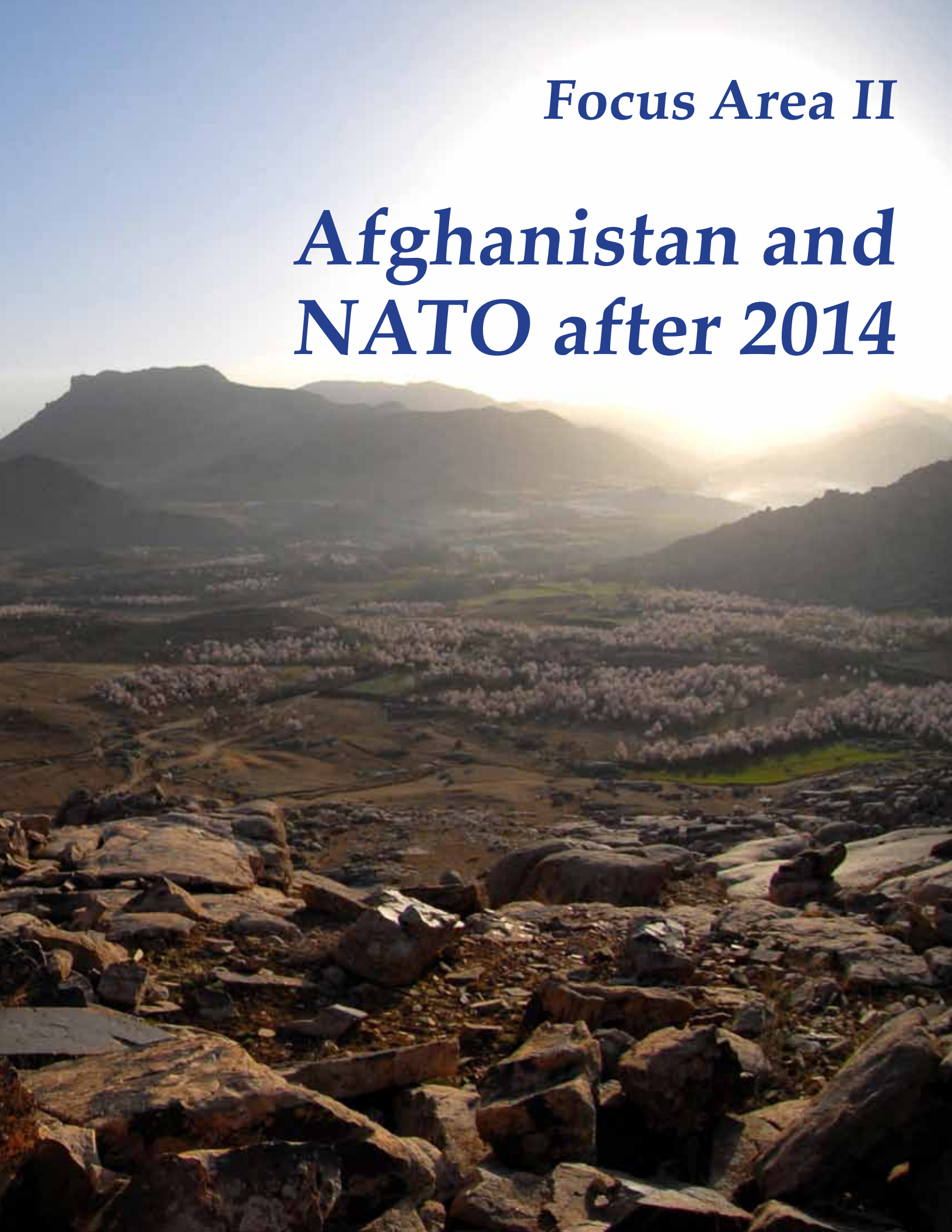






*Focus Area II*

# *Afghanistan and NATO after 2014*





# NATO's Training Mission in Afghanistan: A 'Smart Approach' to Change?

Trine Flockhart\*

The focus of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is currently directed at one particular date: December 31, 2014. On that day NATO's long and challenging International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan will come to an end and the security of Afghanistan will be in the hands of the Afghans themselves. This does not however mean that NATO's engagement with Afghanistan will be over, but merely the end of combat and that NATO from then on will be focusing on training, advising and assisting the Afghan government in its journey through the forthcoming 'Transformation Decade'.

Since the agreement at the 2010 Lisbon Summit to start the transition towards 'full Afghan security responsibility and leadership'<sup>1</sup>, the international community has repeatedly declared continuing commitment to Afghanistan beyond 2014. At the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, the Alliance declared an Enduring Partnership with Afghanistan<sup>2</sup> and at the May 2012 Chicago Summit, allies agreed to shift from the combat mission to 'a new training, advising and assistance mission' of a different nature than the current ISAF mission.<sup>3</sup> The details of the

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1 NATO, Declaration by Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Lisbon, 20 November, 2010. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_68722.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_68722.htm)

2 NATO, Declaration by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on an Enduring Partnership, Lisbon, 20 November, 2010. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68724.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68724.htm)

3 NATO, Chicago Summit Declaration, Issued by Heads of State and Government participating in the

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new mission are not yet available, although NATO endorsed a broad framework at the NATO defense minister meeting on 10 October, 2012. Moreover, the United States (US) entered a bilateral agreement with Afghanistan in May 2012, that covers a broad range of issues and allows US forces to remain in Afghanistan until 2024 to pursue two missions: train Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and target remnants of Al-Qaeda<sup>4</sup>.

NATO's continued commitment to Afghanistan after 2014 is unquestionable and few can doubt the effort that is currently being undertaken to make Afghanistan as ready as possible for taking over full control of its own security by the end of 2014. However, it must also be acknowledged that ISAF countries are exhausted after a thirteen-year-long extremely challenging and costly engagement in Afghanistan<sup>5</sup>. A 'rush to exit' is to be expected and as suggested by Sten Rynning 'a substantial and ambitious Enduring Partnership is unlikely'<sup>6</sup>. The expectation must be that NATO will seek to facilitate as much change as it can in the time available. Moreover, NATO's future commitment to Afghanistan seems likely to be limited to assisting, advising and training in what can only be assumed will be a small-scale training mission. Clearly, the overall political impact of NATO's current contribution to the future fate of Afghanistan post-2014 is only one factor of many others to be taken into consideration.

Given that even under the best of circumstances, and with the best intentions, and with fully adequate resourcing, around 70% of all initiated programs for transformation are known to fail<sup>7</sup>, perhaps our expectations for the outcome in Afghanistan should remain modest. Moreover, in the current environment of financial austerity and war weariness, it is more important than ever to approach Afghanistan's decade of transformation in a smart and cost-effective way. This short article will outline how best to work towards positive change in ANSF within the constraints imposed by the limited availability of resources (including time) and within an

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meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012, Chicago, 20 May, 2012. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease)

4 U.S. Department of State, Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Kabul, 2 May, 2012. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/2012.06.01u.s.-afghanistanspassignedtext.pdf>

5 Sten Rynning, "After Combat, the Perils of Partnership: NATO and Afghanistan beyond 2014", Research Paper, Rome, NATO Defence College, 2012.

6 Ibidem

7 Rune Todnem, Thomas Diefenbach, and Patricia Klarnier, "Getting Organizational Change Right in Public Service: The Case of European Higher Education," *Journal of Change Management*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2008), p. 21-35 ; Mark Hughes, "Do 70 Per Cent of All Organizational Change Initiatives Really Fail?," *Journal of Change Management* 11, no. 4, 2012, 451-464.

extremely challenging environment.

I draw on experience from change-management, socialization and on a newly developed framework for achieving agent-led change. My aim is to outline how to minimize the risk of not achieving the intended change. In so doing, this article will focus on the initiatives undertaken by the Alliance to reach the goals for the ANSF expressed under the Inteqal Framework laid out at the London<sup>8</sup> and Kabul<sup>9</sup> conferences on Afghanistan. Of particular importance here is the pledge by the international community to continue to support the transition process to advance to the point where the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) are fully capable of maintaining internal and external security, public order, law enforcement, the security of Afghan borders and the preservation of the constitutional rights of Afghan citizens.

The above would be a major undertaking in the best of circumstances, and even more so in a country facing multiple challenges such as the continued presence of insurgency, corruption and an illicit economy, high levels of illiteracy, poverty and underdevelopment. Yet paradoxically the challenging situation in Afghanistan also offers modest, though important opportunities for achieving positive, albeit narrow, change. The remainder of this article will focus on outlining guidelines for a 'smart approach to change' in relation to NATO's Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A).

### **Towards a 'Smart Approach' to Change**

The pursuit of change is always a challenge because human beings are 'hard wired' to value routine practices and a stable cognitive environment<sup>10</sup>. At the same time, and as any parent or teacher knows, people are also highly sensitive to their own failures and achievements. A perception of failure and under-achievement is likely to lead to shame and may result in with-

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8 Communiqué of The International Conference on Afghanistan, Afghan Leadership, Regional Cooperation, International Partnership, London 28 January, 2010. [http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/Documents\\_Communique%20of%20London%20Conference%20on%20Afghanistan.pdf](http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/Documents_Communique%20of%20London%20Conference%20on%20Afghanistan.pdf)

9 Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan, Communiqué: A Renewed Commitment by the Afghan Government to the Afghan People ; A Renewed Commitment by the International Community to Afghanistan, 20 July 2010, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/355350/publicationFile/51498/100720-Kommunique-Kabul.pdf>

10 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge, Polity, 1991.

drawal and paralysis of action, whereas success is likely to lead to pride and a 'can do' attitude and increased willingness to undertake new action that may change established routines. This is referred to in the field of psychology as 'ontological security' – a condition where the individual has a stable and comforting sense of self and where a sense of order and continuity in regard to the future, relationships and experiences is maintained.<sup>11</sup> Ontological security is strongly influenced by an individual's self-perception and the ability to maintain a strong and positive narrative. Moreover ontological security is reinforced through established routines, and a sense of achievement in the actions undertaken. It is assumed here that ontological security among the key actors in a change process is a precondition for a sustainable process of transformation to take place.

The argument made in this article is that NATO's task in Afghanistan is increasingly to facilitate the transformation of the Afghan armed forces through specific forms of change. In this role the Alliance, through the NTM-A, has two simultaneous roles: first as a socializer<sup>12</sup>, a role in which NATO works towards the transfer of norms and practices that are regarded as essential for efficient and accountable armed forces and law enforcement forces. Second, in order to maximize the chances for achieving sustainable change of norms and practices, the Alliance must also work towards ensuring a sufficient level of ontological security among the key change agents. Given the assumption that agents (in this case the ANSF) will be able/willing to undertake the required change only if a sufficient level of ontological security can be established and maintained, NATO's role in the NTM-A must be to transfer norms and practices simultaneously through different forms of training and socialization and to ensure that the necessary level of ontological security is maintained among those expected to undertake the change. Therefore, in addition to the widely recognised role as norms entrepreneur, NATO's role in a 'smart approach to change' must also include the less widely recognized role as facilitator of 'ontological security'.

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11 Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State, Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2006, p. 341-370.

12 For NATO as socializer of norms see for example Alexandra Gheciu, "Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization? NATO and the 'New Europe'", *International Organization*, vol. 59, No 4, p. 973-1012; Sonia Lucarelli, "NATO and the European System of Liberal-Democratic Security Communities" in Trine Flockhart (ed.), *Socializing Democratic Norms, The Role of International Organizations for the Construction of Europe*, Houndsmills, Palgrave, 2005, p. 85-105 and Trine Flockhart, "Complex Socialization: A framework for the study of state socialization", *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 12, No 1, 2006, p. 89-118.

Without a sufficient level of ontological security, individuals are likely to resist the necessary changes and may even take on a role as spoilers of the change process, which might ultimately jeopardize the mission. Yet, the problem is that an approach to change which builds on the achievement and maintenance of ontological security may be something that a primary teacher feels professionally comfortable with, but may appear alien and inappropriate within a professional military environment. Hence the approach to change suggested here is itself a form of change that may well be resisted within a military structure bound by embedded practices and symbolic routines and different understandings of what might produce the conditions for achieving ontological security among the Afghan armed forces<sup>13</sup>. Yet, if the current mission is to be successful, NATO must be prepared to undertake both roles outlined above.

### **Strategies for achieving ontological security**

In this article I use a recently developed framework<sup>14</sup> based on insights from social psychology<sup>15</sup> to identify four approaches used by individuals in their effort to either establish or maintain ontological security. Indeed human beings will be engaged in a constant search for ontological security. The four approaches described in this article should be seen as ideal-types, where some individuals will be more disposed to one or more of them<sup>16</sup>, and where some may be more open to change in established practices and more open to undertake action that lies outside their normal 'comfort zone'. The identification of these four approaches is rooted in the observation that all forms of agency must have an ability 'to be and to do'. It therefore follows that all agents – whether an individual, an organizational entity such as a state, an international organization or a much more loosely configured 'movement' or 'net-

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13 This is only a surface appearance however, all military establishments are constructed in a way that ensures a high level of ontological security, right from the construction of a clear and positive group identity, the reliance on deeply internalized routine practices and the clearly displayed levels of personal achievement though rank and display of stars and bars on uniforms.

14 Trine Flockhart, "From a 'practice of talking' to a 'practice of doing': NATO and sources of change," *International Politics*, Vol. 49, no. 1, 2012, p. 78-97.

15 See for example Mark Rubin and Miles Hewstone, "Social Identity Theory's Self-Esteem Hypothesis: A Review and some Suggestions for Clarification", *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 2, No 1, 1998, p. 40-62; Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985; Vaughn Shannon, "Introduction: Ideational Allies – Psychology, Constructivism and International Relations" in Vaughn Shannon and Paul Kowert (eds.), *Psychology, Constructivism and International Relations: An Ideational Alliance*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2012.

16 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p.38

work' – must necessarily have a 'self' defined by an identity and constituted through a narrative, and their 'doing' must be demonstrated through performance in routinized practice and intentional action, which must also be organized into a meaningful narrative that supports biographical continuity.<sup>17</sup>

The four 'ontological security seeking approaches are':

- A narrative approach intended to tell a positive story about the organization and to ensure biographical continuity through the construction of a 'strong narrative' about 'who we are' and 'what we do'. All organizational entities and individuals need a narrative that tells their story in as positive a light as possible and which can incorporate events and actions undertaken into a sense-making story that connects the present with the past and that supports and reinforces a specific identity.
- An identity approach intended to assert the collective and individual identity through maintenance of self-esteem and core identity signifiers such as religion, ethnicity or other characteristics of the social group to which the individual belongs. When the ANA proudly displays its six core values as 'integrity', 'honour', 'service', 'respect', 'courage' and 'loyalty', they are simultaneously constructing a strong narrative and an esteem enhancing self-identity. The 'identity approach' aims to 'imagine a positive self' and it is backed up with the narrative approach 'to tell the story of the positive self'. However, both narrative and identity must be rooted in 'the real world' incorporating real events and real actions – both positive and negative – otherwise the individual will appear delusional or untruthful.
- A practice approach<sup>18</sup> intended to uphold a stable cognitive environment through the continuous performance of routinized practices that at once support the identity and reinforce the narrative. A disconnect between practice and identity and/or narrative will sooner or later lead to cognitive dissonance and a need to change either practice or

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<sup>17</sup> Mitzen, p. 346

<sup>18</sup> I understand 'practice' as 'competent performances that embody, act out and reify background knowledge' Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, (eds.), *International Practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. In this understanding practice is seen as often expressed through unconscious or automatic activities that are embedded in taken-for-granted routines. These are based on social and culturally derived norms guiding appropriate behavior for particular groups with particular identities.

reconstruct narrative and identity.

- An action approach intended to undertake necessary and required change through goal oriented action while still maintaining a sense of individual integrity and pride. The problem is that action often leads to changed practice, which is likely to have adverse effects on cognitive stability and hence on ontological security. Moreover, action always has the potential for being unsuccessful. Unsuccessful action can have severely detrimental effects on narrative, identity and practice, which ultimately can lead to paralysis – or if the action cannot be stopped, such as an unsuccessful military campaign – a vicious spiral may develop where a negative dynamic of undermining action carries on until ontological security is all but destroyed. On the other hand, successful action holds a significant potential for reinforcing identity and narrative and add to the desired ‘can-do’ attitude that will result from a high level of ontological security.

All four approaches are mutually constitutive and interdependent and they are all equally important for a successful change process. So far empirical research suggests that in order to achieve dynamic change towards a desired goal, policy-makers should focus on encouraging successful outcomes in all four ‘ontological security seeking approaches’.<sup>19</sup> Clearly this requires in the first instance that policy-makers and their change agents are aware of the four approaches and the importance of ontological security, and therefore mindful that the task of transferring specific norms involves both a role as socializer and a role as facilitator of ontological security. Moreover, the socializer/facilitator must also be mindful that ontological security is a fragile condition that must be continuously re-constituted and reasserted – even though doing so may be both time-consuming and appear to involve rather mundane tasks or to be outside the scope of normal professional conduct. My research on this question suggests that a considerable percentage of the around 70% of failed processes of change, foundered because all four approaches were not invoked. Not surprising, as most existing change management models focus on just one or two of the approaches suggested here.<sup>20</sup>

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19 This research is still on-going in relation to change in the EU as a security actor, but preliminary results can be found in Flockhart, “From a practice of talking to a practice of doing”, cit.

20 Ibidem.



The four approaches for achieving or maintaining ontological security show that when planning for ‘smart change’ it is important to bear in mind that the action approach can strengthen ontological security but also holds a significant risk for severely undermining ontological security and for this reason should be undertaken with great care. To minimize this risk in the case of NTM-A, NATO should prioritize small steps with a good potential for success. To facilitate ontological security, ‘success’ however insignificant in the broader picture, can be seen as both an objective in its own right and as a necessary means for achieving more overall goals.

The smart approach to change outlined here has clear policy relevance to situations where agent-led change is desired, but where the environment is challenging because it provides a map for undertaking change, and for diagnosing why intended change sometimes cannot be achieved despite good intentions, clearly communicated goals and sufficient availability of resources. To be sure, the approach involves cumbersome moves on behalf of the socializer and it suggests that the ‘road’ to dynamic and sustainable transformation is perhaps longer, more bumpy and with fewer shortcuts than the traditional approach to change would suggest. Yet the approach suggested here also shows that although the road is long and bumpy, small adjustments in any of the four ontological security seeking approaches may add to agents’ ontological security, and it clearly shows the importance of setting achievable goals that can be narrated as successes – even if it means that the change process may proceed through many small steps.

The ‘smart approach’ to change suggested here is an approach that has a greater chance of delivering a sustainable change process through continuous and reinforcing action endowing agents with a sense of pride and a high level of self-esteem (a positive self) and facilitating the construction of a strong narrative that continuously reinforces identity. However, the achievement of ontological security among the key participants in a change process does not guarantee a successful outcome – all change processes must still be managed through the usual mantras of clearly identified goals, clear communication, benchmarking etc. The approach suggested here should therefore merely be seen as an addition to traditional change management by adding a more specific framework for managing ‘people issues’. The point

to emphasize here is that unless ontological security is maintained at all times in the process, no matter how well communicated, how well resourced and how well planned, the change process is likely to end up as one of the 70% of failed change processes.

### **NATO's Training Mission in Afghanistan**

NATO has been engaged in NTM-A since November 2009. The decision to change the existing mission was taken at the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in April 2009, and the mission started in November 2009. The decision was a result of the acknowledgment that the security sector reform (SSR) program initiated in 2002 had not delivered the necessary security forces for the Afghans to realistically take over responsibility for their own security within a foreseeable future. Moreover it was clear that the program initiated in 2002, according to which the US would be responsible for training the ANA and Europe, first on an ad hoc platform run by Germany and then through the European Union (EU) EUPOL Afghanistan mission, would train the ANP was characterized by mutual recriminations, an unconstructive division of labour and reform efforts that were largely based on the superficial understanding of the local context that was available in 2002<sup>21</sup>. As a result, in mid-2009, ISAF Commander, General Stanley McChrystal assessed the situation in Afghanistan as 'deteriorating', and characterized by a 'growing insurgency and a crisis of confidence among Afghans'<sup>22</sup>.

Since 2009, NATO has focused on building ANSF capacity towards the goal of 352,000 security forces (the eventual goal was reduced at the Chicago Summit to 228,500) through embedded NATO Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams with Afghan formations. The aim of the training mission is that ANSF will be able to assume security lead across the whole country from the middle of 2013, thus leaving eighteen months for the transition to embed before the ISAF mission ends on December 31, 2014.

The training mission is certainly achieving an impressive output of newly trained soldiers and police recruits. According to some estimates, it is currently churning out 6,000 newly

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21 Mark Sedra, "European Approaches to Security Sector Reform: Examining Trends through the Lens of Afghanistan," *European Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2006, p. 323-338.

22 General Stanley McChrystal, Commander NATO International Security Assistance Force, "Commander's initial assessment" (30 August, 2009), p. 1 <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/44678830/commanders-initial-assessment-30-august-2009>

minted soldiers and 4,000 police officers – a month!<sup>23</sup> In addition, the NTM-A has recently embarked on a program to train Afghan trainers and instructors, which is meant to generate a self-sustaining ANSF with Afghans training Afghans. There is no doubt that in comparison to what preceded the training mission, the NTM-A has been one of the success stories of NATO's engagement in Afghanistan with remarkable improvements in the ANSF<sup>24</sup>. In that sense the experience over the past three years has contributed greatly to NATO's overall ability to construct a more positive narrative about the mission in Afghanistan.

It is not the aim of this short article to judge the quality of the ANSF produced by the NTM-A, although doubts must remain on the question of quality as the impressive improvements in numbers have been achieved by reducing the training period of new recruits to only eight weeks. My objective here is restricted to establishing ontological security among the main participants in the change process. In doing so I will concentrate on two aspects of NTM-A – the practice of partnering and literacy training.

### **Training Through Partnering**

On taking over the command of ISAF in June 2009, former ISAF commander Gen. McChrystal decided that the only way to overcome the serious shortcomings in ANA and to prepare the ANSF for taking over responsibility for their country's security was if they were actively involved in providing security. The approach was referred to as 'embedded partnering', and is a clear example of seeking ontological security through employing the action approach outlined above. McChrystal specified that 'embedded partnering' meant ISAF troops merging with ANSF to form a single combined force in which 'ISAF will partner with ANSF at all levels – from government ministries down to platoon level' in order to 'live, train, plan, control and execute operations together'.<sup>25</sup> However, one thing is partnering with the reasonably disciplined ANA, quite another is partnering with the much less disciplined ANP. By mid 2010 it was recognized that the challenges in the ANP were of such a magnitude that progress

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23 Susan Sachs, "Transition to Afghan Control is Bumpy", The Globe and Mail, 24 August, 2012, <http://m.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/transition-to-afghan-control-is-bumpy/article582209/?service=mobile>

24 For details on the improvements in numbers and other parameters see the report by Sven Mikser, Transition in Afghanistan: Assessing the Security Effort, Brussels, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2011.

25 Quoted in Rudra Chaudhuri and Theo Farrell, "Campain disconnect: operational progress and strategic obstacles in Afghanistan, 2009-2011," International Affairs, Vol. 87, No. 2, 2011, 271-296.

would not be possible purely on the basis of courses through the existing Focused District Delivery Program (FDD). FDD is a program designed to improve the ANP rapidly by taking whole units away from their localities for eight weeks of training<sup>26</sup>. It was soon realized that improvements from the courses were short-lived, and certainly could not address the persistent issue of the deeply embedded, but highly inappropriate, practices in the ANP<sup>27</sup>. The program can be seen as an attempt to undo existing routinized practices. However, as routinized practices are deeply ingrained, and as undoing them necessarily will lead to a reduction in the agents' ontological security by undermining cognitive consistency, it is not surprising that the program did not produce the desired results. In place, McCrystal introduced partnering between ISAF and ANP. However, there can be no doubt that the challenges of changing ANP ingrained practices are considerable, particularly because it was decided in 2002 to maintain the existing structures and (mal)practices in the ANP. Therefore although 'embedded partnering' is an absolute key element in the transition strategy towards Afghan security lead in both ANA and ANP and is a clear example of seeking to change identity, narrative and especially inappropriate practice, it is a less effective approach in ANP, where the old practices are much more anchored. As practices are best changed following a crisis or other disruptive event, the failure to undo existing policing practices following the overthrow of the Taliban regime constitutes a sadly missed opportunity.

It is difficult to imagine how else ANSF will acquire the necessary skills to eventually be able to provide Afghan security if they are not involved in actually 'doing' security operations through partnering. One can only lament that this policy was not incorporated into Security Force Assistance and SSR planning at a much earlier stage. From the perspective of establishing ontological security among the ANSF, partnering appears to be a must, as it seems to be the only way to ensure the experience of reinforcing action, whilst at the same time instilling the appropriate routinized practices in recruits who have only benefitted from a brief training

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26 Ibidem, p. 278

27 When Germany took over the development of the ANP in 2002, it was decided to build on existing structures. Unfortunately what structures that were in the ANP were dysfunctional, which meant that development since 2002 were built on 'shaky' foundations and deeply embedded dysfunctional practices including corruption, patronage and abusive conduct towards the population which the police force was supposed to protect and serve. The failure to uproot these dysfunctional practices in the aftermath of the fall of Taliban is an example of a wasted opportunity with continuing repercussions for the prospects of a well-functioning ANP.

course of eight weeks. Moreover, from a socialization perspective, partnering is likely to be probably the best available method of transferring professional norms and values to Afghan security personnel. Having said that, partnering brings with it a number of problems, not least that trainers are vulnerable to insider attacks (the so-called 'green on blue' attacks), which constitute a very serious challenge to partnering as a form of reinforcing action. Effective socialization depends on the socializing agent (the ISAF personnel) being held in some degree of esteem by those being socialized<sup>28</sup>. Yet the familiarity that is a necessary function of partnering has also bred unintended consequences in the shape of many forms of personal dislikes, if not outright contempt.<sup>29</sup> Not only do a number of the 'green on blue' attacks seem to be a result of personal grudges, but it also seems likely that unless a degree of affinity between the partners can be maintained, socialization of norms, values and professional practices will be compromised as will the possibility of maintaining a positive identity and narrative.

To be fair, NATO is trying to do the right things within a difficult environment. The motto of the NTM-A 'shohna ba shohna' (shoulder to shoulder) is a good example of attempting to construct a positive narrative about partnering. Apart from the obvious human tragedy, this is also why the 'green on blue' attacks are so damaging – because they go straight to the very basis of partnering by challenging the narrative about 'shohna ba shohna' and by undermining trust and a collective identity based on partnership. NATO is currently attempting to limit the damage through increased attention to intercultural communication and an understanding that training the trainers must be an absolute priority to minimize the inevitable cultural and language obstacles that unavoidably will occur between such different cultures. NATO has also announced increased levels of intelligence gathering and intensified observation of ANSF members to try to spot possible perpetrators of insider attacks. However, such a move risks embedding the increasing mistrust between Afghans and ISAF and could give rise to an unhealthy atmosphere of suspicion.

Instead, NATO should consider stepping up its on-going evaluation process of all recruits

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28 See Flockhart, "Complex Socialization", cit.

29 Significant cultural friction as a cause of fratricide murders was suggested in an investigation conducted by a 'Red Team Report' within the US Army in Afghanistan. However, the report has since been re-classified although it is described in the Wall Street Journal in "Report sees Danger in Local Allies" June 17, 2011. Available at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303499204576389763385348524.html>

to not only ‘spot the bad apples’, but also to ‘talent-spot’ the best candidates as an integral part of recruitment for specific vocational functions with good prospects for promotion and further training, or for accelerated language, numeracy or literacy learning. Although such a process would be time consuming, it would achieve several objectives at the same time, including increased safeguards against insider attacks and possible preventive measures against insider attacks caused by personal grievances thanks to the opportunity given to ANSF partners to air their grievances and concerns. In addition, it would facilitate a structured feed-back approach on a broader scale than is currently the case. If such an increased monitoring system is seen as the norm and as a route to a better position for the individual rather than observation grounded in distrust, it is more likely to be welcomed by those being monitored and hence to add to, rather than detract from ontological security.

### **Training Literacy Skills**

When the NTM-A mission started in 2009, only 14% of new recruits achieved literacy at first grade level in a country where the national literacy level is only 28%. Through a concerted effort with more than a 100,000 ANSF recruits in literacy training at any one time, literacy levels have improved remarkably to around 80% of ANSF now having achieved literacy at first grade<sup>30</sup>. The literacy program employs nearly 2,800 Afghan teachers in 1,551 classrooms teaching about 4,100 classes in all provinces. The aim is that all members of ANSF achieve Functional Literacy Level 3, which is the level internationally recognized as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts<sup>31</sup>. It goes without saying that trained, literate and reliable armed forces must be a priority in its own right and a precondition for the basic functioning of a modern ANSF. Moreover, literacy is likely to have a welcome multiplier effect for the rest of Afghan society. Indeed one of the frequently stated reasons for signing up to the ANSF is precisely the opportunity to learn to read.

The literacy courses have turned out to have a very positive effect on ontological security, as it clearly is a positive identity signifier that increases the individual’s own standing in so-

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30 Sven Mikser, *Transition in Afghanistan: Assessing the Security Effort*, Cit, p. 7.

31 NATO Allied Command Operations’ homepage, <http://www.aco.nato.int/page272701224.aspx>

ciety and with it self-esteem. As in the case of partnering, NATO is already doing the right thing by emphasising literacy training among the armed forces. What's more there seems to have been an evolving understanding that literacy will be vital in transforming the country – and that NTM-A is in a unique position to reach a segment of the adult population that would otherwise be difficult to engage. However, NATO could signal even more clearly not just that basic literacy is a requirement, but also that literacy levels of more than basic literacy and numeracy can open up further possibilities for promotion to leadership positions or transfer into other administrative positions either in the ANSF or elsewhere in the broader Afghan society. At a minimum, special reading and numeracy courses of accelerated learning should be offered to those who are identified as especially gifted. The increased monitoring process suggested above could be used for these purposes also. As an easy and low cost measure to boost the individual recruits' level of ontological security, the ANSF might also consider awarding 'badges' to wear visibly on the uniform to display levels of literacy achievements.

Although some of the suggestions here may appear small at some level, yet costly and time consuming at another level, they intend to contribute to improvements in all four approaches in the search for ontological security within the ANSF. Although change in the overall Afghan society is not the issue under investigation here, initiatives such as the literacy training are likely to have positive secondary effects in the broader Afghan society. The above measures are necessary for achieving success, but they are clearly not sufficient for an overall successful outcome of the training mission and their effect is restricted to within the ANSF rather than to Afghanistan as a whole. This is a point that fits in well with the conclusions reached by Rudra Chaudhuri and Theo Farrell – that the mission in Afghanistan suffers from a 'campaign disconnect' in which despite significant progress at the operational level through the McCrystal approach, the overall strategic goals in Afghanistan are still far from being achieved<sup>32</sup>.

## **Where to Go from Here**

In the last three years NATO has come a long way from an SSR process that was deeply flawed in terms of including ontological security-seeking approaches and in terms of prepar-

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<sup>32</sup> Chaudhuri and Farrell, "Campaign disconnect: operational progress and strategic obstacles in Afghanistan, 2009-2011, Cit.

ing the Afghan security forces for eventually being able to provide security. However, the time line is tight, and it would be unrealistic to think that ANSF will be fully trained at the end of 2014. This is recognized in the decision to continue the engagement with Afghanistan after 2014 in a new mission to train, advise, and assist. Planners for the new mission will be operating within obvious financial and political constraints that are likely to mean that the new mission will be smaller than the current NTM-A. Within these constraints, planners should bear in mind the source of the success of the last three years and seek to safeguard the existing ontological security enhancing aspects outlined above.

By 2014 the ANSF should be at maximum capacity and at a level of near 100% literacy and hopefully with stabilized retention rates as natural attrition and a slowed down recruitment process will have reduced the overall size of the Afghan forces towards the planned size of 228,000. This is not a bad starting point for a new Train, Advise, and Assist mission. From 2014 the mission should concentrate on consolidating achievements and continuing the successful literacy, numeracy and language training and vocational training, to produce suitable candidates for administrative posts and for promotion within the ANSF and eventually for the broader Afghan society. In addition, the new mission should concentrate on two levels: developing the Afghan officer corps and preparation of ANSF personnel for civilian life. On the former there are already extensive plans for both in-country and out-of-country officer training, but the latter could well be an issue that is overlooked. Preparing ANSF personnel who do not wish to continue their military service and for their (safe) return to civilian life is an area that should be particularly dear to the new training, assisting and advising mission. Military training will have given them many useful skills, some of which could be a danger to Afghanistan's continued transition to progress. A planned and assisted return to civilian life with the opportunity to use the acquired intellectual and practical skills for the benefit of the broader Afghan society will be one of the big challenges that the new mission should not overlook.

NATO has done well over the last three years with a remarkable degree of positive change as a result. So far it has allowed the transition to Afghan security in three of the four Transition Tranches identified in the Inteqal Framework. What is more, the process has added



tremendously to the ontological security in the ANSF, which developed into a sustained and dynamic process as the transition to progressively more Afghan-led security forces. Yet, few will disagree that after eleven years since the fall of Taliban and nine years since NATO took command of ISAF, Afghanistan remains a challenging operation with the prospects of an overall successful outcome still far from certain. Despite the impressive achievements over the last three years in NTM-A, serious concerns remain for how Afghanistan's decade of transition will evolve, and much hinges on the danger of destabilizing events in the remaining time before the ISAF mission comes to an end and on the outcome of 'the other Afghan transition' – the presidential election in 2014. As correctly observed by Michael O'Hanlon<sup>33</sup>, should the Afghan people make a bad choice – or more likely – should a bad outcome be engineered through guile, patronage and election fraud, the entire project of moving towards a safe and stable Afghanistan will be in jeopardy<sup>34</sup>. Despite the achievements in ANSF and the fact that the NTM-A seems to have improved ontological security in a difficult environment, other strategic factors may severely limit the effect of the otherwise smart approach to change adopted over the last three years.

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33 Michael O'Hanlon, "The Other Afghan Transition," *Survival* Volume 54, No. 5, 2012, p. 101-109.

34 *Ibidem* p. 102.

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# NATO's Multiple Balancing Acts: Lessons from the Operation in Afghanistan

Riccardo Alcaro and Alessandro Marrone\*

After ten years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan's future remains as uncertain as ever. This indisputable observation casts a long shadow over the performance of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the military mission led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) tasked with pacifying and stabilizing the country. What happens between now and 2014 will inevitably weigh heavily on any assessment of ISAF. Nevertheless, some important conclusions concerning the future of NATO in light of the Afghan experience can already be drawn. In this paper we focus first on the impact of ISAF on NATO's crisis management approach and then on its broader political-strategic implications.

## ISAF's Impact on NATO's Crisis Management Approach<sup>1</sup>

The nine-year long experience in Afghanistan – NATO took command of ISAF in mid-2003 – has had several important effects on how the Atlantic Alliance thinks, plans and implements its crisis management approach, particularly as regards land intervention. These effects are likely to become a part of NATO's overall operational expertise, even though not all future operations are likely to be as large an undertaking as ISAF. This section assesses four impli-

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cations of the ISAF experience for NATO's crisis management approach: transforming military capabilities; building training capacity; developing a comprehensive approach; involving partner countries.

### **The Transformation of Military Capabilities**

When NATO launched its military transformation agenda in the early 2000s, it had yet to officially take over leadership of ISAF. Yet, there is little doubt that the intervention in Afghanistan, in which many allies were involved as of late 2001 in the framework of a US-led ad hoc coalition, provided NATO's strategic planners with much food for thought. In fact, many of the envisaged changes in the military capability structure<sup>2</sup> reflected specific challenges that Western forces were facing in Afghanistan.

The ISAF experience played an important role in accelerating, enhancing and shaping NATO's military transformation process, particularly in European member states. First and foremost, it fuelled the evolution of doctrine and tactics of armed forces from continental Europe toward the concept of expeditionary capability. ISAF has been the most prominent of NATO expeditions, as it is located at a great distance from the North Atlantic area, in a non-permissive environment, and within a truly multinational framework – namely the NATO military integrated command. For several years now, European countries have deployed between 25,000 and 30,000 troops per year to the Afghan theatre, which means – also because of turnover – several tens of thousands of European soldiers. This has led to substantial changes in the way European contingents deployed in Afghanistan have been trained and equipped, which in turn has influenced broader national defense planning. The involvement in Afghanistan has also increased expertise in working in multinational frameworks, exposing allied and non-allied officers to best practices and mutual learning. However, this does not mean that European armed forces have always been able to turn lessons learned on the ground in Afghanistan into a comprehensive national (let alone NATO-wide) doctrine on expeditionary capabilities.

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to stress that the concept of “capability” does not refer only to a certain platform but to the whole set of assets necessary to perform a military task, including equipment, procedures, tactics, doctrine, organizational and human elements.

Moreover, ISAF has exposed shortfalls in NATO equipment. The scarce availability of fixed-wing and rotary-wing air capabilities for both strategic and intra-theater airlift became dramatically evident in the earliest stages of the operation. Another area where capability shortcomings have impaired ISAF activities is force protection, a key requirement in a large-scale and land-based counter-insurgency operation. Allies have struggled to develop adequate capabilities – such as jamming systems, armored vehicles and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) to improve situational awareness – to counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The interoperability capacity of member states' national equipment has also been a thorny issue. To provide just one example, French fighter aircraft in Afghanistan are unable to exchange data directly with allied aircraft because they do not use Datalink-16, the system generally used in NATO.

The ISAF experience has raised awareness of these shortfalls and the understanding of new requirements substantially among defense planners, policy-makers, defense industries and experts. However, the impact on defense procurement, particularly in Europe, has been limited. Procurement is predominantly a long-term process aimed at maintaining a wide range of military capabilities for different contingencies. As a result, it is not easy to change it in the light of requirements from a single, well-defined, kind of counter-insurgency scenario like the one in Afghanistan. Decreases in military spending – a consequence of the crisis that is shaking US and particularly European economies – have further reduced the room for maneuver for governments to diversify and expand procurement planning.

The ISAF experience has nonetheless influenced defense procurement in different ways. For example, the Helicopter Task Force has been launched to support European countries unable to procure transport helicopters on a national basis. Moreover, the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) has supervised an action plan both to provide the systems and technologies needed to counter IEDs, and to improve the related training of troops. Finally, reflecting the experience of its armed forces in Afghanistan, the British government has made large-scale use of the Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR), a special mechanism aimed to couple traditional defense procurement with a more rapid one tailored to the necessities of the Afghan theatre.

## **Training Capacity**

The training of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP), has been a priority NATO task since the 2009 NATO Summit in Strasbourg-Kehl established the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A). Although NATO had already performed training tasks in Kosovo and Iraq before 2009, NTM-A is unique for three reasons. First, the scale of training is extraordinary. In the 2009-2011 period, NATO employed up to 1,400 personnel to train over 300,000 recruits (as of October 2012, ANA counted approximately 185,000 troops)<sup>3</sup>. Second, training had to begin from scratch, as nearly 86% of recruits were illiterate. Third, for the first time, NATO has trained not only military but also police forces, in cooperation with the European Union (EU) EUPOL Afghanistan mission. Furthermore, since 2011 NATO has provided support – mainly in terms of logistics and equipment – to the Afghan judiciary system through the Rule of Law Field Support Mission.

On balance, the ISAF experience has tested NATO's ability to undertake institution-building tasks on a much larger scale and on a much higher level than anything in the past. This has improved NATO training capacity. It has also raised awareness among allies of the fundamental importance in crisis management operations of training local forces so that they can provide security autonomously. Not only can local forces capable of acting alone improve security conditions, but they can also ease the burden on NATO forces and pave the way for shouldering responsibility. On balance, the ISAF institution-building experience has provided allies with a number of lessons for the future, as reflected in the 2010 Strategic Concept's inclusion of institution-building and the training of security forces (both military and non-military) among NATO's crisis management tasks.

## **Comprehensive Approach**

NATO's commitment to Afghanistan has fuelled an intense debate on the 'comprehensive approach' concept, particularly after ISAF became ever more engaged in counter-insurgency activities. The 'comprehensive approach', which has now become a guiding principle in the

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3 ISAF, Key Facts and Figures, December 12, p. 4, <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf>.

official military strategies and doctrines of many NATO countries, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), involves NATO's use of both civilian and military assets in crisis-ridden areas or countries, as well as close coordination with all relevant actors on the ground such as local authorities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and neighboring countries. ISAF is NATO's most significant case of civil-military cooperation (a key sub-component of the comprehensive approach), particularly evident in the political role of the ISAF leadership, as well as in the inclusion of civilian tasks in NATO's crisis-management tool-kit.

In Afghanistan the provision of basic services such as health and education, as well as the material reconstruction of infrastructure have been supported by ISAF while conducting military operations (including combat operations) – and not after their end as in the Balkans. And this while neither the United Nations (UN) nor the EU have been able to replicate in Afghanistan the level of commitment, in terms of both responsibility and personnel, that they have shown in the Balkans. As a result, ISAF has had to undertake, coordinate and support a number of civilian tasks critical for the stabilization of Afghanistan. This has created a new role for the ISAF Commander (COMISAF), who has had to deal with a number of political and diplomatic issues, not all of which related to his military competencies.

COMISAF has been a major strategic interlocutor of the Afghan government and has steered civilian-military cooperation including with NGOs, NATO cooperation with the UN and the EU, and cooperation among ISAF countries themselves. Although COMISAF formally recognizes the leadership of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), he has exerted de facto political and diplomatic leadership. This situation has led to the creation of a new position within NATO's crisis management structure, the Senior Civilian Representative (SCR). The SCR, an official from a NATO member state, has assisted and at times replaced COMISAF in performing political-diplomatic tasks, with the goal of coordinating the efforts of the various components of the international coalition in Afghanistan and building consensus among international and Afghan actors. The SCR co-chairs the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB) in charge of supervising the transition of security responsibilities from ISAF to Afghan authorities (Inteqal is the Dari and Pashtu word for 'transition'). In 2010, building upon



experience at the national level, NATO appointed a Regional SCR in each of ISAF's six Regional Commands. Should NATO undertake crisis management operations requiring close civilian-military cooperation again, it is reasonable to expect SCRs to be appointed from the very beginning of the mission.

Even before the appointment of the SCR and his/her regional emanations, the need for greater NATO involvement in non-military stabilization activities had already resulted in another significant novelty: the creation of twenty-seven Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), units comprising military and diplomatic personnel, as well as experts in post-conflict reconstruction. The analysis of PRT's activities, evolution and performance is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to mention here that the PRT experience encouraged a reflection on the need to build up a small civilian capability within the Alliance. Such a civilian capacity should be tasked with ensuring smooth coordination with civilian actors (including NGOs and international organizations) in crisis theaters and directing civilian tasks if security conditions are so dire as to make it impossible for civilian actors to be deployed. This goal was included in the 2010 Strategic Concept.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Involvement of Partner Countries**

The involvement of non-NATO countries in ISAF is not unprecedented. The Active Endeavor counterterrorism operation in the Eastern Mediterranean and various missions in the Balkans saw the participation of partner countries such as Ukraine and even Russia. However, ISAF has recorded the most large-scale, challenging and integrated commitment of non-NATO countries in the history of allied operations. Twenty partners contributed to ISAF with troops on the ground, which in 2011 hovered around 5,000. Partners have participated not only at the tactical but also at the strategic level, with both a military and a political dimension. Indeed, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) has started to hold regular meetings at ambassadorial level, in which allies and partner countries involved in Afghanistan discuss ISAF-related issues. Moreover, the NATO Summits of Heads of State and Government regularly schedule a specific session with representatives from ISAF-participating countries at the highest politi-

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<sup>4</sup> NATO Heads of State and Government, Strategic Concept – Active Engagement, Modern Defence, November 20, 2010, p. 21.

cal level. Participation of non-NATO members to ISAF has made it possible not only to share the military and civilian burden more broadly, but also to expand the political and diplomatic involvement of the international coalition in Afghanistan beyond NATO's perimeter.

In addition, after an initial period of unsatisfactory coordination, ISAF has, since 2009, taken steps to improve cooperation with UNAMA and the EU's EUPOL Afghanistan police mission at the operational level. Problems with the EU mission, in particular, have also depended on the lingering inability of the two organizations to better connect at the strategic and institutional levels. The experience in Afghanistan has shown once again that, without a consistent top-down input, NATO and EU staff has to put much energy and spend a long time in devising ad hoc mechanisms to remedy to communication gaps and lack of strategic coordination.

Although this level of interaction has in no way blurred the dividing line between NATO members and non-members, it has established an important precedent and contributed to creating greater awareness within NATO of the many advantages of seeking the political and military involvement of partners in allied operations. This was reflected in the 2010 Strategic Concept, which made partnerships a pillar of NATO's strategy to meet one of its core tasks, "cooperative security". This approach to partner countries developed through ISAF was also partly applied to Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya in 2011. At the outset of the operation, it was pondered whether it would be possible to apply a kind of "ISAF format" to OUP to connect more effectively with non-NATO partners such as Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The debate bore fruit and resulted in a scheme regulating the participation of partners' air capabilities and facilitating coordination at the strategic level.

## **ISAF and Allied Solidarity<sup>5</sup>**

The mission in Afghanistan has impacted not only on NATO's crisis management approach and capability agenda. It has had and will continue to have important implications for the evolution of the Alliance as a political organization. This section discusses the origin of inter-ally tensions over ISAF as well as the putative reason for which NATO has ensured the

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<sup>5</sup> This section is authored by Riccardo Alcaro.

sustainability of the Afghan mission. Finally, using ISAF as a prism, it looks into the future and attempts to draw some long-term conclusions on the NATO of tomorrow.

### **ISAF and NATO's Internal Imbalances**

Undoubtedly, ISAF has exacerbated NATO's internal imbalances. The problem of uneven burden-sharing may be as old as the Alliance itself, but rarely has it been felt as acutely as in Afghanistan. Faced with deteriorating security conditions, the US has incessantly called for greater support from NATO allies. However, only some have responded to the battle cry. Others have opted for maintaining their military commitment below a certain threshold, either by refusing to send in more troops or by barring them from combat operations. While there has been a recent effort towards convergence, these limitations – the so-called caveats – have strained inter-ally relations considerably and fuelled a sense of frustration on the western shore of the Atlantic. Former US Secretary of Defense Bob Gates could find no better way to take leave of his NATO counterparts than bluntly warn them that the imbalance in burden-sharing may one day lead NATO to inaction – and consequently irrelevance.<sup>6</sup>

US concerns about insufficient, and decreasing, defense spending in Europe reflect an objective state of affairs, but the accusation (implicit in Gates' words) that certain allies sit idly by while others fight and die is taking things a bit too far. The decision by a number of NATO European member states to set limits to their military commitment in Afghanistan must be traced back to more substantive reasons than opportunism.

One such reason is that most European allies feel that they do not really 'own' ISAF. To them, ISAF looks very much like an American mission. NATO has not been truly involved in strategic planning. US President Barack Obama's 'surge' – a broad strategy that involved not only more troops on the ground, but also a boost in civilian assistance and greater diplomatic outreach towards regional players – was discussed and approved in Washington without much consultation with NATO partners.<sup>7</sup> As a result, ISAF was further 'Americanized': the majority of troops, including the force commander, come from the US, as does the bulk

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<sup>6</sup> Thom Shanker, "Defense Secretary Warns NATO of 'Dim' Future", in *The New York Times*, June 10, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/11/world/europe/11gates.html>

<sup>7</sup> Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, Washington, DC, Simon & Schuster, 2010.

of international aid. Coupled with the length of the mission, this scarce sense of ownership has weakened Europe's post-9/11 solidarity with the US and contributed to engendering a demand for withdrawal in the public opinion. Also important in this regard is the fact that the European public generally deems ISAF excessively costly with respect to results. Even the US public, for years solidly supportive of the mission, has gradually turned against it out of concern that better use could be made of the resources spent on Afghanistan on the domestic front.<sup>8</sup>

Another factor to take into account is the protean nature of the mission – in other words, the incessant multiplication of tasks that allies have been called on to perform. Initially, ISAF presented itself as a peace-keeping operation, different in size, but not in nature, from what the Alliance had been doing in the Balkans for years. As more and more of Afghan territory was handed over to ISAF, however, NATO was confronted with the need to carry out new and very diverse activities, ranging from support to reconstruction to the fight against drug trafficking. On top of that, the expansion of ISAF's territorial competencies – extended to the whole country in 2006 – has coincided with a sharp increase in insurgent activities, meaning that NATO has been more involved in actual warfare than originally anticipated.

Differences in threat perception have been a further reason for the caveats. The US has a natural interest in destroying al-Qaeda and preventing Afghanistan from becoming yet again a haven for hostile terrorist organizations. On balance, such an interest is shared by European countries, most notably the largest ones, such as the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Nevertheless, the nexus between national security and fighting the Afghan insurgency is felt less intensely in Europe than it is in America – in truth, in certain European states it is not felt at all. Consequently, most governments in Europe have only been ready to risk the lives of their troops – and the favor of their public – to a certain extent.

Caught between a disaffected public opinion and allied requests for more help, several NATO governments have chosen an uncertain middle path. They have resisted the temptation to pull troops out, but have only agreed to a limited increase in troop deployment and to

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<sup>8</sup> For a summary of ISAF's decreasing popularity see, among others, Charles E. Miller, *Endgame for the West in Afghanistan? Explaining the Decline in Support for the War in Afghanistan in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, France and Germany*, Carlisle (PA), US Army War College, July 2010.

the relaxation - not the lifting - of the caveats. This middle path may not have eliminated interally frictions and has certainly affected ISAF's ability to tackle the insurgents. However, it has, arguably, been the only way for these 'reluctant' governments to keep thousands of troops in Afghanistan in the face of mounting popular discontent. Otherwise, an event of great public impact – such as the killing of a large number of civilians by mistake, or the loss of a considerable number of troops in a single attack – could have generated a public demand for early withdrawal that these governments would have found nearly impossible to resist.

When put into perspective, the dispute over the caveats contributes to casting NATO's decades-old burden-sharing problem in a new light.<sup>9</sup> During the Cold War, burden-sharing was easily quantifiable – it sufficed to look at the amount of gross domestic product (GDP) each member state allotted for defense (although some allies insisted that the availability of their territories for NATO facilities was also a critical factor). Partly due to the experience of ISAF, the debate has become more complex today. For some allies, the level of commitment to an operation like ISAF is as important a criterion for measuring burden-sharing as the GDP proportion absorbed by military expenditures. In light of this, they – implicitly or explicitly – claim that risk-sharing is a fundamental variable for evaluating an ally's service record. Again, this is nothing new, as risk-sharing was also a factor during the Cold War (particularly with regard to nuclear-sharing arrangements). Yet, assessing the level of burden-sharing has now become an exercise subject to a greater degree of arbitrariness. A NATO member state may allocate a relatively low GDP proportion to defense and yet put much energy in operations abroad, for instance by deploying a proportionally high number of troops. Taking ISAF as an example, Denmark and the Netherlands could be mentioned as cases in point. Alternatively, an allied country with a higher military spending ratio may turn out to be more reluctant to commit full-heartedly to a mission like ISAF, as shown by the cases of France, Turkey or pre-crisis Greece.

Reflecting this debate, there has been much talk about NATO evolving towards an alliance à la carte, to which allies contribute selectively according to their own convenience.<sup>10</sup> For the

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<sup>9</sup> Jens Ringsmose, "NATO Burden-Sharing Redux: Continuity and Change after the Cold War", in *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 31, no. 2, August 2010.

<sup>10</sup> See, among others, Theo Farrel and Sten Rynning, "NATO's Transformation Gaps: Transatlantic Differences and the War in Afganistan", in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 33, no. 5, October 2010.

time being, they still seem capable of finding enough common ground to agree on a broad strategic platform. The adoption in Lisbon of the 2010 Strategic Concept attests to this. However, unlike in the past, when the imperative to check the Soviet threat was undisputable, today's inter-ally tensions derive from different strategic priorities – in short, the origin of tensions lies not only with the means, but with the ends of NATO themselves.<sup>11</sup> This is set to pose a serious problem of Alliance sustainability. While exposing this vulnerability, however, the ISAF experience also provides some encouraging lessons.

### **NATO and ISAF's Sustainability**

In spite of inter-ally recriminations, ISAF has to date recorded no true defection (the exception being the withdrawal of Dutch and French troops, which however occurred at a late stage in the mission's lifetime: 2010 and 2012, respectively). Contingent reductions have been rare and have, in any case, taken place in a coordinated fashion. The number of troops from a 'reluctant' country such as Germany actually peaked in mid-2011 – ten years after the first landing of Western forces in Afghanistan, and at a time when the mission had already lost popular support – and has not gone down significantly since then. In addition, several countries have relaxed the caveats. What to make of this apparent paradox?

For many European NATO countries, participation in ISAF is not really an issue of national security but rather an item in their cooperation agenda with the US. Their concern is not so much about a terrorist threat at home as about keeping the US committed to Europe. By supporting the US in Afghanistan, they aim to keep NATO – and its mutual defense clause – appealing to the US. Thus, NATO's global action (which is what the US is mainly interested in) is a function of its lingering regional role (which is what most Europeans are interested in).

This is the ultimate explanation of why NATO has been a more functional option in Afghanistan than the 'coalition of the willing' which was the US' first choice. Without NATO, keeping the Europeans in Afghanistan would have been significantly harder. As argued by Sarah Kreps, the political and security benefits accruing from NATO membership work as 'systemic incentives' for allied governments to take controversial and sometimes unpopular

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11 Riccardo Alcaro, "Combining Vision with Realism. Options for NATO's new Strategic Concept", in Documenti IAI, 10/07, (May 2010), <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai1007.pdf>.

decisions – such as maintaining thousands of soldiers in a faraway country for over a decade.<sup>12</sup> Even though these systemic incentives are not strong enough to shield governments entirely from the effects of popular discontent (hence, the caveats), they are ultimately responsible for the sustainability of ISAF. In fact, a government that withdraws its troops from an ad hoc coalition – such as the one in Iraq – has much less to fear than an allied government that unilaterally leaves a NATO operation. In the first case, whatever cost the pullout decision implies might well be offset by the approval of the public opinion. In addition, the decision can be justified on the sole basis of the mission's objectives. This would not be possible in the case of a NATO mission, in which allies would also have to ponder the implications of their decisions for the Alliance, not only for the mission. The withdrawing state would risk paying a much higher price because it would weaken its credibility as a reliable ally and undermine the pact of reciprocal solidarity that underlies NATO itself.

Although it may appear paradoxical for a mission that has such strained inter-ally relations, ISAF has demonstrated the added value of an integrated organization like NATO with respect to a coalition of the willing.<sup>13</sup> The latter may be preferable in terms of flexibility and the rapidity of decision-making, but NATO offers more solid guarantees in terms of coalition cohesion and member commitment.

### **Lessons from ISAF for NATO's Future**

ISAF has been an extreme experience in several respects, destined to leave its mark on the Alliance's future. Yet, predicting the path that NATO will take in the future as a result of it is an exercise just slightly less risky than divining, given NATO's record in proving soothsayers wrong.

Prior to the intervention in Libya, conventional wisdom had it that ISAF 'fatigue' would dampen NATO's zeal for out-of-area operations. Some saw ISAF as entirely determined by an

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12 Sarah Kreps, "Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion: Why Public Opinion Hardly Matters for NATO-led Operations in Afghanistan", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 6, no. 3, July 2010, pp. 200-201.

13 See, among others, Ellen Hallams, *The United States and NATO since 9/11. The transatlantic alliance renewed*, New York, Routledge, 2010; and Daniel Hamilton et al., *Alliance Reborn: An Atlantic Compact for 21st Century Security*, Washington, DC, Atlantic Council of the United States, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center for Technology and National Security (NDU), Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University SAIS, February 2009.

extraordinary event – a massive terrorist attack against a NATO member – and concluded that it could hardly set a precedent.<sup>14</sup> Most agreed that the economic crisis in Europe would reduce the Alliance's range of action. There is certainly a good deal of truth in both arguments. For all the emphasis put on crisis management by the 2010 Strategic Concept, the troubled experience of ISAF has reduced the appeal of armed intervention in support of state-building,<sup>15</sup> while cuts to military spending are set to hamper the development of expeditionary capabilities, if only because they will make out-of-area operations proportionally more expensive.<sup>16</sup> That said, the notion that NATO can go back to its North Atlantic 'roots' jars with reality.

The US' residual interest in NATO lies with the Alliance's ability to contribute to American security interests, which are global in nature. Moreover, the evolution of the international security landscape makes it increasingly difficult to insulate regional crises from their global implications. The rise of new powers – first and foremost China, but also Russia, India, Brazil and regional players like Iran – will reduce Western influence on the international stage. No longer able to dictate the agenda as in the past, the West will need to seek support from third countries, notably those that share, at least in part, its interests, values and worldviews. Thanks to its established cooperation mechanisms, NATO is an important instrument at the West's disposal for engaging these countries, particularly non-Western democracies.

Against this backdrop, the lessons from ISAF are the following. First, NATO's range of action cannot be artificially reduced in scope. Allies will therefore constantly face the challenge of striking a balance between the Alliance's regional and global dimensions. Second, the expansion and strengthening of NATO's partnerships with third countries or groups of countries will be an ever more important component of the Alliance's crisis management toolkit. Third, the fact that some of the rising powers feature forms of government alternative to the Western model of liberal democracy is likely to push NATO countries to try to co-opt their 'natural' partners, i.e. non-western democracies, on a more structural basis. Should this trend consolidate, NATO will need to prevent the formation of this 'second ring' of non-member

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14 Karl-Heinz Kamp, NATO after Afghanistan, US Naval Institute Proceedings, June 2010.

15 See, among others, Rolf Schwarz, "NATO and Prevention of State Failure: an Idea Whose Time Will Come?", Contemporary Security Policy, vol. 31, no. 2, August 2010.

16 Stephen Flanagan et al., A Diminishing Transatlantic Partnership? The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Defense and Foreign Assistance Capabilities, Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2011, particularly pp. 15-28.



partners from leading to the re-emergence of a 'bloc' logic that would undermine the chances of cooperation with non-democratic or semi-democratic states such as China and Russia.

In ultimate analysis, the ISAF experience is important not so much because it has tipped the scale in favor of one of the two potential outcomes of NATO's evolution – 'back to the roots' or 'global NATO' – as because it has painfully exposed the difficulty, both political and military, in striking a balance between the two. Failing or failed states, intra-state conflicts and regional crises will continue to confront NATO members with the question of how they should best pursue their security interests. Such interests may have a regional scope (as in the case of Libya) or a more global one (as in the case of Afghanistan), but dealing with them will inevitably involve consistent crisis management and response. NATO strategic planners were aware of this challenge when they drafted the new Strategic Concept. The document indulges extensively in detailing a wide array of non-military options to deal with crises before they spiral out of control.<sup>17</sup> It goes without saying that preventing a conflict is always a better option than having to manage it. Yet, for all NATO's efforts, there will continue to be circumstances in which armed intervention will present itself as a practical option. The decision to take up arms against Libya's dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, is emblematic in this regard. The restraining effect of ISAF fatigue has turned out to be much less pervasive than anticipated.

## Conclusions

NATO's operation in Afghanistan has yet to be completed and its assessment will require further analysis. Undoubtedly, it has been the most challenging mission in the history of NATO, and has already had some effects on the Alliance's approach to both crisis management and inter-ally solidarity.

The ISAF experience has played a role in improving NATO's capacity to train local security forces. It has also tested NATO's ability to perform new political, diplomatic and civilian tasks, thereby contributing to the formulation of the comprehensive approach concept. Third, it has

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<sup>17</sup> Such as institutionalized political dialogue, close cooperation with relevant international institutions, coordination with local actors (including non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations), security and military assistance, training, logistic support (see NATO Heads of State and Government, Strategic Concept – Active Engagement, Modern Defence, cit., §§ 4c and 26-35).

set an important precedent in terms of non-NATO members' military and political involvement in NATO operations. Finally, the effects of their NATO commitment in Afghanistan have accelerated and fostered the transformation process of European armed forces, although they have been far less pervasive in European defense procurement.

ISAF's magnitude – a large-scale, lengthy operation in a country far removed from the North Atlantic Area – is such that the mission has also had broader political-strategic implications. ISAF has exposed NATO's internal imbalances and cast the decades-old problem of burden-sharing in a new and more ominous light. Today, NATO certainly suffers from an acute syndrome of multiple identities. In the post-Cold War period, no single task to which NATO has committed itself has ever taken on the all-dominating nature of the former deterrence and containment of the Soviet menace. NATO has instead pursued a wider set of objectives, where the priorities of one allied country have not always dovetailed with the priorities of the others. Inter-ally tensions are not only endemic (arguably a constitutive trait of any alliance), they have also grown more threatening to NATO's potential for collective action.

Nevertheless, the fact that allies, including the US, keep resorting to NATO demonstrates that the pact of reciprocal convenience and solidarity at its core is still solid enough to allow for the pursuit of partly different agendas. This structural imbalance can only be sustainable if, at the end of the day, NATO member states continue to believe that membership in NATO, in spite of the burdens and responsibilities that come with it, eventually produces a net gain. The lesson from Afghanistan (as well as from Libya) revolves not so much around the difficulty in managing partly diverging security agendas, as the ability to generate adequate resources for the plurality of tasks implied by those multiple agendas.

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# Report on Working Group II

## Afghanistan and NATO after 2014

Federico Catapano\*

Working Group II (WG2) explored the impact that NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) combat troops withdrawal will have on the future of both Afghanistan and the Alliance. On balance, participants agreed that, if the ISAF experience has generated positive catalyzing effects that have promoted the transformation of the European armed forces, on the other hand the nine-year long experience in Afghanistan has exacerbated the decades-old NATO's internal capability imbalances and the uneven burden-sharing between some European member states and the United States (US).

The unprecedented challenges of the Afghan operating environment have been for NATO an opportunity to make a virtue out of a necessity. The ISAF experience has posed

a serious challenge for the overall NATO's crisis management approach – in this regard, during the last nine years, the Alliance has been accelerating its own transformation process, building a training capacity, developing a comprehensive approach and conducting operations with non-NATO countries. These shifts towards a more expeditionary NATO need to be carefully analyzed in order to best assess whether global-oriented capabilities such as counterinsurgency should be given a higher priority than those regional-oriented capabilities which the intervention in Libya revealed to be crucial yet dangerously scarce in NATO.

The debate focused more extensively on the two potential outcomes of NATO's future role as security organization – “back to

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the roots” of collective defense or “Global Actor” – hence concentrating on the broader political-strategic implications post-2014, and less on the future of Afghanistan that was assessed mainly in the context of NATO Training Mission (NTM-A).

That being said, WG2 attendees’ dissimilar views and the intense discussions related to the conceptualization of NATO’s future role highlighted the main perceptions and misperceptions that ISAF has generated in the transatlantic relations today. In particular, participants debated the diverging views of US and Europe on NATO’s global role – recognized to be a consequence of a different threat perception – and the transition of ISAF from its current nature of combat mission to training, advising and assistance mission.

The first paper-giver, Danish Institute for International Studies scholar Trine Flockhart (‘NATO’s Training Mission in Afghanistan– Achieving Positive Change’), presented ontological security, a concept that takes into account the cognitive domain, to minimize the risk of not achieving the intended changes NTM-A has been working on since its establishment in November 2009. Flockhart defined ontological security as a smart ap-

proach to achieve positive change, based on four interdependent ‘strategies’: 1) narrative strategy; 2) identity strategy; c) practice strategy; d) action strategy.

Flockhart argued that while there is no doubt that NTM-A is a remarkable achievement of ISAF, the improvements in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) could have not been possible without building self-confidence, self-esteem and pride in the Afghan people (the agents of change). In essence, Flockhart claimed that positive long-term changes are obtained only by taking those people cognitive issues into consideration that facilitate the construction of positive narrative that over time reinforce identity. In this regard participants had divergent opinions about the existence of identity among the Afghan people, with one participant in particular stating that national identity is still fragmented as some Afghans struggle to consider the government in Kabul as the legitimate ruler of Afghanistan.

The lack of good governance has always been a destabilizing issue in Afghanistan. ISAF has been struggling to ensure that the central government of Kabul can control the entire Afghan territory. One participant contended that the anti-education and anti-

female policies of the Taliban prevented Afghanistan from developing the potential of its human capital and made it difficult for Afghans to have a vision for a better way of life, this ultimately being the reason why the international community should believe and invest more in ontological security. Some participants argued that the success of NTM-A in the ANSF improvements should be more accurately measured by using both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. In this regard, a participant noticed that achieving improvements with the Afghan National Police (ANP) has been much more challenging than with the Afghan National Army (ANA) for NTM-A. Other participants argued that this proves that ontological security is theoretically speaking very interesting but difficult to put in practice in the ANA/ANP.

The debate became lively when some participants started diverging on the existence of positive narrative in the seven years that preceded the establishment of NTM-A. In this regard, some felt that an ontological security-based approach could not be successfully applied to Afghanistan, but could be used by NATO in other future similar operating environments. Others showed their skepticism about the idea that positive narra-

tives and ontological security may be the best hope for fostering security.

Flockhart argued that the smart change-oriented approach initiated in June 2009 by General Stanley McChrystal based on 'embedded partnering', is the best example of how NATO has been able to apply ontological security. This partnering had ISAF troops merging with the ANSF, so that at any level ISAF and ANSF became to be completely integrated.

Some participants expressed their concerns about the recent increasing of attacks against NATO troops by members of the ANSFs (over the last months the term of 'green-on-blue attacks' has been replaced by the term 'insider attacks'). These events were commented by some of the participants as a huge challenge to both the relationship between ISAF and the government of Afghanistan as well as a challenge to prepare ANSF for eventually being able to provide security autonomously and at best as a challenge to the construction of a positive narrative. One participant pointed to a deep and troubling difference in cultural compatibility as one of the possible contributing factors to these incidents, but this explanation was found unsatisfactory by the majority of the participants. Participants agreed

that there are indeed significant differences in the culture of ISAF troops and ANSF and it is probable that some of these attacks have been precipitated by slights of honor or conduct on the part of coalition forces that was not consistent with a positive and professional relationship. There are significant risks associated with embedding partnering, of that there can be little doubt. NTM-A has placed a huge amount of emphasis on educating its force and taking precautions to prevent insider attacks. This single explanation of the clashes of cultures, a lack of trust and the defense of honor falls short of fully explaining the frequency and scope of the problem, thus the participants agreed that these destabilizing events should be further assessed.

Flockhart also argued that along with embedded partnering, literacy courses have turned out to have had a positive effect on ontological security. She then proposed that ANSFs should consider to award special badges to wear on the uniform so that self-esteem of individuals can be promoted while at the same time as a secondary effect the improvements in literacy could be incorporated as part of the positive narrative.

To conclude the discussion around ontological security, the majority of the partici-

pants expressed their skepticism about what was perceived as excessive optimism on the future of Afghanistan and warned about expecting too much from the ontological security approach. Some participants then challenged the entire WG with some provocative questions that they believed would stimulate future discussions:

- Aren't international funds crucial for the future and the stability of Afghanistan?
- Is it really true that we can deliver security to the individuals in Afghanistan?
- Why do afghan people join ANA/ANP/ANSF?
- What is the perception of international community about Afghanistan? In this regard, perception "outside the official network" should be considered.
- Why the Soviet failed in Afghanistan?
- How can we mitigate the risk of failure?
- Which are the possible scenarios in the post 2014 Afghanistan?

Istituto Affari Internazionali scholars Riccardo Alcaro and Alessandro Marrone, the other two WG paper-givers, ('NATO's Multiple Balancing Acts – Lessons from the Operation in Afghanistan') presented a two-fold purpose assessment concerning the future of

NATO in light of the ISAF experience: the impact of ISAF on NATO's crisis management approach and the consequential broader political-strategic implications.

Marrone argued that aside from the significance of Afghanistan, attention should be paid to NATO's military transformation. In fact, due to the intervention in Afghanistan the Alliance had to dramatically adapt in order to meet new security challenges. This time the threat was in neither the transatlantic nor the European areas. NATO had to realize that emerging threats to stability, such as the transnational terrorism of al-Qaeda, could affect the Alliance from a great distance, hence NATO had no other choice but to become expeditionary. In essence Marrone claimed that the ISAF experience sparked the acceleration of NATO's military transformation process, particularly in European member states. Yet, when it comes to capabilities development, the defense procurement of the majority of the European countries is a long-term process that is not able to rapidly respond to urgent operational requirements. The discussion moved then to the new training capacity developed by NATO during the last three years. Marrone underlined that training in Afghanistan has been particularly

challenging due to the high percentage of illiteracy among the recruits of ANA and ANP. Then he concluded on training arguing that the ISAF experience have taught to the members of the Alliance the fundamental role that the training of local security forces plays in crisis management operations. The majority of the participants received favorably the convergences between Flocker and Marrone over the importance and success of training in Afghanistan, yet one of them contested that training in ISAF aims to nothing but the exit strategy.

Marrone's paper argued further that the comprehensive approach has been one of the most debated concepts within the Alliance, in particular after ISAF became more engaged in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. One discussant argued that the comprehensive approach is not a new idea at all and based on the Soviet experience in Afghanistan, counterinsurgency requires indeed a holistic approach. With the arrival of new actors on the national and international stage, NATO needed a new concept of how to integrate the efforts of the old and new actors. The comprehensive approach gave NATO that way of looking at things, of coordinating planning, and of aligning efforts and mobilizing the



resources that the local, national, and global communities (NGOs, IOs) have to offer. Marrone explained what NATO is implementing in Afghanistan is, rather than a full-fledged comprehensive approach, is extended civil-military cooperation, which is a first step in that direction but still falls short of satisfying all requisites implied by a truly strategic comprehensive approach. The civil-military cooperation NATO is employing in Afghanistan started first at regional/tactical level with the creation of the 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and has matured over the years so that today is functioning at a higher level. This new approach employed by the ISAF Commander (COMISAF) to undertake holistically all the different aspects of complex crisis management operations is based on the close cooperation with the NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) that is responsible for the political-diplomatic aspects of the ISAF tasks.

Marrone then described the crucial role that partners played in ISAF at any level from tactical to strategic. In particular it was agreed that the experience in Afghanistan has re-emphasized the need to remedy the communications gaps and the lack of strategic coordination between NATO and the European

Union (EU). Further, Marrone claimed that the intervention in Libya has been another lesson learned for NATO, as he insisted that the participation by non-NATO member states in the Operation Unified Protector (OUP) was at least partially modeled along the partnership pattern used in ISAF. Marrone concluded underlining that in the 2010 Strategic Concept the Alliance made partnership one of its three core tasks.

In his section of the paper co-authored with Marrone, Alcaro argued that since ISAF has exacerbated NATO's internal imbalances, an assessment of the broader political-strategic implications that will shape the future of the Alliance was required. Alcaro pointed out that the chronic tension between Europe and the US over ISAF is related to the fact that ISAF is viewed in much of Europe as largely an American mission rather than a European or even NATO one. A different threat perception has emerged as another fundamental dividing line. While the Europeans are sympathetic with the US interest in destroying al-Qaeda and preventing Afghanistan from becoming again a haven for terrorist organizations, they perceive the nexus between their national security and the fight against the Afghan insurgency less strongly than is

the case in America. Coupled with the length of the mission, the European scarce sense ownership of the ISAF problem has been weakening inter-allied solidarity.

However, Alcaro explained that European member states remain committed in Afghanistan because they want to keep the US in NATO and committed to Europe. Alcaro claimed that ISAF has brought to the surface the real challenge for NATO that is not the dilemma of choosing whether to go back to the regional roots or become a global actor, but rather trying to find a compromise between two different roles that NATO must play when it comes to its security interests. Sometimes security interests will be global as in Afghanistan, or regional as in the case of Libya. Some participants contested the idea of a global NATO and argued that the collective defense role of the Alliance could be jeopardized by these unsustainable global scale ambitions. Moreover some participants suggested that to best predict the future of the Alliance, an in-depth analysis of both ISAF and OUP operations should be conducted. With the end of the presentation of the second paper, WG2 participants felt that some aspects or actors had been not consid-

ered in the discussion. One participant in particular referring to the future stability of Afghanistan argued that the role of Iran and Pakistan cannot be neglected. Other concerns were raised in relation to the hypothesis that a fragmented Afghanistan might become a new haven for jihadists. In this regard participants debated about the right balance between non-kinetic (training) and kinetic (Special Operations Forces) capabilities to be used in the post-2014 ISAF.

In conclusion, WG2 reflected upon the many challenges that will come with the handover of responsibility from ISAF to ANSF by the end of 2014, with ISAF assuming a merely training and assisting role. Participants also recognized another crucial change in that there will be an economic transition, as the country will need to adapt to a rapid fall in the foreign military presence and the economic aid that has accompanied it. Unfortunately these certainties did not help WG2 to reaching a shared common agreement about how things will be in the post 2014 Afghanistan. However, by and large it was agreed that despite the fact that the ISAF experience has been very challenging for NATO, the inter-allied solidarity it is not broken.





*Focus Area III*

*NATO's Partnerships  
in North Africa and  
the Middle East*





# The Four Stages of NATO's Partnership Frameworks: Rethinking Regional Partnerships with the Middle East and North Africa

Gülnur Aybet\*

Since the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC,) NATO's first partnership initiative that was extended to the former Warsaw Pact states in 1991, NATO's partnership frameworks have evolved and transformed to meet specific challenges. The original NATO partnerships in the 1990s were based on a goal of 'projecting stability' in the post-Communist space by promoting Western liberal norms, through the agency of institutions like NATO, by inducing political and military reform and subsequently a complete absorption of the partners as full members of the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Partnerships in the post-September 11 period emphasized functional and practical measures of crime and border control and collaboration in counterterrorism, as well as support for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. This period also saw the geographic extension of partnerships to 'global' partners like Australia and Japan and to new regional frameworks like the 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Council (ICI), aimed at fostering a new channel of dialogue with the Gulf states in the Middle East. By 2004 it was evident that partnerships were no longer confined to the post-Communist space, and despite the 'unfinished business' of absorbing the Western Balkans into the Euro-Atlantic institutions, the early Central and Eastern European partners had all become members of NATO.

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With the geography, the purposes of partnerships also changed. They were no longer necessarily a pathway to membership. Nor were they solely the means to diffuse an international liberal world order, but instead were tailor-made initiatives concentrating on specific issues of collaboration with each partner or group of partners. Within these tailor-made frameworks for collaboration, NATO was able to offer a selection from its 'toolbox' – that is, its particular expertise in the areas of defense and security sector reform, defense planning, civil-military relations and partner contribution to NATO-led exercises and missions. In that sense, NATO's technical know-how in these fields remained a means to absorb these partner countries into a wider liberal democratic order. However, partnership initiatives in the last decade have wavered between NATO's normative role in diffusing liberal values and its functional role as provider of defense reform and tailor-made cooperation packages to combat global security challenges.

NATO's outreach to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) undoubtedly falls in the latter category. The two regional NATO partnership frameworks, the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the aforementioned ICI, have become channels for practical cooperation with North Africa and Middle East countries as well as with the Gulf states, although the MD was initially created in 1994 to complement the normative outreach to Central and Eastern Europe. It is only with the Arab Spring that new opportunities and challenges have emerged for NATO to establish its normative role in the region, just like it once reached out to the unstable post-communist world and used its technical know-how to absorb those countries into a system of Western democratic liberal norms. To this end, NATO has offered, on a 'case by case' basis, dialogue and cooperation to countries in the Middle East who are not participants of either MD or ICI.<sup>1</sup>

But the Middle East is not comparable to the experience in Central and Eastern Europe. Nor has NATO proved to be the champion of safeguarding regional stability through military intervention followed by state-building like it did in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. If anything, NATO's military intervention in Libya, Operation Unified Protector, has left many loose

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1 Final Statement, Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers, NATO HQ Brussels, December 7, 2011. Press Release (2011) 145. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_81943.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_81943.htm?mode=pressrelease)

ends regarding NATO's footprint in the region as a guarantor of stability, since NATO has not followed its initial intervention with state-building practices like it did in the Balkans. As over a year after the end of the Muammar Gaddafi regime Libya is still struggling to establish a basic security environment essential for moving on with political reform and state-building, and as NATO distances itself from the perils of the Syrian conflict spilling over to neighboring countries like Turkey and Lebanon, its footprint in the region as a security guarantor is considerably different than in the Balkans. Since NATO's image as a provider of stability has a significant impact on how NATO is perceived by other countries in the region, this also impacts the legitimacy and attraction of NATO for potential and existing partners in the region.

This paper explores the three stages of NATO's outreach to the Mediterranean and the Middle East during the development of its partnership schemes. It then evaluates NATO's new partnership policy launched in April 2011 in the light of global security challenges, as the fourth stage of NATO partnership initiatives. The paper ends with lessons learned from the Libya operation and how the legacy impacts NATO's image in the region. It concludes with policy recommendations on how to make the partnership tools more efficient and flexible to meet these challenges and emphasizes the need to strike a better balance between NATO's normative and functional approach towards partnerships.

### **The MD and ICI within the Three Stages of NATO's Partnership Initiatives**

The evolution of NATO's partnership frameworks has been in three stages. Stage one took place from the early to late 1990s, when the purpose of partnership frameworks was to 'radiate' stability to the post-communist space and absorb the Central and East European states into Euro-Atlantic institutions through the diffusion of liberal democratic norms. Partnership initiatives from this period include the 1991 North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), extending to all the former Warsaw Pact countries, and the 1994 Partnership for Peace (PfP) program extended to all member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). While the NACC was a framework that laid out a work plan between the North Atlantic Council and the former Warsaw Pact states, PfP consisted of individually tailored partnership agreements. Both mechanisms were intended to form a pathway to even-



tual membership, although there are many states in PfP who have no intention to become NATO members. The NACC was eventually replaced by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997.

The second stage took place from the mid-1990s onwards until the end of that decade, and saw more practical cooperation with partners, most notably by involving them in NATO-led operations. This stage enhanced the legitimacy of NATO's role in collective security through the involvement of partners in humanitarian intervention, peace-building and peace enforcement efforts in Bosnia and later in Kosovo. This did not just involve the 'membership track' Central and Eastern European states, but other partners such as Russia, Egypt, Ukraine and Malaysia, which all contributed to NATO's first post-Cold War peace-building operation, the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia in 1995. Although some mechanisms for partnerships were not yet in place, such as the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997, partners from a wide geography, including Russia, were already involved in NATO-led missions. It is this 'practical' engagement with individual non-NATO countries that constitutes the basis for more formal partnership frameworks like the PfP and the NATO Russia Council (NRC)..

The third stage of NATO's partnerships came after September 11. From then onwards, the functional value of partners in the war against terror saw NATO moving away from its normative role of engaging and absorbing countries within a liberal democratic community. In the third stage, partnerships had become an essential component of a new kind of collective defense function for NATO: a borderless collective defense against non-state enemy actors.<sup>2</sup>

The political goal behind the operations of the 1990s in the second stage of partnerships was not just to maintain stability on the European continent, but also to establish a system of legitimate collective security, one that would address violations of international norms held up by Euro-Atlantic institutions, through military intervention if necessary. This was the era of fighting off 'bad examples' that could de-legitimize the ownership of international norms

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2 For a definition of the term 'borderless collective defense', see Gülnur Aybet 'The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited: Grand Strategy and Emerging Issues' in Gülnur Aybet and Rebecca Moore, *NATO in Search of a Vision*, Georgetown University Press, 2010, p. 35-50. Collective defense during the Cold War was defined in terms of defending the territory of NATO member states. Borderless collective defense meant that NATO would go 'out of area', that is outside its geographic area as defined by Article 6 of the Washington treaty, but not necessarily for humanitarian reasons as in the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo but in order to project stability to provide security for its member states, as in Afghanistan.

by the West.<sup>3</sup> It was the norm-wars. Bosnia was not an imperative of security but a 'bad example', which explains why it took so long to intervene.<sup>4</sup> But post-September 11, NATO was no longer just fighting off 'bad examples' but a tangible enemy, albeit one that was hard to see, engage and predict, and more importantly not tied to the geographical boundary of a state. The war against terror therefore initiated the next wave of NATO out-of-area operations. Afghanistan was not a humanitarian intervention, it was collective defense. NATO's traditional implementation of collective defense had been geographically bound by the limitations of article 6(1) which only refers to attacks on an allied member's territory, vessels and aircraft in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic area, north of the Tropic of Cancer.<sup>5</sup> Post-September 11, the borders of collective defense went beyond the limitations originally envisaged in 1949. It was now essential for NATO to undertake 'borderless collective defense' in cooperation with regional partners.

Most of the mechanisms for this more practical approach to partnerships were drawn out at NATO's Prague summit in 2002 and later at the Istanbul summit in 2004. The Prague summit launched the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), with a view to intensifying country-specific assistance and advice between NATO and the Central Asian states. However, to date, the only Central Asian state participating in IPAP has been Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, the five Central Asian members of PfP, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan provided critical assistance to NATO's Afghan operation, including allowing the use of bases and transit routes, providing re-fueling facilities and contributing to border security.<sup>6</sup> This focus on Central Asia was taken further at the Istanbul summit of 2004, when NATO appointed a special envoy to the region and began a new initiative, the Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building (PAP-DIB) aiming to assist all partner states in defense reform, but thought to be particularly relevant to the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Dieter Mahnke, *Parameters of European Security*, Paris, WEU Institute for Security Studies, September 1993, Chaillot Paper No.10.

4 On the legitimacy of military intervention and international norms, see Gülnur Aybet, *A European Security Architecture After the Cold War: Questions of Legitimacy*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000.

5 The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C., April 4, 2012. Article 6(1). [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

6 See Rebecca Moore, 'Lisbon and the Evolution of NATO's New Partnership Policy', in *Perceptions Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (Spring 2012), p 59.

7 NATO 'Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building (PAP-DIB), Brussels, June 7, 2004 at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-3CE1CF96-E601977E/natolive/official\\_texts\\_21014.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-3CE1CF96-E601977E/natolive/official_texts_21014.htm?selectedLocale=en)

In these first three stages of NATO partnerships, the Mediterranean Dialogue, although existing since 1994, did not assume a priority among NATO's many partnership initiatives, including the intensified PfP mechanisms with Central Asian states after September 11, the launch of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in 2002, and the creation of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Initiative (EAPC) in 1997. The launch of the MD in 1994 came at a time when NATO was establishing itself in the post Cold War as an institution wielding its military know-how through activities such as promoting and transferring its experience in operational procedures, defense reform, and military training and exercises. In comparison to other Euro-Atlantic institutions, these were the niches that NATO excelled in and it was through these functions that NATO exercised its influence as a normative organization. Therefore, it was initially hard to see why NATO would involve itself with a politically weighted dialogue process with the Mediterranean and North African countries, while it sought to avoid involvement in ongoing regional crises such as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Perhaps it is the timing and the significance of the date when NATO decided to launch the MD that is important. The MD was decided upon by NATO in January 1994, at the same time as the creation of the Partnership for Peace program. By January 1995, NATO commenced the MD with Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. In November that same year, Jordan was also invited to participate. Unlike the PfP, MD consisted of an open dialogue on a case-by-case basis with the partners. To a large extent the individual meetings of Dialogue Countries with NATO, consisted of 'executive briefings of NATO activities'.<sup>8</sup> NATO, in turn, was more interested in finding out the views of the MD countries about NATO's role in terms of security and stability in the region, rather than their security concerns. This is what has been referred to as a 'panoptical' effect.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, NATO's initial foray into the Mediterranean Dialogue was to bolster NATO's normative image vis-à-vis its 'absorption' policies in Central and Eastern Europe. Apparently today, the matter is quite different, with NATO partnerships focused on practical cooperation on issue areas. But let us take a hard look at how much of this

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<sup>8</sup> Jette Nordam, 'The Mediterranean Dialogue: Dispelling Misconceptions and Building Confidence' in NATO Review, No. 4, Vol.45 (July-Aug 1997) <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1997/9704-6.htm>

<sup>9</sup> This reflects a point made by Glenn Bowman that the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) in the former Yugoslavia was not so much there to look at what was going on, but to be looked at. This point was made at an Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) seminar on 'Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution', held in London November 27-28, 1995.

‘panoptical’ legacy of the early 1990s is still prevalent in NATO’s outreach activities today.

Up until its revamping in 2002 and 2004, the MD consisted of a piecemeal process based on cooperation and dialogue with each individual country. Three MD states, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, participated in the Stabilization Force (SFOR, the successor mission to IFOR) in Bosnia, but their presence was not linked to a grander design for military cooperation between NATO and the MD countries. The presence in IFOR of these three Muslim MD states, together with Turkey, bolstered the legitimacy of the mission as a multinational and multicultural undertaking. In this sense, partner contributions actually served the purpose of legitimizing NATO missions. Throughout this period, the content of the MD was restricted to ‘low politics’ and included science information, civil emergency planning and courses at NATO schools. In fact, even after a Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG) was launched in 1997, to give the MD a more formal process, MD countries still preferred individual meetings with NATO, rather than group-to-group exchanges.

From 1997 onwards, the MD started to increasingly borrow more elements and activities from the PfP program, which included military cooperation and civil emergency planning. By the time of the Prague summit in 2002, a series of political and practical measures had been incorporated into the MD, including a tailor-made approach to cooperation with each Dialogue state. At the Istanbul summit in 2004, a more expanded cooperative framework was announced to transform the Dialogue into a genuine partnership, although this signaled the Alliance’s intention to maintain good political relations with MENA countries rather than concrete progress in their technical cooperation. Together with the re-launched MD, NATO initiated the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative at the same summit in 2004. NATO initially intended the ICI for all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, but only four countries joined the ICI in 2005: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Saudi Arabia and Oman refrained from joining and have since then upheld this position.<sup>10</sup>

Through both the re-launched MD and the ICI, NATO has sought to have a widening functional approach to partnerships by incorporating many PfP activities into partnerships with the Middle East and North Africa region. Both initiatives served the purpose, which Septem-

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<sup>10</sup> ‘NATO Elevates Mediterranean Dialogue to a Genuine Partnership, Launches Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, NATO Update, June 29, 2004. <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/06-june/e0629d.htm>

ber 11 had made an imperative: to work with partners in areas such as cooperation against international terrorism, including maritime cooperation. However, to this date, only two MD partners, Israel and Morocco, have participated in Operation Active Endeavour, which is NATO's main maritime counterterrorism response mission to September 11 and involves the monitoring of shipping in the Mediterranean to 'detect, deter and protect against terrorist activity'.<sup>11</sup> The enhanced MD included NATO's offer of an Individual Cooperation Program (ICP) to each Dialogue country, which involved cooperation in the fight against terrorism and joint military exercises in the Mediterranean, but to this date only Israel, Egypt and Jordan have signed ICP agreements with NATO.

It is probably fair to say that the MD and ICI have underperformed if compared to other activities carried out by NATO in its overall partnership outreach. This is due to three reasons:

i) Despite NATO's intention to intensify these partnerships by incorporating PfP mechanisms and deeper cooperation in issue areas such as counterterrorism, there has not been a strong interest to intensify participation from MD states, save but a few, and the ICI has largely remained on the level of a case-by-case dialogue with individual countries.

ii) Post-September 11, NATO's focus on practical cooperation with the Central Asian states, particularly their support to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan created an imperative which overshadowed the partnership initiatives with the Middle East and North Africa. Similarly, the intensification of NATO-Russia partnership mechanisms with the creation of NRC in the same period also overtook outreach activities to the MENA region.

iii) NATO's emphasis on 'global partners' at the Riga summit of 2006 and the subsequent offering of Tailored Cooperation Packages (TCPs) to four of these global partners: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea, at the Bucharest summit in 2008, led to a public debate about the Alliance's global normative role. In academia, the most significant proponents of this debate were Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, who suggested a world-wide 'Alliance of Democracies' to eventually replace NATO. But this idea of a 'global NATO' which would involve an Alliance with 'like-minded states' in the Asia-Pacific region did not meet widespread approval. François Heisbourg, among other experts, contended that

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11 Operation Active Endeavour, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_7932.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_7932.htm)

such a move would lead to an unwarranted friction with China.<sup>12</sup> The significance of this debate also overshadowed NATO partnerships to the MENA region.

It seems that NATO partnerships have now entered a fourth stage, where normative engagement and practical cooperation have been replaced with the imperative to address head-on global security challenges, highlighted in the report of the Group of Experts chaired by former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright and tasked with providing guidance to NATO's new Strategic Concept of 2010. To this end, NATO launched a new partnership policy in 2011. Like previous partnership initiatives, this one too is reactive to ongoing change and builds on existing partnership frameworks. As such, it is a continuation of the piecemeal approach followed so far and it lacks a broader strategic vision.

### **The Imperative of Global Security Challenges: the Fourth Stage of NATO Partnerships**

The requirement to adjust old partnership frameworks to meet new global security challenges was first spelled out in the report by the Group of Experts. On this point, the report of the Albright group seems to have definitely had an impact, as the Strategic Concept eventually adopted in Lisbon in 2010 emphasized the role of partnerships for NATO's next decade by making cooperative security one of the 'essential core tasks' of the Alliance, alongside collective security and crisis management.<sup>13</sup> At the Lisbon summit Allies decided to develop 'a more efficient and flexible partnership policy'. This policy was unveiled at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Berlin in April 2011. The main themes of the new partnership policy are 'efficiency' and 'flexibility'. Implied is the offer of all of NATO's partnership tools and mechanisms to all its existing and potential partners around the globe. The rationale behind this

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12 Ivo H Daalder and James Goldgeier in 'NATO: For Global Security, Expand the Alliance' International Herald Tribune, October 12, 2006 <http://www.cfr.org/nato/global-security-expand-alliance/p11704>.

Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay in 'An Alliance of Democracies', Washington Post, May 23 2004 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46728-2004May21.html>.

Francois Heisbourg in 'What NATO Needs is to be Less Ambitious' Financial Times November 22, 2006. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3a657376-7a01-11db-8d70-0000779e2340.html#axzz2GXVdOIVA>.

13 NATO Strategic Concept, Active Engagement, Modern Defense, Adopted by the Heads of State and Government, NATO Lisbon Summit, 19-20 November, 2010. [http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat\\_Concept\\_web\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf).

NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_63654.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm).

two-fold process of 'deepening' and 'broadening' partnerships includes the need to enhance 'international efforts to meet emerging security challenges', improve early warning and crisis prevention mechanisms, and promote regional security and cooperation. New priority areas for dialogue, consultation and cooperation include crisis management and prevention, counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and emerging security challenges such as cyber-defense, energy security, maritime security and antipiracy. Enhancing the existing partnership frameworks of the MD, ICI, EAPC and PfP is also part of the new policy and includes enhanced political consultation on security issues of common concern, further practical cooperation on non-proliferation, arms control, democratic reform and defense reform, and training and capacity-building in the area of NATO expertise such as education and training of military professionals.

The 'flexible' format includes the '28+n' formula, which means cooperation beyond existing frameworks can also be thematic-driven as each case warrants. To achieve this, NATO intends to streamline its partnership tools by establishing a 'Single Partnership Cooperation Menu' and a tailor-made Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program (IPCP). NATO has also decided to offer the existing Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) and the Planning and Review Process (PARP) beyond the EAPC/PfP programs to any partner around the globe on a case by case basis.<sup>14</sup> The flexibility of this new policy means that the NATO 28 can engage with one or a number of partner countries driven by a specific issue area, whereas existing partnerships, both the group-to-group platforms and the partnerships with individual countries, are not necessarily thematically driven. The new policy is probably the most ambitious and far-reaching restructuring of NATO's partnership program.

NATO's new partnership policy needs to be assessed on the basis of the purposes it serves, and on whether the proposed mechanisms to achieve those purposes are adequate. In the first and second stages of NATO partnerships, the purpose was a normative outreach to absorb would-be NATO members into a liberal democratic order, and involve partners in NATO-led missions to increase the legitimacy of these missions. In the third stage, this purpose was overtaken by the imperative of engaging partners on piecemeal, practical and issue-based co-

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14 NATO, 'Active Engagement in Cooperative Security: A More Efficient and Flexible Partnership Policy', April 15, 2011 [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_04/20110415\\_110415-Partnership-Policy.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-Partnership-Policy.pdf).



operation in the war against terror. The problematic nature of the fourth stage is that it is not clear what the purpose behind the new partnership policy is.

Offering all kinds of NATO tools, from defense planning assistance to training, to any partner around the world is a sign that NATO is ready to do business with partners who have common interests but who may not necessarily share the same values. While global partners are still on the agenda, the debate surrounding global NATO as an Alliance of 'like minded' democracies seems to have become irrelevant. While cooperation on the fight against terrorism continues with the piecemeal issue-based cooperation we saw in the third stage, new security challenges have been added to new areas of tailor-made practical cooperation such as proliferation of WMD, cyber and energy security and antipiracy. Enhanced cooperation within existing partnership frameworks also comprises an intensification of piecemeal cooperation on security issues of common concern as well as NATO's offering of a wider range of tools, from defense planning assistance to training.

The imperative for this over-arching partnership policy stems from the original Group of Experts report that added to existing global threats such as terrorism, the spread of WMD, and ethnic and religious regional rivalries, the following global security challenges: vulnerable information systems, competition for energy and strategic resources, maritime insecurity, demographic changes that could aggravate global problems and climate change. On the Mediterranean and the Middle East in particular, the report concluded that these regions will impact Alliance security in nuclear non-proliferation, counterterrorism, energy security and a 'peaceful international order'. The report stresses 'strategic patience' with the MD and ICI partners and suggests 'an agreed statement of shared interests based on new and broader concepts of security, taking into account conventional and unconventional dangers, as well as political, economic, social and cultural issues.'<sup>15</sup> 'Strategic patience' indicates that before NATO offers practical engagement with MD and ICI countries based on its areas of technical expertise, it should attempt to engage in a wider strategic dialogue with these countries, and try to find a common understanding about what shared security concerns may be. Rather

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<sup>15</sup> NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010, cit.



than assuming that NATO has a role to play based on its expertise, the key seems to be finding what roles NATO can play through an iterative process of brain storming. Judging from the new partnership policy's emphasis on offering NATO 'tools' to the MD and ICI, it seems that the new policy has lost sight of the original purpose laid out in the guidance of the Group of Experts.

Megatrends in global security challenges that go beyond issue-based narrow areas of co-operation constitute the basis of a foresight exercise by NATO's most important member, the United States. The US National Intelligence Council's Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds report, published in December 2012, highlights the likelihood of a fragmented international system where the risks of interstate conflicts will increase due to spillover from regional conflicts and competition for resources. The best way to manage this fragmentation is a regionalization of the liberal world order, with rising economies taking greater global responsibilities. To take account of these shifts, institutions that form the core of the post-1945 liberal order, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN) and NATO itself will have to reform or become marginalized.<sup>16</sup> As far as NATO is concerned, adapting to these global shifts involves different and flexible patterns of cooperation, which is reflected in the imperative behind establishing a new NATO partnership policy.

Therefore, while functional and practical cooperation with partners endures, there is also a bigger picture at play behind this new partnership policy. The wider rationale is meeting existing and emerging global security challenges with partners around the globe, and managing regional change with regional partners. The problem with the new partnership policy is how the tactical/functional aspects of cooperation and the overall strategic goals of the partnership policy itself are presented to existing and potential partners. For an existing and potential partner, what is on offer is just too confusing: Is NATO presenting its partners with an offer of various tools ranging from PARP, IPAP to PAP? Or is it trying to engage them in a wider strategic management of global and regional security challenges?

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16 National Intelligence Council (NIC) report Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds, December, 2012 (NIC 2012-001) [http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends\\_2030.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf)

Tackling existing and emerging global security challenges could be undertaken by enhancing existing mechanisms for practical cooperation on specific issue-areas with specific partners, based on the same model as intensified cooperation with Central Asian partners in Afghanistan. However, managing regional change with existing and new partners warrants a different approach. It requires an intensified dialogue on regional perceptions of sustainable stability. And in no way should this dialogue be linked to what NATO can offer from its range of tools to these countries to make them more 'like minded' or 'democratic'. The template of shaping regions through normative power and using institutional leverage to induce political and defense reform worked well in the case of Central and Eastern Europe. But this template is no longer relevant to engaging global and regional partners to manage global security challenges and regional change. A much more open and inclusive approach is needed – one that may not involve practical cooperation but strategic dialogue. The fact that there has been such a minimal input of MD and ICI countries into Operation Active Endeavour is perhaps a telling sign that practical cooperation focusing on a particular issue or a specific mission, in the absence of a broader strategic dialogue on common interests, does not always yield long-term security benefits.

However, despite the need for a wider strategic dialogue, much of the new partnership policy seems to be focused on practical cooperation. For example, the new policy establishes enhanced mechanisms to allow for partner participation in NATO-led missions, under the new 'Political Military Framework (PMF) for Partner Involvement in NATO-led Operations. The framework establishes more effective consultation mechanisms with partners, especially in the pre-crisis assessment phase.<sup>17</sup> While this is a very useful mechanism that will no doubt enhance NATO's crisis management capabilities, it is hard to see the relevance of this new mechanism for the MENA region. This is because it is hard to envisage any NATO-led mission in the region after Libya for the foreseeable future.

### **Lessons after Libya: NATO as a Functional and Normative Organization**

NATO's involvement in Libya is a testament to the Alliance's capability to rapidly respond

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<sup>17</sup> NATO, 'Political Military Framework for Partner Involvement in NATO-led Operations' April 15, 2011, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_04/20110415\\_110415-PMF.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-PMF.pdf).

to a crisis. In this sense, it can be taken as a good example of the efficiency of the 'flexible' mechanisms within the new partnership policy, as NATO undertook the mission in consultation and collaboration with several regional partners. But it was not so much the efficiency of NATO's partnership mechanisms, but the convergence of several other factors which enabled NATO's rapid reaction. NATO's initial involvement consisted of surveillance operations in the Mediterranean. On March 23, 2011, NATO took the decision to enforce the UN mandated no-fly-zone and on March 27 took over the entire military operation in Libya from a coalition led by the US, France and the United Kingdom (UK). Three things enabled the swift consensus within the North Atlantic Council (NAC) for NATO to act rapidly. First, United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1973 gave the legal backing to the operation, which made it far easier for a unanimous decision to be reached by NATO allies. Second, the support of the Arab League gave the necessary regional political support and legitimacy to the operation. Third, even before NATO took over, the mission had already been driven by three NATO allies, who had the capabilities and the political will to intervene. It is very unlikely that all three factors will converge and enable NATO to step in and lead a mission of this sort in the region for the foreseeable future. Besides, despite the rapid response by NATO, consensus within the Alliance was fragile before and throughout the operation. Publicly voiced dissent from Alliance members Germany, France and Turkey regarding reservations over NATO's role in the crisis, followed by reservations by Italy three months into the mission, did not help the public image of Alliance cohesion.<sup>18</sup>

All this notwithstanding, the way NATO managed to engage regional partners can be seen as one of the success stories of the Libya mission. Although the Libya operation, Operation Unified Protector (OUP), came just before NATO adopted the new partnership policy, NATO was nevertheless able to make use of the existing MD and ICI channels to seek support and contributions. NATO also put into use the new 'flexible' format of partnership mechanisms to speed up the process.<sup>19</sup> This is a typical example of how practical engagement with partners

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18 Isabelle Francois, NATO Partnerships and the Arab Spring: Achievements and Perspectives for the 2012 Chicago Summit, Center for Transatlantic Security Studies, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, December 2011, (Transatlantic Perspectives, No. 1) <http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/trans-perspectives/CTSS-TransPers-1.pdf>.

19 Ibidem

comes before the blueprints for partnership frameworks. Two ICI countries, Qatar and the UAE, contributed militarily to Operation Unified Protector.

However, it is the aftermath of the Libya operation that is likely to have a long term impact on how NATO's footprint is seen in the region. Three outcomes of NATO's Libya operation, in particular, will most likely have long-term effects on how NATO is perceived in the region.

i) The first is NATO's non-involvement in Libya after Operation Unified Protector drew to a close. Since the OUP ended in September 2011 NATO has not played any further role in Libya. This is a clear departure from NATO's footprint in the Balkans, where a successful military intervention to bring the conflict to an end was followed by immediate post-conflict security provisions and a role in state-building, acting jointly with other international organizations. As OUP was about to be terminated, there was discussion in the Libya Contact Group that NATO might take over a narrow technical role, focusing only on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities (DDR), while post-conflict reconstruction efforts would be driven under an over-arching UN mission. But there was no mention of a NATO peace-building force to provide security, as in Bosnia and Kosovo. It is hard to see how NATO could play a role in DDR or security sector reform (SSR) when there is no UN authorization, no overarching UN mission and no peace-building force as part of the package to provide a secure environment. The international consensus, fragile at best, during the NATO operation in Libya, severely broke down half way through the operation. Russia, China and South Africa voiced concerns that NATO had overstepped the UN mandate which was just to protect the civilian population, and had gone far enough to tip the conflict in favor of the rebellion to enable regime change. In addition, Russia and China's refusal to become part of the Libya Contact Group also damaged any international consensus that was essential in getting an internationally coordinated post-conflict reconstruction effort in Libya. As the international community was divided, post-conflict Libya was left to its own devices. This prevented NATO from playing any meaningful role. But because NATO had undertaken the military action that had led to the regime change, and because NATO had a legacy as a 'security provider' in post-conflict settings in the Balkans, its non-involvement in post conflict Libya was a clear break with its

post-Cold War track record.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, an increasingly unstable security situation in Libya, which led to the death of the US ambassador on September 11, 2012, does nothing but question whether the NATO operation has indeed been a success.<sup>21</sup> As a worst-case scenario, a failed Libyan state could do serious damage to NATO's agenda in the entire region, especially if the violence were to spill over to neighboring countries like Algeria.

ii) The second outcome which is likely to impact NATO's role in the region is the future of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) operations. This has also a bearing on the international paralysis over the conflict in Syria. The Libya operation is likely to be remembered as an ambivalent and reluctant intervention. One would have thought that with a clear-cut UN Security Council resolution, the support of the Arab League, and the abstentions of both China and Russia in the Security Council, that would not be the case. But here the West was caught between the legacy of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq which discouraged any future regional military intervention, and the inconsistency of 'doing nothing' by ignoring the Responsibility to Protect doctrine. Therefore, from the outset Alliance consensus about the moral impediment for intervention was blurred, in comparison to Bosnia and Kosovo. Secondly, the reluctance of the US to lead the operation and refusal to commit to any ground troops, created an ambiguity not just about the limits and duration of the operation but also the role of NATO in the aftermath of the operation. On top of it, the discomfort over the Libya operation was not just confined to the Alliance. Dissentions from inside the international community followed. In the past, Russian and Chinese objections to intervention were either ambivalent, inconsistent or ignored. Such was the case with the NATO intervention over Kosovo in 1999, which was notoriously carried out without a UN mandate. Yet after the air campaign, Russia had no objections to the establishment of the NATO-led Kosovo force (KFOR) and even participated in it for a while. After Libya, Russia and China have drawn a very clear border line : They will

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20 One of the findings of the British Academy funded project Assessing NATO and EU Conditionality on State Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina was that all three groups to the conflict found NATO's normative role clearer than the EU's because of NATO's ability to stop the war and take charge of security provision in its aftermath. The author was principal investigator of this project. For more on the project see: <http://intbosnia.wordpress.com/> For the report of the Sarajevo workshop which mentions this finding see: [http://intbosnia.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/sarajevo\\_workshop\\_report1.pdf](http://intbosnia.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/sarajevo_workshop_report1.pdf).

21 'Benghazi Attack Throws Libya Gains into Question', IISS Strategic Comments, Vol. 18, Comment 35, October 2012. <http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/past-issues/volume-18-2012/october/benghazi-attack-throws-libya-gains-into-question/>.

not support a humanitarian intervention that leads to regime change. The era of inconsistent objection seems to be over. But it is very hard to envisage a full-fledged operation to halt atrocities that does not lead to regime change, unless the intervention is to have only a temporary effect, potentially fuel a civil war or leave a frozen conflict unresolved. This is why it is very hard to foresee another UNSCR that would endorse a Chapter 7-type military action in the region, or anywhere else for that matter, for the foreseeable future. NATO is unlikely to act without UN authorization. This leaves another bad footprint for NATO in the region if the Syrian conflict deteriorates and even spills over to neighboring countries, and the Alliance, the once known 'security provider' in the Balkans, does nothing to provide security for the Middle East.

iii) The third outcome of the Libyan conflict is the lessons NATO has learned about its own limitations in undertaking such operations. A report compiled at the end of February 2012 by NATO's Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Center concluded that there were serious Alliance shortcomings in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), because NATO countries did not share targeting information effectively with each other. Targeting information was also flawed because of inadequately trained staff at NATO headquarters in Naples. The report added that there was an overreliance on US assets when it came to ISR and air to air refueling. Perhaps more serious was the 'vacuum of responsibility' between a failed Libyan state and NATO operational guidelines which left distress calls by refugees trying to escape from the conflict in the Mediterranean, unanswered. This, according to a Human Rights Watch report, led to civilian casualties. Such unintended consequences have also had an impact in tarnishing NATO's image as an efficient security provider.<sup>22</sup>

If these outcomes of the aftermath of the Libyan intervention have tarnished NATO's image as a security provider, NATO's passivity in the escalating Syrian conflict is more likely to have more serious repercussions. While it is highly unlikely that the impasse in the UNSC will be overcome due to Russia and China's objections, the situation has a further impact on NATO's role in the region because of neighboring Turkey. The insecurity along the border of a NATO

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22 'NATO Sees Flaws in Air Campaign Against Qaddafi' New York Times, April 14, 2012. <http://www.ny-times.com/2012/04/15/world/africa/nato-sees-flaws-in-air-campaign-against-qaddafi.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

ally inevitably concerns the Alliance. The impact of NATO's distance from the region after the Libya operation while attempting to launch ambitious partnerships with MD and ICI countries, is somewhat of a paradox, because the legitimacy of NATO's regional outreach to partners has been based on its track record as a security provider. When the link between NATO's normative outreach and its ability as a security provider is broken, it is hard to see how NATO can establish itself as a legitimate actor in the MENA region. It can no longer rely on the success of its functional roles to legitimize its normative role. For example, NATO will find it hard to exercise its normative role through its functional expertise such as defense reform, defense planning assistance, and training. Nor can it rely on its normative power derived from its successful track record as a military intervention force providing post-conflict stability and security, as it did in the Balkans. NATO has to approach the Middle East and Mediterranean partnerships on the basis of the original recommendations of the Group of Expert's report: "an agreed statement of shared interests based on new and broader concepts of security."

### **Policy Recommendations<sup>23</sup>**

1. NATO should initiate a broader strategic dialogue on common interests and visions for stability before it engages in areas of practical cooperation. It should do so by initiating a strategic dialogue with MD and ICI partners and invite other states such as Saudi Arabia, Oman and Lebanon to join in the process. The strategic dialogue need not be made within an existing partnership framework, like ICI or MD but can be a series of brain storming sessions with wider and flexible participation, allowing for non ICI and MD countries to attend, and the main issue area of discussion should be on management of regional change. Brainstorming with existing and potential partners from the MENA region on strategic priorities linking the dynamics of regional change to global ones can also help identify 'cluster dynamics', as proposed by Reynolds and Bedford in their contribution to this volume.. Therefore the process of identifying strategic priorities can also lead to practical cooperation.

2. NATO should be clear about the agenda of global and regional security challenges to be included in the strategic dialogue with regional partners. Perhaps a reference point could

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<sup>23</sup> I would like to thank all the participants in the workshop for the lively discussion and comments which enabled me to revise and make additions to the policy recommendations presented at the conference.

be some of the trends identified in the US NIC's Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds report, to establish areas of common concern.

3. The presentation of the new partnership policy and the 'flexible' mechanisms for co-operation to existing and potential partners needs to be simplified. The goals of partnerships must be clearly identified. Is it to aid in democratic governance and political reform? To provide security for a stable environment? To provide expertise in defense reform and planning assistance? Or is it to engage in strategic dialogue to reach a common understanding of shared concerns about global security challenges? It may be better to categorize different purposes for different partnership schemes rather than to streamline them.

4. It may be helpful to hold multilateral strategic dialogues between MENA countries and NATO on an issue-based approach, focusing on specific topics such as international terrorism, failed states and energy security.

5. NATO must make it clear that its legitimacy as a party to strategic dialogue on common interests is not linked to its success as a regional security provider. This would be helpful in shaping regional expectations. NATO's track record in the Balkans need not be repeated in the MENA region for NATO to play an active role with partners from the region. NATO can perhaps establish a new legitimacy as a broker of strategic dialogue between various actors, ICI, MD and non partner countries from the region. Understandably, this will evolve with practice.

6. NATO can most probably engage in regional strategic dialogue more effectively if it acts together with other regional powers and institutions. To this end, NATO could add management of regional change and strategic dialogue with partners in the MENA region to the agenda of the NATO-Russia Council. Rather than treating Russia as a separate partner alongside many other partnership frameworks, NATO should engage Russia so that the latter becomes a joint partner in strategic dialogue with the MENA region. This may also help smooth over differences between NATO and Russia towards the region, starting with Syria.

7. NATO should explore the unique role of Turkey as an ally who can influence regional strategic dialogue, similar to the role it plays in the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and



8. NATO should make an effort to unlock the blocked areas of NATO-EU partnership, and also engage the European Union (EU), alongside Russia, as a partner in initiating regional strategic dialogue.

9. While it is certain that NATO holds key expertise in areas such as security sector reform, it is doubtful if a 'bottom up' approach building NATO partnerships with the MENA region on piecemeal practical cooperation will be successful in the absence of a 'top down' approach defining common strategic interests. The 'functionalist' approach of 'bottom up' cooperation worked in post-World War II Europe because there was an overall structure in the allied planning council, Marshall aid, and then the establishment of institutions that provided economic and security cooperation: the European Economic Community (EEC, the forbear of the EU) and NATO. All of these endeavors helped in defining a common vision about the region's future. No such structure exists in the MENA region.

10. NATO should avoid using the template of the 1990s: shaping regions through normative power and using institutional leverage to induce political and defense reform. Any practical issue-based cooperation under the new partnership policy should not be presented under this pretext, especially to potential partners.

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24 Turkey has played an important role as host and facilitator of the Istanbul Process which brings together the 'Heart of Asia' countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan. A similar forum of bringing a diverse array of countries on a regional platform could be beneficial for the MENA region. For more information please see: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/istanbul-process-on-regional-security-and-cooperation-for-a-secure-and-stable-afghanistan.en.mfa>.

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# Prospects for NATO Partnerships

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NATO's partnership mechanisms, specifically the Partnership for Peace programme, have earned their spot in the history of Europe. The EU's recent Nobel Peace Prize notwithstanding, NATO's multifaceted series of partnerships were the principal means by which the Alliance consolidated the grand victory of the Cold War. In doing so, NATO helped create a European continent that is now safe, democratic, and free. But as NATO is not an entity inclined to rest on its laurels, it is time to ask, 'What are the areas of greatest opportunity for the Alliance as its leaders formulate a strategy concerning the future of partnerships?'

Recent remarks made by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen encapsulate the core Alliance challenge of the emerging era: "We cannot deal with today's security challenges from a purely European perspective. What matters is being engaged wherever our security matters. That means here in Europe, across the Euro- Atlantic area, and around the globe...NATO's partnerships play a key part in meeting the security concerns of today and tomorrow."<sup>1</sup> Central to navigating the security challenges of the future are NATO's diverse partnership programmes as agreed to under the Strategic Concept. Specifically, "We are prepared to develop political dialogue and practical cooperation with any nations and relevant organizations across the globe that share our interest in peaceful international relations."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, recent findings in ACT's Strategic Foresight Analysis remind all who are interested in preserving the strength of the Alliance that the globalized nature of emerging

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1 Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO: Delivering Security in the 21st Century, London, 4 July 2012, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_88886.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_88886.htm)

2 NATO. Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, Brussels, 19-20 November 2010. <http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>

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threats will be complex and require more comprehensive relationships with a broad range of actors. But before policymakers make decisions regarding the future of partnerships, they should consider the following six ideas that can bolster NATO means to engage others and address the security challenges of the post-ISAF era: redefine 'partner,' re- think 'distance,' re-marry economics and security, embrace clusters, minimize the commitment-capability gap, and properly assess risk. While none are revolutionary, these ideas can, together, facilitate a needed shift in how NATO thinks about and conducts its relationships with the global security community.

### **Redefine 'Partner' to reflect the reality of today and tomorrow**

Currently, NATO has no overall strategy to engage partners. A partner in NATO parlance is a non-member state that has agreed formally to cooperate with the Alliance, which can be as broad as 'we will fight side-by-side with you in Afghanistan,' to as simple as an accord to share best education and training practices. Yet the last two decades of growth in the loosely defined concept of 'partnerships' has opened the door for NATO to work with nations as far east as Japan, non-state actors ranging from small aid organisations to the United Nations, and from private industry and government agencies. Thus, while NATO's relationships with other, non-traditional actors form the foundation of a Comprehensive Approach — which has a causal relationship with partnerships — the definition of 'partner' needs to be updated and expanded beyond a formal interpretation to reflect the reality of the 21st Century. A working definition ought to be: A partner is an actor, private, public, or international; state, non-state, social crowd, or individual; with which the Alliance cooperates to achieve mutual benefits based on shared risk and gain.

The impetus behind a change in definition is clear: the original mission of partnerships, to prepare states for eventual NATO membership, is no longer the dominant interest of either NATO or its partners. Furthermore, partners—both public and private—are expanding in both type and function, from small countries nestled in Europe; to states well beyond NATO's borders; to non-state actors, social media, and individuals; from public sector to private. And without an evolution in what constitutes a partner, NATO's programmes will lose relevance,

compounding further the percussive effects of budget cuts and reductions in force structure.

**1. Re-conceptualise (& prioritise) ‘distance.’** By limiting the concept of distance to the physical space between NATO and a partner actor, Alliance policymakers underestimate what separates NATO and the entities with which it cooperates. Geography matters, but it is not the whole story. Indeed, according to Robert Kaplan, geography matters because “rather than eliminating the relevance of geography, globalisation is reinforcing it.”<sup>3</sup> The political contours and proximity of the Middle East and North Africa, close neighbours to NATO’s southern members, reinforce this imperative and weigh heavily in NATO’s partnership calculus as events like the Arab Spring unfold on Europe’s doorstep. Engagement with Russia matters because it borders or shares waterways with 12 NATO member states. Yet in an era when an individual can travel to almost any point on earth within 72 hours and roam freely in cyberspace, where ‘spatial adjacency’ is the norm, the scope of NATO’s horizons must expand in kind. For example, NATO’s oft-overlooked Pacific flank provides NATO with an enduring interest and in—and springboard toward—the affairs of the Pacific East Asia region, especially as the economic relationship between the trans-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific regions continues to flourish.

Harvard Business School professor Pankaj Ghemawat defines distance along four dimensions: cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic.<sup>4</sup> Building on ‘strategic proximity’ described in the concept of Smart Defence, NATO contends with a fifth dimension—function. Combined, these categories can help both NATO and partners alike identify areas of cooperation beyond the military domain, as well as raise awareness of elements that limit the full potential of cooperation. Each of them is distinctive; but it is when they are viewed as a whole that matters. Ghemawat is clear about the importance of distance: “managers must always be conscious of distance in all its dimensions.”<sup>5</sup>

NATO should consider these five dimensions when assessing partner suitability and prioritise partnerships with actors that score higher across these five areas. For example, a democratic state with an advanced military and economy, but one that is distant geographically

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3 Robert D. Kaplan, “The Revenge of Geography”, in *Foreign Policy*, vol. 172 (May/June 2009), p. 96-105

4 Pankaj Ghemawat, “Distance still matters”, *Harvard business review*, Vol. 79, No. 8 (2001), p. 137-147

5 Ibid.

to Brussels could be more desirable as a partner than one closer to Brussels physically, but distant culturally, economically, and administratively. As the security environment has become global in scope, so too must the Alliance's perception of what is 'near' and 'far' in the international system. In short, NATO accept that it is regional in character and global in stature.

Admittedly, geographic distance means that it is more difficult for NATO to engage in meaningful cooperation with a country far away from the trans-Atlantic region than it is with an actor next door, even if the state in question occupies a strategically important piece of real estate, e.g., a canal or harbour. But geographic distance entails more than just physical separation. Ghemawat notes, "Other attributes that must be considered include the physical size of the country, average within-country distances to borders, access to waterways and the ocean, and topography. Man-made geographic attributes also must be taken into account, most notably, a country's transportation and communications infrastructures."<sup>6</sup> For example, Japan, South Korea, and Australia are attractive partners for the Alliance because their developed infrastructures help overcome their physical distance from Europe.

Economic distance covers the discrepancy between rich and poor states. Ghemawat notes, "Rich countries, research suggests, engage in relatively more cross-border economic activity relative to their economic size than do their poorer cousins. Most of this activity is with other rich countries, as the positive correlation between per capita GDP and trade flows implies. But poor countries also trade more with rich countries than with other poor ones."<sup>7</sup> Nations with advanced economies are more likely to field advanced militaries, which suggests that NATO should focus on partnership with states that are advanced economically and possess forces with which the Alliance can develop stronger relationships on a multitude of levels. In addition, disparities in economic and military capabilities between members of the Alliance and partners make standardisation and interoperability more difficult to achieve.

Administrative or political distance means that "historical and political associations shared by countries greatly affect trade [interaction] between them."<sup>8</sup> The Alliance engages with partners, some of which have long and turbulent histories with its member states. And given

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6 Ibid., p. 144

7 Ibid., p. 145

8 Ibid., p. 146

the sensitivity associated with military cooperation amongst states, it is important to note that even if partner is close geographically to the trans-Atlantic community, partnership will be limited if it is distant culturally, politically, or administratively. Conversely, NATO's role in the supreme reconciliation of Europe after the Second World War makes it an attractive entity with which other actors can engage to solve similar historical differences.

Cultural distance means that "cultural attributes determine how people interact with one another and with companies and institutions."<sup>9</sup> Differences in religious beliefs, race, social norms, and language are capable of creating distance between states. These principles are the hardest to measure, yet they play a profound role by influencing the preferences of decision-makers. It is vital that officials within the Alliance understand the culture of each of its partners and the broader civilizational forces that shape the substance of the international security domain. For example, NATO's identity is forged by a tapestry of 28 different cultures that share basic values, but even its member states have internal cultural idiosyncrasies that flavour the Alliance indirectly. NATO's strength is its culture of reconciliation and inclusion, whereby member states have not only overcome intense historical grievances, but are still able to disagree on issues without being disagreeable to each other.

And last, functional distance addresses the gap between capabilities of the Alliance and those of a potential partner. Cooperation with states that possess advanced militaries that are interoperable with forces of the Alliance are 'closer' to NATO than a small developing state that does very little strategic analysis, let alone have the means to 'plug and play' with a sophisticated military unit under NATO command. Granted, small nations often possess niche capabilities that are critical for the success of NATO's operations, i.e., human intelligence. Notwithstanding, the Alliance should prioritise partnerships with forces that offer the most functionality and value for resources.

### **Re-marry economics & security**

Not surprisingly, the price of a car in Brussels is determined more by the relationship between Japanese automobile companies and their Portuguese factory workers than by the

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9 Ibid., p. 140



fuel and environmental surcharges applied by the EU at the point of sale. Yet, increasingly, state-owned corporations are serving as proxies for their parent governments in their pursuit of interests. This phenomenon is not new per se, but a return to a historical norm after the Cold War. For centuries, states mixed economic and military tools to further their interests and conduct their statecraft. They were separated functionally after the Second World War — a phenomenon that is perhaps the least understood of the Nuclear Age — as Mutually Assured Destruction rendered economics as a coercive tool of last resort. Yet the 21st Century has brought this intersection of economics and security to the forefront, enabled by a type of mercantilism underpinned by networked societies, integrated markets, and international finance. Thus, the central tenet of international relations in the 21st Century is that the relationship between economics and security is mutually reinforcing. Policymakers in the Alliance must, as a priority, engage thought leaders that specialise in economics to better understand how trade affects security and vice versa to assess the utility and efficacy of future partners, e.g., in the OECD, or think tanks that have expertise in international political economy.

While the 19th Century was shaped by industrialisation and empire, and the 20th Century was defined by big wars and ideologies, at least the first half of the 21st Century is expected to be determined in part by peer-to-peer economic friction and competition. During the Cold War, ideological conflict and arms races shaped the world and its conflicts; burgeoning—and global—macro-economic interdependence was a consequence of security, not an element of it. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, major changes manifested in the international system: a perceived shift from U.S. hegemony toward national pluralism or multi-polarity, the erosion of sovereignty and the impact of weak states, the empowerment of small groups and individuals, and an increasing need to protect the information domain by those actors that stood to benefit most from its proper function.

Thus, a multipolar world is, and will be, shaped by large states that dominate the global economy by innovating, organising, networking, and out-manoeuvring their peers. It is important to note, moreover, that “today, the economic dimension is at least as important as military muscle in shaping the balance of power. That makes for more complicated

international relationships.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, policymakers in the Alliance must consider how NATO will position itself as the world’s balance of power shifts. They can do so by addressing first how the challenges that a multipolar, multi-threat and multi-faceted world presents to the trans-Atlantic community; and, second, how NATO and its partners can solve challenges of an economic-security nature in a manner that benefits the trans-Atlantic community as a whole.

Economics and security relations are now interwoven, both multilaterally and globally. Macroeconomics carries different functions that affect security systems, concerns, threats and mechanisms. Economic-based influence can be a tool to shape the security system for a state actor and its surrounding region, and can be a means to secure access to resources or to leverage political and military interests. In addition, economies are a target for actors that want to pursue interests at different levels, and a point of interest for criminal activities. Economics has a prominent role to play vis-à-vis security strategy as well, which carries risks. When the economies of states collapse or change significantly, the resulting forces constitute a threat to traditional, and proven security mechanisms throughout the international system. Conversely, security affects economics. Unacknowledged and unanswered security threats expose nations and their economies to new and old risks, and the accumulations — and globalisation — of such threats diminishes an entity’s ability to hedge against risk. An actor that tries to secure its economic and commercial viability always has its enduring security in mind. As trade and financial links extend and intensify globally, one country’s or group’s ways, means, and effects to achieve economic viability will invariably affect the security concerns of other actors. In 2010, ACT made these points an important part of the discussion on future security in addressing how to assure access to the Global Commons.<sup>11</sup>

### **Embrace clusters, both conceptually and operationally**

NATO’s position over the past quarter century has shifted, and will continue to do so, from that of a regionally-focussed alliance atop a tightly-aligned security hierarchy to a critical node

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10 David Gordon and Ian Bremmer and David, “Where Commerce and Politics Collide”, The New York Times, 7 October 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/08/opinion/08iht-edbremmer08.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/08/opinion/08iht-edbremmer08.html?_r=0)

11 Maj. Gen. Mark Barrett, Dick Bedford, Elizabeth Skinner, Eva Vergles, “Assured Access to the Global Commons”, Supreme Allied Command Transformation, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Norfolk, Virginia USA, April 2011

in a loosely connected network that is global in scope. Clusters — functional and geographic concentrations of actors that derive significant benefit from cooperating with one another in close proximity — were first described in a NATO context by the Secretary General in 2012 and are now being embraced by many as a more effective concept than conventional frameworks. Two emerging examples close to NATO are NORDEFCO and Ballistic Missile Defence, which are geographic and functional, respectively.

As NATO has enlarged over the past 25 years, it grew more cumbersome and, as a result, may no longer offer the best or only solution to a specific security challenge. However, as an integrator, thought leader, and custodian of standards for education and training, and ‘best practices,’ where the whole exceeds the sum of its parts, it remains first in class. As NATO continues the difficult task of ‘leaning out’ its command and force structures to meet the needs of its member nations, it has difficult choices to make over the near to mid-term horizon. One of the paramount decisions will be to resist the temptation to hollow its force structure in a post-ISAF world. One way to augment capabilities is through the power of clusters. Using Smart Defence and the Connected Forces Initiative as models, NATO should ensure that capabilities developed within the Alliance are not only ‘born joint,’ but are ‘partner and cluster-friendly’ as well.

It is important not to forget the obvious; NATO partnership has evolved since the original Partnership for Peace programme was introduced in 1994. At its inception, partners served as a means to extend a consolidated state of peace to the edges of the European continent. Partners were consumers of initiatives focussed on defence reform and later Security Sector Reform, even before the practice was named as such. Over time, and through intense education and reform, partners that were once security consumers became security producers during times of crisis. By the early 2000s, several partners had become critical operational enablers that were clusters before the term was described in a security context. From the former Yugoslavia to Libya, from Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa, clusters of partners and members continue to play a pronounced role in NATO operations. Less obvious, however, is the shift in how partners and NATO members relate to each other. What was once a treaty-based enterprise between the Alliance and a state has evolved out of necessity beyond formal relationships to

include informal arrangements with a multitude of actors, both state and non-state, that are geographically and functionally-based.

Clusters are, according to Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter, “critical masses—in one place—of unusual competitive success in particular fields.”<sup>12</sup> They are a reaction to the explosive proliferation of human ingenuity brought about by the use of technology and the phenomenon of globalisation. Clusters pull a wide range of diverse actors into a close proximity with one another, usually by way of training, information exchange, or some other means of support.<sup>13</sup> As a result, clusters are re-positioning the Alliance from sitting atop an international military hierarchy, to becoming a central hub in a flattened security architecture comprised of geographic and functional nodes. Critically, the concept of clusters is descriptive, not prescriptive. This phenomenon does not diminish the importance of NATO in international security; however, it is critical that members and partners alike understand the implications of a clustered trans-Atlantic community in a globalised security environment.

In terms of intelligence sharing, clusters give the Alliance “access to specialised information,” notably intelligence and technical expertise.<sup>14</sup> One example of how partners bolster situational awareness through clusters is crisis mapping, a crowd-sourced phenomenon whereby volunteers from around the world connect via the internet to populate maps for a specific purpose. During the Tohoku earthquake in Japan in March 2011, crisis mappers based in Boston, Massachusetts initiated a crisis map to connect victims and rescuers, essentially creating a ‘poor man’s Common Operational Picture.’ Victims and rescuers were connected in spite of official mechanisms, not because of them. By enlisting the support of crisis mapping experts spread around the world, and Japanese-speaking volunteers, the Tohoku crisis map exploded in popularity within days; both rescuers and victims contributed to the development of a highly detailed map of the disaster that quickly became the official operational picture used by the Japanese government and embassies based in Tokyo. Crisis mapping is a taste of things to come for the Alliance: multiple disparate actors use open and inexpensive technologies to link

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12 Michael Porter, “Clusters and the New Economics of Competition”, Harvard Business Review, Vol. 76, no.6 (1998), p. 78

13 Ibid., p. 91

14 Ibid., p. 81

together globally and achieve common goals, with each actor contributing to a network that is easy to join and sustain, gains legitimacy quickly, and, most importantly, renders traditional capabilities—NATO's strong point—obsolete.

In what is generally described as 'complementarities,' clusters enable "a host of linkages among members (that) results in a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts."<sup>15</sup> For example, the success of a major theme park enables the hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls to be independently successful, but still linked. Members of the Alliance have partnership mechanisms that offer similar complementarities. One such example is the trilateral cluster between Australia, Japan, and the United States. Every year, the Pacific Air Mobility Seminar brings together representatives from each of the three aforementioned countries to discuss greater air and joint cooperation. The benefit of the exchange is multi-layered. Japan—with a predominantly static armed force—learns how to make its military more joint and deployable, while the U.S., and Australia exercise and manage a logistical deployment and re-supply effort that covers nearly half the globe. With the support of the United States, Australia and Japan are able to find ways to cooperate bi-laterally. And each country gains operational trust with the other.

The same can be said for NATO's Strategic Airlift Command that is based in Papa, Hungary. There, members of the Alliance and partners work together to fund and operate four C-17 military aircraft that provide strategic lift capabilities to nations that have determined unilateral strategic airlift capabilities to be prohibitively expensive.

Another example is NORDEFCO, an initiative comprised of five Nordic states to increase collaboration along five strands of work: Strategic Development, Capabilities, Human Resources & Education, Training & Exercises, and Operations.<sup>16</sup> While NORDEFCO cannot provide its members the Article V guarantee or ease of access to other members of the Alliance, it gives its members capabilities that were at one time within the exclusive domain of NATO. In short, NATO no longer has a monopoly on certain elements of defence and security administration.

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15 Ibid.

16 <http://www.nordefco.org/areas-of-c/>

This exponential increase in both the availability and quality of information is a discontinuity that has created new industries — even new economies — while destroying others. As Joseph Schumpeter popularised in 1942, creative destruction (“Schöpferische Zerstörung”) is a hallmark of market economies as new technologies rush to replace antiquated tools and methods. That same information revolution has, over the past decade, eroded several advantages that NATO once enjoyed, e.g., information control and C4ISR dominance. No longer is it unimaginable to consider European defence without an enduring American presence, or European defence agencies that move their headquarters to the Asia-Pacific region—where an increasing number of their clients are located. NATO nations, save a select few, are no longer developing new capabilities at a rate and amount to justify retention of the level of suppliers and experts it once had. These shifts contribute to the growing sense among both partners and members that the Alliance needs to re-think its ends, ways, and means if it is to endure. In this dense and interdependent environment, NATO must adapt its institutional culture to overcome and accept clusters of nations, both regional and functional, that help the Alliance further its goal of providing defence and security to 12 percent of the world’s population and over 50 percent of the world’s economic output.<sup>17</sup>

Flexible Formats are an analogous framework that member states agreed to at Lisbon in 2012. The difference, however, centres on ownership. In short, NATO assumes responsibility for the maintenance of Flexible Formats (even nominally so), whereas clusters are not managed per se, but dependent on continuous interactions between members at multiple levels. Both Flexible Formats and clusters have three fundamental attributes that can benefit the trans-Atlantic community. They bolster the productivity of participant actors, set the pace and direction of innovation, and stimulate the formation of new connections. Porters notes, “A cluster allows each member to benefit as if it had greater scale or as if it had joined with others formally—without requiring it to sacrifice its flexibility.”<sup>18</sup> The problem for the Alliance, however, is that clusters represent a type of partnership that is out of NATO’s formal structure and thus beyond its full control. For the leadership of an organisation with the ultimate responsibility

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17 Martin Erdmann, “NATO: What’s in it for the United States”, The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, 13 February 2013, <http://www.fletcherforum.org/2013/02/13/erdmann/>

18 Porter, p. 80

to protect a combined population of over 900 million people, the prospect of relinquishing even partial control of security to a series of diffuse networks comes across as unthinkable. Even so, it is important to underscore the potential gains in innovation and cost savings that clusters and Flexible Frameworks offer NATO and partners alike.

### **Minimise the commitment-capability gap**

Members of the Alliance are reducing their defence budgets, mostly in response to the lingering effects of the five year economic contraction in Europe and North America, but also due to the impending drawdown in Afghanistan. It is also clear that after a decade of conflict, domestic programmes will have priority. NATO, because of its success in the past, must always contend with the pressure of being the central actor expected to deal effectively with threats to the stability of Europe, e.g., in North Africa and Southwest Asia. ISAF has proven that a diverse set of partners using common standards can bring utility, innovation, and greater capability when properly organised and led. NATO, however, needs to harness better that utility; making the Connected Forces Initiative available to all partners would be a big first step. Policymakers need to bring trusted partners deeper into planning and decision making processes with the expectation that partners will partially offset losses in capabilities and provide additional benefits across the spectrum, from a liaison office in the Asia-Pacific region or expertise in international banking systems, to conceptual thinking on countering hybrid threats. These clusters of capabilities, however, must be part of an integrated plan, not just makeshift additions to existing systems.

Georgetown University professor Michael Mazarr observes of the U.S., that “twenty years of warnings will finally come true over the next five to ten years, unless we adjust much more fundamentally than [governments] have been willing to do so far.”<sup>19</sup> Yet Mazarr’s point is applicable to the rest of the trans-Atlantic community. One of the fundamental adjustments critical to the future success of the Alliance is partnership. NATO and partners have operated together in complex, dangerous missions for 20 years, culminating with today’s ISAF. This period of intense partnership, however, is ending. Interoperability and lessons paid for in

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Mazarr, “The Risks of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2012), p. 8

blood and treasure are nearly impossible to achieve through routine training and exercises that only simulate those experiences.

As Mazarr points out, five shifts that must be addressed by the international system: “disappearing finances, rising alternative power centres, declining U.S. military predominance, a lack of efficacy of key non-military instruments of power, and reduced domestic patience for global adventures.”<sup>20</sup> One way to mitigate a portion of these risks is to accept and promote a larger role for partners. While recognising the desire to engage with broad range of actors, the Alliance cannot afford to engage with partners that have little to offer diplomatically, militarily, or philosophically. If done correctly, however, partnership can help offset the risks associated with the five shifts mentioned above.

Failure to re-formulate NATO’s partnership mechanisms can manifest in several areas. For example, NATO’s level of ambition has remained fairly consistent over the past two decades, but during that same period, its capabilities and force levels have diminished by 50 percent. Despite Smart Defence and programmes like the Connected Forces Initiative, this gap will continue to grow in the years to come. The wider the chasm between ambition and capability, the less credible NATO will be seen in the eyes of its friends, neutrals, and enemies. The Alliance’s diplomatic and military power has decreased in real and relative terms since the end of the Cold War and will accelerate as national budgets are cut and as other actors in the international system increase their defence spending. Potential partners will be less inclined to work alongside a diminished NATO, especially as the U.S. pivots to the Asia-Pacific region and non-traditional alternatives emerge, like NORDEFECO or the Visegrád 4 Group.

As members of the Alliance withdraw from Afghanistan, political elites across the Alliance will demand a second Peace Dividend. But less military spending translates into fewer capabilities and greater operational risk. Populations within Alliance member states will continue to demand that actions be taken in moments of crisis, but their militaries will have fewer means — and less flexibility — at their disposal. Moreover, fewer resources will translate into a greater need for partners and their capabilities, but unfortunately there will be fewer places where partners can connect. Reductions in defence capabilities will contribute

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20 Ibid., p. 10



to a paradoxical and vicious cycle that will both intensify the Alliance's need for partnerships and degrade its capacity to nurture them.

### **Assess Risk Properly**

In 2012, scholars Robert S. Kaplan and Anette Mikes published an article that addressed risk assessment, offering a new framework to identify, assess, and hedge against risk. Kaplan and Mikes define three types of risk.<sup>21</sup> First, there are preventable risks, which are “internal risks, arising from within the organisation, that are controllable and ought to be eliminated or avoided.”<sup>22</sup> These risks are hedged by standard operating procedures, codes of conduct, and doctrine. These are important because in all but exceptional circumstances, i.e., a soldier who disregards orders and rescues comrades in a fire fight, this type of risk offers no strategic benefit. Indeed, this sort of risk mitigation — read: interoperability in the form of techniques, training, and procedures — is an attribute that is coveted by partners of all kinds and from all corners of the globe. NATO mitigates preventable risks through training and doctrine, navigates strategy risks through increased awareness and education, and contends with external threats by detecting them early and developing counter-strategies. Risk assessment in NATO is often a secondary consideration and frequently juxtaposed at the last minute in a way that misses the mark. It is mostly ad hoc, too compartmentalised, and lacks a complementary strategy to frame and prioritise risk. Furthermore, partners need to be at the core of the Alliance's risk assessment mechanisms, not the periphery. One way to integrate them is through a multi-disciplinary risk assessment office staffed by NATO officials and representatives supplanted by a wide range of partners.

As ISAF winds down, however, NATO's relationships with partners will either atrophy or evolve to become ‘pathfinders’ for the Alliance: entities that help NATO as it contends with both threats and opportunities from regions beyond its periphery and issues beyond its traditional areas of expertise. At the operational level, the Alliance enjoys a series of tools that help identify and reduce the level of risk. From lessons learned processes to war-gaming, and training and exercises, NATO dedicates significant resources in support of activities that both

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21 Robert S. Kaplan and Anette Mikes, “Managing Risks: A New Framework”, Harvard Business Review, Vol. 90, No. 6, (2012), p. 48-60

22 Ibid., p. 52

bolster efficiency and reduce the risk of failure. Excluding the early days of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, today's assessment, vis-à-vis NATO partnership, equates to 'more partners means less risk.' Granted, more partners expose the Alliance to different types of risks, ones that are more manageable. According to this mindset, NATO's risk profile is lower by having an unruly partnership network with a broad range of actors than a small, exclusive club that leaves several potential partners shut out of the trans-Atlantic community. This assumption has led to a cumbersome and sometimes flawed process where all partners are treated as equals.

There are several reasons why NATO's inability to assess risk misses the mark. First, risk assessment in the Alliance is compartmentalised. Roughly, ACT examines future risks — both political and military. ACO covers operational risks, while NATO HQ attempts to foster policy across a range of disparate functions: defence planning, investment, and political policy. In turn, each organisation compartmentalises risk into smaller segments to ensure branches at the bottom of the respective organisation can handle them. While this works in a military sense, such a process is incapable of handling grand strategic shifts, like the re-emergence of the Asia Pacific region — a shift so substantive that no one Command, HQ, or nation is able to address the problem completely. Instead, member states contend with major issues in their capitals. This leads to a bottom-up strategy in the North Atlantic Council that makes consensus-building difficult, and an Alliance left on the periphery of significant international security debates. And lacking a core strategy, NATO senior officers are reticent to address security concerns that extend beyond the military domain. Instead, they provide best military advice that covers broad security questions, which in turn leave senior civilian leaders with an incomplete picture concerning risks, gain, and loss that one strategy might pose over the other. Clearly, NATO needs a better framework for managing risk, especially as it pertains to partners and the provision of comprehensive military advice.

Yet preventable risk mitigation has its limits when used as a means of broadening and deepening partnerships. NATO's library of rules and best practices is based on members who share the same operating philosophy and culture. Outside that common context, room for misinterpretation grows. The focus on mitigating preventable risks with partners,

therefore, “is best managed through active prevention: monitoring operational processes and guiding people’s behaviours and decisions toward desired norms.”<sup>23</sup> To be blunt, however, preventative risk mitigation only works with actors that understand the risks in the first place. History shows that changing long-held cultural understanding of risk and reward is a matter of education — not training. Change of this nature is measured in decades, not years.

Second, NATO contends with risks based on strategy. On the surface, this type of risk is self-evident; the Alliance assumes risks by undertaking operations in Libya and Afghanistan, or by not taking action in places like Egypt or Syria. Risks of strategy are sometimes desirable because, if navigated wisely, they offer the Alliance potential strategic gain. Engaging in defence reform with former Warsaw Pact countries enabled NATO to expand its area of responsibility — and the democratic principles upon which it was founded — to the eastern edge of the European continent, without a shot fired. Yet expansion was fraught with risk, mostly over how Russia would react. In an example well outside the Euro-Atlantic area, partnership with Australia in Afghanistan has paid dividends in- theatre by offsetting the risk to forces of the Alliance while providing Australia gains in interoperability, training, and operational command and control.

While the Alliance has demonstrated agility when confronting risks in strategy in the past, it now must identify the risks that a broader range of partners, many astride the North Atlantic region, bring. Understanding contemporary risk and the context within which it appears, is nowhere near what it was in two decades past. NATO could take bold action in Europe because it understood how Russia and its former satellite states would react. The same cannot be said for NATO’s awareness of partners beyond its geographic borders, notably the Asia-Pacific region, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Despite perceived insufficient political will or intent to examine risks that emanate from beyond NATO’s borders, the Alliance’s risk management systems designed for mitigating risk based on strategy must focus on reducing “the probability that the assumed risks actually materialise and to improve the [organisation’s] ability to manage or contain [those] risk events should they occur.”<sup>24</sup> Avoiding certain parts of the world because the Alliance does not understand the strategic significance of such a region

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23 Ibid., p. 53

24 Ibid.

— and/or simply wants to avoid the region — exposes NATO to a host of other, equally significant, risks. In short, delayed reaction due to an inability to act is a risk multiplier, not a hedge.

Third, the Alliance faces external risks from outside the Alliance and “beyond its influence or control.”<sup>25</sup> The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989; implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991; terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States (that led to ISAF) and ongoing attacks in Turkey along its border with Syria; and the destabilising effects of the Arab Spring constitute external risks that affect the Alliance. Adding to those risks is the fact that defence spending in other parts of the world, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, outpaces NATO for the first time in the history of the Alliance. The key to mitigating external risk is to detect it early and develop counter-strategies that mitigate impact. Identifying external risks highlights the need for changing how the Alliance trains its leaders. According to Kaplan and Mikes, “extensive behavioural and organisational research has shown that individuals have strong cognitive biases that discourage them from thinking about and discussing risk until it’s too late.”<sup>26</sup> Political leaders in NATO need to foster and support military commanders who balance risk against reward as they struggle to formulate best military advice.

Clearly, the Alliance’s varied programmes that put partnerships front and centre helped consolidate the grand victory of peace after the Cold War. In Afghanistan, partnerships evolved to become a force multiplier that also increased the legitimacy of NATO’s operations. Partners constitute an important part of ISAF, as partners are working alongside the Alliance not only in the crucible of war, but also providing the capacity to deliver aid and foster development. As ISAF winds down, however, NATO’s relationships with partners will either atrophy or evolve. Central to that eventuality will be NATO’s ability to contend with both threats and opportunities from regions beyond its periphery and issues that stretch its expertise and capacity to act.

Where the Alliance once had a monopoly in Europe on securing the populations, territories, and forces of its member nations, NATO now must interact with a mix of actors — state, non-

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

state, social crowds, and individuals — that operate across the Global Commons — sea, air, space, cyber, and human — to achieve its goals. The importance of this cannot be over-stated; while threats to the security of the Alliance were, at one time, limited to the military sphere, these threats have evolved and now originate from all parts of civilisation and from all corners of the globe.

Viewed in this context, the security domain by nature is a crowded marketplace of actors that specialise in parts, not the whole. It is à la carte security without a headwaiter. The Alliance has a storied past of being the consummate superintendent, but as past is not prologue, there is no guarantee that NATO will fill that role in the future.

The path NATO chooses for partnerships is critical; they are, and will remain, fundamental to the Alliance. NATO's relationship with partners will determine whether the security domain evolves into a community of networked clusters with NATO playing a key role as conductor and integrator, or devolves into a fragmented free- for-all with NATO lurching from crisis to crisis.



# Report on Working Group III

## NATO's Partnerships in North Africa and the Middle East

Emiliano Alessandri\*

### Summary

Working Group 3 (WG3) assessed the state of NATO's partnerships in the MENA region and the Gulf and concluded that there is need for greater and deeper NATO engagement with Southern partners in the Arab world. Opportunities and challenges that have emerged in the post-Arab uprisings context, and consolidating strategic orientations within the Alliance – such as investing in 'cooperative security' to address expanded security requirements in a more cost-efficient and politically viable way – all seem to point in the direction of further development of existing partnerships. These developments also seem to call for the establishment of new

agreements with countries that are currently not part of NATO's formal partnership structures, such as Saudi Arabia and post-Qaddafi Libya.

### Challenges

Views varied significantly among WG3 attendees, however, as to how conceptualize NATO's southern outreach and evaluate the potential and limits of current relationships. Participants engaged in a very lively discussion on how to update and reform partnerships – an exchange that brought to the surface important differences among European and American perspectives on the rationale and scope of new partnerships. It also high-

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lighted the existence of somewhat diverging views about ultimate goals of NATO's future cooperation with non-members, some seeing partners as to be increasingly involved in planning and decision-making, while others sticking to more traditional views of partners as beneficiaries of or mere contributors to NATO-designed policies. Some of these differences in approach and focus were latent in the two papers which were presented at the beginning of the workshop, offering the basis for discussion

### **A Possible 'Periodization'**

The first paper-giver, Kent University scholar Gulnür Aybet ('The Four Stages of NATO's Partnership Frameworks'), provided an historical perspective on NATO engagement with non-members, identifying four 'stages' of NATO partnerships since the fall of the Berlin Wall: a) post-Cold War partnerships aimed at 'radiating' stability in the post-Communist space; b) partnerships from the mid-1990s onwards focused on operational cooperation with European and non-European partners in the context of NATO missions in Bosnia and Kosovo; c) post-9/11 partnerships used to buttress NATO 'collective defense' principle as redefined by threats

emanating from outside the territory of Europe, like in Afghanistan; d) the current period, marked by important developments within the Alliance having an impact on partnerships (the adoption of a new Strategic Concept in 2010, the closing of the mission in Afghanistan) and sweeping external developments in Europe's neighboring regions, most notably the MENA.

### **Normative Ambitions and Security Goals**

Aybet argued that, historically, NATO has mixed different goals when pursuing partnerships: broad normative ambitions and more specific security-oriented objectives. Normative ambitions were embodied in initiatives such as the Partnership for Peace (PfP), launched in 1994, which aimed at enlarging the Western-led liberal order to former Soviet bloc countries (some of which later became full NATO members). In this context, NATO has been both a catalyst and instrument for peace, security sector reform, and democratic development in post-Cold War Europe. Security-oriented objectives were in the mix of NATO partnership objectives from the beginning, but became paramount especially in the post-9/11 context, when Atlantic allies expanded on their existing partnerships (or

created new ones) with select non-members, including in the MENA region and the Gulf, in search for support to shared security priorities, such as the fight against international terrorism and the anti-proliferation agenda.

Although it was launched in the early 1990s as a southern complement to faster-developing and wider-ranging partnerships with Eastern European countries, NATO's 'Mediterranean Dialogue' (MD) clearly focused from the start on region-specific security-oriented objectives. The ambition to expand the Western liberal order to the Southern Mediterranean was modest and mainly pursued indirectly through support to security sector reform and the socialization of local security elites in MD partner countries.<sup>1</sup> After 9/11, the MD was revamped and Mediterranean partnerships evolved to include an expanded menu of cooperation options, with security, intelligence, and military cooperation – including involvement in NATO-led missions such as the one in Afghanistan – becoming more prominent. Launched in 2004 with strong support from the Turkish government, the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), open to member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has not promoted

any major normative objectives, its rationale resting mainly if not exclusively with convergent security priorities between NATO members and Gulf states, such as counter-terrorism and Iran's nuclear ambitions.<sup>2</sup>

### **Limits of Southern Partnerships So Far**

Aybet's paper argued that MD and ICI initiatives proved overall useful to the Alliance but were nonetheless deficient in several respects. Among other things, NATO hardly paid attention to MD and ICI partners' expectations and demands, focusing instead on communicating the Alliance's goals to non-members and taking advantage of their capabilities for NATO-designed and NATO-led activities. For a combination of historical and political reasons, Southern partners from both the MD and ICI have for their part showed only limited interest in cooperation with NATO. For instance, only two MD countries – Morocco and Israel – have actively participated in Operation Active Endeavour – NATO's Article 5 anti-terrorism maritime security mission in the Mediterranean basin launched in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Saudi Arabia and Oman have so

<sup>1</sup> The NATO MD members are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

<sup>2</sup> NATO ICI members are Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia and Oman have so far declined to participate.



far refused to enter partnership agreements with NATO, prioritizing instead bilateral relations with the US.

### **No Clear Direction**

The paper concluded with a skeptical view of the most recent evolution of NATO partnerships in the post-Arab uprisings context. Relevant NATO documents advocate for a deepening of partnerships as well as for greater 'efficiency' and 'flexibility'.<sup>3</sup> It remains unclear, however, what the rationale and the drivers behind the proposed evolution are: an attempt to support democratization in the region through greater NATO involvement, narrower security-oriented goals as redefined by the more fluid regional setting, or a mix of the two.

The paper also touched upon NATO's Libya mission (Operation Unified Protector), which was a first for NATO's military engagement in the North African region and benefited from the participation of Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The paper argued that the mission broke with NATO post-Cold War track record (in

the Balkans, but also in Afghanistan) in that it was not followed by NATO's involvement in post-conflict stabilization efforts. This has potentially negatively affected regional views of the Alliance, especially as regards its credibility as a security provider in the broader Mediterranean area.

### **Putting Strategic Interests First**

Among policy recommendations, the paper included anchoring the development of Southern partnerships to the launch of a new 'strategic dialogue' which NATO should sponsor among regional stakeholders. This dialogue could be developed irrespective of NATO's track record so far and potential future role as a regional security provider (that is, beyond the mixed Libya legacy). The dialogue's aims would be to clarify respective interests and priorities, especially by soliciting interest from newly elected governments in Arab transition countries. The paper argued that the initiative could benefit from the involvement of extra-regional NATO partners, notably Russia. The larger goal would be to found the evolving relationship between NATO and Arab countries on 'an agreed statement of shared interests based on new and broader concepts of security' – as pro-

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3 'Active Engagement in Cooperative Security: a More Efficient and Flexible Partnership Policy', Berlin, 15 April 2011, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_04/20110415\\_110415-Partnership-Policy.pdfv](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-Partnership-Policy.pdfv)

posed by the Group of Experts, led by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, tasked with providing guidance to the drafting of the 2010 Strategic Concept.<sup>4</sup>

### **A Clusters-based Alternative?**

Strategic Partnership Group Allied Command Transformation analysts Jeffrey Reynolds and Dick Bedford, the other WG paper-givers, ('Prospects for NATO Partnership') chose a different approach. Rather than delving into the historical evolution of partnerships, they focused exclusively on how to re-conceptualize and reform partnership mechanisms. The central argument was that NATO's ongoing struggle for relevance will largely depend on the Alliance's ability to build new types of partnerships, mainly by applying the economic concept of 'clusters' to their development. Quoting extensively the work of Harvard Business Scholar Michael Porter, clusters were defined as 'critical masses – in one place – of a global economy of unusual competitive success in particular fields'. The paper showed how the concept could be applied to the security domain, concluding that NATO, due to its growing en-

gagement with other international organizations, states, but also non-state actors, from private sector to civil society, is already itself a cluster from a 'systemic point of view'. This means that the Alliance can be seen less and less as the head of an 'international military hierarchy' and more and more as 'a central hub in a diffuse security network comprised of effective regional hubs'.

Providing concrete examples of existing clusters such as the Nordic Defense Cooperation initiative and NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense program – both of which see the involvement of partners alongside NATO members – the paper further argued that both geographically and functionally clusters are blurring divides between members and non-members while creating new opportunities for the Alliance. Among other things, clusters are credited with enabling new linkages among participants resulting in a 'whole greater than the sum of the parts'. Clusters dynamics, for instance, are said to improve access to specialized information, facilitate communication with institutions, and create incentives for innovation that would not be available from within NATO.

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4 'NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Change', 17 May 2010, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2010\\_05/20100517\\_100517\\_expertsreport.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2010_05/20100517_100517_expertsreport.pdf)

### **Clusters as a Make It or Break It?**

The paper concluded with the warning that if NATO continued to conceptualize and develop partnerships the way it has done so far without understanding that clusters are already a reality and provide a unique opportunity for the Alliance's much-needed renewal, then NATO may in fact face decline as an institution and a strategic alliance. The risk is high that by opposing or neglecting the development of clusters which are currently out of NATO's formal structures – and thus beyond the Alliance's full control – NATO will fundamentally remain a highly hierarchical, compartmentalized, change-averse institution narrowly focused on military challenges in a strictly regional context.

The understanding of how clusters already work in NATO would on the contrary help NATO address a lot of disparate challenges, from moving beyond a notion of risk defined in strictly military terms to incorporate larger concerns such as strategic shifts for which the Alliance is currently unprepared (such as the emerging multipolarity and the rise of the Asia-Pacific region). Cluster-modeled partnerships would also arguably help NATO develop a more global approach to the Alliance's security requirements, by in-

corporating notions of 'distance' that are not exclusively geographical, but also economic, institutional-administrative and cultural. The paper argued that geographical distance still matter in the increasingly global context of international security. But cultural and administrative differences may in some cases matter more than geography. The paper further argued that more flexible and numerous cluster-type partnerships could highlight the role that NATO partners may play in securing the Alliance's 'strategic solvency', through their fuller inclusion in the burden-sharing equation.

### **Partnerships as Identity or as Opportunity?**

Participants agreed that the two papers had clear elements of difference albeit sharing the belief that NATO partnership in the MENA region and the Gulf should be further cultivated. Some participants thought that the two papers reflected 'cultural' differences between the American and European policy communities involved in NATO issues – which some summarized as Europeans seeing partnerships as a discussion on identity while Americans looking at them in terms of opportunity. Aybet focused on the new regional context in the Arab world and addressed the issue of institutional change in

that setting. Her paper also emphasized the alleged 'regionalization' of the international order, and the need for NATO to fully take this ongoing development into account when promoting its southern engagement. Reynolds and Bedford used the analysis of NATO's engagement with Arab countries to indeed make a larger point about partnerships in general, with a view to contributing to the long-standing debate on NATO's future.

### **The Need to Differentiate and Define**

European participants tended to caution against stretching and expanding too much the understanding of existing partnerships. Some underlined that all partners are different and that the vision of flexible, variable clusters could clash against the reality of rigidities and deep-seated rivalries even among partners involved in the same NATO initiatives. Difficulties experienced in the multilateral dimension of the MD were mentioned in this context. Competition for limited resources and the quest for a privileged bilateral relationship with NATO were also mentioned as potential obstacles to a clusters approach. Other participants expressed skepticism about the very concept of clusters, not-

ing that it is still ill-defined when it comes to the security domain and may in any case be too broad to be successfully operationalized. It was for instance argued that Reynolds and Bedford could not clearly explain in what elements clusters differ from more traditional 'networks'.

Others accepted the notion of clusters as an intellectually stimulating one, but also noted that security clusters could lead to path-dependency and resiliency problems that are common in more traditional partnership structures.

### **Underlying Security Approaches**

When trying to explain the rationale behind the idea of clusters, some participants noted that what seems to separate American and European views of NATO is at the bottom a definition of security which remains global for the US and mainly regional for European countries. In this context, it was noted that by blurring divides between members and non-members and by suggesting to move beyond regionalism, the clusters approach to NATO partnership would in a way re-propose the vision of a 'Global NATO' which Europeans already overwhelmingly rejected when it

was first proposed in the 2000s. Some noted, however, that by shifting the discussion from potential new members to partnerships Europeans could this time express fewer reservations about the concept as its operationalization would not risk making their relationship with the US less exclusive. In any event, some pointed out that without a new understanding and a renewed commitment to the Atlantic core, there cannot be a role for NATO as a global actor.

The emphasis put by Aybet's paper on the need for a political dialogue preceding partnership development spurred a lively discussion on the right sequencing in NATO's outreach effort. Several participants underlined that 'practical cooperation' has historically helped build confidence between NATO and partner countries in the Arab world. By proving that the Alliance can help with practical goals such as modernization of armed forces, security sector reform, intelligence-sharing and other operational projects, the Alliance was able to stimulate an interest in cooperation with NATO that would not have been there otherwise, given the caution and wariness that still surround Arab attitudes towards Western security institutions. Even lower-key

projects such as exchange and training programs proved very useful as ice-breakers and catalysts for deeper engagement.

### **Principles and Interests**

Indeed, it was underlined that contacts among security elites which were developed in the context of 'practical cooperation' projects ultimately proved useful in opening critical political channels when the Alliance decided to take on high-profile military tasks in the region, including most recently the NATO-led Libya mission. Most participants agreed that contacts with regional elites in MENA countries were instrumental for putting in place the necessary favorable international conditions for NATO's intervention. Some rebutted, however, that without an agreement between NATO members and partners on basic political principles and without a frank exchange on common strategic priorities in the new context created by the great Arab uprising, practical cooperation will never be able to deliver beyond limited objectives. Aybet clarified that strategic dialogue should not necessarily be about norms but could be focused on shared interests.

More ambitious objectives, however,

would include developing common approaches to democratization, or tackling long-standing regional issues such as the Arab-Israeli peace process, which have proved to be highly divisive even within NATO itself. Participants seemed to agree that reform movements in the region may be interested in new approaches to regional security, providing the room for a new dialogue based on principles and values. But it was also recognized that the picture remains highly mixed and new elites in respective contexts have so far failed to clearly outline their new foreign policy orientations, sometimes actually raising fears among Atlantic allies that they may pursue 'revisionist' agendas. Others pointed out that even the West is fundamentally undecided about what the new priorities should be and how to best implement a more 'value-driven' approach to regional security issues. Multilateral strategic dialogues between NATO and regional partners would risk exposing Western dilemmas (for instance about whether to support democratic reform in the Gulf region, where NATO's authoritarian partners remain status-quo oriented), thus complicating instead of helping Western strategy. In any case, some pointed out that in

this and other regional settings NATO could find inconvenient to make its priorities fully explicit as this would incur the risk of stirring rivalries or causing misgivings among NATO partners.

### **A Club Too Small?**

It was also noted that in order to be meaningful, a new strategic dialogue would have to include other actors whose role and presence are expanding in the region, such as China, Brazil, and Russia. It was recognized, however, that these actors would be reluctant to participate in NATO-led initiatives. Furthermore, it could be unadvisable for NATO to share views with countries that are sometimes seen as international competitors. Russia, for instance, has been unhelpful in the Syrian context (much as China has) and seems to be pursuing a Middle East agenda that differs from the West's. A broad consensus was found in the idea of selective NATO-led multilateral strategic dialogues with individual existing partners on specific topics. One such topic could continue to be international terrorism; a new topic could be approaches and responses to the failing or failed states in the region. Energy security was also mentioned, especially in light of the

rapid developments that are taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean gas market.

### **Libya's Legacy**

Participants also engaged in a discussion of NATO's legacy in Libya, although it was recognized that it is not strictly speaking a partnership-related topic. Attendees agreed that the mission was unique – or at least 'qualitatively different' – in many respects. Operation Unified Protector relied on conditions – from a UN Security Council resolution to Arab League endorsement – which may prove difficult to have in place in the future. It was also underlined that the mission did not start as a NATO one, but that a 'coalition of the willing' led by France and the United Kingdom later evolved into a NATO coalition. It was also stressed that the mission was different from past ones in that the US refused to lead, and not all NATO members participated – Germany having even abstained from the UN Security Council vote that authorized the intervention in Libya.

While there was some disagreement on regional reactions to the mission, many agreed that the mission may have nonetheless set a precedent for a new type of out-of-area missions in which more variable geometries of

cooperation between NATO members and non-members are explored. One participant provocatively contended that for precisely these reasons NATO's Libya mission could provide insight into what a global NATO would look like: a NATO operating outside the borders of Europe, relying on a new mix of participating states, and embracing newly emerging international principles such as the 'responsibility to protect'. Some, however, presented the mission as a highly controversial precedent as it may be argued that negative security spillovers to Algeria, Mali and the Sahel are such that the mission may have succeeded in Libya as much as it failed in the larger region.

The question was asked whether overall NATO performed as a security or 'insecurity provider' in the region after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings. Concerns were expressed, for instance, that Algeria's views of NATO may have grown significantly more negative as a result of the Libya intervention. In this context, some participants agreed that NATO's Libya mission may as well not be over, and that instability in the Sahel should now figure more prominently among NATO's security concerns, from terrorism to potential refugees' crises.

## **Turkey's Role**

Discussion among WG 3 participants also included a lively debate on Turkey and its contribution to NATO's southern engagement. It was noted that Turkey has been historically a very active supporter of NATO partnerships in the Arab world. However, some noted that the Turkey-Israel diplomatic break since 2010 has added a new obstacle to the development of a multilateral regional security dialogue in the context of MD, while possibly undermining Turkey's sought-after role as a mediator in the region. Some participants underlined however that the ICI has not been affected by the Turkey-Israel break and that Ankara keeps helping NATO pursue deeper ties with regional organizations such as the GCC and the Arab League.

Others, however, contested that Turkey is likely to involve NATO only limitedly in new initiatives, preferring instead to pursue unilateral or bilateral engagements. Turkey has for instance strengthened strategic cooperation with the US after the Arab uprisings, a development that has had only limited positive reverberations on the Turkey-NATO relationship. Turkey, due its long-standing dispute with Cyprus, is also contributing to blocking NATO-EU cooperation, which

could be very useful in the MENA region where the two organizations could more effectively complement each other if they were able to streamline efforts and assets, join resources, and agree on a division of responsibilities based on their respective strengths. Some participants rejected this interpretation and argued instead that among major developments of recent years is NATO's articulation in three main centers of power: the US, Europe and Turkey – with Turkey rising in importance in the broader Mediterranean region as the EU grapples with the internal crisis and budget constraints and the US refocuses towards Asia-Pacific.

## **The Growing Relevance of Cooperative Security**

Despite these and other dissonances, WG3 participants agreed that partnerships will remain a critical topic in NATO debates, providing a litmus test for NATO's adaptation to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was recognized that NATO rightly decided to include 'cooperative security' among the three core missions of the Alliance, together with collective defense and crisis management. It was also noted that the relevance of cooperative security to NATO may increase not just because of growing budgetary con-



straints and the more global security context but because of the alleged evolution of the international system towards multipolarity. In a scenario of NATO in 2030, the Alliance's ability to forge cross-regional relations with partners, through clusters or more traditional forms of engagement, may prove critical in addressing the reality of a more fragmented

yet also more interdependent international system. The challenge will be to take advantage of the flexibility that NATO policies and instruments already allow for to take partnerships in a direction that will not create new divisions within the Alliance but will, on the contrary, add to NATO's relevance.









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