

NATO APPROACH TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SECURITY: NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT

As NATO transforms the military contributions of its member countries to more agile, expeditionary, sustainable and usable forces, many Alliance members continue to fall short of the national commitment required to make NATO transformation a reality. The most important document at the present, periodically revised by NATO, is its Strategic Concept. Indeed, it is a mind-boggling task, as the concept should include the clear definition of the situation, reaffirm the Alliance's collective identity, spell out the aims and the strategic objectives and finally provide a preliminary indication of the approaches to be followed. As Nations' vital interests are therefore affected, all Allies strive to have them inserted into the Concept.

INTRODUCTION

How can we best address the political challenges to NATO's transformation? We must first be certain that the Alliance members share a common vision. Do the North Atlantic Treaty, the Strategic Concept, and the Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG) provide all NATO members an unambiguous and unanimous understanding of their purpose, strategic objectives and fundamental security tasks that are essential ingredients in the development of a common vision? Additionally, we must keep our publics informed. To do this we must aggressively pursue a more robust public diplomacy campaign that communicates the NATO vision to the people the Alliance protects. The Alliance also needs to solicit greater commitment from its members by establishing more realistic goals and ensure all its members understand the consequences of not meeting them. Lastly, but not least, NATO must change its decision making process and foster better collaboration with international organizations like the United Nations and the European Union. One thing is certain: if NATO wishes to remain an effective and influential Alliance, it must continue to transform. Transformation however requires the political will of its members and a means of tackling the variety of political challenges an organization of democracies possesses.

A good start for a new strategic document is to take a look at the previous document, to see what needs to be changed and what is still relevant, in the ever-changing world scenario. The first issue to be addressed concerns the Alliance "raison d'etre". In this respect, the NATO Strategic Concept issued in 1999 at paragraph 65 states: "The Strategic Concept reaffirms the enduring purpose of the Alliance and sets out its fundamental security tasks. It enables a transformed NATO to contribute to the evolving security environment, supporting security and stability with the strength of its shared commitment to democracy and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Strategic Concept will govern the Alliances security and defense policy, its operational concepts, its conventional and nuclear force posture and its collective defense arrangements."¹

Since then several events occurred, starting with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, followed by others in London, Madrid, and Istanbul. The rising world tension and the events of the first decade of the XXI century profoundly changed the strategic environment, thus calling for a further revision of the NATO strategic approach, to adapt itself to effectively meet the new threats, the growing risks and the multifaceted challenges experienced. The Alliance has foreseen this necessity at the 1999 Washington Summit when the Strategic Concept was adopted, by stating that "it will be kept under review in the light of the evolving security environment".² The Prague Summit Declaration (2002), the Istanbul Summit Communiqué

¹ *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*. Washington, 23/24 April 1999. Available from: www.nato.int

² *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*. Washington, 23/24 April 1999. Available from: www.nato.int

(2004), the Riga Comprehensive Political Guidance (2006), and the Bucharest Summit Declaration (2008) projected the Alliance into a new security scenario and paved the way for a revision of the Strategic Concept. The Strasbourg-Kehl Summit Declaration together with the Declaration on Alliance Security provided the conceptual and procedural background for a new Strategic Concept, setting also forth that it will be developed and adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 2010.³

NATO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: CORE BUSINESS

To develop a common vision an organization must have a clear understanding of its mission. For NATO as a defense alliance, a clear and common understanding amongst its members on its purpose, objectives and fundamental security tasks is essential in developing this common vision. Often however, nations will categorize the risks differently based on their perceptions or how they view the mitigation. Moreover, those that share the same perception may choose one course of action while another member or members may choose another. This becomes especially troublesome when the Alliance operates on consensus where all must not oppose in order for the Alliance to collectively respond. A nation's culture, history, demographics and geography can often shape its values, expectations and assumptions which, in turn, can shape its perception of the security risks. NATO must strive to develop a common strategic vision that takes into account these differences. What elements currently exist to help develop a common strategic focus and vision?

The NATO's new Strategic Concept should particularly focus on three issues as strengthening of the Transatlantic Link, the very political essence of the Alliance, the utmost importance of the consultation procedures among the Allies over common security issues and the relevance of Article 5 as NATO core business⁴, to be complemented by an enhanced attention to Article 4 with reference to the emerging vital issues such as energy security and cyber defense.

The Transatlantic Link is the political essence of NATO, as the Alliance rests on the active synergy between both sides of the Ocean. This link implies common values, shared vision and commitments, mutual understanding and a fair burden-sharing among all Members. After 60 years and in an enlarged Alliance, the Transatlantic Link represents more than an essential "Approach to Security", as considered in the 1999 Strategic Concept, and became itself a core NATO value to be strengthened and preserved. Therefore, the Transatlantic Link should be listed in Part I of the new Strategic Concept, among the Purpose and Tasks of the Alliance. Also the Articles 4 and 5 are the bedrock upon which the security of the Alliance is based. The spirit of solidarity, the consultation and cooperation inherent to these articles, should be effectively reflected in all NATO-led operations which are subject to the consensus of Members on the aim and approach to be followed. In the light of the emerging new threats and future security challenges, the role of Article 4 might be enhanced in a spirit of solidarity, mutual assistance and cooperation based also on the precedent of NATO's Operation Display Deterrence.

ASYMMETRIC ENVIRONMENT: EMERGING THREATS AND RISKS

During the Cold War, Alliance members shared a common potential adversary. The Alliance agreed the general threat to security was centrally located and posed direct and easily identifiable risks. A post Cold War reality however is the general threats are multiple and are neither easily identifiable, quantifiable in nature nor is their direct impact on Alliance security universally accepted or understood. A nation's culture encompasses value systems, beliefs and traditions, perceptions, and appropriate behavioral norms regarding environmental conditions. In an Alliance of 28 sovereign nations there are multiple cultures which, by nature, may lead to varying perceptions of the security environment. Security and stability

³ 2009 Strasbourg-Kehl summit Declaration. Available from: www.nato.int

⁴ *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*. Washington, 23/24 April 1999. Available from: www.nato.int

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risks may therefore not be sufficiently identified, interpreted or assessed in the same way across the Alliance. The result is different national priorities and approaches to the strategic challenges within the Alliance. A common understanding of the threats and potential risks to the Alliance is required.

The 1999 Strategic Concept still considers terrorism as a "risk" and not yet as a threat.⁵ Therefore, the notion of terrorism must be revised in order to make it more coherent with the real nature of the threat, as it has already been laid out both in the NATO Defense against Terrorism (DAT) program and the Military Concept for Defense against Terrorism, which were adopted by the Alliance shortly after the Washington and New York terrorist acts. The 1999 Strategic Concept, Paragraph 24 (mentioning terrorism) considers the possibility of a "disruption of the flow of vital resources". Energy security is a vital interest of the Alliance and NATO can and should have a greater role in safeguarding energy resources by protecting transport and transfer flow as well as the critical infrastructures in the energy sector. Maritime security is an important step to face security challenges for the Alliance. Illegal immigration, human and drugs trafficking, weapons smuggling, piracy, terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as their means of delivery are plaguing the world's oceans and seas. Therefore, NATO is required to perform an ever more active role in guaranteeing maritime security. The new Strategic Concept should foresee the right by NATO to act along the sea lanes of vital interests for the Alliance, to protect critical infrastructures, including oil and natural gas off-shore platforms and to enhance maritime security with respect to the surveillance of shipping lanes, port facilities and choke points, intelligence gathering and information exchange.

The global warming is another major challenge NATO is expected to deal with in the 21 century. In the current Strategic Concept there are no specific indications over it, even if the conclusion states that "as the North Atlantic Alliance enters its sixth decade, it must be ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of a new century". Global warming could result in growing scarcity of water and food, spread of infectious diseases, migration of millions of people and melting of the polar ice caps, with the risk of a generalized rise of the sea level. Moreover, the possibility to increasingly exploit the resources in the Arctic regions, as well as the opportunities afforded by a commercial use of the North-East and North-West passages poses new political problems.

Cyber Defense, too, is not explicitly taken into account in the 1999 Strategic Concept, even if paragraph 23 draws attention to the case that "state and non-state adversaries may try to exploit the Alliances growing reliance on information systems through information operations designed to disrupt such systems. They may attempt to use strategies of this kind to counter NATO's superiority in traditional weaponry".⁶ A specific Cyber Defense Policy, aimed at impeding the success of any aggression against defense-related systems of the Member countries has been adopted at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, thus needing to be taken into account in the new Strategic Concept. Inter-Allied solidarity and mutual assistance, in case of cyber attacks, should be contemplated as well.⁷

Space is another issue the NATO new Strategic Concept should include among the future challenges. The subject is not mentioned within the 1999 Strategic Concept, but it gained increased relevance in recent years. Space is strictly connected to antimissile defense and, more generally, to nuclear weaponry issues. NATO new Strategic Concept should look closely at international developments and include the option of taking the required defensive measures in case of any hostile use of Space against either the Alliance or one its Members.

NATO ENLARGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

As geo-political realities have shifted following the end of the Cold War, NATO has changed from a static, collective defense organization into a flexible security alliance determined to contribute to global stability. The Alliance's broad ap-

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*. Washington, 23/24 April 1999. Available from: www.nato.int

⁷ *NATO Summit and Ministerial Meetings*. Available from: <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm.html>

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proach to security asks not only to strengthen the interactions amongst its members but also to develop closer partnerships with strategically important regions, whose security and stability is closely linked to the Euro-Atlantic security. Consequently, NATO has developed different types of partnerships with non-NATO countries based on cooperation and dialogue. The geographical outreach is focused on Central and Eastern Europe, South Mediterranean and Middle East, but includes also "contact countries" such as Japan, Australia, Pakistan and China.

The current Strategic Concept states that "through its active pursuit of partnership, cooperation and dialogue, the Alliance is a positive force in promoting security and stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area" (para 33). From being a static Alliance, during the Cold War, NATO became part of an 'Interlocking Institutions' system, where the Alliance is called upon to provide an added value in security sectors and in cooperation with other International Organizations, first and foremost the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the OSCE. Partnership for Peace program has been the principal mechanism for forging security dialogue and enhancing interoperability between the Alliance and its Partners. The word 'Dialogue' is already used 13 times in the 1999 Strategic Concept either generically or for a more specific approach, as mentioned in the case of the Mediterranean Dialogue, considered to be fundamental for the European security system.⁸ NATO partnerships have significantly evolved since 1999; partners are currently participating to NATO-led operations, notwithstanding the existing limitations in the exchange of tactical information. A new Cooperation Initiative has been developed with Gulf Countries at the 2004 Istanbul Summit. The opportunity to develop closer relations with other Regional Organizations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union (AU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Arab League, is emerging in conjunction with increased Alliance activities and global threats.

Additionally, developing formal partnerships with interested countries and institutions in various regions of the world will augment NATO's capabilities and increase its credibility and legitimacy as a security institution. The NATO-UN relationship would be strengthened if the UN would give approval to the August 2005 draft joint UN-NATO declaration and the September 2005 draft framework agreement for continuing interactions at all levels (instead only during crisis situations). The tools exist to develop a synergistic relationship between NATO and the EU; it is the politics (as always) that needs to be resolved. Facing the threats effectively will require wide-ranging partnership and strong synergy between these two organizations. While there have been pragmatic realizations in NATO – EU cooperation, the realization of a mature and efficient relation continues to be hampered by those declaratory politics. In order to develop a virtuous circle of efficient and mutually supportive coexistence between NATO and the EU, the solution must be to concentrate on the achievement of what is actually required in the real world of security and risks and challenges, rather than on the abstract goal of an institutional arrangement between the EU and NATO.

NATO-EU partnership appears crucial, as it will be matched with the level of ambition of the two organizations and their degree of cooperation. The reform of the European Security and Defense Policy brought forward by the Lisbon Treaty⁹ will require an update in the bilateral relations that should bring about an enhancement of the cooperation, in order to widen its spectrum, now limited to the 'Berlin Plus' agreement. To this end, both Organizations should define their level of ambition as well as a better coordination between their respective capabilities development processes.

The "open door" policy is already clearly stated by Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty and is still nowadays the consolidated NATO approach towards other European countries. The doors are open for the Membership of every European country who shares the same values and meets the conditions necessary to contribute to the common aims

Russia plays a unique role in Euro-Atlantic security, as "a strong, stable and enduring partnership between NATO and Russia is essential to achieve lasting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area" (para 36). The new threats and challenges re-

⁸ *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*. Washington, 23/24 April 1999. Available from: www.nato.int

⁹ The Treaty of Lisbon, Available from http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm

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quires constant dialogue and cooperation with the Russian Federation that might proved to beneficial also on issues not considered in the current Strategic Concept. Wherever there are similar strategic interests, the cooperation between NATO and Russia might prove extremely beneficial to both.

Enlargement and Partnerships are essential ingredients in establishing the coalitions of capabilities. NATO must think strategically about which countries it offers membership. Any enlargement sentiment must not weaken the Alliance space of common values. A mixed partnership approach will increase proportionality and efficiency of NATO's strategic objectives by creating a community of states which is willing, able and ready to act whenever military action in peace operations is deemed necessary. The fragmentation of NATO's partnerships affects the way Partners perceive their importance for the Alliance. These partnerships are in need of new guidelines, both to clarify the purposes of these arrangements, and to streamline the co-operation efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

A post Cold War reality however is the general threats are multiple and are neither easily identifiable, quantifiable in nature nor is their direct impact on Alliance security universally accepted or understood. Different national priorities and approaches to the strategic challenges within the Alliance are due to different national interests, perceptions of vulnerability and interpretations of risks. A common interpretation requires a credible intelligence source which can be accessed by all members of the Alliance. This cooperation will improve political situational awareness, provide a better understanding of the probability and severity of the security risks and may shorten the timeline required to respond to the threats.

The global security environment has changed and will continue to change. Due to fundamental changes in the strategic landscape, NATO's Strategic Concept of 1999 is at least partially outdated. In order to meet present and future challenges, NATO needs to reassess its Strategic Concept. The NATO Strategic Concept identified a "wide variety of military and non military risks" shaping the future strategic environment. It states their multidirectional nature and limited predictability. However, even if a great part of this security assessment still remains valid, it needs to be updated in order to take into account the ongoing and future evolvments of the security environment. The next Strategic Concept needs to acknowledge the expected consequences of the global trends in the next decades, specifically changes in demography and the climate as they influence and very often enhance the potential of other risks.

The North Atlantic Treaty, the 1999 Strategic Concept, the current Comprehensive Political Guidance and the NATO Strategic Commanders' Strategic Vision provide the framework necessary to ensure the Alliance and member nations share a common strategic vision. NATO however, should consider updating the Strategic Concept to reflect the current global challenges and conditions that were not evident during the development of the 1999 document.

Keywords: NATO transformation; Strategic Concept; security environment

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