

What NATO for what threats?

Warsaw and Beyond

Acknowledgments

This publication is the result of the Conference ““What NATO for what threats? Warsaw and Beyond”, organized by NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), the University of Bologna and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) of Rome. The Conference was the fourth iteration of ACT’s Academic Conference series, and it took place at the Centro Residenziale Universitario of the University of Bologna in Bertinoro (Italy), from the 4th to the 6th of October 2015. The success of the event was due to the joint efforts of the three institutions, and particularly of LTC Alfonso Alvarez and CDR Matteo Minelli of the ACT’s Academic Outreach Team; Michela Ceccorulli, Enrico Fassi and Sonia Lucarelli of the University of Bologna; and Alessandro Marrone and Anna Gaone of the Institute of International Affairs. Special thanks go also to Federico Casprini (FCAC) for his valuable advice.

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What NATO for What Threats? An Introduction

Enrico Fassi, Sonia Lucarelli, Alessandro Marrone

The relatively rapid transformation of the security environment in the past 15 years has seen NATO involved in what has become the keyword to effectiveness: adaptability. Throughout time this has taken different forms, but three have been its main avenues: a redefinition of the concept of security, the development of core tasks that have been added to collective defence (crisis management operations and cooperative security) and the Alliance's enlargement. All three venues have contributed to make NATO more apt to the changed security scenario, but each of them needs to be constantly assessed for its contribution to NATO's effectiveness as a security Alliance and integrated with a reflection on dynamics internal to the Alliance itself. The spirit of the fourth Academic Conference organized in Bertinoro on October 4-6, 2015, was to contribute to the reflection on NATO's adaptability with respect to security challenges (with a special attention to hybrid threats), its internal cohesion, its readiness, and cooperative security in particular with regards to partnerships¹.

Redefining security in the post-Cold War scenario has been the concern of the new Strategic Concepts since the end of bipolarism². Parallel to a broadening of the concept of security in the academic context,³, during the 1990s NATO significantly broadened the range of what it now considers to be security challenges: cybersecurity, instability beyond NATO's borders, terrorism, energy security, health risks, climate change and water scarcity are explicitly mentioned in the 2010 Strategic Concept, something probably unthinkable only fifteen years before. Nonetheless, the adaptation of the theoretical lenses to the evolving reality, as well as the redefinition of concrete tools and strategies,

¹ The conference, the fourth organized by NATO Allied Command Transformation, the University of Bologna and the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome, was part of series of activities organized in the context of the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Bologna and NATO Allied Command Transformation. The event was organized by ACT (in particular LTC Alfonso Alvarez and CRD Matteo Minelli), the University of Bologna (in particular Enrico Fassi and Sonia Lucarelli) and the Institute of International Affairs (in particular Alessandro Marrone). A great contribution to the editing of the papers (and ultimately of this publication) was given by Michela Ceccorulli, while Anna Gaone from IAI coordinated the secretariat of the event.

² http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm

³ Barry Buzan, *People, states and fear: the national security problem in International Relations*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983; Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: a New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, London, Lynne Rienner, 1998; Barry Buzan, Lane Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009

inevitably constitute a never-ending process. In the specific domain of security and defence, the width, the depth, and the rapidity of this adaptation dynamic seems to depend on a combination of different variables: to what extent the new threats are different from the previous ones?; to what extent they challenge existing frameworks, assumptions and understandings, thus creating a sense of unpreparedness and inadequacy?; how new threats are perceived to be both imminent and directed towards the vital interests of the actors concerned?. No surprise then that NATO is now in the midst of an adaptation effort.

The evolution of security concerns in the past two years (2014-5) has led the Alliance to focus attention particularly on ‘hybrid warfare’ - the combined use of the full-spectrum of modern warfare tactics, tools and domains by an enemy within a complex and coherent strategy. If the combination of conventional and non conventional weapons has always been a reality in warfare, the specific form of the current hybrid menace, and the way it is embedded in a highly coherent strategy, pose new and specific problems to the target (NATO’s countries in this case). The relevance of the issue for the Alliance today explains the central place that this year’s Academic Conference has devoted to hybrid threats, which were the topic of the first Plenary Session (whose results are summarised at the beginning of this publication).

However, it is clear that hybrid threats do not exhaust all sources of insecurity. The shocking terrorist attacks to several targets in Paris, on 13 November 2015, have reminded all of us that security is a complex and articulated reality, which requests to focus not only on the instruments to deter and prevent terrorist attacks in the short term, but also on the cooperation among the intelligence and police agencies of the member states; on a coordinated external response in destabilized (if not warring) contexts in the surroundings of NATO’s borders; and on an effective range of partnerships with other states and international organizations - let alone on social policies that would deprive terrorists support in our societies. In order to deal with the internal issue of coordination among NATO members, one session of the Conference, and the first part of this publication, was devoted to explore the implication of the differences in terms of strategic culture among member states, broadly defined as the set of values, norms and convictions that orient security policy preferences and decisions. The latter is of great relevance in threat assessment as well as in strategic decisions with respect to the use of force. In other words, part of NATO’s effectiveness depends on the compatibility of member states’ understanding of security challenges and legitimate responses.

A specific attention to the different dimensions of readiness was devoted by Working Group Two (here in the second part of the publication), that explored tactical, operational, strategic and cultural readiness and provided policy-advice to enhance them all. In particular, the strategic and cultural dimensions of readiness emerged as useful theoretical tools in order to discuss pressing issues such as the effectiveness of the existing decision-making mechanisms to face current hybrid threats, the perceptions of the challenges posed by Russia among the Allies, or the interpretation of the exact boundaries of article 5. Moreover, no reflection on NATO’s ability to adapt to the changed circumstances could avoid thinking about partnerships. The Alliance has currently undertaken dialogue and practical cooperation with 41 partner countries, within the context of very diverse partnership settings (from the Partnership for Peace to the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative). Working Group Three (part three of this publication) explored the characteristics of this network of partnerships and discussed its functionality in today’s security environment.

Finally, also the political dimension of NATO needs to be taken into account, given that the identification of the security challenges, the choice of the means of response and the definition of the long-term goals of the transatlantic community, are all the results of political evaluation and processes that take place within the Alliance and in each member state. From this perspective, the many challenges posed by Russia and stemming from the ‘southern flank’, the role played by democratic

ideals and practices – both inside NATO and towards third states –, and the solidity of the transatlantic partnership were discussed in the second and final Plenary of the conference, with a view to the Alliance political guidance.

All in all, can we conclude that NATO has effectively adapted to the current security environment? In reality a lot has been done and a lot needs to be done too. Probably, the most important lessons we can derive from an assessment of NATO based on the perspective of strategic cultures, readiness, and cooperative security are five simple observations:

1. Flexibility and out-of-the-box thinking: an uncertain security environment both in terms of type and producer of a threat has become ‘The New Normal’. Multiple, hybrid and simultaneous security challenges, as well as recurrent crises are likely to be with NATO for a long time. Such a fluid security environment requests flexibility and the ability to adapt and transform quickly. Early warning and forecast are necessary tools, but the ability to think out-of-the-box (both in terms of threat assessment and in terms of policy decisions) is even more important. This represents a very significant challenge to NATO, given the fact that a military organization is usually all the more efficient, the more is able to respond quickly according to predefined standardised procedures.

2. Deter & Resist: NATO’s deterrence (both conventional and nuclear) can only function if the counterpart is sensible to the Alliance’s counter response (and here the effects on states and non-state actors are rather different) and its credibility (namely linked to a rapid and certain decision-making). Hence, three things appear to be more relevant than others: a clear internal identification of where the threshold is with respect to Article 5, combined with an external ambiguity with respect to such threshold; an internal significant confrontation with respect to the differences among states’ threat assessment and strategic concerns; and strengthened solidarity. It should be internally clear what NATO members are ready or not to accept and what they consider an act of aggression. However, it is also important that the external message is less clear in this respect as far as hybrid threats are concerned (e.g. a cyber attack). A strengthened coordination and solidarity cannot be imposed but should result from a set of steps that NATO could undertake to better integrate the Alliance’s foresight analysis with national foresight and planning exercises; to promote best practice assessments; and to sensibilise domestic political constituencies – in this view, NATO’s public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts look even more important. Nevertheless, deterrence to function needs also the capacity to withstand or recover quickly an attack: resilience. In this respect, it is indispensable for NATO to support the development of a sort of ‘Resilience Security Governance’ system, involving other actors (states as well as regional organizations) more apt than NATO to guarantee the resilience of European societies and institutions.

3. Political-military coordination. For NATO to be credible and effective, its two component – political and military – should be better coordinated. The ‘New Normal’ of crisis deserves a crisis-like delegated power to NATO’s bodies to make the Allied decision-making more effective and efficient. For example, this might take the form of a delegation of power to the SACEUR to make the Alliance more ready to respond.

4. In and Out. In order for NATO to be credible and able to respond to the challenges before itself, it should maintain a clear distinction between partners and members regarding the security guarantees that can be given, while at the same time continuing to enhance the interoperability of partners with NATO and, in case of regional organizations like the European Union, to strengthen coordination. Whatever kind of partnership policy NATO is going to pursue in the future, it has to ensure that its core capabilities remain unaffected by the partners: the Alliance should not become dependent on partners as it is on its own members.

5. *Narrow 'the Atlantic'*. A relevant challenge to NATO is the weakening of the traditional trans-Atlantic relation. As the center of American interests shifts toward the Pacific, Washington seems to be more ambivalent towards Europe and its neighbourhood. Such a weakening would represent the end of the Alliance and of its main strengths: both deterrence and détente are indeed symbiotic with internal solidarity and cohesion, because without these latter the formers lose any credibility. Such a trend needs to be contrasted. In particular, the Europeans have to find ways to prove both a more convincing political unity and practical utility for the Alliance, in order to remain relevant within the debate on NATO's transformation vis-à-vis an American leadership less focused on Europe and its neighbourhood than in the past.

In conclusion, in order to remain relevant, NATO has to transform and to adapt its instruments, its structure, its strategy to the ever-evolving security environment. In doing so, the Alliance should try not to forget the shared values upon which this unique political community has been created and has been developing until now. It is only by framing a renewed political vision based on its socio-political foundations that NATO would find the ambition to shape the international environment, the lucidity to identify specific objectives, the courage to pursue them and the legitimacy to do so.

Plenary One - Roundtable on “Hybrid Threats: What NATO Should Stand Ready for?”

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For the past two decades the transatlantic community has been confronted with multiple and diverse threats. As a consequence, NATO has engaged in long-term and complex missions outside traditional geographic regions of interest, increasingly coupling usual military instruments with new ones. The last year, however, has been a period of profound geopolitical shifts. The exact scope of this impact on global security still remains to be seen. Nonetheless, given the lessons of the past decade, the Alliance must be ready to face hybrid threats (and corresponding hybrid warfare) from a number of regions, including: Russia and Post-Soviet States, the Black Sea region, the MENA region as well as other regions such as the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

In light of this, a new approach to security that addresses the rise of hybrid threats from different regions may be required. In order to understand how NATO should respond to these threats, the first Plenary has considered the nature of hybrid threats, the actors involved, and the main geopolitical shifts that characterize the current strategic context. Against this background, the speakers highlighted the main military or political measures that NATO should evaluate in response to hybrid challenges.

What Hybridity?

The term ‘hybrid threats’ seems to dominate much of the discussion about the nature of contemporary and future threat assessment and warfare. More specifically, the concept is often used to identify the security challenges that NATO has to face in the current strategic context. In Wales, the 28 members of the Alliance officially declared their commitment to ensure NATO’s ability “to effectively address the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats, where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design”. Nonetheless, a shared and more specific definition of the concept is lacking, and due to its widespread use the term risks to lose its meaning and even to create strategic confusion instead of clarifying the features of present challenges.

Indeed, as pointed by more than one participant, if hybrid warfare refers to the combined use of conventional/unconventional, regular/irregular, overt/covert means directed at the vulnerabilities of the opponent, then modern war has always been hybrid, and the Cold War represents the most clear example of the use of hybrid tactics. The specificity of present hybrid threats thus seems not to rely so much in the exploitation of the full-spectrum of modern warfare tactics, tools and domains (including cyber), but *in the capacity of different actors to combine these latter within a complex and coherent strategy*. The multilevel and multidimensional nature of hybrid strategies makes more difficult for the targets to recognize the very nature of the challenge, bringing together the different pieces of the puzzle; an ambiguity that complicates decision making – such in case of the recourse to Art. 5 of the Alliance – and relents the adoption of counter-measures, thus conferring a structural, strategic advantage to NATO's adversaries.

Which Actors?

A strive for more conceptual clarity has embraced also the definition of the actors involved in the present hybrid warfare. On the one hand, it has been underlined how the risk of a too narrow focalization on just one actor (i.e. Russia, due to the contingent situation) could lead to underestimate the extent and the nature of the challenge posed to NATO by other actors and regions. On the other hand, some commentators highlighted how transformations in the nature of these actors are leading to a much more complex security context, in which the old conceptual lenses seem no longer to fit with this new reality. The role of 'super-individuals' and the emergence of 'proto-states' stand as the most striking examples of these dynamics.

In many ways, 'super-individuals' can be considered as a by-product of globalization, that has acted as force-multiplier for digital actors able to exploit its potential. Internet enabled them to communicate instantly at almost no cost at every distance, to transfer money, to find information or to obtain hardware components and weapons designs: as a consequence, 'super-individuals' increasingly act on the world stage directly, unmediated by any state. Given the capacity they have to exert influence as well as to cause serious damage, one could argue that rarely power has been so dangerously diffused.

At the same time, by contrast, we witness the emergence of 'proto-states': the *Daesh* (ISIS) is the clearest example of a loose terrorist network concentrating power in a meaningful territorial actor with the capability of waging conventional as well as cyber and information warfare, together with the financial means to sustain its action (from trafficking, taxation, exploitation of natural resources, kidnapping).

The 'New Normal'?

These conflicting dynamics partially explain the complexity – and the resulting confusion – that seems to dominate the current strategic context. Hybrid threats are not confined to an actor or a region, but are employed by different type of actors (state, non-state, proto-states) at different levels (operational, tactical, strategic) and in different regions (Russia, but also Daesh controlled area between Syria and Iraq, China, Iran). NATO, which is a typically Westphalian organization finds itself increasingly immersed in a post-Westphalian world in which the usual distinctions state/non-state, civil/military, domestic/international, peace/war are losing all their heuristic capacity. As put it by one panellist, current hybrid warfare stays somewhere in "between chaos, confusion, and Clausewitz".

Thus, the most daunting challenge for the Alliance might not be found at the military level, but consists instead in grasping the sense of this security scenario. This would probably require the development of a totally new mind-set, overcoming the illusion of an imminent return to ‘normality’. The multiple, hybrid and simultaneous security challenges the West has to face, as well as the continuous, unpredictable, recurrent explosion of crisis are what one commentator defined as “The New Normal”.

What NATO Could Do?

Notwithstanding the sense of strategic confusion that permeated some reflections, many contributions reflected instead on NATO’s current strengths. *Deterrence* – both conventional and nuclear – has been recognized as an area in which NATO maintains a significant capacity, although its effects on non-state actors cannot be taken for granted and its maintenance requires an increased effort by all the member states, as agreed in Wales. The credibility of deterrence rests also on the capacity to take decisions in a rapid and cohesive manner: in this view, although the Rapid Reaction Plan is a welcome development that could make NATO more pro-active and agile, the results it can bring in terms of deterrence (and defence) would be hampered without parallel improvements at the decision-making level. These, in turn, would not require just technical or organizational solutions, but also more firmness among the member states when their shared democratic values (and vital interests) are at stake.

Resilience – the capacity of bouncing back – is another dimension that has attracted significant interests among speakers. Given the difficulties associated with defence from and deterrence of hybrid threats, increasing resilience of member states’ material capacities, as well as their institutions, economies and societies, looks at least as a very promising second-best strategy. Although NATO is not primarily positioned to increase the resilience of its members states, in the coming future the Alliance could do more in this direction, coordinating members states’ efforts and cooperating with those institutions, such as the European Union, that already display a vast expertise and a significant capacity in this domain. In this view, NATO’s Allied Command Transformation, due to its forward-looking mandate, seems to be perfectly positioned to explore and suggest the dimensions in which future resilience might be improved.

Partially related to resilience, *technological development* surfaced as another area in which NATO still enjoys significant advantage. Nonetheless, both the process of technological diffusion and massive investments by other actors are rapidly reducing this gap and the very possibility to maintain a technological edge in the coming future, if not matched by parallel efforts by all the allies. Similarly, strategic communication/information warfare is one dimension in which the members states enjoy significant capacities. Yet, these have not been exploited to the fullest to counter present hybrid threats, mainly due to a lack of coordination and, especially, difficulties with NATO’s legitimacy and support among the European public opinion.

Overall, the fluidity and complexity of this strategic context demand NATO an *increasing capacity to adapt and transform quickly* in order to face both emerging and prospective threats. This means to use reliable data, accurate forecasts and solid analysis in order to prepare for the most likely strategic scenarios. But it also means to look for out-of-the-box thinking, cutting-edge research and forward looking visions in order to “prepare for the unexpected”. In such a context, the Allied Command Transformation programs and activities might turn out to be one of the main strategic assets for the Alliance’s persistence and success.

The More Things Change... A European Perspective on Persistence and Transformation in the Strategic Cultures of NATO Member States

Heiko Biehl - Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr

Since the end of the Cold War, the analysis applies that the international situation has become confusing, that various risks and not just military threats alone imperil the security of states and societies, that dangers can hardly be contained regionally and security policy reactions therefore need to be embedded in multinational accords, mediated by international organizations and placed within a global frame. These observations also hold true for NATO as a political and military alliance that brings together 28 member states. One of its central tasks is to enable compromise and consensus among its members in order to be able to act together. The pursuit of cohesion is under pressure from the outside with regard to international events and developments but also from within because its members' strategic cultures shape different and sometimes conflicting interests, norms, values and threat perceptions. It is the aim of this paper to map both challenges to NATO's cohesion: the multitude of geo-strategic changes NATO faces today and foremost the spectrum of strategic cultures across its member states.

Geo-Strategic Challenges for NATO Member States

By taking a global view on current affairs a variety of geo-strategic challenges arises, with which NATO member states have to deal with: in Afghanistan, after the end of the ISAF mission, the focus lies on strengthening and further developing local security structures. The aim of this endeavor is to create a more or less stable order that shall include all relevant factions. On the one hand, this shall prevent a descent into civil war like that of the 1990s, on the other hand, it shall guarantee that Afghanistan will not again turn into a cradle of global terrorism. In the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region several developments, which touch upon the security policy interests of NATO members in varying degrees, merge together. Primarily, the focus lies on containing the advancement of Islamic fundamentalism, especially the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In this context it is necessary to limit the conflict in Syria and Iraq and handle the involvement of the NATO's member Turkey. At the same time, Western nations strive to inhibit the further proliferation of nuclear weapons and control the reached agreement with Iran, so it is not perceived as a national security threat by Israel. In the North of Africa, state structures have to be strengthened or even restored in order to counter the spread of Islamic fundamentalist movements and to keep migration

to Europe in check. With the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine conflict a major strategic challenge has emerged in Eastern Europe to which NATO – with a special regard to its Eastern member states – has to react appropriately.

NATO's members find themselves facing a multitude of challenges and risks which occur simultaneously but exhibit substantial differences. Without question, there are similarities and connections between the developments outlined above. Suffice it to mention the role of Russia: in regard to the Ukraine conflict, Russia shows a hostile stance towards the Western states but at the same time it has to be integrated when it comes to a resolution of the conflict in Syria and negotiations with Iran. In addition, several of these conflicts have their cause in – or at least an effect on – lacking statehood. Thereby, empty spaces are created for actors who fill this power vacuum, at times with state-like structures. In accordance to this, it is the goal of Western efforts to contribute to the creation of functional state structures. A common development in current conflicts is the increasing relevance of digital communication, especially social media, which play a major and also, from a qualitative point of view, a new role in all of the conflicts. It broadens the scope of available channels of communication, deepens the pool of receivers of security policy communication, functions as an alternative provider of information next to the established media, but also spreads rumors and lies. NATO has to take these developments into account because they may immensely accelerate communicative and political processes.

Apart from these connections and similarities, there are indeed substantial differences among the outlined geostrategic developments. This already becomes evident when the quality of the relevant actors is taken into account: Libya represents a failing state, which threatens to fall apart into different parts. ISIL is a terrorist organization which exerts itself to build state-like structures and especially state-like instruments of repression. Russia, in contrast, is a re-emerging power, or – in the words of US president Obama – a regional power (albeit one with nuclear weapons). The degree to which NATO members are affected by different conflicts is also varying. Turkey shares borders with Syria and Iran. This is already a reason enough for the Turkish state to focus on the MENA region. Italy, Greece and Turkey are particularly affected by the refugee movements in the Mediterranean. Therefore, they consider the stabilization of the North African states, especially Libya, as utmost priority. The Eastern European states, especially Poland and the Baltics, feel themselves threatened in their territorial integrity and their state sovereignty due to their geographical proximity to Russia.

With these discrepancies in mind, the following pages will focus on the security policy ramifications of these developments for NATO and especially for its European member states. With reference to the concept of 'strategic culture', the thesis will be developed that the European NATO states show deviating points of view regarding threat perceptions. As a result they ascribe differing levels of importance to the current geostrategic challenges. An ambivalent prognosis can be drawn from these assumptions: it can be expected that Europe (and NATO) will adopt methods of security policy burden sharing. This means that diverse sub-alliances will form to tackle the various challenges. While such a development indeed bears the potential for divergence and discord, it can also lead to enhanced cooperation and military integration within these sub-alliances. To generate this thesis it is necessary to introduce and exemplify the concept of strategic culture. Subsequently, a discussion of the impact of the most recent developments on the political elites, the societal acceptance of security policy measures and the military practice of security policy multi-nationality, will follow. Finally, the emergence of a security policy approach of burden sharing as it can be observed in Europe and its perceivable outlines will be presented here.

Strategic Culture – Profile of an Academic Concept

Cultural theories enjoy a continuous boom in social sciences and even more so in the humanities in general. It was a study on Soviet nuclear strategy by Jack Snyder that was responsible for triggering the cultural turn within security studies⁴. In his work Snyder emphasized the cultural imprint on threat perception, the security policy decision-making and its military-strategic implementation. Snyder's analysis stood in stark contrast to the models of realistic interests, rational choices and static principles which dominated the perspective on international order during the Cold War period.

After these initial disputes and debates a downright revival of the concept of strategic culture occurred during the turn of the millennium. Yet, the focus of the newer studies has not been on potential enemies and opponents. Rather than that, strategic cultures have been used to explain differences in the security policy positions of Western states. From the perspective of strategic cultures, the different approaches of the UK, France and Germany regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have their origin less in diverging interests and resources and more in different culturally defined points of view on security policy relevant threats, developments and tools. Simultaneously, in regard to the construction of a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), the existence of a shared strategic culture has been declared as a necessary precondition. Accordingly, the first European Security Strategy states: “We need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary robust intervention”⁵.

From the turn of the millennium onwards, several analyses have been provided, which compare the strategic cultures of different European states and discuss their differences and similarities^{6 7 8}. Within these studies different opinions on the preconditions, characteristics and properties of strategic cultures have been pursued. For the purpose of this paper, strategic culture shall be defined as commonly shared societal values, norms and convictions, which influence security policy preferences and decisions. In other words: strategic culture sets the framework within which concrete security policy decision can be made. Of notable interest for this conference, are the questions how solid and how alterable said framework is. As culturalistic approaches generally do, the strategic culture approach emphasizes the stability of cultural imprints. Cultural change, however, is by no means excluded. The literature on the topic distinguishes between endogenous and exogenous causes for changes in strategic culture. Political entrepreneurs can use active advertising for programs and contents to define new positions, perspectives, and norms. Yet, more frequently, changes in strategic culture result from external shocks like wars, terrorist attacks, conflicts, as well as peaceful developments.

These insights refer to the conditions of strategic culture which are based on common experience. However, actual historical processes and hard facts have less influence on strategic culture than the societal reflection and processing of these processes and facts. On the basis of those processes, accepted narratives arise, which not only define the collective experience of the past but also the

⁴ Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture. Implications for limited nuclear operations*, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 1977. See also Colin S. Gray, “Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back”, in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1999), p. 49-69. Alastair Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998

⁵ Council of the European Union, *European Security Strategy, A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Brussels 12 December 2003, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsupload/78367.pdf>

⁶ Bastian Giegerich, *European Security and Strategic Culture: National Responses to the EU's Security and Defence Policy*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2006

⁷ Kerry Longhurst, “The Concept of Strategic Culture”, in Gerhard Kümmel and Andreas Prüfert (eds), *Military sociology. The Richness of a Discipline*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2000, p. 301-310

⁸ Christoph O. Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

perception of the present and the outlook upon the future. Through the lens of this analysis, political elites and the broader population are bearers of the strategic culture of a country. In democracies the concrete design and definition of strategic culture evolves from interaction between these two groups. With this in mind, the following passages of this paper will take the security policy level, the domain of society, as well as military practice, into account in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the relevance of strategic culture.

Three Types of Strategic Cultures in Europe – The Level of Political Elites

Based on the conception of strategic culture outlined above, the following passages present the main findings of the international research project ‘Strategic Cultures in Europe’. With the application of a unified methodological and analytical concept, this project brought together different expertise and competences on the strategic cultures of European states. To structure the research process and make the findings comparable the project used a common analytical framework which focused on four dimensions: 1) a country’s level of ambition in international security policy; 2) the scope of action for the executive in decision-making in a given political system; 3) the country’s foreign policy orientation; 4) and its willingness to use military force. The main purpose of developing this framework was to generate comparable observations which would help to unearth patterns of strategic culture across Europe. Therefore, the country experts arranged their analysis according to specific questions and chosen indicators (e.g. numbers of troops deployed in NATO - and EU - missions as hint for the country’s foreign policy orientation or specific areas of geographic responsibility as indicator for the level of ambition). The study was conducted between 2011 and early 2013 and focused on the then situation. However, historical aspects were also taken into account, given that strategic cultures are the result of long-term dynamics.

Matching national positions in the four areas of strategic culture can be seen as a prerequisite for close cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy. In a European and a transatlantic context, convergence in one or more of the above-mentioned dimensions has been, more than once, the catalyst for closer cooperation while divergence proved to be the source of stagnation. Detailed analytical profiles of countries, unlike any available beforehand regarding range and the high level of uniformity and comparability, are among the outcomes of the project. Another result is that similarities and differences of the strategic cultures of the European states become evident. Even a cursory glance at some of the issues discussed in the case study chapters makes it obvious that there is no single European strategic culture. However, considering the analysis presented as a whole, patterns of strategic cultures do indeed emerge. Speaking of clusters in Europe might be too strong a term, but three broad configurations do suggest themselves. Focusing on the term ‘strategic’ in strategic culture and therefore on the purpose why states use their security and defence policy (including the maintenance, use and control of their armed forces), leads to a distinction between countries whose security and defence policy is driven by the attempt to manifest their own presence in the international system, countries whose strategic culture lead them to attempt to shape their multilateral security milieu through international bargaining, and countries who focus their security and defence policy on the protection and projection of state power.⁹

1. Security Policy as Manifestation of Statehood

The first group of countries – with Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, and Portugal – engages in international organizations and participates in international military missions because doing so is an expression of statehood. Many cases falling into this category are small states

⁹ For more details see Heiko Biehl, Bastian Giegerich and Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2013

with limited resources, including in terms of size, population and financial capacity. Their primary goal is to demonstrate that they can live up to the responsibilities of a valued member of the international community and be recognized by others as such. A key purpose of the armed forces for these countries is to support this embryonic manifestation of statehood. Their limited resources are paradoxically a catalyst for their engagement because elites feel the need to show that their country is capable of playing a constructive security and defense role. In practice, such countries are reluctant to use military force and show a preference for civilian, diplomatic means of crisis management and conflict prevention, which seems to be a reflection of their structural inability to provide for their own defense. Countries in this group tend to channel their engagement through the EU rather than NATO, in part because the latter, despite formal equality, is perceived to be dominated by the influence of the *primus inter pares*, the United States.

2. Security Policy as Team Play

A second and largest group conducts security policy as international bargaining and conducts security and defense policy mostly in form of multinational policy through – and for – alliances and (international) organizations. They are less concerned about the direct and primary effects of their engagement, such as deployments, and more about influencing multinational policy in order to generate a mutual sense of obligation and solidarity. Sometimes, this can lead to policy choices that may appear cynical when, for example, participation in operations in Afghanistan is used to justify staying away from operational engagement in Iraq. Two varieties can be distinguished which became more relevant in the last few years: several countries, including the Baltic countries as well as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania, are most interested in collective defense. Their engagement in NATO is driven by the desire to generate reliable security guarantees for themselves. This often goes hand in hand with intense efforts to maintain good bilateral relations with the United States. This rationale often serves as a justification for military deployments in theatres such as Afghanistan and Iraq in the absence of other relevant national interests. Their engagement aims to build up credit in the expectation that partners will reciprocate should the need arise. A deeply felt concern about conventional military threats, obviously linked to Russia, leads them to stress classical alliance functions rather than a reorientation towards new security challenges. The actions of other countries – like Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain – also aim to generate secondary effects, but of a different kind. They are interested in being perceived as reliable partners in NATO and/or the EU who can be counted upon to make a contribution even if they are not stakeholders of distinct national interests in the context of particular operations. In return, they expect to be able to influence the policies of these larger multinational frameworks and their engagement is a price willingly paid for a seat at the main table. Many of these countries continue to be in the middle of protracted security and defense reform efforts, often begun after the end of the Cold War. Since a convincing national rationale, which would for example serve to justify particular roles for the armed forces, was often missing, such reform efforts tended to be inconclusive. What purpose the use of armed forces ultimately serves is often distinctly vague for both electorates and elites and meanders from traditional territorial and collective defense to a more expeditionary mindset without being firmly tied to either.

3. Security Policy as Protecting and Projecting State Power

A third group of countries has a traditional understanding of security and defense policy being concerned with protecting the state and projecting state power abroad. Those countries, like Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, or the UK, are convinced of the utility of armed forces in the pursuit of these overarching goals. Those who are focused on protection are driven by a threat perception that is linked to a vulnerable national territory. The sense of vulnerability is culturally engrained, as in the cases of Poland, Finland, and Greece, and is not necessarily a product of mere objective analysis. Those focused on power projection understand security and defense policy to be about international order and stability. They perceive a responsibility to engage beyond Europe,

possibly globally, to manage crises and conflict and are willing to make resources available, relative to their size and wealth, to underpin this ambition. Denmark, France and the United Kingdom come closest to this latter description – but Sweden and the Netherlands also embody variants of this kind of strategic culture. International organizations are enablers of these ambitions as long as they can demonstrate the capacity for action. If organizations do not display this capacity, countries in this category also participate in coalitions of the willing, as demonstrated most clearly during the war against Iraq, and seen again during the 2011 Libya operation. States in the third category may be seen as leaders in European Security and Defense Policy.

Stability and change of strategic cultures

In respect to this categorization – undertaken in 2012, before the rise of ISIL and the Russian occupation of Crimea – and the initially outlined developments, the question of stability and transformation of strategic cultures arises: do the current geostrategic challenges lead to a change in the security policy of NATO and its members and will this in turn lead to a change in the respective strategic cultures? The following passages will defend the thesis that the contemporary developments will indeed lead to changes in the security policy behavior and demeanor of some important member states. Yet, the Ukraine conflict and the revival of the concept of collective defense do not fundamentally change the strategic cultures at all. On the contrary, strategic cultures can be drawn upon to define and explain the conduct of the European NATO's states regarding the Ukraine conflict in a meaningful and convincing manner. The Central and Eastern European states are the most obvious examples here. They have in any case always understood their membership in NATO (and the EU) to be a reinsurance against a renewed striving for power emanating from Russia. From their point of view, collective defense, the original *raison d'être* of the alliance has gained utmost priority again. While the Central and East European states felt that during the past one and a half decades their warnings regarding the perils of a Russian regaining of power and a return to confrontation fell on deaf ears too often and were not taken seriously enough, their concerns have been catapulted to the top of NATO's agenda again as a reaction to the occupation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine. Notably, the NATO summit in Wales can be named to indicate this development. The security policies of the Western European states are also changing drastically and at a rapid pace. Germany provides an interesting case study because its unaltered strategic culture generates substantial shifts in its security policy. In Germany – like in many Central and East European countries – an intensive pivot towards collective defense principals can be witnessed.

While the *Bundeswehr* (the German military) has been conceptually exclusively limited to national and collective defense during the Cold War, the past two decades have witnessed a gradual and tentative restructuring of the German armed forces into an army that is capable for interventions.

This paradigmatic reorientation has not been easy for German politics, the German public, and the German armed forces themselves. It has been hard to merge the idea of the pursuit of interests by military means and global participation in international missions with the strategic culture of the Federal Republic. The existing culture often seemed to be widely incompatible with these new requirements. It has only been possible to implement armed forces in West Germany after the Second World War by accentuating their defensive character, their strictly multilateral embedding and a defensive orientation as their fundamental legitimation. The revival of collective defense now offers the opportunity to refocus German security policy towards Europe once more and to redefine the *Bundeswehr* with a focal point on defensive tasks.

Resulting from this, Germany detects the chance to reconcile once again its security policy orientation and tasks with its strategic culture. In order for such a reorientation to be successful, the passive nature

of the foreign and domestic German security policy has to be vanquished. As a consequence, Germany might even emerge as a leading entity regarding matters of European security and defense policy. Such a prognosis gains further credibility and plausibility when the societal dimension of strategic culture is entered into the equation.

Acceptance of Defense Issues and Military Interventions – The Societal Level

There is a consensus in the academic discourse that in democracies, security policy is not solely a concern of elites but also represents the preferences of the public and the population. In accordance with this observation, the availability of data on security policy attitudes of European citizens is by now pleasantly vast and of good quality. The state of knowledge on security policy attitudes of the public has been substantiated and secured by the *Transatlantic Trends*, the *Eurobarometer* surveys, or the research conducted by our Center for Military History and Social Sciences just to name a few.

For many (continental) European states, especially Germany, the surveys expose a noteworthy gap between the security policy decisions, the resulting military missions and support from the society. The finishing ISAF mission in Afghanistan is a prime example which can be used to illustrate this discrepancy. While the temporal duration of the engagement increased, successes remained imperceptible, the number of victims among own soldiers and the civilian population kept rising, the approval ratings for these missions were dropping. These trends can be observed in Germany and in most continental European countries like Austria, Belgium, Italy, Spain and even France. A certain divergence from this pattern of public opinion is found in countries like the UK and Turkey. For most European societies the existing divergence has not been limited to the questions if and how a state and its armed forces should participate in the Afghanistan mission but included the discussion regarding the required tasks in theater. There has been a distinct gap between political will, military mandate, and societal preference¹⁰.

In this light, the European populations represented a united voice when it came to supporting humanitarian measures of their soldiers in Afghanistan. Education and training of Afghan security forces – the task which by now lies at the core of Western efforts – already resonated with comparatively less popularity and has been rejected by majorities in some countries. In a survey conducted in eight countries, only the British have ranked fighting the hostile forces as the main task of the armed forces, while six continental European populations opposed combat missions of their armies.

Three observations become discernible based on these findings: first of all, contrary to a common misconception, it is not the German public's attitude towards military violence that diverges from the European norm. The dividing line runs rather between an Anglo-Saxon position which accepts military violence as an instrument of politics and a continental European position with a skeptical view on this, at least in relation to interventions. Secondly, to a large extent congruence exists between the three identified clusters of strategic cultures and public opinion in Europe. The UK, for example, takes an active stance in security policy with military means if necessary and is supported by the British citizenry. Germany, like others, acts much more reluctant in military affairs and matches thereby the demands of her public. In a small number of countries preferences of political elites and the population diverge. The most remarkable case is France where political elites show stronger interventionist tendencies than the French public. These observations lead to the third conclusion that

¹⁰ For empirical details on the following results see Heiko Biehl, Rüdiger Fiebig, Bastian Giegerich, Jörg Jacobs, Alexandra Jonas, *Strategische Kulturen in Europa. Die Bürger Europas und ihre Streitkräfte*, Strausberg, SOWI, 2011(Forschungsbericht 96)

public opinion has less influence on the decision if a state participates in an international mission but indeed shapes the way the state does so and what the concrete military contribution looks like¹¹.

The population as well as a considerable portion of the European political elites deem the engagement in Afghanistan to be a failure. As a consequence there is a lack of willingness to support potential subsequent missions with a comparable setup. However, this skepticism exhibited by the public must not be confused with an anti-military or pacifistic attitude. All studies on the matter run quite contrary to this assumption and reveal a positive standing of the armed forces in the European states¹².

Furthermore, popular majorities can be found for many of the tasks that armed forces are fulfilling today. This holds true for the support of domestic and foreign humanitarian aid and relief missions but is not limited to it. National defense and – to a lesser degree – collective defense are also acknowledged by the European citizens as tasks for their armed forces. In relation to the current conflict occurrences, this should not suggest that the populations would primarily strive for a military solution to conflicts, like the one in Ukraine for instance. Rather than that they prefer a reasonable mix of political, diplomatic, economical, but also military steps. Beyond that, there is indeed a discernible trend in the opinions of the European publics (albeit to different degrees) that indicates a readiness to assist partners and neighbors in the retention of their sovereignty and their political and territorial integrity¹³.

This trend in popular opinion supporting transatlantic and European defense efforts creates political incentives to put a stronger emphasis on the defensive character of security policy and armed forces again. After all, it is in the interest of the political elites and the armed forces to acquire broad societal support and legitimation. Conclusively, it becomes evident that regarding the revival of collective defense, the security policy preferences of the continental European elites and populations are widely congruent. Collective defense possesses a higher level of legitimation than the international missions of the past decades. This makes a reorientation of the NATO states more likely. It can be expected that such a policy will surely not find much resistance from most of the European armed forces.

Opportunities and Limits of Collective Defense – The Military Level

Analogous to the strategic-cultures-approach in the field of security studies, military sociology generated the concept of military culture. An essential discovery of the research in this realm is that the culture of an armed force always arises from the tension between the conflicting domains of military functionality, logic and laws, societal preference and influence as well as security policy decisions. With an outlook on the military dimension of security policy two aspects are important: first, at least for the continental European armed forces, there is an observable preference for defense tasks over missions abroad. Armies especially prefer the orientation towards a confrontation with other regular, in the sense of state-sanctioned, armed forces in symmetric conflicts¹⁴. Yet, there are certain differences between Anglo-Saxon and European armed forces that may have their geo-historical roots in the difference between sea and land powers. Most Western armies prove to be inapt and ill prepared when it comes to fighting against irregular forces, against insurgents in asymmetric scenarios – often in theaters far away from home. These kinds of conflicts are particularly prone to

¹¹ Henrike Viehrig, *Militärische Auslandseinsätze. Die Entscheidungen europäischer Staaten zwischen 2000 und 2006*, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010

¹² European Commission, Eurobarometer, *Public Opinion in the European Union* (No. 82), 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_first_en.pdf

¹³ Pew Research Center, *NATO Public Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid*, 10 June 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-Russia-Ukraine-Report-FINAL-June-10-2015.pdf>

¹⁴ Linn McAllister, *The Echo of Battle. The Army's Way of War*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2007

escalations and infringements, which in turn result in de-legitimation. For these reasons, it has to be assumed that the European armies will back a refocusing on collective defense since they are familiar with such an orientation and it is more engrained in their military culture and in line with it.

The second essential aspect lies in the consistently multinational orientation of collective defense. Given the phalanx of – by no means unjustified – complaints about the insufficient progress made regarding military integration of NATO and the interoperability between the European armies, the fact that Western armies have by now gained extensive experience in the area of collective action is often overlooked. This applies, when one takes a look at the integrated structures of the alliance, which have been in existence for decades or the international missions of recent years. At first glance, the difficulties related to these endeavors are what come to mind. They begin with the military hardware and equipment doctrine and training.¹⁵ Inadequate language skills also remain a barrier to an improved integration. Different rules of Engagement (ROE) which often define the conditions of military action down to the smallest details, have proven especially problematic. However, there are also differences in the military ‘software’: different understandings of hierarchy, divergent civil-military relations and different concepts of the relationship between the political and military realms.

As indicated by numerous studies on military multi-nationality, however, there are indeed ways and means to overcome these obstacles and facilitate military cooperation. This is most evident where similarities in military culture exist. It is not a coincidence that German and Dutch soldiers cooperate in a joined corps¹⁶. It is an educated guess that in regard to the revival of collective defense there are also similarities between the German and other Central and Eastern European armed forces. Moreover, even for divergent military cultures there are tools which facilitate cooperation. For military cohesion is by no means only possible for nationally homogenous units. As recent studies show, variables like trust in superiors are by no means dependent upon national affiliation. Processes of cooperation are facilitated when units are clearly dominated by a single nation and other armed forces only engage on demand. The same effects can be observed while looking at very heterogeneously composed elements typical for NATO¹⁷. Next to the 28 member states of the organization, other partners are also incorporated within its staffs.

Regardless of this diversity, it can be possible to generate military cohesion and forge functional units and staffs. This is made possible by the means of a participatory way of leadership which can moderate the destructive elements of differing interests and cultures. It becomes more difficult when few units of equal size are merged. Such an equal distribution of about 50/50 from two different nations encourages turf battles and conflicts revolving around power and identity. Cooperation is also facilitated when the delegates of a nation promote the common cause more than narrow national interests. During the past decades, the Bundeswehr has been among the units which gained extensive experience with military multi-nationality, as a junior partner and also in leadership positions. Thus, from a military point of view there are no essential objections to a revival of collective defense, a revitalization and consistently multi-national orientation of the armed forces.

¹⁵ Bastian Giegerich, “European Cooperation and Defence Procurement. Current Trends“ in Dieter Kollmer (ed.), *Militärisch-Industrieller Komplex? Rüstung in Europa und Nordamerika nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Freiburg, Rombach, 2015, p. 285-302

¹⁶ René Moelker, Joseph Soeters, Ulrich vom Hagen, “Sympathy, the Cement of Interoperability: Findings on Ten Years of German-Netherlands Military Cooperation”, in *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2007), p. 496-517

¹⁷ Heiko Biehl, René Moelker, Gregor Richter, Joe Soeters, *OCS – Study on SHAPE’s Organizational Culture*, Potsdam and Breda, 2015

Conclusions

This paper inquired into the relevance of the current security policy developments for the NATO states and their effects on the respective strategic cultures. In conclusion, changes of fundamental nature become apparent, like those associated with the end of the Cold War or the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. States' responses to such challenges have been influenced by each nation's strategic culture. In other words: NATO's states' divergent takes on security policy challenges and their different ways of tackling and dealing with these challenges. Therefore no definite and objective dangers, risks, and threats exist which states as rational actors have to react to referring to a *single* certain logic and a *single* certain reckoning. On the contrary, the contemporary developments once again demonstrate that security policy perceptions, judgments and reactions are to a considerable degree culturally defined. From this assessment two conclusions might be drawn – one for security policy in Europe, one for further research. As a result, current tendencies, that have initially been outlined, could lead to a burden sharing between the European powers within NATO. What form this could take will conclusively be briefly outlined using the examples of the German, French, and British security-policies.

British security policy of the past decade has been defined by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan¹⁸. The UK has – according to its comprehension of a 'special relationship' – been operating closely with the United States. In the context of the war in Iraq, the UK has not shied away from confrontation with several EU partners, especially Germany and France. This transatlantic orientation continues to show, especially through the participation in airstrikes against ISIL, in which the UK is engaged in with limited forces. Regardless of that, current British policy is generally marked by an increasingly domestic perspective. This has been brought about by the referendum concerning Scotland's membership in the UK, the parliamentary elections in May 2015 and the upcoming referendum concerning the UK's membership in the EU. In the aftermath of the engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, a widely discussed overstretching of the available military means, and facing scarce resources and uncertain budget developments, British security policy seems to pass into a phase of consolidation, which makes participation in missions with high personnel and resource requirements less probable.

A similar prognosis can be made regarding the French security policy¹⁹. Due to its economic development, France only holds limited fiscal-political tolerance. During the past years, the French armed forces have been exposed to a continuous process of reform, which revealed the limits more than the possibilities of their military means. Notwithstanding, France keeps on being strongly engaged in its classical spheres of influence, primarily North Africa, as the missions in Libya and Mali testify. There is little reason to believe that this will change in the foreseeable future.

The most extensive changes can be observed in German security policy²⁰. During the past decades, it has been defined by the transformation from defense purposes to foreign missions. Starting immediately after the German reunification, the Bundeswehr engaged in international missions. This stands in stark contrast to the Cold War period, when the Bundeswehr has been created as a purely defensive army and oriented solely towards collective defense. It can be predicted that said process of transformation of the Bundeswehr has come to an end and will be revised in essential parts. Germany wants to focus primarily on collective defense for the coming years and present itself as a

¹⁸ cf. Paul Cornish, "United Kingdom", in Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe*, op cit.

¹⁹ cf. Bastien, Irondelle and Olivier Schmitt, "France", in Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe*, op. cit., p. 125-137

²⁰ cf. Julian Junk and Christopher Daase, "Germany", in Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe*, op. cit., p. 139-152

partner for the Central and Eastern European members. The foundation for this is laid by the strategic culture of the political elites as well as the preferences of the population and the armed forces. In order for such a reorientation to be successful, it will need credible efforts. First steps taken indicate that the political elites in Germany are ready to become far more active in collective defense in the near future. This readiness has often not really existed during the past decades of international conflict management. Furthermore, corresponding promises have been made regarding an increased defense budget. What it all boils down to now, is if and how these efforts will be perceived by the partners and potential opponents and if these efforts will be taken seriously.

For future research it is relevant to analyze the relationship between the three levels of security culture: the strategic culture of NATO member states as manifested in decisions made by political elites, the preferences of citizens which shape discussions and processes in democracies, and the military culture with its impact on military means. As the analysis has shown, there are some countries like the UK where on all three levels the same tendencies, preferences and culture can be observed. In other countries like France and Germany – especially with regard to military interventions – there are mismatches between elites, people and soldiers. In the relevant literature it is neither conceptually clarified which of the three layers of strategic culture has the strongest impact on actual decisions. Nor does enough research exist which tackles these issues and questions on an empirical base. The studies at hand indicate that there might be an interaction between the three levels with a tendency towards equilibrium. Given the stability of strategic cultures, a re-balancing of security policy and decisions and search for compromise seems to be inherent in Western democracies.

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Understanding the Public Security Discourse- an Attempt by the Evocs Project

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Introduction

The title of this year's NATO Academic Conference asks the question 'What NATO for what threats?' To be able to answer this question, one would need to know which threats are relevant enough to shape NATO and what their nature is. In addition to that, Working Group 1 deals with the question of 'What persistence and transformation in the strategic cultures of NATO member states?' This question brings up the 'strategic cultures' of NATO's members which are connected to the above-mentioned threats. Taking these two questions as a foundation, many more come to mind: What exactly is a threat in this context? When does it become relevant for NATO? What is a strategic culture and how does it relate to the threats?

The present paper will introduce the methodology and the results of the FP7 EvoCS-project ('The Evolving Concept of Security: A critical evaluation across four dimensions'²¹) so as to give answers to the questions just mentioned. In order to do this, the next section will give a brief overview of the EvoCS project and its methodology and a short introduction to the concept of strategic cultures. The section on 'The Public Security Discourse in Four European NATO Countries' will present the results of the first stage of the research process in EvoCS for countries which are relevant in the framework of NATO and the historical trajectory of the security discourse in these countries. Also, the results are compared to the results of a comprehensive study on the strategic culture of European countries²². At the end of this section is Figure 2, which sums up the main results of the EvoCS project's case studies. Finally, the section on 'conclusions' will sum up the discussions, compare them with results on strategic cultures and give a possible outlook to the two questions asked in the context of this year's conference.

Before looking at the details of the EvoCS project, it is important, however, to evaluate how the analysis of the public security discourse (and the evolving concepts of security which emerge from it) relates to the study of strategic cultures. 'Strategic cultures' and concepts of 'security' are not the same thing, but they do have some overlap. As the name implies, the concepts of security concentrate on security, understood in the civil definition (i.e. non-military aspects). On the other hand, the

²¹ In the course of the project, the number of dimensions was increased to five but the original name was kept.

²² Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2013

concept of strategic cultures has from the beginning²³ been connected to the military sector. The overlap between these two concepts is the area of policy-making. Both concepts aim to understand the reasons as to why certain policy-makers decide the way they do. The way the two concepts realize this aim can be different though. While the study of strategy cultures focuses on elites and partially their interplay with the public, the concepts of security approach involves both areas equally and in a more structured way. In order to compare both concepts in a more detailed manner, the methodology behind the EvoCS project will now be described in more detail.

The EvoCS-project – an Attempt to Capture European Public Security Discourses

The FP7 EvoCS-project²⁴, as its title implies, deals with ‘evolving security concepts’ as they are being discussed in the public security discourse. These ‘security concepts’ are made up of and modelled in multiple dimensions. The items these dimensions are applied to are documents from different source types, from Government policy documents to newspapers or academic publications²⁵. These different source types were chosen in order to have a broad data base which reflects the written public security discourse. In total, the EvoCS project used and analysed over 4000 items.

Reading through the items, the researchers started a process we called ‘coding’, i.e. characterizing each item in relation to the five dimensions of the EvoCS project. The coding process captured documents from the time period of November 2013 until October 2014. In a second stage, the analysis was broadened to include documents from the years 2004 till 2013. In this second stage the researchers did not code the documents but analysed them via classical desktop research in order to put the results of the coding into a broader historical perspective. In this way, a quantitative-objective approach (the coding of the five dimensions) was combined with a qualitative-subjective approach (the desktop research) in order to provide a comprehensive view on the public security discourse.

The first dimension of the EvoCS concepts of security are six core values: physical safety and security; territorial integrity and security; environmental and ecological security; social stability and security; cultural identity and security; information and cyber security. These core values reflect the different aspects (with regard to the content) of the public’s security. The topics of a security discourse were categorized using these core values. It was possible for an item to have more than one core value. The next dimension deals with the actors of the public security discourse, ranging from national governments and international organization to the media and civil society²⁶. These actors can take a number of different roles like addressor, addressee, object actor (the actor who is being affected by a security issue) or ‘absent’ (if the actor is not mentioned in the source item). The third dimension is about the levels²⁷ the public security discourse can take place (from local to global) on and finally, the fourth dimension is constituted of ‘Ethics & Human Rights’. If an item in one of the various

²³ Alastair Iain Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture”, in *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1995), p. 32-64

²⁴ The partners of this multi-national project are the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies HCSS (The Netherlands), Loughborough University (UK), Procon (Bulgaria), Istituto Affari Internazionali IAI (Italy), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore UCSC (Italy), Tecnalia (Spain), Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych PISM (Poland), and Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna di Studi Universitari e di Perfezionamento SSSUP (Italy). It is coordinated by Fraunhofer INT (Germany). The work on the project started in June 2014 and will be finished by November 2015

²⁵ The source types are the following six: Government policy documents (e.g. national security strategies), Parliamentary publications (mostly transcripts of debates), Academic publications, Newspaper articles, Private sector publications, NGO publications

²⁶ The actors are defined as follows: National government, National parliament, Regional state apparatus, European Union, International institution (for example NATO), Foreign government, Civil society, Private sector, Academia and research institutes, Media, General public or individual citizen(s), Think tanks and policy institutes

²⁷ The levels are defined as follows: Local, Subnational (meaning for example the level of provinces, départements, states or Bundesländer), National, International (meaning bi-lateral), Transnational (meaning multi-lateral), Global

source types dealt with ethical topics and/or questions of fundamental human rights, the coder would mark this and describe what these questions were about. Similarly, the fifth dimension ‘Security Challenges (Threats, Hazards and Risks)’ was a free-text field in which the coder described the issues reported in the item. We deliberately pooled together challenges, threats, hazards and risks because, even though they are distinct, they are often used interchangeably in various popular security discourses.

Since the scope of the EvoCS project is the whole of Europe, we chose to delineate four regions, in which we could conduct the above described coding for a number of case studies. The regions and countries that were chosen for the case studies were the following (see also figure 1):

- West-Mediterranean EU: Italy, Malta, Spain
- Eastern EU Border: Poland, Hungary, Lithuania
- North-West EU: United Kingdom, Netherlands, France
- South-Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey

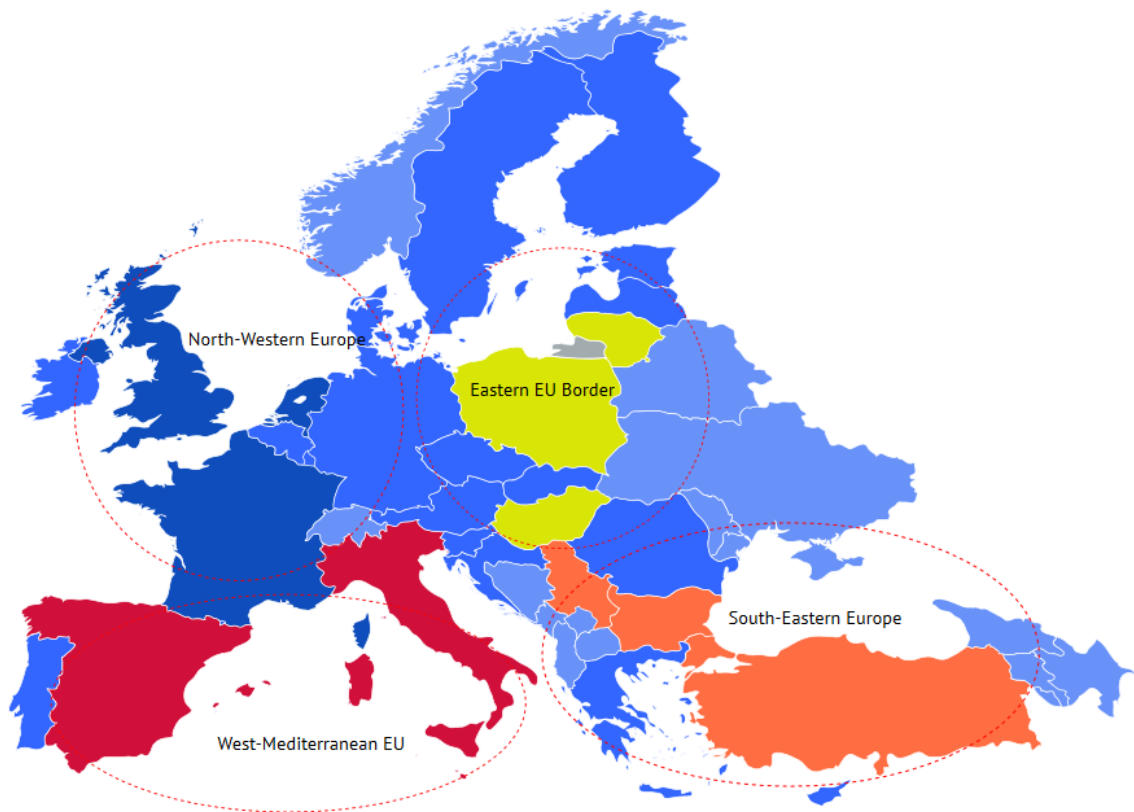


Figure 1 The model regions of the EvoCS project. The countries in blue, red, green and orange were chosen as case studies

All of the analysed countries except Serbia and Malta are NATO member states. In order to illustrate the public security discourse as found in the EvoCS project, one country for each of the regions was chosen for further analysis: the UK, Italy, Poland and Bulgaria.²⁸

²⁸ For the complete details on the EvoCS methodology, please refer to: Tim Sweijts, Joshua Polchar, Boaz Manger, Willem Oosterveld, Laurin Nabuko Hainy, Milos Jovanovic (contrib. ed.), Erik Frinking (contrib. ed.), *Assessing evolving concepts of security – EvoCS Deliverable 3.1*, 2014, http://publica.fraunhofer.de/eprints/urn_nbn_de_0011-n-3323292.pdf

Compared to this, as mentioned in the introduction, the concept of ‘strategic culture’ is in a number of ways similar to the ‘security concepts’ of EvoCS. There are a number of different possibilities to define the term ‘strategic culture’²⁹ but they all have some common characteristics. The research on ‘strategic cultures’ suggests that there are a number of ‘predominant strategic preferences that are rooted in the early or formative experiences’ of states and are ‘influenced [...] by the philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characteristics’ of a state and its elites. There is some discussion as to whether these strategic cultures really exist and if so, whether or not they influence the behaviour of a state’s elites. In this way, EvoCS’ security concepts represent a part of strategic cultures, since they represent the content of a country’s public security discourse. The different sources used in the EvoCS project actually represent a sample of possible literature, which might be used to analyse strategic cultures³⁰. Both terms of ‘strategic culture’ and ‘security concept’ can have certain implications for a country’s policy. The analytical frameworks of the two concepts differ in their outlook and in their foci. While EvoCS focuses on its five dimensions (and has a rather broad basis because of this) and looks at a country’s internal security discourse, the strategic cultures are focused on military aspects (making the basis narrower) and look at external aspects and threats.

In the following section, the results of the EvoCS analyses are described in detail.

The Public Security Discourse in Four European NATO Countries

The coding process which was described in the above section concentrated on documents from November 2013 until October 2014. In this way, the coding reflected the current public security discourse. In a second stage the results of the coding were put into a broader historical perspective.

The United Kingdom

In the UK, the public security discourse concentrated on the core values ‘Physical safety and security’, ‘Economic prosperity and security’ and ‘Environmental and ecological security’. The most salient security challenges were identified as being terrorism (including for example discussions on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - ISIL, or the Irish Republican Army) and climate change and natural hazards (including, for example extreme weather and flood). The most prominent actors in the UK are the national government (as the main addressor), the national parliament (as the main addressee) and the general public (as the main object actor). Terrorism is raised by all security actors except think tanks and the private sector, which are mainly concerned with cyber-attacks. National government and parliament, as addressors, both cover a broad variety of security challenges in the discourse, while academia, international institutions and the EU are rarely mentioned as addressors. There also seems to be a bi-directional channel of communication between the government and the parliament, without the inclusion of other actors. The main level on which the security discourse takes is the national one. The only security challenge which is discussed on the global level is climate change and natural hazards, which is also discussed on all other levels except the transnational one. Human rights and ethical issues are rarely mentioned at all, except in some cases in connection with terrorism and climate change.

Putting this recent security discourse into historical perspective, one notes that the UK has had a number of initiatives to combat the threat from terrorism, for example the first Terrorism Act (which was passed in 2000)³¹, the UK Government’s strategy for counter-terrorism (CONTEST, which was

²⁹ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Thinking about Strategic Culture*, op. cit.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 49

³¹ Her Majesty’s (HM) Government, *The Terrorism Act*, The Stationary office, 2000

passed in 2006, and then revised in 2009 and 2011)³² or the recent Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, which was introduced in 2015³³. Similarly, climate change (or rather its security implications) has recently been added to National Security Strategy³⁴. This, however, is only the result of a long process which saw climate change evolve from an environmental/developmental perspective to one of security. Climate change however is not included in the so-called 'Tiers of risk' in the National Security Strategy but is seen as a 'risk multiplier', while natural hazards are among the highest priority (Tier 1) risks.³⁵

Summing all up, the UK's public security discourse focuses on two security challenges, which have evolved to be of central importance for the country and are included in the National Security Strategy. The factors that have led to this are a number of security-relevant events (in the case of terrorism and natural hazards) and long and numerous public discussions between politicians and academics (in the case of climate change). Comparing these results to the study on the UK's strategic culture³⁶ it seems that the security and military spheres are strongly separated in this country. While the EvoCS results enrich the picture of this country's strategic culture, they do not pertain to military questions.

Italy

The Italian security discourse is mainly concerned with core values 'Physical safety and security', 'Social stability and security' and 'Economic prosperity and security'. However, apart from 'Physical safety and security', the other core values are mentioned similarly often. This reflects a security discourse which is characterized by fragmentation, diversification and interrelation. Among the most prominent security challenges, one can find illegal immigration, the financial and economic crisis, and terrorist attacks. Additionally, natural disasters were identified by the project researchers as a prominent security challenge even though it did not emerge as a topic as part of the coding process. The reasons for the inclusion were recent earthquakes (2009 in L'Aquila and 2012 in the Emilia-Romagna region) and the results of an EvoCS workshop with regional experts who also stressed the importance of this security challenge³⁷. Similar to the UK, the Italian general public is the main object actor and, in addition to that, the main addressee (together with the national parliament). The main addressor (again, similarly to the UK) is the national government, but it is not as dominant as in the North-Western country. Other important addressors are the national parliament, civil society and the private sector. The main level at which the security discourse takes place is the national one, which is another similarity with the UK. On a much lower level of prominence are the international and the local level. The role of the latter, however, should not be underestimated, since some Italian regions have a broad amount of autonomy which enables them to be an active actor in the security sector. Human rights and ethical issues are mostly notable for their absence from the public security discourse. Where they appear, they do so in relation to the aspects of illegal immigration in combination with humanitarian emergency. Not directly linked to these issues are discussions on

³² Her Majesty's (HM) Government, *CONTEST: the UK strategy for counter-terrorism*, 2011

³³ Home Office, *The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act*, 2015

³⁴ Katie Harris, *Climate change in UK security policy: implications for development assistance?*, London, Overseas development Institute, 2012 (Working Paper; 342), <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7554.pdf>

³⁵ For the complete analysis of the UK and the whole region of North-West Europe, please refer to: Ksenia Chmutina, Andrew Dainty, Tim Sweijts, Jacques Mukena, Erik Frinking, Barbara Lucini, Marco Lombardi, *D7.2 – Case Study on North-West Europe*, 2015, <http://evocs-project.eu/download/file/fid/54>

³⁶ Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, op. cit., p. 371-386

³⁷ Alessandro Marrone et al. *Deliverable 5.1 - Report on the regional workshop of the West-Mediterranean Europe case study*, 2015, <http://evocs-project.eu/download/file/fid/52>

stricter policy towards immigration and the impact of the economic crisis on fundamental rights (i.e. the effect of austerity measures on the rights of certain groups of people).

From a historical point of view, the identified security challenges can be described by looking at different aspects. National terrorism in Italy in the last 10 to 15 years was mostly concerned with attacks by left-wing extremists, while the transnational aspect of terrorism in Italy dealt with terrorism stemming from Islamic fundamentalists. In both cases, the Italian jurisdiction has taken up this challenge which has led to a number of arrests. The problem is long-term and will probably stay an integral part of the discourse. On the other hand, the economic crisis has led to a strong decrease in GDP and an increase in the unemployment rate, but the latest economic data seems to indicate that the country will be out of the crisis by the end of 2015. This could mean that the prominence of this challenge will be lessened in the near future. On the other hand, the prominence of the security challenge on illegal immigration seems to be growing, with the number of migrants in Italy (from the region of the Middle-East and North-Africa) reaching an all-time-high of 170.100 in 2014. Natural disaster has been an important component of the security discourse and will probably continue to stay so with about 6000 earthquakes, which have hit the country since 2005.

Italy has no overall National Security Strategy but a number of institutional documents which deal with security issues. An analysis of some of these documents (e.g. the 2015 'White Paper for International Security and Defense'³⁸) shows that Italy has a number of permanent issues, which are illegal immigration and terrorist attacks. Using these documents for the analysis also revealed that the government gives the security challenge of 'Cyberspace protection and ICT protection'³⁹ a special focus, which was not a result of the coding process. The reason for this could be external pressure from the EU to introduce such a strategy in each member state. The economic crisis and natural disasters are also mentioned in a number of these documents, which shows that the government tries to address the challenges accordingly⁴⁰.

Overall, the perception of security and its public discourse in Italy are shaped by Italy's geographical exposure to a number of instabilities. This has the effect that salient issues like illegal immigration and terrorist attacks remain essential parts of this discourse in the long run and might probably even increase in importance. On the other hand, the challenge of economic crises might lose some of its importance. Finally, 'natural disasters' is a security challenge that gains a prominent place in the discourse shortly after its occurrence which then diminishes after a while. It is probable that this will remain so in the future. The comparison with the study on Italy's strategic culture⁴¹ is similar to the one of the UK: the realms of security and military seem to be cleanly separated and the results give additional information from the side of civil security but not for the military side.

Poland

The most salient Polish core values are 'Physical safety and security' (the same as in the UK and Italy), 'Economic prosperity and security' and 'Territorial integrity and security'. The most salient Polish security challenges are road traffic safety, demographic crisis and the conflict in Ukraine. The prominent actors in Poland are the national government, the national parliament and the EU. Ethical

³⁸ Italian Ministry of Defence, *Libro Bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*, 2015, http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Documents/2015/04_Aprile/LB_2015.pdf

³⁹ Presidency of the Council of Ministers, *The national plan for cyberspace protection and ICT security*, December 2013, <http://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/italian-national-cyber-security-plan.pdf>

⁴⁰ For the complete analysis of Italy and the whole region of the West-Mediterranean EU, please refer to: Paola Sartori et al. *Deliverable 5.2 – Case Study on West-Mediterranean EU countries*, 2015, <http://evocs-project.eu/deliverables>

⁴¹ Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, *op. cit.*, p. 193-206

and fundamental human rights issues were not properly reflected in the coding process, since they are not explicitly stated in the analysed items. However, where they are explicitly stated, the items dealt with the right of self-determination (e.g. in the conflict in Ukraine), migration policies and the humanitarian crisis in the EU's neighbourhood, human rights standards in emerging economies and the more general discussion on the conflict between freedom and security. Also, the discussion on the ratification of the Council of Europe's 'Convention on Countering Violence against Women and Domestic Violence'⁴² and the issue of security services overstepping their authority (along with the breaches of data protection and privacy) were part of the Polish public security discourse.

Poland had a new National Security Strategy published in November 2014. Comparing it to the previous ones from 2003 and 2007 it seems as if the Polish concept of security has broadened. However, the security discourse in Poland is often overshadowed by a military component, the above mentioned security challenge 'conflict in Ukraine' only being one example. This military factor has gained weight in Poland since 2010, and the maintenance and development of the national defence capabilities seems to have become the primary pillar of the national security. This is also reflected in the third core value which is salient in Poland: territorial integrity and security. This core value will also probably remain salient in the future. What did not come up in the coding process but what is considered to be of growing importance from the point of view of the project's researchers is the conflict with ISIL and the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. The same is thought of cyber and information security⁴³.

In the comparison with the study of Poland's strategic culture⁴⁴ it was observed that the results are indeed similar and that here there is no clear distinction between the military and the security sector. In this way, the results not only broaden the findings from the study on the strategic culture, but they also deepen it because some of these findings could be replicated here.

Bulgaria

In contrast to the other three countries analysed in this paper, Bulgaria's security discourse does not focus on 'Physical safety and security' but rather on 'Political stability and security', 'Economic prosperity and security' and 'Social stability and security'. Indeed, the detailed analysis put special emphasis on why Bulgaria's society seems to be insecure in these areas, even though the country is both an EU and a NATO member. According to this analysis, all three core values are interconnected. This is exemplified by the observation that any rise in political instability leads to a worsening financial situation which in turn leads to smaller possibilities for any social advancement of the population. Also, political stability has been observed as a value that was very strong during Bulgaria's communist years which was to be preserved even after the end of the eastern bloc. Thus, the democratic process was always seen as a weighing of instability vs. stability. This again is connected to the financial situation, since one of the failures of the democratic governance in Bulgaria has also led to two collapses of the financial systems in the years 1992-1997. Ironically, the former communist party was ruling the country at that time. Membership in the EU does not seem to have improved the situation when weighed against the expectations of the citizens⁴⁵. In conclusion, the three most salient core values in Bulgaria are rooted in domestic developments rather than in the external environment. These internal developments are a combination of democratic deficit, poor

⁴² Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, 2011, <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/210.htm>

⁴³ For the complete analysis of Poland and the whole region of the Eastern EU Border, please refer to: Marcin Terlikowski et al. *Deliverable 6.2 – Case Study on the Eastern EU Border*, 2015, <http://evocs-project.eu/deliverables>

⁴⁴ Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, op. cit., p. 269-280

⁴⁵ Ivan Krastev, *The Inflexibility Trap: Frustrated Societies, Weak States, and Democracy*, Bratislava, UNDP, 2002

governance and lack of trust in institutions' ability to regulate social relationship in favour of ordinary citizens. This can also be formulated as a vertical gap between the Bulgarian population and its government. A similar gap was identified between the perceptions of prominent security challenges by the official institutions and the general public. While the institutions consider for example the crisis in Ukraine, security issues in the Western Balkans, transnational terrorism and easy access to modern information technology as a threat. The general public rather considers corruption, organised crime and emigration and demographic crises, relations with Russia and delayed reforms in the security and law enforcement sector to be worthwhile discussing.

From the official side, Bulgaria's threat perception is similar to the one of the EU. The state leadership sees the recent events in Ukraine as something that completely changes the security landscape. The conclusions for Bulgaria are that it cannot rely on any international treaties or institutions outside of the EU and NATO to protect its borders. Economic interdependence in this context is seen as a source or insecurity. However, at the public level Bulgaria is focused inwards, as described above. Civil society is still in the process of consolidation and the government is seen as a security actor which is overwhelmed and overstretched. Generally speaking, Bulgaria as a state, society and culture is very vulnerable at present. Recovering and developing after political, financial and security shocks has been met with limited success. Also, security challenges are not met in a strategic way but rather by expanding the scope of security beyond the capacity of the government to manage these issues. While the above mentioned challenges are systematically problematized, they are not made political problems of security. This has led Bulgaria's governments to draft many security relevant strategies which are however not implemented⁴⁶. The consequence of this is that the security discourse in the next years is on the one hand going to stay similar to what the EvoCS project found in the coding process, but on the other hand emphasising external challenges (like the events in Ukraine), that will become more and more prominent.

The comparison with the study on Bulgaria's strategic culture⁴⁷ is similar to the one for Poland. Here, the security and military sectors are also not clearly demarcated as was the case with the UK and Italy above. To the contrary, while the strategic culture speaks of a shift from the military dominating the foreign policy to the very reverse, the results from the EvoCS projects actually show us examples of this foreign policy with the discussions and perceptions on Ukraine: that the Bulgarian government is seen as overwhelmed and overstretched in questions of security and that there are many security strategies but only little implementation. In this sense, the results of the EvoCS project not only replicate the findings on the strategic culture but also enrich them with new aspects and perspectives.

Conclusions

Taking the above described four national case studies together, one gets a mixed picture of these four NATO members in the context of their public security discourse (see Table 1 below). Some countries share similar core values that are most salient in the security discourse like 'Economic prosperity and security' in all countries or 'Physical safety and security' in all countries except Bulgaria. Going into more detail, though, one can see that the security challenges behind these core values are less similar. While the UK and Italy both perceive terrorism and natural hazards/disasters as important topics, Poland and Bulgaria discuss 'demographic crises' and the conflict in Ukraine or the relations with

⁴⁶ For the complete analysis of Bulgaria and the whole region of South-Eastern Europe, please refer to: Miloš Jovanović et al., *Deliverable 8.2 – Case Study on South-Eastern Europe*, 2015, <http://evocs-project.eu/deliverables>

⁴⁷ Heiko Biehl, Giegerich Bastian, Alexandra Jonas (eds), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, op. cit., p. 43-54

Russia. One may perceive at this point a still existing split between the Western ‘old’ NATO members and the Eastern ‘new’ ones.

The most important security actor addressor (as the actor from which discussions are being started) for all the countries is the national government, often followed by the national parliament. Likewise, the most important level on which the discussion is articulated is the national one in all countries. This is also an important point for NATO, since the ‘transnational’ level is not perceived as being very important. Similarly, when looking at some results from studies on strategic cultures⁴⁸, this split (between Western and Eastern NATO members) might be observed as the difference between the two types of strategic cultures called ‘Security Policy as Protecting and Projecting State Power’ (i.e. typical larger countries of the Western Hemisphere) and ‘Security Policy as Team Play (i.e. countries of Central and Eastern Europe).

Regarding a possible change in the security discourses of these four NATO members, there seem to be clear national differences. The discourse in the UK seems to be stable and will probably remain so, unless an unforeseen event changes this in the future. In Italy the picture looks similar, with the exception of economy-related security challenges, since the country seems to be on the verge of leaving the economic and financial crises behind itself. Again, the two analysed Western NATO members seem to be more stable in their security discourses than the Eastern ones. In Poland, security challenges like terrorism, cyber and information security will probably be discussed more in the future, which is similar to Bulgaria, where external challenges like the conflict in Ukraine will gain more prominence. The differences here, however, will have to be taken with a grain of salt, since, for example, the discussion on internal security challenges in Bulgaria also seems to have been stable in the recent past. For the sake of stability, NATO could try, where possible, to help its member states more with security challenges and threats in order to stabilise the security discourse. For example, in some countries the military is used to help in the current refugee crisis. This could be a possibility for NATO to coordinate the efforts and better pool the capabilities. However, this should only be done where the blending of the security and military sector does not impede on the rights of a country or the European Union.

Looking at the change in the security discourse from a more generic level, it seems clear that the security discourse is affected strongly by events that have a direct effect on the general population like terrorist or cyber-attacks or a conflict in a near or neighbouring country. Depending on the nature of this event, discussions will be of a more short-term or long-term nature. The EvoCS methodology takes these different natures into account by analysing both the current security discourse (using the coding process) and its recent historical trajectory (using desktop research and expert opinion). For international organisations like NATO, it is very important to be able to discern between what are short-term (for example illegal immigration in some cases), long-term (and ‘traditional’, for example organised crime) or long-term (and ‘non-traditional’, for example cyber and information security) aspects of a countries or regions security discourses in order to be able to react to security challenges which are also inside the scope of NATO. Reacting to short-term events with long-term strategies would probably not be the right choice. The same is true for tackling ‘traditional’ security challenges, which have been part of a country’s security discourse for a long time, in ‘traditional’ ways without first identifying the reasons why these specific security challenges have been part of the discourse for such a long time without being solved satisfyingly.

To sum up, the research on EvoCS’ security concepts is a good example of how discussions on strategic cultures can be complemented in order to bring an additional perspective to policy makers’ perceptions. Also, since the focus of EvoCS is on civil security, the picture can be broadened to not

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*

only include military aspect. In this way, the two research approaches can add to each other and help replicate each other's results. This would lead to more robust research and the possibility of better recommendations for policy makers.

	United Kingdom	Italy	Poland	Bulgaria
Key core values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical safety and security Economic prosperity and security Environmental and ecological security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical safety and security Social stability and security Economic prosperity and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical safety and security Economic prosperity and security Territorial integrity and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political stability and security Economic prosperity and security Social stability and security
Key security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrorism Climate Change Natural hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrorism Illegal immigration Natural disasters Economic crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road traffic safety Demographic crisis Conflict in Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corruption Organised crime Emigration and demographic crises Relations with Russia
Key actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National government National parliament Civil society Private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National government National parliament EU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National government
Key level of discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National
Short-term change	No.	With respect to the economic crises probably yes. The others not.	Terrorism, cyber and information security will become more important in the future.	Not for internal challenges. External challenges will probably become more prominent.

Figure 2 Overview of the results of the EvoCS project in the context of this paper

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Working Group 1 – Report

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Debating Strategic Cultures within NATO

Strategic culture is a concept that features prominently in academic and policy debates over defense matters. Strategic culture is often broadly defined as the set of values, norms and convictions that orient security policy preferences and decisions. Understanding the way in which countries frame their approach to security has a special importance within NATO as the Alliance needs to find the best tools to coordinate inevitably diverse, deeply embedded mindsets in order to promote the core *unity of effort* required to perform effectively.

While a better understanding of strategic cultures is required, the concept itself is far from having a univocal connotation. First, as it emerged from the recognition of the state-of-the-art of academic literature, strategic cultures may be referred to three different levels of analysis: they can pertain to political élites, to the broader societal level, and to the military. Every level has its own peculiar features, which clearly add to complexity. Second, there are difficulties in operationally defining and measuring the concept, as research on the theme – though very rich in insights – does not provide many shared points. However, and notwithstanding the frequent concept ‘stretching’, it is widely held – and highlighted by the two papers presented – that strategic cultures share three constitutive features.

First, they provide the key lenses through which countries interpret their security environment. Research digging on the cultural dimension of strategic thinking and planning allows uncovering some less known aspects that underpin security and defense policy and might lead to counterintuitive results. Second, they tend to present notable differences across countries (or clusters of countries). Different criteria can be proposed to typify strategic cultures. European NATO Members, for instance, do not share the same fundamental view about the core missions of their armed forces, with some countries viewing the projection of power as the key task and others more inclined to focus on collective territorial defense. Third, they have a ‘constitutional’ value, that is, they are relatively rigid (i.e. difficult to modify) and tend to maintain their fundamental character over time. As such, they might not shape every single decision, but rather have a sizeable impact on those policy choices that touch upon fundamental issues. How to react to a new threat is clearly one of these latter cases, and diversity across Europe over the assessment of Russia’s assertiveness in Ukraine an immediate example.

The Working Group recognized the complexities as well as the importance associated with a thorough understanding of strategic cultures and focused its discussion around 3 major themes: 1) the analysis of how diversity affect decision-making and shapes the workings of the Alliance; 2) the debate over

continuity and change in strategic cultures; and 3) the consequences for NATO in general and ACT in particular of such characterization, and what can be tentatively done about it.

Analyzing Diversity

Strategic cultures play an important role in shaping the long term outcome of a country's defense and security policy-making. But they may also become particularly salient in a global security environment characterized by hybrid threats and by an increasing number of crises. While more conventional threats – such as those associated with the prospects of a conventional aggression to one country's territory – lend themselves to larger problems in terms of identification. Different 'filters' (as it is possible to conceive strategic cultures) can lead to disagreements in terms of definition, design and implementation of policy responses. At the same time, coherently with the findings of research on the inner workings of organizations and decision-making, during crises strategic cultures can play a relevant role. With constrained time for making decisions, policy-makers might turn to rather uncritical adhesion to the most embedded set of values that countries have (i.e. strategic culture). Thus, the understanding of how strategic cultures differ represents an essential tool for decision-makers in charge of coordinating multi-national undertakings.

While it is relatively easy to observe that, within NATO, different cultures exist (and persist), there is a relative dearth of research that addresses the specific connection between security cultures and defense policy (more strictly intended). Until now, the European Union has been a leading provider of funding, largely backing projects (such as EvoCS – Evolving Concept of Security, whose preliminary results were presented during the Working Group) that focused on societal-level definitions of security, and on the national variations at this level. Further attention on intra-NATO diversity would provide much needed fine-grained material on the impact of different security cultures on policy-making, as well on the factors that drive continuity and change in strategic cultures.

The panel also discussed in depth how to improve the methodology of research in order to increase the rigor together with usability and usefulness of research products. With reference to that, one participant raised the issue of promoting methodological convergence: the processes of 'coding' the material on which research is based (e.g.: documents on security policy), for instance, need to be more transparent and widely shared. This type of practices would be coherent with a key objective of new research to effectively cumulate knowledge on the topic. Other interventions pointed out that, in order to achieve the very objective of informing and enriching the policy debate, the analysis of the strategic culture must recognize the pluralism of approaches in social sciences. More attention to the reciprocal influence of discourses and practices, and how sometimes discourses are decoupled by practices themselves, would allow a more thorough grasping of what strategic cultures are and how they affect decisions.

Overall, notwithstanding criticism and the persistence of diverse views among researchers on the concept of strategic cultures, it was widely shared that further research on the topic would be crucial. Methodological improvement and focus on the most pressing issues for the Alliance should fit together. In this sense, understanding different cultures is a pre-condition not to change, but rather to 'synchronize' them as a key element for unity of effort that constitutes a cornerstone of NATO doctrine. The Working Group agreed that such research on strategic cultures is one of the topics where social science research and policy can fruitfully reach common grounds for cooperation, and thus where NATO could play an important role together with academia. Similar programs, such as such as the Minerva Program started in 2008 by the US Department of Defense, proved to be successful in fostering fruitful cooperation between defense institutions and the social sciences.

Continuity and Change

One of the key attributes of strategic cultures is their relative ‘stability in diversity’. How does this statement relate with a world in which crises are more frequent and the threats cannot often be easily assimilated to well established canons? On the one hand, this presence of simultaneous complex threats can create incentives for countries and their leaders to move back to ‘comfort zones’. An example of this would be countries with deeply engrained preferences for collective defense as the key activities of armed forces – such as Germany – that will tend to read new threats – such as Russia’s activism on the Eastern flank of Europe – as challenges that call for a redefinition of the *Bundeswehr* on defensive tasks and away from the expeditionary model that had prevailed in the past two decades. On the other hand, new challenges provide notable pushes for change. Critical junctures, in fact, can represent moments in which preferences and institutions that have been stable over time are subject to increasing pressures and can thus bring about change.

The panel discussed at length the factors that can lead to transformation in strategic cultures. A first distinction can be drawn between exogenous and endogenous sources of change. The former certainly include long term evolution of the global and regional security environment in which a country is situated. A participant stressed that also membership in institutions (such as NATO and the EU) can affect strategic culture by socialization (and in parallel, internalization) of new norms over time. Endogenous change can be linked to societal changes that occur in the long run (such as variations in the demographic composition of the population that may lead to shifts in values of the public opinion and leadership). Another related distinction is between changes occurring in the short run and in the long run. The former, in particular, are generally the outcome of traumatic events – such as a direct and unprecedented threat to national security. Changes occurring in this fashion may not lead to long term changes, rather it is possible to observe that they are followed by more “volatility”, with different values potentially clashing in the short and medium run.

The panel was conscious that while diversity is an enduring feature, and while most of the mentioned changes are either due to long term transformations or to undesirable traumas, some convergence is certainly needed for the alliance to smoothly operate. One possible scenario that might materialize, in the absence of such broad convergence, is that the Alliance will be increasingly characterized by the presence of different clusters, or sub-coalitions, that will coalesce around shared strategic cultures. This can lead to the loosening of overall ties, or – less radically – to more difficulties in finding minimum common denominators short of agreeing in presence of clear ‘article 5 scenarios’. To avoid such outcomes, NATO can address some of the current sources of divergence and better learn how to facilitate coordination among a diverse range of worldviews.

Implications for NATO

In drawing implications for NATO in general, and in particular on what Allied Command Transformation might do, the panel was keen on stressing that policy responses in this field should adhere to one overarching principle, that is, they should avoid exclusively top-down approaches. Reconciling different strategic cultures in order to pursue common objectives cannot come as an attempt to super-impose a superior set of values and preferences. Rather, it should begin by a thorough process of identification of the minimum common denominators among Nations. In this specific field, creating the (basic) needed cultural convergence should have its roots in the recognition that bottom up elements, sometimes embedded in routines and practices that already exist, can drive the required incremental change.

Given this, two broad set of objectives should be pursued. First, there is a need to create better linkages among all the institutions involved. This entails strengthened cooperation within NATO command structure. A participant argued, for instance, that the next strategic foresight analysis should be better integrated into planning at different levels (involving then both ACO and ACT). While this enhanced coordination is essential, most participants agreed that the largest gap is still between NATO and the Nations. This persistent gap makes it difficult even for the right policies to reach the right constituencies, i.e. those actors that can shape change. Finding the right levers to move from these changes to results is a key element of any improvement in the institutional design and – at a lower level – of the practices that should be adopted within the Alliance. The second objective is to provide these linkages with a ‘content’, that is to improve the capabilities in terms of collective information processing and sharing.

What follows is a list of 7 recommendations devised by the Working Group that provide tentative solutions to achieve these two (overlapping) objectives.

First, *Better integration of foresight analysis with national foresight and planning exercises* is a pre-condition for other measures to have an effective impact. Currently, there is not enough coherence between NATO-wide analyses of future threats and similar national exercises (if and when these exercises take place). A coherent effort to harmonize foresight analysis should not be based on the premise of top-down imposition of one’s view of the future environment, but rather on the creation of more occasions of sharing the different views and recognizing the common elements among them.

Second, *Recognition of the strengths of experiences that already exist within NATO and between NATO and the Nations*. There are, in other words, several bottom-up practices that created best practices through time and that should be further strengthened. ACT has acted, for instance, as the standard bearer in terms of establishing the best practices for dealing with transformation, playing an important standard setting role that often allowed the common ground to emerge. The establishment of standard-setting and training structures such as JALLC is another example of this type of activities.

Third, *NATO, and particularly ACT, should directly support those fields of social sciences research that address relevant policy problems*, such as ‘strategic cultures’, so contribute to build a solid knowledge base. As it emerged in all the discussion, recognizing differences among strategic cultures is the starting point to understand how change and effective coordination can occur. In supporting research, NATO/ACT should aim at promoting methodological rigor while acknowledging that research in the field cannot be constrained to a single method and should be based on quantitative as well qualitative approaches.

Fourth, *Improving information gathering and databases at the NATO-level* could lead to the creation of useful tools that are tailored to suit the needs of NATO. The idea of a tool comparable to similar exercises (produced for instance by the EU), such as a ‘NATO barometer’, to better understand public opinions (and possibly, élites) and their perceptions of key transatlantic themes together with their broader views on security issues (as a relevant element to understand diversity in strategic cultures), was supported by the Working Group.

Fifth, As reaching the right national constituencies is key to overcome differences and stimulate change, *ACT could promote initiatives targeting policy-makers*. Within the panel, it emerged how the success of Models NATO – targeted at University students – was in raising cross-cultural awareness and reducing informational asymmetries on how NATO works. Structuring a ‘senior version’ of such exercise directed at national policy-makers might have similar effects, although clearly the effort in customizing it to make it fit for a different audience would be considerable.

Sixth, Promoting sharing of knowledge base is not just about exchanging data, as the human factor is central. *Strengthening cultural awareness of both the military and civil components of NATO* is a required first step to effective sharing, which cannot come without a high level of mutual understanding. Strengthening a human resources policy that, for instance, promotes the exchange of officers at different levels to build knowledge networks would also constitute an effective way to create those informal mechanisms of horizontal coordination that underpin successful cooperation through sharing and mutual understanding. While such an effort should certainly take into consideration the heavy loads that rotations and foreign postings can have in the lives of officers, ACT should also work strategically through its rich human resources assets to transmit knowledge.

Finally, *ACT should keep promoting joint training*, as this – among the other important functions – affects cultural awareness directly at the operational level. Panelists suggested that different types of training should be strengthened. First, due to the nature of the current crises, ACT should focus more on high-end exercises that include ‘kinetic’ activities. However, this should not lead to forget the comprehensive approach. The latter has been a key element of NATO’s doctrine in the recent past and, most importantly from the standpoint of this panel, it seemed to be one of the rare approaches that represented a common strategic culture (or at least common elements of a strategic culture, under the label of COIN, Whole-of-Government approach, and so on). This, of course, entails more investments in training, which now constitutes a limited slice of defense budgets across NATO’s countries. This makes the objective of reaching and socializing the right audiences to the requirements of joint efforts even more crucial.

What Is NATO Ready for? Making the Case for ‘Strategic Readiness’

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Introduction

Do we know what the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is ready for? The question seems to be a straightforward one, and the notion of readiness to be fairly self-explanatory – it gauges the Alliance’s ability to use force to fulfil its objectives. It should therefore be possible to answer the question with some degree of accuracy.

In fact, the short answer to whether we know what NATO is ready for is: not really. Or at least, not completely: we have a good sense of some aspects of NATO readiness, but huge blind spots subsist for others. The main issue is that the way NATO measures readiness is partial. Across NATO it is conceived of chiefly as a technical variable, which focuses on such things as “flying hours, steaming days, tank miles, and training events”⁴⁹, to the exclusion of other facets of what it means to be ready to use force. Yet the way we measure readiness influences the way we understand readiness. Therefore, the way we understand readiness is partial.

This poses problems for NATO deterrence. The first issue is that the way we measure and understand readiness is partial, but readiness itself is not. It is hard to see readiness as anything other than a yes or no issue: one is either ready to face a threat, or not ready. Being partly ready does not cut it: if the airborne component of a high readiness force is not ready, this will annihilate the anticipated effect of the force itself quite entirely. Conversely, a low readiness force can be a coherent part of a balanced and cost-effective force structure attempting to achieve a set of clear objectives. But if a force enjoys a high level of so-called ‘readiness’, but is not ready for the threats it is to face – or is ready for different threats than those it is likely to face – is this force to be described as ready? In such cases, uneven levels of readiness will prove worse than lack of readiness if they maintain the illusion of readiness, and therefore the illusion of deterrence. As such, the readiness problem is not quite as straightforward as it looks.

The second issue to NATO credibility is that our understanding of readiness is partial, but we do not often remember that it is partial. Military officers are quite happy to report back on ratios of flying hours, steaming days, tank miles or training events. In turn, top brass will report back to political decision-makers, along the old political-military fault lines which dictate that the military prepares

⁴⁹ Todd Harrison, “Rethinking Readiness”, in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Fall (2014), p. 41

the force, and the political authorities use it. This worked in an era when we had a clear sense of how the world worked, and of how military force could be applied to effect change. But today this useful division of labour helps to elude a complicated but important question: what are such forces ready for, and what lasting effect are they liable to have in the current environment? If the landscape of threats is shifting quicker than our capacity to detect and understand them, how does one prepare for facing them? In an era when media pressure is unceasing, how does one use force to effect lasting change in the strategic environment, not just the media environment? At a time when the notions of peace and war have blurred, and when tactical victories can turn into harrowing long-term defeats, would it be worth devoting more time, energy and resources to the lasting effect one might achieve in a given situation, in addition to technical assessments of readiness?

This paper unpacks the notion of readiness, to assess the issues it presents to NATO deterrence and credibility. It starts by looking at military readiness levels and the way they are measured across NATO, particularly amongst its key military players. Robust and consistent methodologies are in place almost everywhere, inherited from the Cold War but adjusted to address some of the readiness issues that came about with the end of it. At NATO level, readiness targets also furnish a time-tested and reliable yardstick of readiness despite the levels themselves being largely classified. The data yields some other interesting conclusions. Firstly, with some notable exceptions, national levels of readiness have dipped across NATO militaries as a result of age, neglect, operational wear and tear, and dwindling defence spending – which tends to have a disproportionate effect on readiness levels. In this regard the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and the constitution of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) decided upon in 2014 clearly help adapt the organisation to threats on its Eastern flank.

The comparison also provides confirmation that readiness is a predominantly technical notion across NATO countries. Readiness is used to measure the tasks that a trained, supported and equipped combat unit can perform, aggregated from army-specific indicators into a coherent joint-level readiness picture. It yields a quantitative, measurable picture of readiness – low, high, or very high – which is both necessary and important. However, it is not sufficient. In fact, folding the question of readiness entirely onto its most technical understanding may contribute to concealing the biggest challenges to NATO readiness.

Clearly the capacity to use force requires forces to be combat ready. But it implies rather more than a reliable statistic of flying hours, steaming days, tank miles and training events. On the one hand, it involves the ability to project the assets that are combat ready. It supposes one is able to deploy the assets quickly to a given theatre: issues with availability and readiness of enablers will mechanically affect how quickly one is able to deploy assets to an operational theatre. It also requires the capacity to operate today in multinational coalitions on a given theatre. Thirdly, it supposes these deployed, combat-ready assets are adapted to the threats they were deployed to face, and are able to have more than a fleeting impact on them. Lastly, it supposes leaders, nations and populations are willing to project force and deploy the armed forces – and crucially, that they understand and agree about what they are trying to achieve by doing this.

This suggests that ‘readiness’ narrowly defined captures only a fraction of what it is to be ready to use force. Far from the self-evident notion it would appear to be, readiness involves at least four layers: combat readiness, operational readiness, cultural readiness, and strategic readiness.

There is an inbuilt, institutional leaning amongst NATO militaries that focuses on combat readiness, to the detriment of aspects of readiness which are trickier to capture using hard statistics. This is understandable insofar as it affords the military with a comforting degree of knowledge and control over the availability of its assets. However, if one considers the very purpose of readiness, which is

being ready to deploy force to achieve a calculated end, then it is incomplete. Plainly, the notions of strategic and cultural readiness are more diffuse and difficult to measure or control. But even if they are not always soluble in military thinking, they nonetheless have palpable military effects – just as lack of combat readiness has critical military impact. In effect, the lack of any of these facets of readiness has a similar consequence: to defeat the purpose of readiness, which is to be ready to deploy force to achieve one's end.

Combat readiness, operational readiness, strategic readiness, and cultural readiness: all these aspects of readiness are necessary. Yet neither is sufficient in isolation. Therefore, after comparing levels and understandings of readiness across NATO, this paper advocates upholding the technical, time-tested methods of measuring combat-readiness. However, it also makes the case for an understanding of readiness that better covers what it means to be ready to use force to achieve an end. Combining hard and 'soft' indicators is one sensible way of building a finer and more realistic picture of military readiness. Building a methodology of impact that focuses on output and tangible effect is another. Otherwise, we risk burying the crucial question of NATO's military readiness under a pile of data.

Reporting Readiness

The definition of readiness across NATO countries focuses mainly on the operational 'inputs' that are necessary to the capacity of using force quickly. It is understood as the ability of a military unit to perform a task that is assigned to it⁵⁰. It includes manpower (e.g. an army battalion) and equipment (e.g. a weapon system). As such it encompasses condition, spare parts, maintenance, supply and logistics for equipment, and such variables as training, morale⁵¹, food, as well as "attracting, retaining [and] educating [...] top quality military personnel"⁵² for manpower.

Overall, American, French or British militaries offer similar understandings of military readiness. The US Department of Defence (DoD) defines readiness as "the ability of U.S. military forces to fight and meet the demands of the National Military Strategy, which describes the armed forces' role in achieving national security objectives"⁵³. It assesses readiness both for "individual units such as Army and Marine Corps battalions, Navy ships, and Air Force squadrons; and joint forces composed of units from more than one service branch"⁵⁴. The readiness requirements for the American military are therefore measured using a

common framework for conducting commanders' readiness assessments, blending unit-level readiness indicators with combatant command (COCOM), Service, and Combat Support Agency (CSA) (collectively known as the C/S/As) subjective assessments of their ability to execute the National Military Strategy (NMS). Specifically, the Chairman's Readiness System (CRS) provides the C/S/As a readiness reporting system measuring their ability to integrate and synchronize combat and support units into an effective joint force ready to accomplish assigned missions⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ See George Kruys, "Combat readiness with specific reference to armies, Institute for Strategic Studies", Pretoria, University of Pretoria, Institute for Strategic Studies 2001

⁵¹ Jack Spencer, "The Facts About Military Readiness", The Heritage Foundation, September 2000, available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2000/09/bg1394-the-facts-about-military-readiness>

⁵² Derek Trunkey, *Implications of the Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System*, Washington DC, Congressional Budget Office, March 2013

⁵³ *Ibidem.*, p.iii.

⁵⁴ US Department of Defence, *CJCS Guide to the Chairman's Readiness System*, 2010, p.7. Available at http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/g3401.pdf

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*

American military readiness is distinguished by degrees which vary from C-1 to C-4: “at the highest level, a unit is prepared to move into position and accomplish its mission. At the lowest level, a unit requires further manpower, training, equipment, and/or logistics to accomplish its mission”⁵⁶. It is achieved both through the SORTS system and the DRRS evaluation⁵⁷, which “includes a commander’s self-assessment of whether a unit is ready to perform the missions and tasks assigned to it”⁵⁸. Both these methods, and indeed the US military’s attempt at ‘automating’ the measurement of readiness⁵⁹ tends to confirm the overall impression that readiness is primarily conceived of as a technical and quantitative undertaking at operational level. As researcher Todd Harrison puts it in his analysis of readiness, “the way the US military thinks about readiness is driven in no small part by the way it measures readiness”.⁶⁰ It is inherited from the so-called DOTMLPF model⁶¹, the acronym of which is evocative: it stands for ‘Doctrine, Organisation, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel and Facilities’. Based on such criteria, domestic and foreign readiness went from forces immediately ready for and capable of high intensity offensive action on one end of the spectrum, to forces in reconfiguration phase, ready for limited defensive action.

This understanding of readiness has broad currency in the wider strategic community. On both sides of the political divide, American think tanks focus the brunt of their intellectual effort on ways of measuring military readiness in the technical acceptance of the word. The Brookings Institution has published widely in an attempt to assess military readiness⁶², which is carefully defined in one report as the measure of whether armed forces “have enough of the right types of skilled and adequately trained personnel, and if they own adequate stocks of equipment in good working order”⁶³. A Heritage Foundation paper has described readiness as “the ability of a military unit, such as an Army division or a carrier battle group, to accomplish its assigned mission”⁶⁴. The Rand, likewise, has devoted a significant amount of research to operational readiness, which it defines as “organizing, training, and equipping armed forces for combat”⁶⁵, and has long sought to adequately measure it⁶⁶, despite the fact that the value of readiness measurement to high-level decision makers “in support of decision-making” has been “very limited”⁶⁷.

The consensus that has formed around readiness as a chiefly technical variable extends outside the U.S. Department of Defence and across NATO allies, including those which for historical and cultural reasons are not prone to using American military planning, categories, and metrics. The French

⁵⁶ Derek Trunkey, *Implications of the Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ US Department of Defence, *Status of Readiness and Training System and Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System*, Washington DC, May 2015

⁵⁸ Todd Harrison, “Rethinking Readiness”, *op. cit.*, p. 45

⁵⁹ “Although DoD initially envisioned DRRS as a replacement for SORTS, DoD now intends for DRRS to improve on, add to, and automate readiness reporting while continuing to incorporate most of the SORTS metrics”, Derek Trunkey, *Implications of the Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System*, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Todd Harrison, “Rethinking Readiness”, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁶¹ Department of Defense, *Dictionnaire of Military and Associated Terms*, March 2015, www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf.

⁶² Richard Betts, “Military Readiness, Concepts, Choices, Consequences”, Washington DC, Brookings institution, March 1995; Jerre Wilson and Michael O’Hanlon, “Shoring Up Military Readiness”, Washington DC, Brookings Institution 1999 (Brookings Policy briefs Series; 43), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/1999/01/defense-ohanlon>; Jason Forrester, Micah Zenko, Michael O’Hanlon, “Are U.S. Armed Forces Ready? ”, Washington DC, Brookings Institution, Spring 2001, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2001/03/spring-usmilitary-ohanlon>

⁶³ Jason Forrester, Micah Zenko, Michael O’Hanlon., *Measuring U.S. Military Readiness*, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴ Jack Spencer, “The Facts About Military Readiness”, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Rand Corporation, Operational Readiness, Rand official website, <http://www.rand.org/topics/operational-readiness.html>

⁶⁶ Craig Moore, James Stockfish, Matthew Goldberg, Suzanne Holroydand& Gregory Hildebrandt, “Measuring Military Readiness and Sustainability”, Santa Monica, Rand Corporation, 1991, <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2007/R3842.pdf>

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*

army's conception of military readiness (*préparation opérationnelle*) is two-fold. It relies upon force preparation on the one hand and equipment readiness on the other⁶⁸. Operational preparation has evolved since the war in Afghanistan, which has led to distinguishing general force preparation and modular preparation for a specific type of conflict (such as Mali or CAR today). Equipment readiness (technically defined as *maintien en condition opérationnelle* (MCO), generically defined as *disponibilité des matériels*, includes logistics, management of equipment across its shelf life, actualisation of technical specifications, availability of spare parts, individual training, predictive (structural) maintenance and corrective (*ad hoc*) maintenance⁶⁹. Traditionally, the French army has measured readiness (MCO)⁷⁰ by using two Service-specific criteria: technical readiness (DT)⁷¹ and technical operational readiness (DTO)⁷². Technical readiness is measured as the percentage of equipment in functioning condition, calculated as a share of the army's total equipment. Technical operational readiness on the other hand is defined as the percentage of equipment capable of fulfilling its assigned mission. Both DT and DTO, however, are understood along service lines⁷³. For the Airforce and the Navy, readiness revolves mainly around the permanence of French nuclear deterrence. The priority for both services is to "ensure permanence of the nuclear deterrence mission, [...] undertake all recurrent missions [...] and ensure readiness for external operations"⁷⁴. For the Army, the priority is to "ensure readiness levels of over 90% in external operations"⁷⁵. The Army places a greater emphasis on training and individual readiness, in a general doctrine which places men at the centre of its model, and individual preparation, strategic culture and state of mind as its main asset. In practice, readiness levels are more finely differentiated for forces and equipment outside external operations, with a view to ensuring overall military readiness objectives⁷⁶.

The British Army has a similarly layered and service-specific understanding of readiness⁷⁷. It defines readiness as "the varying levels of preparedness at which the Ministry of Defence holds its military

⁶⁸ "La préparation opérationnelle repose sur la disponibilité des matériels, donc sur leur entretien et maintenance, et sur l'entraînement des troupes. Tel est l'objet du programme 178 de la mission 'Défense' qui concerne la préparation et l'emploi des forces". French Senate, *Projet de loi de finances pour 2015 : Défense : préparation et emploi des forces*, Official report, November 2014

⁶⁹ Cour des Comptes, *Maintien en condition opérationnelle, or MCO. Le maintien en condition opérationnelle des matériels militaires : des efforts à poursuivre*, September 2014 (Rapport public thématique)

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*

⁷¹ 'Disponibilité opérationnelle', or DT

⁷² 'Disponibilité technique opérationnelle', or DTO

⁷³ "In the Army, the concept of OTA (Operational Technical Availability) is used to estimate, on a daily basis, the amount of vehicles able to conduct operational missions. The French Navy has developed a complex estimation process regarding ships availability in accordance with the missions they have to accomplish. Technical availability is perceived as the ship's capacity to navigate, whereas OTA is conceived refers to the missions it is able to carry out: thus, for example, an anti-submarine frigate can assume anti-submarine capacities, but not of its anti-air ones. [...] Finally, in the aeronautic field, technical availability is conceived as the ability for an aircraft to carry out in less than 6 hours any mission it was designed for. OTA corresponds to the ratio of all the technically available aircrafts compared to the amount needed to carry out the most demanding scenario stressed out in the operational contract. This definition changed in 2011: up to this year, OTA stood for the ratio between technically available aircrafts and the amount needed to conduct activities just as planned ». Cour des Comptes, "In-service support for military. Continuing rationalization". Cour des Comptes, *Maintien en condition opérationnelle, or MCO, op. cit.*, p. 24-25

⁷⁴ "In the naval sector, the planning of technical stops is established in order to permanently ensure nuclear deterrence and to have enough available units to face recurring missions. In the aeronautic sector, priority is given to overseas operations and the permanence of the deterrence mission". Cour des Comptes, *Maintien en condition opérationnelle, or MCO, op. cit.*

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*

⁷⁶ "In the Army, the aim is to permanently guarantee an operational availability rate above 90% regarding the materials dedicated to overseas operations, and to adapt the availability rate in mainland France to the needs of operational training and preparedness. Depending on its position in the engagement cycle, each regiment is assigned a specific priority level and a threshold of availability regarding the equipment it uses on a daily basis for its operational preparation", *ibidem*

⁷⁷ US Department of Defence, *Readiness and recuperation of the Armed Forces: looking towards the Strategic Defence Review*, Washington DC, Defence Committee, February 2010

forces in order to respond to emerging operations”⁷⁸. The UK Ministry of Defence therefore “plans on maintaining forces at a variety of ‘peacetime’ readiness states and to be able to reconfigure forces to respond to contingencies within specific readiness times”, because “the cost of keeping forces ‘ready’ for contingencies has to be balanced against the likelihood of such contingencies occurring and the warning and preparation time available to respond”⁷⁹. The measurement of readiness is unit-related and broken down to assess service-specific readiness: the MoD

measures the readiness of individual force elements and then aggregates the results to determine overall readiness. The readiness of an individual force element such as an armoured brigade in the Army, a ship in the Royal Navy or a squadron of aircraft in the RAF is measured under its four constituent parts: manpower; equipment; training and sustainability. A critical or serious weakness in the readiness of any force element can result from a failure in one of the constituent parts. For example, a shortage of spare parts to repair a particular piece of equipment would be a weakness in the sustainability of a force element thereby reducing its readiness for contingent operations. Similarly, having equipment available without sufficient Armed Forces personnel trained to operate that equipment would result in a weakness in its readiness⁸⁰.

The U.K.’s readiness measurement and reporting system requires

the three Services each set specific parameters for key elements of readiness such as manning levels, equipment support and collective training (that is the training units do together to ensure they can fight effectively as part of a larger force) which, if achieved, should allow them to deploy for their primary role within a set period. Assessments can be made against this firm baseline⁸¹.

In view of such targets, the U.K.’s Future Force 2020 objectives distinguish the structure of British armed forces according to their level of readiness into the ‘deployed force’, the ‘high readiness force’, and the ‘lower readiness force’⁸². It also envisages how Allied and partner forces might contribute and feed into such national targets⁸³.

The Metrics of Readiness

What American, French and British understandings of military readiness have in common is that they focus their attention on “flying hours, steaming days, tank miles, and training events”⁸⁴: in other words, on inputs. They are measurable, task-related and traditionally concern unit or joint levels of preparation. They assess the capacity of a military unit to perform a mission assigned to it jointly or within a given army service, and they focus on combat readiness.

By dint of such a definition, the measure of readiness is a complex but not insurmountable task. Consistent methodologies are in place and some solid statistics are available, despite some caveats for the analytical accounting of France, Britain and Germany⁸⁵. The available metrics point to low

⁷⁸ U.K. National Audit Office, *Assessing and Reporting Military Readiness*, London, June 2005, t <http://www.nao.org.uk/report/assessing-and-reporting-military-readiness/>

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*

⁸¹ *Ibidem*

⁸² UK Ministry of Defence, *Future Force 2020 – Summary of size, shape and structure*, July 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62487/Factsheet5-Future-Force-2020.pdf. See annex.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, See annex

⁸⁴ Todd Harrison, *Rethinking Readiness*, *op. cit.*, p. 41

⁸⁵ Cour des Comptes, *Maintien en condition opérationnelle, or MCO*, *op. cit.*

and generally decreasing national levels of readiness amongst key NATO Allies. At the end of 2014, numbers surfaced for Germany, France, Italy and the UK “which put readiness levels for fighter jets, attack and transport helicopters at below 50% (in one case 15%), and that there are issues with main battle tanks, amphibious vehicles and submarines. They resonate with highly publicised reports of enablers breaking down and troops in Europe training with inadequate equipment”⁸⁶.

In France, overall aircraft readiness was measured at just under 50% in 2008. It has dropped to 40% in 2013⁸⁷. Readiness of strategic transport C-130 planes in 2013 was 39%, readiness of Super Etendard fighters in 2012 was 31%, and readiness of Tiger helicopters was 22% in 2013⁸⁸. The downward trend between 2011 and 2013 for Airforce fighters (an 18 point decrease) and Army helicopters (a 13 point decrease) can be linked to the intensity of French external operations⁸⁹. On the contrary, whilst readiness of France’s Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier has decreased to under 50% in 2012⁹⁰, readiness of SSN submarines and frigates has increased to 60% in 2012. Readiness of land equipment is also higher (67% for Leclerc main battle tanks, 80% for VBCI armoured vehicles). In the UK, “performance against readiness targets has been declining over several years”⁹¹ and more than half of the different force elements are reporting serious or critical weaknesses. According to the UK Defence Select Committee, in December 2005 81% of these elements had no such weaknesses; in April 2008, 55% of force elements had no critical or serious weaknesses against a target of 73% for peace time contingent tasks; in 2008-09, readiness had fallen further with only, on average, 43% of force elements reporting no critical or serious weaknesses. Think tank RUSI reported that only 40 fighter jets were available from 170 planes⁹². Only 15% of Italy’s helicopters are available⁹³.

The situation in Germany is worse, and Defence Minister Von der Leyen was recently forced to admit that Germany simply “cannot fulfil all of its NATO obligations”⁹⁴. In 2014, 42 out of 109 Eurofighters were available, with the appearance that only 8 were fully deployable, 38 out of 89 Tornado bombers, 10 out of 31 Tiger combat helicopters, 3 out of 43 Sea Kings, 350 out of 586 armoured transport vehicles⁹⁵. Submarines, Boxer armoured vehicles, NH90 helicopters, Sealinx helicopters⁹⁶ and the majority of frigates are in a similar position. Amongst the anecdotes reported upon by the media, the few Transall strategic transport planes that are available have been breaking down with striking regularity⁹⁷, there are issues with Eurofighter fuselage, soldiers have been training with broomsticks⁹⁸

⁸⁶ Olivier de France, “Defence Budgets in Europe: Downturn or U-Turn?”, Paris, European Union Institute for Strategic Studies, March 2015 (EUISS Brief; 14), p. 4, <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/defence-budgets-in-europe-downturn-or-u-turn/>

⁸⁷ Cour des Comptes, *Maintien en condition opérationnelle, or MCO*, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*

⁹¹ House of Commons, *Readiness and recuperation of the Armed Forces: looking towards the Strategic Defence Review*, Defence Committee, June 2010 (fourth report of session 2009-10), <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmdfence/53/53.pdf>

⁹² Olivier de France, “Defence Budgets in Europe: Downturn or U-Turn?”, *op. cit.*, p. 4

⁹³ *Ibidem*

⁹⁴ Justin Huggler, “German army ‘used civilian vans for training exercises’ due to equipment shortage”, in *The Telegraph*, 27 January 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/11372498/German-army-used-civilian-vans-for-training-exercises-due-to-equipment-shortage.html>

⁹⁵ Der Spiegel staff, “Germany’s Disarmed Forces: Ramshackle Military at Odds with Global Aspirations”, in *Der Spiegel*, September 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ramshackle-army-at-odds-with-berlin-s-global-aspirations-a-994607.html>

⁹⁶ See annex

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*

⁹⁸ Rick Noack, “Germany’s army is so under-equipped that it used broomsticks instead of machine guns”, in *The Washington Post*, 19 January 2015, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/19/germanys-army-is-so-under-equipped-that-it-used-broomsticks-instead-of-machine-guns/>

during NATO exercises, their HK G36 rifle does not shoot straight, “a Tiger combat helicopter lost a weapons rack over a training area in Germany because its lock came undone, [and] because certain replacement parts are unavailable, the military is being forced to cannibalize equipment based in Germany in order to keep the Turkey-based Patriots in operation”⁹⁹; the army has been using Mercedes Vito vans for armoured personnel carriers, Nissan Pathfinder 4x4s for Eagle IV armoured ambulances, and civilian off-roaders for Dingo armoured vehicles, and “Germany's KSK special forces had to pull out of a joint exercise with Nato allies because there was no operational helicopter available for them”¹⁰⁰. As such,

the German NATO task force would face serious problems if it had to intervene abroad. More than 40% of the task force's soldiers would have to do without P8 pistols, and more than 30% lacked general-purpose machine guns, known as MG3. Operating at night would be particularly difficult for Germany's armed task force, given a lack of 76% of necessary night viewers¹⁰¹.

Assuring NATO Readiness

The low levels of European readiness point to the present state of European armies, in a context where defence spending has decreased since the 1990s, and has declined more sharply since the onset of the financial crisis in 2007. Against this long-term backdrop, the crisis in the Ukraine inevitably raised some searching questions about the true levels of NATO readiness, and indeed the capacity of the organisation to protect its Eastern border.

A report by the U.K. House of Commons Defence Select Committee in the run-up to the NATO Newport Summit in September 2014 concluded that the Alliance

is currently not well-prepared for a Russian threat against a NATO Member State. A Russian unconventional attack, using asymmetric tactics [...] designed to slip below NATO's response threshold, would be particularly difficult to counter. And the challenges, which NATO faces in deterring, or mounting an adequate response to such an attack pose a fundamental risk to NATO's credibility¹⁰².

General Sir Richard Shirreff, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe between 2011 and 2014 also stated that “NATO would find it very difficult to respond sufficiently quickly if, for example, Russia decided to attack and mount an airborne descent operation, in Riga, Tallinn or Vilnius”. He added that he thought it “highly unlikely that the NATO Response Force could be stood up sufficiently quickly”¹⁰³.

To shore up common force readiness levels, the Wales Summit opted through the implementation of the Readiness Action Plan, approved at Newport on 5 September 2014. Whilst the RAP itself is an effort at political reassurance “an essential part of it is the creation of a new ‘Very High Readiness Joint Task Force’, which will be part of the decade-old NATO Response Force”¹⁰⁴. The RAP thus

⁹⁹ Der Spiegel, “Germany's Disarmed Forces: Ramshackle Military at Odds with Global Aspirations”, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ “Although the special forces unit was supposed to have nine transport helicopters, eight were out of service and the ninth only had three hours' flying time before its next mandatory inspection – not enough time for the exercise”, *Justin Huggler*, “German army 'used civilian vans for training exercises' due to equipment shortage”, *op. cit.*

¹⁰¹ Rick Noack, “Germany's army is so under-equipped that it used broomsticks instead of machine guns”, *op. cit.*

¹⁰² U.K. Select Defence Committee, *Third Report: Towards the next Defence and Security Review*, House of Commons, 22 July 2014, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmdfence/358/35807.htm>

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁴ Jan Abts, *NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force - Can the VJTF Give New élan to the NATO Response Force?*, Rome, NATO Defense College, February 2015, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=771>

enhances the NRF and creates a new quick reaction ‘Spearhead Force’ of “several thousand ground troops supported by air, maritime and special forces, able to deploy within a few days”¹⁰⁵. The plan addresses “both readiness and responsiveness. It is aimed at a rapid adaptation of NATO’s strategic military posture”¹⁰⁶. The VJTF, understood as the operational implementation of the political reassurance measures involved by the Readiness Action Plan, will plug some of the gaps in NATO readiness understood in the technical sense of the term. Turning Szczecin MNC-NE into a permanent HQ and establishing NFIUs in the six countries of NATO’s Eastern frontier are also concrete measures that are geared toward enhancing readiness in practice. In addition, the Wales Summit usefully highlighted the obvious: readiness costs money. Yet, readiness seems to have taken a disproportionate hit with the decrease in defence spending. Insisting on the 2%-20% criteria furnishes the necessary political yardstick to make Allies think twice about further cutting budgets. Defence spending trends since Newport have been encouraging, with all but half a dozen European countries planning to increase budgets, including France, the UK, Germany, Spain and Poland.

However, operational readiness will remain a concern for NATO. The Alliance uses a similar classification to the US Department of Defense’s DOTMLPF¹⁰⁷, to which it adds interoperability to doctrine, organisation, training, materiel, leadership, personnel and facilities (DOTMLP-I). This shows that focusing narrowly on combat readiness will not be helpful, if combat ready forces cannot be deployed to an operational theatre to fulfil their assigned missions in multinational contexts. In this respect, the Afghan war was a peak period for operational readiness, due to effective certification upstream and on the ground which bred a genuine culture of interoperability and efficiency. However, beyond the standards routinely suggested by NATO ACT, it will remain difficult to judge in practice whether NATO nations have a common set of operational standards going forward. NATO’s force readiness is indeed both a definition and a practice. Force elements at readiness levels (FEAR) are operationally classified, and involve a number of thresholds which are set by NATO. They assess the ability to fulfil a number of tasks and operate in an international environment with a degree of interoperability. In this respect, NATO readiness is very much a ‘stamp’ that reflects a capacity to be certified. However, it is up to Allies themselves to conform to these thresholds.

Secondly, no matter how combat ready, reactive and rapidly deployable such forces are, they will serve little purpose without the common will to deploy them quickly. As General Sir Richard Shirreff points out, the NATO Response Force shares a similar ill with its European counterpart (the EU Battle Groups): it has “lacked credibility, because the North Atlantic Council has never been able to agree on its deployment. A consensus of all 28 nations is required before it can be deployed”¹⁰⁸. Once deployed promptly and with the adequate measure of political will, the existing readiness metrics do not address the output that such inputs can achieve. Therefore, in operational terms, it is hard to say whether such inputs will lead to appropriate outcomes – such as a tactical victory. Similarly, it is not easy to assess whether the effort of generating Alliance capabilities is being conducted efficiently and effectively. These different caveats complicate our understanding of readiness.

¹⁰⁵ NATO, *NATO’s Readiness Action Plan*, December 2014 (Fact Sheet), http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_12/20141202_141202-factsheet-rap-en.pdf

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁷ See *supra* and: www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ U.K. Select Defence Committee, *Third Report: Towards the next Defence and Security Review*, *op. cit.*

Operational Readiness: Madonna and Maginot

To clarify the problem, it might be helpful to distinguish some of the different facets of readiness. Beyond combat readiness, what is necessary to the ability to use force quickly to achieve one's ends? The first prerequisite is to be able to project assets that are combat ready, quickly, to a given theatre, to operate in national contexts, or more frequently multinational coalitions. This knot of issues has to do more with operational readiness than combat readiness *per se*.

Issues with availability and readiness of enablers will mechanically affect how quickly one is able to deploy assets to an operational theatre. Europe's capability gaps in the area are well documented, particularly in such critical respects as strategic transport and air-to-air refuelling. They are the consequence of unbalanced long-term force planning. European armies styled around mobilisation and territorial defence will devote much of their resources on personnel expenditure and expensive maintenance of ageing equipment. They will unavoidably have fewer resources available for buying newer equipment and for deploying the newer equipment they acquire. This might cause them to lose a capability altogether – despite appearing to possess all the required and combat ready equipment and personnel to use it. As recent out of area operations have cruelly exposed, a number of key capabilities are now at a sub-critical stage, and others simply cannot be used. Once the threshold is crossed

it becomes a question not simply of losing a given capability, but also the capacity to develop that capability in the future. [...] And there is a risk that the perception of this threshold might occur only once it has already been crossed – when irrevocable cuts have been made to capabilities, the industrial infrastructure that serves to generate them, and the capacity of European member states to fend for themselves in an increasingly volatile neighbourhood¹⁰⁹.

This self-styled threshold where “equipment becomes effectively useless” can be likened to a “Maginot moment”¹¹⁰.

When austerity pressures defence spending on the one hand, and the cost of technologically advanced weaponry rises on the other¹¹¹, the equation becomes difficult to solve. Often ill-adapted to their strategic environment and difficult to deploy, European militaries offer little encouragement. The *status quo* is quietly helped along by European states themselves, who have stymied Europe and NATO's pooling and sharing efforts. The way NATO has been adapting its operational posture since 2014 offers more encouragement – indeed if the usual standards of multilateral organisations are anything to go by, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation reacted to Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 with unpredictable alacrity. [...] By the time September came around, the Alliance had possibly changed more in the course of six months than it had since 2002, if not the end of the Cold War¹¹².

To misappropriate Peter van Ham's terminology, NATO, since 2014, has outperformed singer Madonna's in its capacity to reinvent itself operationally¹¹³.

Yet temporarily outperforming Madonna will not solve all of the Atlantic Alliance's readiness ills. There are more structural and underlying issues. Perceptions by European publics and European

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*

¹¹⁰ Olivier de France, *Europe's Maginot Moment*, Paris, the European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2014 (EUISS Brief ; 7), <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/defence-budgets-europes-maginot-moment/>

¹¹¹ The acquisition by Italy or the Netherlands of F-35s is a case in point

¹¹² Olivier de France, *Don't Stop the Soul-Searching*, London, European Leadership Network, 2014 (ELN Commentary), http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/nato-dont-stop-the-soul-searching-_2244.html

¹¹³ Peter Van Ham, *NATO and the Madonna Curve: Why a New Strategic Concept Is Vital*, NATO, 2008 (NATO Review), <http://www.nato.int/docu/Review/2008/03/ART5/EN/index.htm>

leaders do not tend to outperform Madonna's capacity to keep up with the time. Instead, they tend to change only in very small increments. Since the onset of the crisis in Crimea, the fundamentals in the West have in fact changed very little: widespread war-fatigue, a passivity of populations in the face of force, an aversion to using it across large swathes of Europe, with some notable exceptions, a dearth in forward thinking and strategic culture, an inward-looking mentality, a difficulty in understanding how the world works, and certainly in explaining to the public, and an exercise in leadership by European politicians which is patchy at times, brazenly oblivious of history at others. Operational readiness, then, much like combat readiness, fails to tell the full story.

Cultural Readiness

How does one address the issue of conventional deterrence? Is it solved only by creating rapid reaction units, high readiness forces, and very high readiness task forces? Should one put to one side the more fundamental problem of our relationship to using and projecting force? It is one thing to point fingers at Europe's much maligned Battle Groups, but one would be hard pressed to find a high intensity theatre to which NATO's reaction force (NRF) has been deployed. The issue is therefore roughly the same on both shores of the Atlantic: what willingness is there amongst Western leaders, and by immediate extension their constituents, to use force at all? And to what end?

Cultural readiness might be defined as a state of mind: being willing, prepared and able to project, deploy and use force to reach a calculated end. One might be willing to use force, without enjoying assets that are combat ready or deployable. Equally, one might enjoy assets that are combat ready without being able to deploy them, being willing to use them, or having a sense of what they might achieve or why to use them. The criticism levelled at European forces will tend to focus on combat readiness, deployability, and willingness to use force. On the contrary, since the turn of the century, the American military has seldom been castigated for lack of combat readiness, deployability, or willingness to use force, but rather for a sense of what it is attempting to achieve, and actually achieving. In effect, the outcome will be the same: to defeat the purpose of readiness, understood as the capacity to use force to reach a number of calculated ends. As such, the will to use force is an integral part of the readiness equation.

Commentators will usually expedite the problem by using the notion of 'political will', typically in the phrase 'lack of political will, or by arguing that Europe has simply lost the will to power, in a strategic environment in which most players have not'¹¹⁴. It seems to be a magic stick that is waved about at the end of expert discussions, when all other options have been exhausted, yet without much thought about what constitutes it. Is it possible that the proverbial 'political will' is a term that we use as a proxy for our own lack of any clear sense of how to effect change? Is it the sole remit of our political leaders? What is it?

What is Political Will?

Upon first examination, the expression 'lack of political will' is an improper one. It is typically used to describe a situation in which political will is exercised, but in a way which does not resonate with

¹¹⁴ See for example James Rogers, *An EU Global Strategy: Developing the 'will to power'?*, London, European Leadership Network, 2015, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/an-eu-global-strategy-developing-the-will-to-power_2964.html

the wishes of the onlooker¹¹⁵. In a European context for example, the expression ‘lack of political will’ to advance European defence or migration policy is simply a proxy for saying that the aggregated interests of European states currently consist in avoiding to further European defence or migration policy. And the ‘interests of European states’, in democratic societies, is in principle a proxy term for the aggregated interests of the citizens of European states. ‘Lack of political will’ on defence or migration issues might simply be the expression of the reigning collective consensus in Europe, and therefore the addition of different political wills. In this sense, it is an improper expression.

‘Political will’ itself is a notion that can be used as a blank canvass upon which are projected anyone and everyone’s interests and wishes. French philosopher Claude Lefort equates it with an ‘empty place’¹¹⁶. He states that “where there is an empty place perceived, there is no possible conjunction between power, law and knowledge”¹¹⁷. It is upon this abstract receptacle that citizens will project their own image of what power is and of where it operates. It is everything to everybody, and can therefore be blamed for anything. In this sense, the idea of political will might be the sum of all these different projections – and therefore necessarily disappoint, because it cannot fulfil the diversity of these expectations. This is also an essential feature of democracy itself. In democratic societies power is in the hands of all, but at the same time “for power to remain democratic, it necessarily must escape the hands of all”, as commentator Jean Birnbaum puts it¹¹⁸.

If ‘lack of political will’ is an improper phrase, and the idea of political will is a blank canvass, what then is ‘political will’ itself? What are its constituents, and what are the channels through which is it exercised? The first constituent of political will, as illustrated above, is doubtless the public opinion. In democratic societies, the perception of the media and the citizenry plays a necessary part in political decisions. In this respect, it would be useful to gain finer perception and greater awareness of the factors that affect perception by European citizens of security and insecurity, in order to develop more effective security policymaking within NATO. Eurobarometer¹¹⁹ methods provide a useful historical backdrop for this. However, the data is not security focused and do not go into sufficient detail to gauge resilience in European populations and individual and collective perceptions of security. Generating proper policy recommendations would entail acquiring better first-hand empirical evidence.

The prime way of achieving this is to collect wide-ranging statistical data through reliable methods of collection and sampling, by using multifactor analysis, and rigorously layered approach which distinguishes a number of criteria and parameters including age, gender, demographic background, education, occupation or income. Regional expertise on security related matters might be drawn to analyse of the empirical data made available, to identify more accurately the underlying factors of perception of security and insecurity by European citizens. This would include testing the assumptions about diverging threat perceptions in Europe against the existing empirical evidence. On such a basis it would be possible to generate meaningful policy recommendations for addressing citizen perception of insecurity, and achieving more effective policymaking within NATO.

¹¹⁵ The expression ‘lack of strategy’ is often used in the same way – when a strategy is exercised but does not resonate with the wishes of the onlooker.

¹¹⁶ Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique*, Seuil, 1986

¹¹⁷ Quoted by Jean Birbaum in *Le pouvoir, ce ‘lieu vide’*, *Le Monde des livres*, 6 November 2015

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*

¹¹⁹ See: www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm.

Political Leadership

But political decision-making cannot consist only of mirroring the short term interests apparent in the shifts of public opinion. It needs to protect the long-term values and interests of a country. In some cases, it is obliged to go against the grain of public opinion in the short term, and contribute to shaping it in the long term. This requires a degree of ‘political leadership’. The exercise of political leadership, as the phrase goes, involves being ready to ‘lose the next election’. The second constituent of political will may precisely be in the discretionary power summoned by political authorities above and beyond the immediate consensus, or the short term interests of its citizenry. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s decision to welcome refugees to Germany in September 2015 was widely interpreted as a decision made on principle, rather than one which reflected a short-term collective consensus¹²⁰.

It is often pointed out that there is a dearth of leadership across Europe¹²¹. The refugee crisis was another occasion for commentators to call upon European leaders to show vision and strategic nous. It may be true that Europe lacks leaders such as Francois Mitterrand or Helmut Kohl to steer Europe in a clear, decisive direction. At the same time, the current context also makes it harder, more difficult for political leaders to emerge. The media environment, which politicians need to ride and steer through, is governed by the short term. Lack of short-term results undermines long-term efforts to an unprecedented degree. Paradoxically, even when political leadership is on show, it is often greeted with scepticism. The first reaction is to question its motives, to pick it apart, and often to deny its political discretionary power. In the case of Germany’s attitude to refugees for example, the German Chancellor’s decision was immediately linked back to demographic trends and the national political context, rather than to principles. This general tendency towards suspicion¹²² is fuelled by the context, but it is problematic because it breeds defiance at best, resignation (or conspiracy theories) at worse. As French sociologist Bruno Latour puts it, “the more insidious power seems, the more it breeds suspicion”¹²³.

One way to cut through the scepticism would be to make more apparent how decision making works, and to study in much greater depth what the channels of political will, and what the caveats to political decisions are in a number of areas. This would helpfully apply to NATO: a better picture of decision-making mechanisms, of potential caveats and constraints to the decision-making chain would be useful both within and without the organisation. Outside, it could help battle lack of clarity and comprehension, disengagement and the general feeling of lack of influence or wherewithal in Europe. Inside, it would afford the organisation with a landscape of the political levers and of the potential policy blockers, perhaps a clearer view of how decisions work, and a better sense of how to foster political commitment. Top table exercises allowing NAC leaders to exercise their capacity to appropriate a problem, respond to a threat, test their own readiness and intellectual agility would no doubt prove to be rewarding.

It may be that a careful assessment of the channels of political will and the chains of decision-making would show political influence to have waned, and its discretionary powers to have been reduced on a number of issues. It may be for example that for European states, it has become rather more difficult to effect lasting, positive change in their environment. What then? Would European publics readily acknowledge and accept the fact that political authority cannot solve everything? Or do they look to political actors to give them the illusion that political power has the ability to effect change? If so,

¹²⁰ “The indispensable leader”, in *The Economist*, 6 November 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21677643-angela-merkel-faces-her-most-serious-political-challenge-yet-europe-needs-her-more>

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, see also: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=61911>

¹²² What French critical theorists have termed ‘l’ère du soupçon’

¹²³ Bruno Latour, *Où est le pouvoir ?*, Le monde des livres, 6 Novemebr 2015

European leaders and public opinions caught in a ‘catch-22’ situation, which they have jointly contributed to creating. It may indeed be that both parties neither wishes to relinquish the illusion, and both look to the other to provide it. As Jean Birnbaum suggests, “men and women in power are the unceasing recipients of an impossible demand: it appears citizens ask of them promises which everyone knows will have to be broken”¹²⁴.

In the latter scenario, leadership on the part of political decision-makers would have less to do with a show of action than with a show of honesty: lucidly assessing the situation, acknowledging such loss of influence where necessary, and explaining as much. A act of political leadership could be to own up to the fact that even big European countries no longer have the wherewithal to do everything, then to explain what leverage states and international organisations still have, and be honest about what effects they can actually achieve. This implies starting from an honest and realistic assessment of what a country can do, rather than what it thinks it should be able to do – and then agreeing on a precise idea of what effect it wants to have, and where.

Strategic Readiness

Naturally, such leadership requires that political actors themselves have a world view that is sufficiently clear that they can understand it, have the honesty to articulate it, and the courage to explain it. In other the words, reclaiming political will entails salvaging the capacity to know, and the ability of understanding our environment. As French philosopher Marcel Gauchet recently put it, we appear to have “given up trying to understand the world”¹²⁵. Yet will to power amounts to little in the absence of the power to will, and the power to know.

What is needed most urgently in the short term seems to be investment in the long term: investing in grey matter and our analytic capabilities of understanding the world. Doing more prospective thinking, contrarian study, scenario building, looking more closely at potential short-term impacts and long-term effects, and linking this back to means, resources and capabilities would be of value to NATO. It would enable the Alliance to reach a better understanding of what threats our militaries are ready for, what threats they are not ready for, and what impact they can have on such threats in given situations. This requires an understanding of the context in which they operate and of how they can effect change within it. In other words, it requires strategic readiness.

Strategic readiness can be defined as being prepared and able to project, deploy and use force to reach a calculated end. It entails a sense of what one’s means might achieve, being aware of what one is attempting to achieve through such means, and the capacity to use them. The present bias towards metrics of readiness and measures of defence spending simply does not dispense from trying to address such questions. The comfort that quantifiable units provide does not preclude from trying to assess what these tools are for, how helpful they can be, or what they can actually achieve. Nor do they preclude from investing in better understanding the current strategic landscape, in how it is evolving, in building a finer picture of current threats, of how current threats like cyber or hybrid warfare might look like in a future, and how new threats might emerge.

These are issues that are not easily captured by statistics and more difficult to catch in military models, they will seem vague and complicated at best, or futile at worst. But even if they are not always

¹²⁴ Jean Birnbaum, *Le pouvoir, ce ‘lieu vide’*, *op. cit.*

¹²⁵ Marcel Gauchet, “Nous avons renoncé à comprendre le monde”, in *Revue Internationale et Stratégique*, No 99 (September 2015)

soluble in military thinking, this does not mean they do not have very real military effects. Strategic, cultural, operational and tactical readiness go hand in hand. They are all necessary conditions of military readiness, though neither of them is sufficient in isolation. If shielding readiness from its political, strategic and cultural preconditions conceals some of its most potent constraints, then it can be helpful to promote an understanding of readiness that better straddles the political-military divide. In sum, the difficulty in connecting the political and the military facets of readiness emerges as the heart of the problem.

Concluding Remarks: the Roots of Readiness

All in all, so-called readiness appears to be a fairly narrow way of evaluating how quickly and effectively forces can be deployed and operate to achieve a certain goal. The current readiness debate tilts towards tactical or operational levels of readiness, and how to achieve them. Unpacking the notion of readiness helps to balance out the conversation, and turn it towards what it means to be ready to use force to achieve a calculated end. A more realistic definition of readiness helps to show that the lack of one type of readiness undermines the others – sometimes to the point of nullifying the impact of military readiness altogether. In other words, tactical and operational readiness requires strategic and cultural readiness – and vice-versa – for them to have the desired short term impact and long term effect.

There are certainly a number of issues with NATO's readiness at combat and operational level. Much effort and analysis goes into identifying and plugging gaps in these areas. There is less inclination to examine what is more difficult to measure and quantify. Yet readiness metrics only paint a partial picture, and sometimes amount to what researcher Todd Harrison might call a 'proxy measure'¹²⁶. They have the benefit of addressing the need to monitor, measure and control the intricacies of military procurement and military spending. The drawback is that they tend to bury the questions which ultimately have the greatest impact on military readiness. Such questions have to do with output, what NATO wants to achieve with this output, and what NATO can achieve with this output. Cultural readiness supposes not simply a will to power, but a power to will. And the power to will supposes a power to know. It asks whether NATO countries still have enough power to know to harness this power to will. As former French statesman George Clemenceau once put it: "it is about knowing what one wants, then showing the courage to say it, and finally having the drive to do it"¹²⁷.

¹²⁶ Todd Harrison, *Rethinking Readiness*, *op. cit.*, p. 41

¹²⁷ "Il faut d'abord savoir ce que l'on veut, il faut ensuite avoir le courage de le dire, et enfin l'énergie de le faire"

Annex

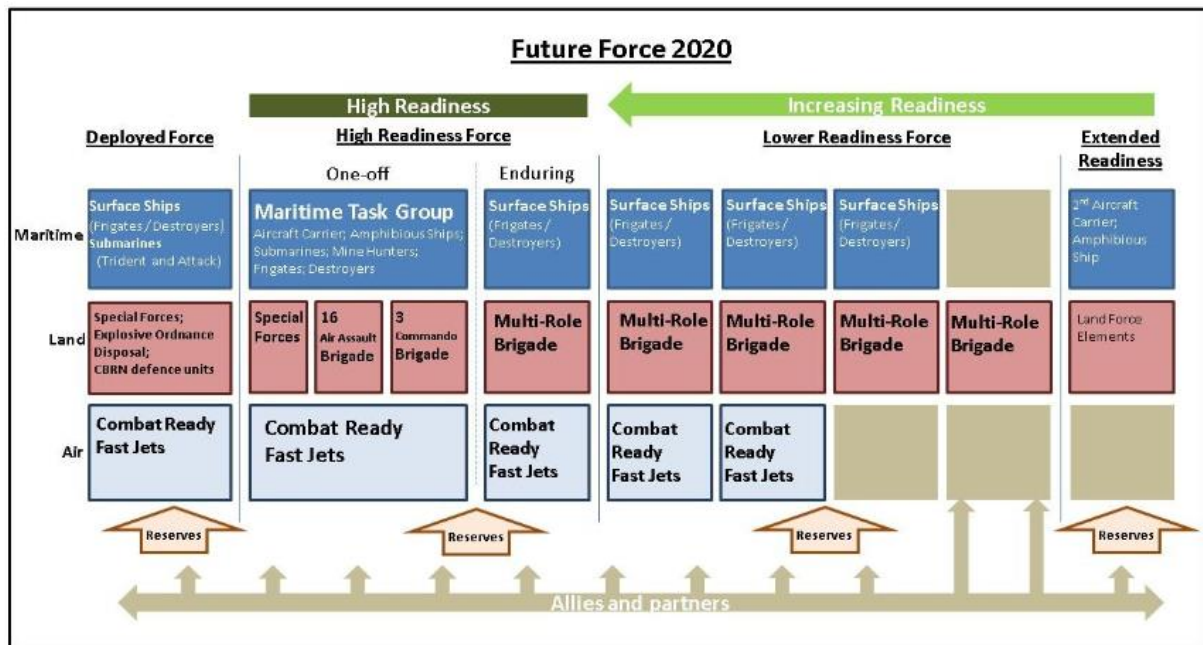


Figure 3 UK Ministry of Defence, Future Force 2020 - Summary of size, shape and structure, July 2012. Source: UK Ministry of Defence

Bundeswehr - Operational Capability of Select Weapons Systems

Weapons System	Total Number	Available	Deployable
Tiger helicopter	31*	10	10
NH90 helicopter	33*	8	8
Sea King helicopter	21	15	3
Sea Lynx helicopter	22	18	4
CH53 helicopter	83	43	16
Eurofighter fighter jet	109	74	42
Tornado fighter jet	89	66	38
K130 corvette	5	2	2
U212 submarine	4	1	1
Frigates	11	8	7
Marder tank	406	280	280
Boxer tank	180	70	70

Total stock = all procured units

Available = in operation, including systems currently out of service because of maintenance or repair

Deployable = can be used immediately for missions, exercises or training

*includes pre-production models
Source: Bundeswehr German Armed Forces

Figura 4 Source: Der Spiegel, "Germany Disarmed Forces: Ramshackle Military at Odds with Global Aspirations"

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NATO's Readiness in the post-Crimea Security Environment: Political and Military Challenges

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"My dear, have we must run as fast as we can, just to stay in place. And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that"

– Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

Introduction

In spite of re-appearing discussions about the fading relevance and inability to provide security in the changing global environment, NATO, throughout the last decades, has demonstrated resilience and ability to transform. It has appeared that the changing security environment has time and again reinvented a *raison d'être* for the North Atlantic Alliance and reinvigorated it. After the Cold War, the collective defence role – the one for which NATO was created – was supplemented by the roles of cooperative security and crisis management. It might be argued that, in fact, the latter ones have been dominating NATO's activities for the past two decades. NATO became a political organization operating in a wide network of political partners and occasionally providing crisis management capabilities for security hotspots. However, it should also be admitted that the volatile security environment has more than once caught NATO by surprise and unprepared. NATO lacked the necessary capabilities and knowledge to react to the escalating conflicts in the Balkans. NATO was shaken when the planes commanded by the terrorists hit the twin towers in New York. After the Cold War, NATO has undergone two transformation cycles. The first one concentrated on the reform of its armed forces from large heavily equipped and based on conscription, which were meant for large scale conventional activities mainly undertaking the tasks of territorial defence, towards the light, deployable and profession units equipped with modern weapons, aimed at conducting crisis management operations outside NATO borders. September 11th attacks have triggered another reform - development of rapidly modern crisis management capabilities which would be deployed at a relatively short notice, to every spot on earth and able to combat terrorists and defend against weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Both reforms were made with reference to the strong belief that the times of conventional warfare in Europe were over and the main threats to NATO were coming from outside. Moreover, they were based on the premise that Russia was no longer an adversary but rather a partner in solving global security issues.

The occupation of Crimea and the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine have once again taken NATO aback. The premise about the impossibility of military inter-state conflict in Europe turned out to be wrong. In spite of collective defence remaining one of the main missions of NATO after the Cold War, the know-how and ability to fight large scale conventional warfare was almost lost during the last decade. Moreover, along the conventional war fighting in Ukraine, Russia is also employing hybrid strategies, involving the exploitation of other non-military instruments. In the summer of 2014, defence experts had simulated a war game adapting the scenarios evolving in Ukraine to the Baltic states. It turned out that NATO was unable to defend Baltic countries¹²⁸. It became apparent that one more reform in NATO was needed to enable it to respond to the Russian challenge. The Wales summit decisions represent a first step in the next cycle of NATO's transformation. Yet it is obvious that it will not be an easy task to implement. First of all, NATO will be facing a dilemma of how to develop necessary capabilities designed for conventional territorial defence and at the same time maintain crisis management capabilities within the limits of existing defence budgets. Secondly, NATO members would have to change their security discourse in which Russian status is reconsidered from a partner to a competitors or a potential source of threat.

The paper aims to evaluate NATO's readiness in the post-Crimea security environment. The paper, therefore, first seeks to identify main tasks for NATO in the post-Crimea environment, with the main focus on the challenges emanating on the Eastern flank of the Alliance, as these tasks are relatively new for NATO. The first part, therefore, is devoted to the explanation of the multidimensionality of the Russian challenge to NATO and the definition of the new tasks necessary to answer this challenge. It also discusses measures enhancing NATO's readiness agreed in the Wales summit. The second part argues that the measures taken in Wales are not sufficient to enhance NATO's readiness to respond to the new tasks, as they might be heavily constrained by slow decision making in NATO, disagreements of member states, financial shortages and reluctance of Western societies vis-à-vis defence issues. The last part of the paper is dedicated to the military constraints and strategic challenges for NATO's readiness¹²⁹.

New Tasks for NATO in the post-Crimea Security Environment

The crisis in Ukraine has dramatically changed the security environment in Europe. Former Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has defined it as the "gravest threat to European security and stability since the end of the Cold War"¹³⁰. Parallel security challenges are emanating from the southern neighbourhood, the Middle East and North Africa. It might be argued, though, that the Russian challenge is particularly perilous for NATO. First of all, it challenges the habitual security thinking of the 21 century, which is dominated by post-modern security challenges and the belief in a democratizing Russia. Consequently, there is little understanding and preparation to answer a conventional Russian challenge. Secondly, occupying a piece of Ukrainian soil, Russia has breached a number of international agreements, such the UN Charter, the Helsinki Accords, the Tashkent

¹²⁸ Julia Ioffe, "Exclusive: The Pentagon is preparing new war plans for a Baltic Battle Against Russia", in *Foreign Policy* (18 September, 2015), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/18/exclusive-the-pentagon-is-preparing-new-war-plans-for-a-baltic-battle-against-russia/>

¹²⁹ The analysis is based on the latest academic as well as expert level debates in academic articles, media and conferences

¹³⁰ Fred Dews, *NATO Secretary-General: Russia's Annexation of Crimea Is Illegal and Illegitimate*, Washington DC, Brookings Institution (19 March 2014), <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/03/nato-secretary-general-russia-annexation-crimea-illegal-illegitimate>

Treaty¹³¹ and the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances,¹³² thereby, as Stephen Blank argues, ripping “apart the post-Cold War settlement based on the indivisibility of European security”¹³³. This behaviour not only has reduced predictability in international security but has also set a precedent for other revisionist powers. Third, Russia is far bigger and stronger opponent than the terrorist groups or insurgents NATO has been fighting for the last decade. Reform of the armed forces in Russia, which started in 2009, is very ambitious. It aims to renew around 70 per cent of equipment until 2020 and consumes around a quarter of the national budget yearly. Russia possesses around 1 million of standing forces and 2 million of reserves. Estimating that defence spending has been continuously decreasing in the majority of NATO countries in the same way as the number of their military personnel since the end of Cold War, makes Russia even a larger challenge for the West. Moreover, differently from the majority of the Western states, as NATO Secretary General concluded, Russia possesses the will to employ military capabilities¹³⁴. Fourth, Russia has one of the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world and Russian politicians, including Vladimir Putin, are not hesitating to bring this fact to the attention of the West¹³⁵. Fifth, Russia employs covert hybrid strategies in Ukraine, which on the one hand create politically and legally vague situations of ‘between peace and war’, and on the other hand require multidimensional strategies of response, including political, economic, informational, and cyber tools, which are not in NATO’s possession. Sixth, contemporary Russia is well integrated into Western financial, business and energy systems and has a great leverage to intimidate, divide¹³⁶ and influence the West, which creates additional challenges to the Alliance.

Former Secretary General Rasmussen has highlighted that “in these turbulent times NATO must be prepared to undertake the full range of missions and to defend Allies against the full range of threats”,¹³⁷ which means that NATO has to be able to make an effective use of its crisis management capabilities as well as to generate capabilities for collective defence operations. Effective deterrence of Russia and assurance of NATO Eastern members might require conventional military capabilities and collective defence strategies but might as well demand readiness to react to a covert hybrid attack, such as the disruption of critical infrastructure or civil disorder in a member state. The Readiness Action Plan (RAP) approved in the Wales Summit has designed assurance and adaptation measures to make NATO respond “swiftly and firmly to the new security challenges”¹³⁸. The RAP at the same time responds to the challenges posed by Russia and their strategic implications and foresees the enhancement of current crisis management capabilities necessary to answer threats stemming from the southern neighbourhood, the Middle East and North Africa. The same hybrid strategies are being employed by the terrorists and the actors such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Sirya (ISIS). Therefore, by strengthening NATO’s capabilities to address hybrid threats stemming from Russia, NATO could enhance at the same time capabilities to fight the same threats in other regions. NATO’s experience in the latest crisis management operations can be as well employed vis-à-vis Russia. The measures

¹³¹ *Agreement on Principles and Procedures for the Implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, Tashkent, 15 May 1992, <http://fas.org/nuke/control/cfe/text/tashka.htm>

¹³² *Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances*, 5 December 1994, <http://www.cfr.org/nonproliferation-arms-control-and-disarmament/budapest-memorandums-security-assurances-1994/p32484>

¹³³ Stephen J. Blank “America and the Russian - Georgian War”, in *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol 20, N° (2009), p. 32-48

¹³⁴ The Economist, “From cold war to hot war”, 14 February 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21643220-russias-aggression-ukraine-part-broader-and-more-dangerous-confrontation>

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*

¹³⁶ Jamie Shea, “NATO: the Challenges Ahead”, in *Global Affairs*, European International Studies Association, Vol. 1, N°2 (2015), p. 121-128

¹³⁷ Ian Davis and Nigel Chamberlain, *An Evaluation of the Wales Summit: NATO Builds Coalitions for Conflict on Multiple Fronts*, France, NATOWatch, 10 September 2014 (Brief Paper; 54), <http://natowatch.org/node/1529>

¹³⁸ NATO, *NATO’s Readiness Action Plan*, May 2015 (Fact Sheet), http://www.nato.int/nato_static...2015.../20150508_1505_Fact

outlined in the RAP include increased military presence, exercises and activities in the Eastern members, changes to the Alliance's long-term military posture, command structure and capabilities and the creation of the spearhead Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) with a reaction time of 3-5 days. The Wales Summit declaration announced that these reinforcements "will provide the fundamental baseline requirements for assurance and deterrence, and flexible and scalable response to the evolving security situation"¹³⁹. It could be argued that the measures adopted in the RAP have demonstrated strong commitment of NATO to once again transform itself in order to be able to respond to the changing security environment, reinforcing this time the 'collective defence' dimension, but also increasing the speed of possible reaction. NATO Secretary General has called the RAP the "biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War"¹⁴⁰. But whether the RAP is a sufficient response for the current security situation and whether it will be implemented remains to be seen.

Political Challenges

One of the key elements of all NATO's transformations is the speed of reaction. The European Leadership Network (ELN) Report argues that the lack of speed remains one of the major constraints to NATO's readiness¹⁴¹. Reaction speed includes fast decision making on the political and military levels and the ability to send adequate troops at short notice. The RAP foresees some measures to speed up the time of NATO's response e.g. VJTF, new command and control units in the area. However, it does not provide the ground for the reform of NATO's decision making procedures. Decisions to deploy troops have to be affirmed by North Atlantic Council (NAC). It takes time to assemble 28 nations and more time is needed to ensure consensus among them. The decision to send NATO forces to Bosnia took more than a year; meetings of the working group that was drafting a proposal for the Military Committee alone took 8 months¹⁴². It is worth noting that, to send troops to military operations outside the country, member states have to also undergo national decision making procedures; in many cases this requires voting in the national Parliaments. In especially pressing situations, slow decision making can seriously endanger the situation on the ground. Considering the current security environment, it should be admitted that the necessary speed of reaction is increasing. It took Russia less than four days to occupy Crimea and no more than three weeks to initiate its annexation¹⁴³. Russia is able to take decisions quickly, in secret and to send forces across borders immediately, whereas NATO forces are dispersed, owned by member states and force generation process after the operational plan has been drawn and agreed might take weeks, if not months¹⁴⁴. In addition, through its channels of influence in the Western states, Russia might try to manipulate decision making process both at the international and at the national level. Slow decision making might turn especially dangerous in collective defence cases, because unfavourable changes on the ground might have serious effects on further ability of NATO to defend itself and, by extension, on the same survivability of the Alliance. One of the suggestions on how to streamline NATO's decision

¹³⁹ NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration*, 5 September 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm

¹⁴⁰ NATO, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴¹ European Leadership Network, *Brinkmanship, Deterrence and De-escalation between NATO and Russia: Report from a Roundtable Discussion Held in London on 27 May 2015*, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/06/23/f9c1b2bb/ELN%20NATO%20Russia%20Roundtable%20Report.pdf>

¹⁴² Paul Gallis, *NATO's decision-making procedure*, Washington DC, Congressional Research Service Report, 5 May 2003 (CRS Report to Congress), <https://fas.org/man/crs/RS21510.pdf>

¹⁴³ On the 23rd of February Putin had a meeting with his security chiefs where he expressed its aims to start the process of returning Crimea back to Russia, on the 27th of February insignia-less soldiers already were on the soil of Crimea

¹⁴⁴ Jamie Shea, *NATO: the Challenges Ahead*, *op. cit.*

making includes granting the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) a ‘discretion rule’ to prepare contingency operational plans for potential NATO missions¹⁴⁵. This rule might be particularly beneficial when engaging VJTF. The similar scheme is employed by the US Armed Forces. On the one hand the ‘discretion rule’ might be more difficult to apply in an Alliance of 28 members than in the US. On the other hand, NATO might look for options on how to grant SACEUR the right to start planning pre-emptively and on how to make this process more transparent for other members.

Another significant constraint, which might slow down the decision-making process, is a narrow definition of Article 5. September 11 and the use of Article 5 for the first time triggered debates on how binding this article is and when it should be invoked. Pal Johnson argues that there were at least three groups of states in NATO having different attitudes towards Article 5. First of all, those who wanted more focus on strengthening the credibility of Article 5; second, those who required to devote more efforts to out-of-area operations; and third, the groups of countries who insisted on better relations with Russia¹⁴⁶. The hybrid strategies that Russia is employing in Ukraine brought back discussions on the scope of Article 5. It became evident that should Russia employ similar strategies in e.g. Baltic states, its activities might be qualified below the threshold of Article 5 and NATO would not be able to invoke the collective defence clause. The Wales Summit declaration defined cyber defence as “a part of NATO’s core task of collective defence” which could lead to the invocation of Article 5, because “cyber attacks can reach a threshold that threatens national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security and stability”¹⁴⁷. But the questions ‘what is the threshold’ and ‘what NATO will do to respond to this attack’ remain unanswered. Reacting to the altered security challenges some experts suggested an amendment of Article 5, removing the notion of armed attack from the definition¹⁴⁸. However, this might be too risky, because it is not clear what should be put in the formulation instead of the notion of ‘armed attack’. Hence, amendment might make Article 5 even more ambiguous. On the other hand, a vague definition of Article 5 might as well be considered as a ‘fertile ambiguity’, allowing to include into the definition much more than being more precise and expand the limits of potential engagement.

Lack of unity between member states is one of the most serious constraints for fast decision making in NATO and might also have a negative effect on NATO’s ability to react timely and effectively. Major dividing lines between member states today include different threat perceptions, conflicting prioritization of defence development and diverse strategies on how to react to the Russian challenge. NATO members have quite conflicting understanding of what threats are most urgent for the Alliance and therefore should be addressed first. Southern member states believe that the ISIS, as well as the deteriorating security situations in Syria and Libya, deserve more of NATO’s attention. On the other hand, Eastern members of NATO tend to emphasize the necessity to deter Russian aggressiveness and to react to the declining security situation in Ukraine. These differences become even more evident bearing in mind the limited capabilities of NATO and might have consequences both in the short term decision making regarding the use of NATO forces as well as in the long term NATO reforms.

¹⁴⁵ Leo G. Michel, “NATO Decision-making: the ‘Consensus Rule’ Endures Despite Challenges”, in Sebastian Mayer (ed), *NATO’s Post- Cold War Politics: the Changing Provision of Security*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 107-123

¹⁴⁶ Pål Jonson, *The Debate about Article 5 and its credibility, What is it all about*, Rome, NATO Defence College, May 2010 (Research Paper; 58), https://www.google.it/search?q=The+Debate+about+Article+5+and+its+credibility%2C+What+is+it+all+about&rlz=1C1SKPL_enIT470IT470&oq=The+Debate+about+Article+5+and+its+credibility%2C+What+is+it+all+about&aqs=chrome..69i57.587j0j4&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=93&ie=UTF-8

¹⁴⁷ NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration*, 5 September 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

¹⁴⁸ DELFI, “Former NATO officer suggests changing Washington Treaty”, 12 March 2015, <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/former-nato-officer-suggests-changing-washington-treaty.d?id=67405116>

Another dividing line is contradictory interpretation among member states of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, signed in 1997. The Act committed NATO “in the current and foreseeable security environment” to “carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces”¹⁴⁹. This agreement, according to the mainstream opinion in NATO, prevents the Alliance from permanent stationing of additional military capabilities at its Eastern flank. Baltic states and Poland maintain that the Act is not binding any longer since Russia itself has breached it by occupying Crimea and seriously damaging the security situation in the region. They argue that adherence to the Act might substantially reduce NATO’s reaction time in case of an attack from Russia and corrupt the credibility of NATO’s deterrence. They believe that, without NATO troops permanently stationed on their soil, they are becoming second rank members, sending also wrong signals to Russia. The then Prime Minister of Poland Donald Tusk declared “we want Poland to be defended by the military, not only by words written in a treaty”¹⁵⁰. In May 2015, Chiefs of defence of the Baltic states sent a letter to the SACEUR, requesting to deploy a brigade sized unit in the region¹⁵¹. Nonetheless, the majority of NATO members do not support the cravings of the Balts and the Poles¹⁵² and would like to keep their obligations in order to diminish potential risk of escalation, as Russia continuously keeps claiming that violation of this agreement on NATO’s side will provoke counter measures. Former NATO Secretary General Rasmussen declared that the Alliance was sticking to the agreement¹⁵³. Divergent interpretations of the Act reduce the trust among the members of the Alliance and could inflict damage to the unity of NATO, as Baltic states and Poland may feel second rate members and under-protected. Reluctance of NATO to deploy permanent capabilities in the region is forcing these countries to search parallel security guarantees foremost strengthening bilateral cooperation with the United States. A similar line of divide goes along the debate on how far deterrence measures and escalation in the conflict between Russia and NATO should go. The report recently published by the ELN expresses fears that further strengthening of deterrence vis-à-vis Russia might turn counterproductive or even irresponsible as it, first of all, reflects the security dilemma dynamics and, secondly, increases risk of dangerous military encounters between Russian and Western military units. The report suggests that NATO should combine a two-track approach and introduce de-escalation¹⁵⁴. Similarly during the Cold War NATO adopted a dual-track approach proposed by Pierre Harmel in 1967, in which strengthening deterrence and pursuing détente with the Soviet Union were to be implemented simultaneously¹⁵⁵. Support in Europe for détente vis-à-vis Russia was expressed by the High Representative of the EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, already at the beginning of 2015¹⁵⁶. Later on it was proposed as well by a Report of the US Army War College, emphasizing the possibility of cooperation in areas such as the Syria’s civil war, the fighting against ISIS etc¹⁵⁷. The Baltic states and Poland oppose these proposals fearing that any

¹⁴⁹ NATO, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, 27 May 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

¹⁵⁰ Financial Times, “Poland Calls for NATO Troop Deployment”, 1 April 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3867c08a-b999-11e3-b74f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3rH2smqqx>

¹⁵¹ DELFI, “Baltic Request for Military Brigade Sent to NATO’s Military Chief”, 18 May 2015, <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/baltic-request-for-military-brigade-sent-to-natos-military-chief.d?id=67998468>

¹⁵² John Vandiver, “US, NATO focus east, but for how long?”, in *Stars and Stripes*, 21 June 2015, <http://www.stripes.com/news/europe/us-nato-focus-east-but-for-how-long-1.353651>

¹⁵³ Matthew Karnitschnig, “Pact with NATO Keeps NATO Bases at a Distance, but Should it?”, in *Wall Street Journal*, 3 September 2014, <http://blogs.wsj.com/brussels/2014/09/03/qa-1997s-nato-russia-founding-act/>

¹⁵⁴ *Brinkmanship, Deterrence and De-escalation between NATO and Russia*

¹⁵⁵ NATO, *The Harmel report*, 11 November 2014 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67927.htm

¹⁵⁶ EURACTIV, “Mogherini Suggests Détente with Russia”, 15 January 2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/mogherini-suggests-detente-russia-311288>

¹⁵⁷ Strategicstudiesinstitute, *From Cooperation to Competition: the Future of US – Russia Relations*, A Report on an Interdisciplinary Wargame Conducted by the US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, May 2015, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB1283.pdf>

signal of de-escalation might be interpreted by Russia as a sign of NATO's weakness and might provoke more aggressive actions. Thus, if NATO continues towards de-escalation, there will be much distrust towards NATO in these countries and this will undermine the Alliance's solidarity¹⁵⁸. NATO Deputy Spokesperson Carmen Romero observed that "Russia is deliberately avoiding military transparency and predictability. It has deliberately circumvented the requirements for notification and observation of exercises under the OSCE Vienna Document and has made routine use of the 'exception' for large-scale, no-notice 'snap' exercises"¹⁵⁹. Therefore, it might be argued that Russia itself lacks interest in détente and the chances for its success are thin. Insufficient defence spending is a serious constraint for the implementation of reforms in NATO. During the Cold War, NATO members had to spend approximately 3 per cent of their GDP for defence; now there are only four members that spend 2 per cent, the rest are concentrated around 1 per cent. In order to fulfil more tasks and develop new capabilities, NATO will require additional finances. In Wales NATO members have committed to increase defence spending during the forthcoming 10 years, but only a few of them has already taken necessary steps to reach this goal. Moreover, in order to remain relevant, NATO has to spend more money on new equipment, whereas 20 per cent NATO requirement is met again only by five states. New initiatives proposed by NATO and the EU, such as the Smart Defence, the Pooling and Sharing, the Framework Nations are meant to pool the existing resources and make countries specialize in certain areas. On the one hand, these initiatives might become the right solution for the challenges of insufficient financing; on the other hand, due to the lack of unity, different threat perception and mistrust among members, they might turn out very difficult to implement. Labour division in NATO might also be hampered by the changes in defence planning of certain countries inspired by the changing security environment. Although very active in NATO's out-of-area operations, the Baltic states,¹⁶⁰ Poland, Romania and Bulgaria are at the moment more preoccupied with the defence of their territories and this affects their defence planning.

Finally, the attitude of the European societies towards the use of the military instrument as well as their unwillingness to spend on defence might turn to be the biggest constraint for NATO's transformation. The scepticism of Europeans regarding the use and utility of armed forces was triggered by the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, but considering that any decision to deploy the troops should undergo national legislation, this might also be an obstacle to collective defence. A public opinion survey performed in 2008 found out that should a similar attack to Georgia have taken place in one of the Baltic states, less than 50 per cent of the population of major NATO members would have supported their defence (US, UK, Spain, Italy, Germany and France)¹⁶¹. Another survey conducted in 2015 demonstrated that only 48 per cent of the European population would use their armed forces to come to the aid of another NATO country attacked by Russia¹⁶². Aiming to implement the decisions of the Wales Summit, politicians will have to convince their voters to change their attitudes, otherwise as John Deni remarked, when these countries will feel budget

¹⁵⁸ Slawomir Sierakowski, "NATO's Second Class Members", in *The New York Times*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/23/opinion/slawomir-sierakowski-natos-second-class-members.html>; Edward Lucas, A. Wess Mitchell, *Central European Security after Crimea: the case for strengthening NATO's Eastern Defences*, Washington DC, CEPA, March 2014 (Report No. 35) <http://www.cepa.org/content/case-strengthening-natos-eastern-defences>

¹⁵⁹ NATO, *Statement by NATO Deputy Spokesperson Carmen Romero on NATO military exercises*, 12 August 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_122048.htm

¹⁶⁰ During the past years Lithuania has concentrated on out-of-area operations and the development of professional armed forces; within International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Lithuania was the smallest country to lead Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The country has abandoned the doctrine of territorial defence in 2003 and in 2008 it refused the conscription. Aggressive actions of Russia in the region however forced Lithuania to reconsider its choices: since 2015 conscription has been re-introduced and the army is once again exercising territorial defence tasks

¹⁶¹ The Harris Poll, "The Harris Poll Global Omnibus", September 2008, Q1210, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/vault/HI_FinancialTimes_HarrisPoll_September2008_Tables_EU.pdf

¹⁶² Bridget Kendall, "Poll finds NATO's Europeans Wary of Russia Confrontation", in *BBC Europe*, 10 June 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33072093>

pressures, readiness will be the easiest thing to cut¹⁶³. Moreover, it will be a challenge to convince European societies that Cold War thinking is back. Jamie Shea argues that it will be “difficult to resurrect notions of force-on-force conventional engagements, big military bases and large scale manoeuvres” in the atmosphere of current security thinking¹⁶⁴. Thus, politicians in NATO countries will have to find out strategies to convince the societies to invest in security as they are investing in health and education.

Military Constraints and Strategic Challenges

The Rapid Action Plan (RAP) and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) reinforcement plans adopted in the Wales are meant to increase NATO’s readiness to respond to the changing security environment. Camille Grand maintains that in order to remain relevant NATO has to maintain force structures able to address multiple challenges¹⁶⁵. But is it possible to create forces able to effectively perform both crisis management and collective defence tasks? Does the RAP provide reinforcement for both? The VJTF – “spearhead” force of NRF – increases NATO’s reaction speed from 5-30 days to 3-5 days. This may boost NATO’s readiness to respond to covert non-conventional attacks similar to the ones Russia conducted in Crimea as well as to the crises outside NATO. However, due to the small size (up to 5000 troops) and without reinforcements the VJTF cannot answer larger conventional attack and consequently does not offer credible deterrence alone¹⁶⁶. If there is a further escalation, 30000 strong NRF could be deployed within a month. In 3 months reinforcements of 45000 might come¹⁶⁷ provided all decision making procedures go smoothly at all levels together with capabilities generation process. Russia can generate large-scale conventional forces at very short notice within a couple of days; neither the VJTF nor NRF reinforcements might be able to produce adequate and timely response for this kind of attack. A House of Commons report produced in 2014 argues that different forms of warfare require “different force profiles, training, exercises, logistics systems, equipment and priorities”¹⁶⁸. It should be admitted, though, that some capabilities, e.g. airlift, satellite communication, intelligence, UAVs could be useful for both collective defence and crisis management tasks. Moreover, NATO’s experience in and capabilities developed for crisis management operations might be very useful in addressing so called hybrid threats. However, NATO is poorly prepared to address large scale conventional challenges in the East. Thus, measures specified in the RAP are a good starting point for both strengthening the readiness of the Alliance to respond crisis management needs and also to re-assure Eastern member states against conventional threats; nonetheless, their adequacy and sufficiency in the changing security situation might be reduced by a number of military constraints and strategic challenges.

First of all, most of NATO’s countries during the past years were developing crisis management capabilities and reducing capabilities meant to conduct large conventional operations. Drent and Zandee argue that in some countries, capabilities to provide an answer to a large scale conventional attack were reduced to the minimum; for example, the Netherlands has no longer tanks¹⁶⁹ (though the

¹⁶³ John Vandiver, “US, NATO focus East, but for how long?”, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁴ Jamie Shea ,NATO: the Challenges Ahead, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁵ Camille Grand, *The Modest Price of Preserving Peace* , Brussels, in *Carnegie Europe*, 17 March 2015, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=59388>

¹⁶⁶ Wojciech Lorenz, *2016 NATO Summit on Strategic Adaptation* , Warsaw, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, 9 June 2015 (PISM Bulletin: 58, 790), https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=19967

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁸ NATO, *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two*, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁹ Margriet Drent, Dick Zandee, “A reborn Alliance in a troubled world?”, NATO after Wales, *Clingendael*, 7 April 2014, www.clingendael.nl/...Arlantisch_Perspectief_7_2014

decision this year was made to re-introduce them back into Dutch armed forces)¹⁷⁰. Other European countries also lack heavy equipment, large deployable forces, strategic enablers, necessary command and control capabilities; their forces are not trained for such operations. Secondly, as already mentioned, transition towards crisis management capabilities in NATO coincided with decreasing defence budgets, which caused a massive downsizing of European states' militaries and equipment¹⁷¹. More specifically, in NATO allies, on average, defence spending over the past 5 years have decreased by 20 percent; instead, Russia has increased its defence spending by 50 per cent¹⁷². Third, the balance of military capabilities in Europe is uneven. Having dismissed Russia as a threat after the Cold War, NATO did not trouble to reinforce militarily its Eastern flank. A report conducted by the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) demonstrated that of a "combined NATO strength of around 3 million troops, including 1.5 million in Europe, less than 10 percent (around 300,000) are located in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)"¹⁷³. A similar situation is with NATO's installations and concentration of the United States forces. There are also no nuclear weapons in the territories of CEE countries. The balance is particularly uneven in the Baltic Sea region. At the end of Cold War, Russia withdrew its armed forces from the Baltic States, Poland, and Eastern Germany, but those forces have not been moved far. Most of them were redeployed to bases in the Kaliningrad Special Defence District, the Leningrad Military District, or the Kola Peninsula,¹⁷⁴ causing a concentration of armed forces particularly dense in this region as compared to Central Europe. Reform of the Russian armed forces, which started in 2009, is increasing this misbalance even more. Reinforcements of the newly established Western Military district and offensive exercises directed towards the West¹⁷⁵ (with one of them simulating nuclear attack over Poland) also reveal changing Russian attitude towards NATO. The frequency of military drills has increased impressively on both sides during the last year, but these exercises also reflect uneven capabilities¹⁷⁶. The ELN report argues that on the one hand, exercises conducted by both parts were quite similar – involving rapid mobilization, redeployment of forces over long distances, concentrating on a mixture of high intensity combined arms training and focusing on both conventional and non-conventional engagement. On the other hand, differently from NATO Russian exercises, they relied heavily on elite formations such as airborne troops and mobilization of thousands of conscripts¹⁷⁷. It is important to note that the unpredictability of Russia and the effect of surprise that its hybrid strategies are based on raises fears that these exercises could

¹⁷⁰ Ministerie van Defensie, Nieuwe tanksamenwerking Duitsland en Nederland, 15 September 2015 <https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2015/09/15/nieuwe-tanksamenwerking-duitsland-en-nederland>

¹⁷¹ Camille Grand, *The Modest Price of Preserving Peace*, op. cit.

¹⁷² Ian Davis, Nigel Chamberlain, *An Evaluation of the Wales Summit: NATO Builds Coalitions for Conflict on Multiple Fronts*, op. cit.

¹⁷³ Edward Lucas, A. Wess Mitchell, *Central European Security after Crimea: the case for strengthening NATO's Eastern Defences*, op. cit.

¹⁷⁴ Adrian Hyde-Price, *A NATO and the Baltic Sea Region: Towards Regional Security Governance*, NATO Research Fellowship Scheme 1998 – 2000, 2002 (Final Report), www.nato.int/acad/fellow/98-00/hyde.pdf

¹⁷⁵ Exercises Zapad (2009), Ladoga (2009) and (Zapad) 2013

¹⁷⁶ For example, Russia's snap exercises in March 2015 involved 80000 men, including soldiers from airborne and Spetsnaz special units, 12000 vehicles and 220 aircraft. Sam Jones, "Russia and NATO training for War with Each other, Says Analysis", in *Financial Times*, 11 August 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3ee91730-403c-11e5-b98b-87c7270955cf.html#axzz3rRRcO8VR> The biggest exercises in the European part of Russia in 2014 were conducted on 26 February – 3 March in the Western and Central Military Districts and involved 150000 army, navy and air force personnel, 90 aircraft, 120 helicopters, 880 tanks, 1200 other pieces of equipment and 80 warships. Самолеты истребительной авиации ЗВО ведут постоянное патрулирование воздушного пространства в приграничных районах (Fighters of Western Military District continuously patrol the airspace in the vicinity of the border), Russian Ministry of Defence website, 27 February 2014, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11905664@egNews NATO 'Allied Shield' exercise conducted in June 2015, which was a combined effort of four distinct exercises, involved only 15000 personnel from 19 NATO and 3 partner states. European Leadership Network, *Brinkmanship, Deterrence and De-escalation between NATO and Russia*, op. cit.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*

be used for the further escalation and military intervention; in August 2008, exercise Kavkaz-2008 was used as a platform for the aggression of Georgia¹⁷⁸.

For NATO it would be too difficult to generate forces of this size in general, not mentioning the ability to do this very fast. It could be even more difficult to transfer these capabilities to the Baltic states, as, first of all, NATO countries lack transportation capabilities and secondly, the region is tightly covered by Russian air defence system (S-400) which might constrain air transport. Land reinforcements might be attacked by tactical ballistic missiles OTR – 21 Tochka, deployed in Kaliningrad. Additionally, Russia has deployed Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad as a part of the exercises at the end of 2014 and in the 2015¹⁷⁹, which may be a considerable game changer should the situation further escalate. Commander of the US Army Europe Lt Gen. Ben Hodges argues that at the moment Russia can reach about 90 per cent of targets in the Baltic and Black Seas and thereby can block entrance to both seas¹⁸⁰.

Finally, NATO lacks experience to respond to large scale conventional attacks as such scenarios have not been exercised since the end of the Cold War. Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, Gen. Sir Richard Shireff, has warned NATO that these misbalances and poor preparation on the NATO's side might provoke the likelihood of Russian attack on the Baltic¹⁸¹. Despite all reinforcement measures undertaken in Wales, the Baltic states and Poland remain vulnerable to the fast attacks and escalation on the ground, which might create a *fait accompli* situation, similarly to how it was done in Georgia and Ukraine.

In 2014 – 2015 NATO has conducted an extensive number of exercises in the region, which on one hand were sending a strong symbolic message to Russia about the commitment of NATO to reinforce security at its Eastern borders, and on the other hand were ensuring almost permanent presence of NATO troops in the region albeit on a rotational basis. And yet, rotating exercises as a credible deterrent face certain challenges. First of all, decision making procedures in NATO are slow both on the political and military level. Permanent deployment of troops would allow bypassing these procedures if situation escalates on the ground as reinforcements might be sent on the bilateral level, which is not the case with rotating exercises. Second, due to the rotational logic, equipment also should be rotated. However not all countries have the necessary equipment. Moreover, the costs of the transportation of the equipment are usually higher than that of the personnel. Prepositioning of the equipment, especially including heavy armour, might reduce some challenges, but it has constraints of its own. Many NATO members lack these capabilities. Even in the crisis management operations most of the times the United States has provided the Alliance with the immediate response brigades, the reinforcements, the strategic enablers, the prepositioned equipment, and the command and control and intelligence and surveillance platforms¹⁸². Conventional deterrence and the implementation of collective defence would require even more capabilities that are scarce in Europe (heavy land forces and fire power)¹⁸³. The US proposed 1 bln USD for additional defensive reassurances, including the prepositioning of military equipment in Europe and infrastructure

¹⁷⁸ Pauli Järvenpää, *Zapad – 2013: a view from Helsinki*, Jamestown Foundation, Washington DC, August 2014, http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/Zapad_2013_View_From_Helsinki_-_Full.pdf

¹⁷⁹ Iskander missiles are capable to hit with high precision targets up to 500 kilometers and might be equipped with nuclear or conventional warhead.

¹⁸⁰ Eglė Samoškaitė, "NATO generolas pripažino Rusija užvaldo Baltijos jūrą", in *DELFI*, Vilnius, 21 August 2015, <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/nato-generolas-pripazino-rusija-uzvaldo-baltijos-jura.d?id=68791808>

¹⁸¹ United Kingdom Parliament, *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two – NATO*, Third Report of Session 2014-2015 (HC 358), House of Commons, Defence Committee, 31 July 2014, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/defence-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/towards-the-next-defence-and-security-review-part-ii/>

¹⁸² Jamie Shea, *NATO: the Challenges Ahead*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸³ Margriet Drent, Dick Zandee, *A reborn Alliance in a troubled world?*, *op. cit.*

improvements. Implementation of the prepositioning of military equipment has already started. Each Baltic state should expect the equipment for a company or battalion- size unit¹⁸⁴. But military equipment on the soil of the Baltic states alone cannot serve as credible deterrent as it could easily become target to Russian missiles (e.g. Tochka) deployed in Kaliningrad and be destroyed before the troops arrive. Considering the scope of Russian capabilities and the mobilizing potential it is more a symbolic dissuading step than credible deterrence, as this latter would require the permanent presence of NATO combat units in the region¹⁸⁵ which could act on short notice.

Another important strategic challenge for NATO, which is not elaborated in the RAP, is posed by the Russian nuclear posture. The Russian military doctrine adopted in 2010 foresaw a possibility for Russia to employ tactical nuclear weapons in cases “of aggression on the Russian Federation with conventional weapons, when it endangers the existence of the state”¹⁸⁶. The Russian military reform grants a special attention to the upgrade of Russia’s nuclear arsenal. Last September, Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin promised that “ongoing military modernization will contain a “nuclear surprise” for the country’s potential adversaries”¹⁸⁷. According to Mike Bird, Former CIA bureau, the Russia President Vladimir Putin is prepared and has a will to use tactical nuclear weapons in Europe¹⁸⁸. NATO’s Secretary General Stoltenberg warned that Russia’s plans to deploy nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad – near Poland’s border – and its threat to move nuclear forces in Crimea would “fundamentally change the balance of security in Europe”¹⁸⁹. Therefore, the nuclear policy of NATO as well needs to be reconsidered. Moreover, NATO has to revive exercises with nuclear component to check if all decision-making lines are working effectively. In addition these exercises might work as a deterrent demonstrating to Russia that the second strike would follow. However for such message to be convincing it is crucially important that the US is present in the region. The US military involvement in the Eastern members of NATO is crucial not only in terms of nuclear but also for conventional deterrence. Yet, US reinforcements in the region are also meeting a number of constraints. First of all, due to the changing strategic priorities, the US have been reducing their military participation in Europe throughout the past years. Secondly, the majority of their bases, equipment and necessary infrastructure is concentrated in Western Europe, whereas deterrence is necessary in the East. Third, US forces may be forced to react at the simultaneously deteriorating security situation in the East and in the South Pacific.

There is a number of other less significant military constraints to NATO’s readiness that nevertheless deserve to be mentioned. Firstly, bottlenecks identified at the military level e.g. legal and logistical challenges of cross-border movement of troops and equipment within NATO’s territory,¹⁹⁰ rules of engagement¹⁹¹ and various pre-existing commitments of member states. In that sense, NATO forces

¹⁸⁴ Justyna Gotkowska, Piotr Szymanski, *NATO Presence in the Baltic states – reassurance for its allies or deterrence for Russia?*, The Center for Eastern Studies, Warsaw 29 April 2015 (OSW Commentary; 169), <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/mission-statement>

¹⁸⁵ United Kingdom Parliament, *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two – NATO*, op. cit.

¹⁸⁶ *Военная доктрина Российской Федерации*, 5 февраля 2010 года, Утверждена Указом Президента Российской Федерации, http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/461

¹⁸⁷ Roger McDermont, “Russian military modernization: Rogozin promises a “nuclear surprise”, in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.11, Issue 177(7 October 2014)

¹⁸⁸ Mike Bird, “Former CIA bureau chief: Putin is ‘perfectly willing’ to use nuclear weapons in Europe”, in *Business Insider*, 10 July 2015, <http://uk.businessinsider.com/cia-bureau-chief-says-putin-open-to-using-nuclear-weapons-in-europe-2015-7>

¹⁸⁹ The Guardian, “NATO chief says Russian nuclear threats are ‘deeply troubling and dangerous’”, 28 May 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/28/nato-chief-says-russian-nuclear-threats-are-deeply-troubling-and-dangerous>

¹⁹⁰ European Leadership Network, *Brinkmanship, Deterrence and De-escalation between NATO and Russia*, op. cit.

¹⁹¹ Xenia Wickett, Christian Moelling, *Implementing the NATO Wales summit: From Start to Action*, US Project Meeting Summary, SWP- Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 30-31 October 2014

differ from Russian armed forces, which operate in a single administrative framework and enjoy a single pool of forces¹⁹². Second, although the RAP foresees the reinforcement of Multinational Corps Northeast and the creation of command and control units in other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, command and control capabilities at all levels of NATO are still undermanned¹⁹³. Third, mission financing based on the principle of 'costs lie where they fall' is very discouraging for the countries intending to provide forces for military operations.

Conclusions

Previous experiences of transformation have demonstrated NATO's ability to reinvent its *raison d'être* in the changing security environment, and despite a lot of criticism its capacity to change. However, it seems that the security situation around NATO borders had deteriorated excessively fast during the past years, generating multiple, divergent and ambitious tasks for NATO. In the situation of decreasing defence spending and unwillingness of the western society to support military activities, NATO will be challenged to 'run' twice as fast as during the previous reforms to remain relevant. If it wants to be a viable collective defence organization, it will have to develop capabilities able to deter Russia and to defend its Eastern members on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to maintain high quality crisis management capabilities to address threats outside its territory. The RAP is a good reinforcement plan strengthening NATO's readiness in both directions; however, it does not provide all necessary measures to ensure credible deterrence vis-à-vis Russia, neither it eliminates already existing political and military constraints. Moreover, implementation of the RAP will be revealing additional challenges related to the insufficient defence spending, unwillingness of the Western societies to support military activities as well as lack of trust among member states.

Although it should be admitted that Russian armed forces are suffering from serious problems due to the out-datedness of equipment and lack of discipline, its major advantage is the number of troops, which could be mobilized at short notice and primacy vis-à-vis the West in heavy mechanized equipment stationed in the region. NATO will have to find the method to reconcile the fears of the Eastern members with the unwillingness to breach the NATO – Russia Founding Act in the rest of the Alliance. This challenge is one of the most serious ones as NATO's inability to do so might seriously damage trust between member states and trust in the Alliance. Disagreements might be misread by Russia as the unwillingness of NATO to defend its members. Lack of political unity might encourage Russia to take an opportunity and try to damage the Alliance.

Although de-escalation and détente should be debated in parallel to deterrence measures to avoid further escalation of conflict and possible situations of brinkmanship, it should be admitted that for the de-escalation and détente to be effective these policies should be supported by both sides. It appears, though, that in the current situation Russia is not willing to change its stand; moreover, it continues provoking NATO either by aggressive rhetoric or increased military activity at NATO's borders. Substantial change towards the de-escalation is not in the interests of the current Russian regime, as due to this change it may lose the support of the society, which tends to view current economic difficulties as the inevitable consequences of the NATO – Russia competition rather than the result of bad governance and corruption. On the one hand, hot lines and agreements for the management of uncertainties and misperceptions are necessary in order to prevent situations of

¹⁹² European Leadership Network, *Brinkmanship, Deterrence and De-escalation between NATO and Russia*, op. cit.

¹⁹³ United Kingdom Parliament, *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two – NATO – Defence Committee*, op. cit.

brinkmanship. On the other hand, as the experience of the Cold War has demonstrated, better readiness of NATO and more credible deterrence leads to more effective détente.

NATO has very few instruments to respond to multidimensional hybrid strategies; therefore NATO's readiness to address them will depend on the flexibility and speed of the military response and on the effective cooperation with other international organizations and member states. Economic sanctions employed against Russia by the EU, the US and some other countries created cumulative effects for the measures adopted by NATO in deterring Russia. The aim of hybrid strategies is to expose and make use of vulnerabilities both in the states but also in international organizations. Therefore, in order to be ready to respond to hybrid attacks, NATO has to identify its most pressing vulnerabilities and try to prevent making use of it both by Russia and by terrorists. Therefore, addressing vulnerabilities that could be exploited by Russia such as the lack of the unity or slow decision making procedures and lack of capabilities NATO would increase as well its resilience vis-à-vis such strategies in general. One of the crucial challenges in the forthcoming years will be the lack of finances for the extensive tasks of NATO. Cooperation projects within NATO but also with other organizations and private industries should become number one priority, as it is not likely that defence budgets of NATO members will be increasing much. Development of these projects will be constrained by the lack of trust and competition between member states but also by the lack of support by the societies. Therefore, more attention should be devoted to the communication of security goals and needs in order to change the existing mind set.

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Working Group 2 – Report

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The issue of NATO readiness, including with regards to political and military decision-making, has been addressed by the Working Group (WG) participants by different points of view, but a certain consensus emerged on the following analysis and recommendations.

The Analytical Framework: Four Levels of Readiness

The analytical framework adopted by participants to address the WG subject did substantially draw from one of the papers presented, which differentiated four levels of readiness: tactical, operational, strategic and cultural. *Tactical readiness* is about combat readiness, the capacity of a unit to fulfil the mission assigned, including issues of equipment, manpower, training, etc. *Operational readiness* refers to the ability to project, deploy and sustain capabilities in a given theatre, in a joint and multinational context. On top of what is needed for combat readiness, this requires also strategic enablers such as airlift, etc. *Strategic readiness*, in contrast, does not involve only military issues, but also political ones. It refers to the threats which armed forces are prepared to fight, to the impact the use of force can have, and to the definition of a calculated goal for a given military action. In other words, it is about being aware of the objectives and the ways and means to reach them. Finally, *cultural readiness* is about the political will to use force to reach these objectives, and the broader understanding of the security context by political leadership and public opinion.

Our reflection focused on the strategic readiness, and partly on operational readiness, also because cultural readiness relates mainly to the strategic culture discussed in WG1, while the academic contribution on tactical readiness would be extremely limited. The following five main points and recommendations emerged from the discussion, which are relevant for NATO as a whole and for ACT in particular.

1. To balance the necessary next transformation

Participants recognized that NATO needs to undertake a transformation of its armed forces to meet hybrid threats, mainly but not only on its Eastern borders, comparable to the one undertaken at the end of the Cold War to deal with crisis management operations out of area, as argued by one of the paper givers. This transformation involves changes regarding troops education, the procurement of equipment, doctrine, procedures and training, with a renewed focus on collective defence. However, collective defence today is different from what NATO assured during the Cold War, because of a

number of reasons including the deeper and wider interconnectedness between the West and the Russian Federation.

At the same time, this transformation does not require a revision of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, because the three core tasks listed there are still valid. Indeed, collective defence, crisis management operations and cooperative security, including partnerships, are more interconnected than ever, both on the Eastern and on the Southern flank of the Alliance. Actually, as put forward by one participant, also due to Russia recent military involvement in Syria, in strategic terms NATO has not really ‘flanks’ anymore because Western societies live in a ‘sphere’ – a truly globalized and interconnected world. Moreover, at the operational level a significant share of capabilities – in particular enablers – are fit for the purposes of both article 5 missions and crisis management operations, also in light of the hybrid threats to collective defence. More importantly at the strategic level, keeping equilibrium among the three core tasks contributes to manage the differences among Allies in terms of threat perceptions, and therefore to have more commitment on common endeavour. For example, greater support for activities related to collective defence can be obtained by countries which are less worried of an invasion by Russia if they see the Alliance taking into account also their concerns about threats from the Mediterranean Sea and their request of a NATO role also in that region. At the same time, despite of the normal tendency to focus on the last recent crisis and/or threat, the Alliance should maintain a global awareness and a forward looking approach so as not to be caught by surprise by the next crisis or threats.

In conclusion, the capabilities involved in the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) must be planned to be usable, in principle, for any NATO operation on whatever theatre, and to support the implementation of all three tasks. The Alliance, and particularly the Allied Command Transformation (ACT), should work to balance the next necessary transformation of its capabilities.

2. To combine the pieces of the puzzle

The RAP and the Very Rapid Joint Task Force (VJTF), as well as the more robust NATO Response Force, have been recognized by participants as useful steps designed to improve the Alliance’s readiness. However, they should be used also as engine for the transformation of the armed forces by linking the RAP to the NATO Defence Planning process across all operational domains: land, sea, air, space and cyber. In particular, the former has been recently recognized as operational domain and deserves significant attention and reflection.

At the same time, both the RAP and VJTF should be linked the Framework Nation concept. European militaries have reduced their size in the last two decades because of the move from conscription to professional forces, with the consequence that the overall manpower available has declined. However, within the given quantity of assets and human resources, there is much room for improvements in mobilizing and organizing units and forces with respect to what NATO is currently able to do. If smaller armed forces of several European allies are unable to be mobilized with sufficient speed and effectiveness, they can plug in and reinforce the deployment organized by the Framework Nations candidates - currently Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. Concurrently, exercises which are part of the Connected Forces Initiative such as ‘Trident Juncture’, the largest exercise since 2000 organized in October 2015 in Italy, Portugal and Spain, should be used more effectively to implement and improve the transformation implied by the RAP and the Framework Nation concept. The RAP, VJTF, the NATO Response Force, the Framework Nation concept, the Connected Force Initiative are all pieces of the readiness ‘puzzle’ that NATO has to put together, and ACT has an important role to play in this regard.

3. To complement readiness with presence

According to many participants, since 2014 the Alliance has been discussing how to enhance readiness, and deter Russia, with an expeditionary mind-set: that is, how to deploy troops faster and better than in the past if an attack occurs against one or more of its members. This is a reasonable and effective approach, yet it has its own limits. As said by one participant, in the current situation if Russia were really to invade the Baltic States these latter would be occupied before NATO will be able to bring in the theatre the military forces necessary to defend them. In other words, they are neither really defensible by using only conventional forces nor resorting to nuclear weapons. Moreover, after a potential occupation by Moscow, the Russian Anti-Access and Area Denials (A2/AD) capabilities deployed in the region, plus its ability to close the short gap between Kaliningrad and Belarus, will make any attempt by NATO to retake Baltic States a suicide in conventional military terms – or an escalation in nuclear terms. As a consequence, the issue of permanent positioning of troops in the Baltic States should be considered as part of NATO's strategic readiness if the goal is to ensure collective defence of member states by deterring a potential Russian aggression. The crucial point here is to make sure that any attack, being it done through hybrid warfare or via a more conventional force, will encounter a non marginal number of troops from each NATO member state, including the US. This number of troops is not supposed to stop a Russian attack by fighting, because of the obvious mismatch of capabilities in the theatre. Instead, it is supposed to deter a Russian attack through the very presence of NATO members' citizens in uniform that cannot be killed by Russia since this will trigger a military reaction by Allied governments and militaries and a full scale war.

Such deterrence can be achieved by rotating presence, with all the costs and shortcomings discussed by participants, or by a permanent presence of NATO military forces in the territory of Baltic States and Poland. Since the latter scenario will have effects on the perceptions of both Russia and the Western public opinion regarding NATO 'offensive' and/or 'escalatory' move, were this decision to be taken it will have to be managed strategically by the whole Alliance. For example, one participant suggested it could be done by putting conditionality on the 1997 agreement between NATO and Russia which included the Allied commitment not station permanent troops on the territory of new Central Eastern Europe members. The Alliance should explicitly declare that either Russia respects its commitments on this agreement, which is currently violating by its action in Ukraine, or NATO will station permanent troops in Poland and the Baltic Republics.

In conclusion, NATO should continue to invest on its readiness to make the deterrence against any attack to member states credible, and should complement this readiness with a properly managed presence on its Eastern flank to couple deterrence with détente, rather than with escalation.

4. To bridge the political-military gap in the decision-making

Participants recognized that, since NATO remains an Alliance of sovereign nations, its decision-making cannot be brought to the same levels of speed and unity of command of those of a single state - particularly an authoritarian one like the current Russian Federation. Second, differences in terms of threat perception and strategic culture among member states, i.e. with respect to the threats coming from the MENA region, Russia, or the Asia Pacific area, are something difficult to change and may only converge in the medium-long term. However, such awareness of the limits of NATO's decision-making does not mean Allies should diminish the efforts to improve its political and military aspects. On the contrary, three main recommendations were discussed by participants in this regard, also in order to bridge the political-military gap in the NATO decision-making process.

First, it was noted that nowadays the Supreme Allied Command of Forces in Europe (SACEUR) enjoys significantly less autonomy from the North Atlantic Council (NAC) than 25 years ago, because of the obvious consequences of the end of the Cold War. Considering the current security

environment and the hybrid threats the Alliance has to face, in order to improve NATO's readiness, more delegated power should be given to SACEUR to assemble and deploy troops - as general rule even before a crisis deteriorates to the point that a military intervention is needed - so that if the green lights from the NAC comes, then NATO is really 'ready' to act. In the first plenary session, speakers referred to the persistence of crisis time experienced in recent years, and thus to the new normality of being in such a fluid environment. Accordingly, this 'New Normal' deserves a crisis-like delegated power to NATO bodies such as the SACEUR, to make the Allied decision-making more effective and efficient. A second recommendation is built on the awareness that, while NATO should introduce more delegation of authority and pre-set automatic mechanisms, it should also manage to maintain the political room of manoeuvre for the NAC. One participant rightly affirmed that NATO should not put clearly on record where the exact boundaries of article 5 lies, for example, with regard to cyber attacks, because if a very precise threshold is defined then an opponent will be facilitated in staying just below such threshold with its actions. In other words, NATO needs a degree of ambiguity and flexibility, and, above all, it necessitates a political-military dialogue in this regard. In this perspective, the participants recognized that yearly simulation and exercises involving the NAC, both in Brussels and offsite, are managed by including also policy-makers from the capitals. As third recommendation on bridging the political-military gap, participants argued that these activities should be substantially increased and should involve more policy-makers from different institutions and with different levels of seniority, in order to build the foundations for a timely and effective decision making when the next crisis will occur. During the first plenary sessions, Admiral Gumataotao mentioned the importance for NATO of the partnership established in the Asia Pacific, in order to be aware of how to cooperate with local stakeholders when a natural disaster occurs. A similar argument applies with regards not only to the NAC, but also to a number of offices in the capitals at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Cabinets of the Prime Ministers and of the Head of State, foreign and defence committees in the national parliaments, among others. It is about understanding with which interlocutors to cooperate in times of crisis – and it is also about fostering a convergence of strategic cultures, as discussed in the WG1. Moreover, these exercises and simulation should involve more representatives from think tanks and politicians' advisors. In 2011, Bernard-Henry Levy demonstrated what negative impact can have a single person which by accident advised the French President Sarkozy about a military intervention against Gheddafi regime in Libya. By involving in these NATO exercises the formal and informal policy community which influences policy-makers, would ensure a better job both in times of crisis and on a regular basis.

5. To avoid the 'Dark Side' of the readiness

Participants discussed what the unintended consequences of the readiness of military forces at NATO disposal may be. A Star Wars metaphor can be used here by alluding to the 'Force' and the 'Dark Side' of readiness. The key point is the awareness that the force is strong within the Alliance and the readiness too, yet both may be misused. In 2011, France, the UK and the US were ready to bomb Libya, and NATO as a whole demonstrated to be quite ready to manage a six-months long air campaign against the Libyan regime, which eventually collapsed. This 2011 operation demonstrated Allied good combat and operational readiness, and turned out to be a military success and at the same time a political disaster. Indeed, NATO's intervention had the following unintended consequences: a failed state in the Mediterranean Sea; a civil war among Libyan groups which is becoming a proxy war by involving Egypt and Gulf States in support of their proxies; safe heavens for terrorist and the Islamic State in North Africa; Libyan arsenals being smuggled to Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sahel, and elsewhere in the MENA region; European energy security weakened at time when Europe needs to diversify supplies to reduce dependency from Russia; no control of Libyan ports and thus 170.000 people rescued by the Italian Navy and security forces alone between October 2013 and October 2014 and thousands died by attempting to cross the Mediterranean basin.

Why the West ended up with such a political disaster despite the military success of the air campaign? Because of the Dark Side of readiness: good combat and operational readiness, but very bad strategic readiness. Within NATO there was no clear idea on which impact Allied armed forces could achieve in Libya, no calculated goal to pursue, no link between ambitions and resources and no consensus among Allies on what should follow the air campaign – thus no stabilization mission after the regime was overthrown as a result of the military success. The West, and particularly Europe, is paying the price of the combination of good combat and operational readiness on the one hand, and bad strategic readiness on the other hand - a high price indeed. The price of such Dark Side of readiness would be even higher in facing the Russian threat to the Allied collective defence. In the ongoing reflection on NATO readiness, including the aforementioned presence on its Eastern flanks, it is neither sufficient to say that the Alliance has the moral obligation to defend its new members by stationing permanent troops there, nor it is sufficient to say that Allied militaries have to mobilize faster than some years ago as well as faster than Russia. Moral obligation and speed of military action are necessary preconditions respectively in terms of cultural readiness and combat-operational readiness, but they do not tell anything about the impact NATO will have with this move, the Russian reaction and the calculated goal of such military action. In other words, they do not work in terms of strategic readiness while improving the combat and operational one: a receipt for the Dark Side of the readiness.

If Allies are going to take this action, or any other relevant action in terms of combat and operational readiness, it must be within a proper strategy towards the Russian Federation, which considers the reassurance of Allies, the deterrence of Russia, and a path towards détente and a new security architecture for Europe. It needs to be strategic readiness, or it is going to be a disaster which would put at risk the very same existence of NATO.

Handle With Care: The Limits And Prospects Of Nato Partnership Policy

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Introduction

NATO partnership policy has progressively become a central feature of the Alliance's broad strategy of engagement towards the Eastern and Southern flanks. Recently reinvigorated by the September 2014 Wales Summit¹⁹⁴, it encompasses both a political and military dimension, as it is based on diplomatic consultation as well as assistance in defense-related issues. Such an emphasis on partnerships as an effective tool of cooperation – one might even say, as part of a liberal and cooperative world order – is confirmed by many official documents, from the 1990 London Declaration¹⁹⁵, to the 1999 Strategic Concept¹⁹⁶, up to the 2011 document *Active Engagement in Cooperative Security: A More Efficient and Flexible Partnership Policy*¹⁹⁷. It is hence safe to say that we are not dealing with a marginal and short-lived policy initiative, but a long-lasting project aimed at complementing the traditional collective defense function and the crisis management operations task with an ambitious cooperative security concept¹⁹⁸.

Indeed, to NATO partnership policy as *one* policy can be misleading for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, past and current partnerships are diverse in terms of rationale: as discussed most clearly by Trine Flockhart¹⁹⁹, three different purposes underlie NATO partnerships. Initially, for example,

194 In that occasion, two initiatives have been launched to deepen and enlarge the web of partnerships: the first one is the comprehensive Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII), aimed at enhancing non-NATO members' capacity to conduct joint operations with NATO forces. In particular, five states (Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden) were attributed the privileged status of Enhanced Opportunities Partners (EOP). The second one is the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) program, a form of military assistance directed to Iraq, Georgia and Jordan

195 NATO, *London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council*, London, 5-6 July 1990, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c900706a.htm>

196 NATO, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council*, Washington DC, 23-24 April 1999, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm

197 NATO, *Active Engagement in Cooperative Security: A More Efficient and Flexible Partnership Policy*, 15 April 2011, http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-Partnership-Policy.pdf

198 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*, Lisbon, 19 November 2010, p. 2, <http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>

199 Trine Flockhart, "Introduction. Changing Partnerships in a Changing World", in Trine Flockhart (ed.), *Cooperative Security: NATO's Partnership Policy in a Changing World*, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS

some of them (like the earliest generation in the mid-1990s) were clearly aimed at broadening the values-based membership of the Euro-Atlantic community, as well as reassuring Russia of NATO's peaceful intentions (this is referred to by Flockhart as the 'integrationist rationale'). After the 1999 war in Kosovo, and even more after the experience in Afghanistan, partnerships have been pursued with a clear interest-based logic – i.e. to enhance military cooperation with non-NATO countries and promote interoperability (in Flockhart's terms, an 'interventionist rationale'). Finally, through partnerships the Alliance has tried to have an influence on its partners, either by leveraging on common interests, or by promoting its practices (an 'influentialist rationale').

Partially as a result of these diverging goals, NATO's partnerships show different types of institutional articulation. On the one hand, the most ambitious initiatives aimed at creating multilateral forums for long term cooperation and confidence building: this is the case of most partnerships, like, to name just a few, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD). On the other hand, with growing intensity in the past dozen years, the Alliance has established a number of bilateral partnerships with pivotal states and international organizations. Examples include countries like Russia, Georgia and Afghanistan (and, after the Wales Summit, Australia, Finland, Jordan, Iraq and Sweden), and organizations like the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU). It goes without saying that the bilateral framework is in stark contrast to the multilateral one. One might even say that, considering the recent emphasis that NATO has placed on initiatives like the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) and the Defense and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB), the liberal principle underlying multilateralism has been replaced by a typical hegemonic hub-and-spoke model, where the Alliance represents the only referent (and patron) for a number of satellites²⁰⁰.

Last but not least, a degree of variation is also evident in how successful these partnerships have been. As policy analysts well know, developing a balanced assessment is a hard task for any given policy, since multiple (and usually contradicting) criteria for judgment can be used²⁰¹. For our purposes, suffice to observe the main effects of the partnerships on the security and stability of the regions involved. While partnerships like the PfP and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) have substantially achieved some results – in perspective, contributing to the peaceful and steady accession of former communist countries into the Euro-Atlantic area – other initiatives fell short of any political result. For example, the MD and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), as useful as they might have been in bringing about some degree of military cooperation, from a political standpoint did not significantly increase cooperation in the area²⁰².

Report 2014:01, 2014), p. 27-29. For a similar argument, see also Gülnur Aybet, "The Four Stages of NATO's Partnership Frameworks: Rethinking Regional Partnerships with the Middle East and North Africa", Paper presented at the conference DYNAMIC CHANGE. Rethinking NATO's Capabilities, Operations and Partnerships, University of Bologna, October 26-27, 2012, available at <http://www.scienze politiche.unibo.it/it/documenti/nato/dinamic-change-ld-iideg-convegno-nato-2012>

200 This argument, also holds for the so called "28 + n" mode of consultation – i.e. a flexible format based on invitation of selected partners by NATO members. On multilateralism, hegemony, and international order see among others John G. Ikenberry, *After Victory. Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2001

201 For an original application of this logic to the case of the European Union, see Knud Erik Jorgenson, "The European Union's Performance in World Politics: How Should We Measure Success?", in Jan Zielonka (ed.), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, The Hague, Kluwer Law International, 1998, p. 87-102

202 Karl-Heinz Kamp, Heidi Reisinger, *NATO's Partnerships After 2014: Go West!*, NATO Defense College, 2013 (NATO Research Paper; 92), p. 3; Jakob Aarøe Jørgensen, "NATO in the Middle East: The Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative" in Carsten Jensen (ed.), *Democracy Managers*, Copenhagen, Royal Danish Defence College, 2013, p. 61-72

The variety of goals, institutional formats, and performance of ongoing partnerships can be explained as a response to changing security concerns. Contrary to what many NATO documents would imply, partnerships do not seem born out of a long-term strategy. On the contrary, the above mentioned differences suggest a short-term, incremental approach. This is not surprising, as it is actually quite common in public policy: faced with new and/or compelling threats, policy-makers tend to adapt existing tools to the new emergencies. Such a behaviour entails both opportunities and risks. As we will see in the following pages, the 25-year-long experience with partnerships provides enough empirical evidence to assess their pros and cons. In this view, the next section summarizes the main features of NATO's most prominent partnerships²⁰³; section three provides a closer look at the partnership policy towards the two closest regions – South Caucasus and the Middle East, North Africa (MENA) region – with a view to assess its achievements and drawbacks; section four wraps up the argument and discusses which options are available to improve NATO's partnership policy.

State of the Art

NATO first embarked its 25-year-lasting partnership policy as a direct consequence of the demise of the Soviet Union. A cursory glance at the main partnership programs launched so far reveals a variety of motives and strategies surrounding the implementation of this policy. The cornerstone of partnerships dates back to 1991, with the launch of the NACC. Initially conceived as a broad political forum for a limited number of countries (mostly Central European countries), it quickly grew into a wide organization, whose membership came to include more than 50 states: by 1992, all the Commonwealth of Independent States countries had joined the organization. The main rationale was to establish confidence building measures with Russia and former Warsaw Pact countries. In other words, the NACC “provided multilateral mechanisms for consultation on security issues of interest to allies and partners and for practical cooperation”²⁰⁴.

Such a broad and ill-defined set of tasks made the initiative potentially fruitful, as it allowed for a considerable room of manoeuvre and compromise over security issues. The establishment of a tight net of bilateral ties between NATO and Russia, in particular, gave the Alliance the possibility to reach out to former communist countries, including the ambitious *open door policy*. However, the rapid expansion of the NACC membership, in particular the inclusion of Central Asia's former Soviet republics, watered down the common security interests. Parallel to that, the evolution of NATO's enlargement, that eventually led to the accession of the three Baltic republics and nine other states previously under Soviet influence, eroded the original rationale for the initiative.

As a result, in 1997 the NACC was renamed as the EAPC. As for its predecessor, the EAPC also represents a worthy forum for political dialogue and it has been praised for having contributed to lessen East-West differences in terms of security and strategic culture. Over time, it has lost relevance within the NATO framework, as witnessed by the declining participation of top-level officers to its regular meetings. With a membership as varied as the then nineteen NATO countries, Central European countries, Central Asia's and South Caucasus' former soviet countries, as well as

203 Mostly for space constraints, the following paragraph will be limited to Partnerships with third countries. After the launch of the 2011 Partnership Policy, NATO placed considerable value to cooperation with other International Organisations – in particular the UN, OSCE and the EU – and Non-Governmental Organisations. The limited impact of these initiatives (at least so far) gives good reason for their exclusion

204 Graeme P. Herd, “NATO Partnerships. For Peace, Combat and Soft Balancing?”, in Graeme P. Herd and John Kriendler (eds.), *Understanding NATO in the 21st Century*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, p. 70

traditionally neutral countries, the EAPC marked “NATO’s transformation from classical military Alliance to comprehensive security organization”²⁰⁵.

The second main partnership initiative was forged roughly in the same period and for similar purposes: to increase NATO’s attractiveness vis-à-vis Eastern European countries, while reassuring Russia of its benign intentions – in a word, to pave the way for enlargement. The PfP was formally launched at the 1994 Brussels summit, initially in the form of an invitation to non-NATO NACC members to join a new and ambitious cooperation program. The expected result of such program, in the letter of the document, was to bring non-NATO partners closer to the military standards of the Alliance and, consequently, ease the interoperability problem. Reading between the lines, through the PfP NATO was offering its partners an appealing platform for security sector reform, confidence building with neighbours and, ultimately, NATO membership²⁰⁶. From this point of view, the PfP was apparently successful. It took just five years for the first round of post-Cold War enlargement to take place, as Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO as early as 1999. Admittedly, this decision was quite controversial, as many critics raised challenging arguments against enlargement²⁰⁷. Nonetheless, what is relevant for our purposes is that, in the eyes of the states involved, the PfP became the waiting room for future rounds of enlargement. In doing so, the PfP served the double purpose of easing the political frictions (especially with Russia) created by the enlargement process, and getting around the military gap with new members. The institutional architecture devised to pursue this goal took the form of the Planning and Review Process (PARP), Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPS) Individual Partnership Programs (IPPs)²⁰⁸ and, since 1999, Membership Action Plans (MAPs)²⁰⁹.

These initiatives did not change the framework of cooperation, which from the very beginning was based on a bilateral model (NATO vis-à-vis individual PfP country); however, they contributed to the fragmentation of policy options towards the partners. According to Herd, this principle of ‘self-differentiation’ represents the key of the PfP success, as it provided all partners with the best available option: some have joined NATO, while others have used IPPs to gain assistance and advice on such a sensitive issue like the security sector reform. Moreover, it has allowed neutral states to interact closely with the Alliance and grasp the benefits of the circa 1.600 activities covered by the program²¹⁰. As a final evidence of NATO’s faith in the promise of PfP- inspired forms of cooperation, over the years the PfP portfolio of actions has been replicated to other partnerships.

Parallel to the PfP, and almost simultaneously, NATO embarked on a similar project on its southern flank: also launched in 1994, the MD aimed at promoting confidence building, political dialogue, and

205 Julian Lindley-French, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2007, p. 78.

206 NATO, *Partnership for Peace: Framework Document*, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council/North Atlantic Cooperation Council, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 10-11 January 1994, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c940110b.htm>

207 See, among others, Michael E. Brown, “The Flawed Logic of NATO Enlargement”, in Philip H. Gordon, (ed.), *NATO’s Transformation. The Changing Shape of the Atlantic Alliance*, Lanham MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 1997, p. 121-139; Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, Stephen Larrabee, “NATO Enlargement: A Framework for Analysis”, in Philip H. Gordon, (ed.), *NATO’s Transformation*, *op. cit.*, p. 93-120; Ronald D. Asmus, Richard L. Kugler, Stephen Larrabee, “The Costs of NATO Enlargement”, in Philip H. Gordon, (ed.), *NATO’s Transformation*, *op. cit.*, p. 177-200; Robert E. Hunter, “Maximizing NATO”, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (1999), p. 190-203; Michael E. Brown, “Minimalist NATO”, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3, (1999), p. 204-218; Zbigniew Brzezinski, “NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion”, in *The National Interest*, (Fall 1998); The most detailed account of NATO’s enlargement is still James Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: the U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO*, Washington, Brookings Institution, 1999

208 Later replaced by the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP), a single framework for all Partnerships, actually based on the IPP model

209 Graeme P. Herd, “NATO Partnerships. For Peace, Combat and Soft Balancing?”, *op. cit.*, p. 71

210 Apart from providing a roadmap for future accession, MAPs also marked a clear distinction between potential candidates for NATO membership and those that were excluded

improve NATO's relationship with seven Mediterranean countries²¹¹. Moreover, like the PfP, the MD has been based since its inception on a two-level cooperation. The highest political form of cooperation includes political consultations, both in the bilateral ('NATO+1'), and multilateral format ('NATO+7')²¹² – in the optimistic words of Jakob Aarøe Jørgensen, “an opportunity for two-way political consultations between NATO and MD partners”²¹³. The lower form of cooperation is laid down according to annual Work Programmes and includes a broad range of activities, like “seminars, workshops and other practical activities in the fields of modernization of the armed forces, civil emergency planning, crisis management, border security, small arms & light weapons, public diplomacy, scientific and environmental cooperation, as well as consultations on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)”²¹⁴.

Differently from the PfP, however, the MD has not achieved tangible results²¹⁵. Obviously, considering the complexity of the region (torn as it is by intractable conflicts like the Israel-Palestine conflict and chronic instability, as shown most clearly by the ongoing civil war in Syria), it should not come as a surprise if the Alliance fell short of any substantial achievement on these sensitive issues. So, little wonder if NATO public statements stress the potential of its framework, cherish its role in modernizing its partners' security sectors, “by making them more affordable, more accountable and better able to work with each other”²¹⁶, but neglect its basic failure as a confidence building measure. In 2004, ten years after the establishment of the MD, NATO developed another project towards the Middle East, this time towards Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates: the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) aimed to promote practical cooperation with these countries through security sector reform, defense transformation, best practice advice on the democratic control of armed forces, defense planning, and civil-military operations²¹⁷. In Julian Lindley-French's words, “the ICI looks to extend the security footprint of the Alliance beyond Europe by creating a new concept of partnership fundamental to its new strategic stabilization mission”²¹⁸.

The above-mentioned partnerships represent the traditional formats of consultation. As we have seen, they have engaged very different partners and experienced varying degrees of success. What is relevant for our purposes is that they encompass the two most common forms of cooperation: bilateral²¹⁹ and multilateral. A third framework for cooperation, one that lies in between the two alternatives, is known within NATO circles as ‘28 + n’²²⁰. It is clearly a flexible format, based on considerations of opportunity, which allows NATO members to engage with partners of choice, depending on the issue at stake (from energy security to military operations). This is also, according to NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, James Appathurai, the most promising and potentially fruitful avenue for cooperation in the future. Whether this is really the case will be debated in the third section. In the next few pages a policy assessment

211 From December 1994 to March 2000, seven countries joined the partnership: Mauritania, Morocco Tunisia, followed by Egypt, Israel, Jordan and, finally, Algeria

212 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm

213 Jakob Aarøe Jørgensen, “Partnerships in the Middle East: Interventionist Endeavors?”, in Trine Flockhart, (ed.), *Cooperative Security*, op. cit., p. 112

214 James Appathurai, “The Future of NATO's Partnerships”, in Trine Flockhart, (ed.), *Cooperative Security*, op. cit., p. 41

215 Helle Malmvig, *From a Diplomatic Talking Shop to a Powerful Partnership? NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and the Democratization of the Middle East*, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2004 (DIIS Brief), p. 4

216 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm

217 NATO website, topic ICI: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_58787.htm

218 Julian Lindley-French, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, op. cit., p. 18

219 Special relationships have been established so far with Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Afghanistan

220 James Appathurai, “The Future of NATO's Partnerships”, op. cit., p. 39. After the Wales Summit, with the launch of PPI and DCB, this format has come to encompass also the so-called ‘global partners’ – i.e. states that came to cooperate with NATO as contributors to ISAF, and are now willing to keep up their relationship with the Alliance.

exercise will be done by paying closer attention at NATO's partnership policies towards the South Caucasus and the MENA region, and by discussing the effects it has had on both regions.

Troubled Partnerships Ahead: the Cases of South Caucasus and MENA Region

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, NATO partnership policy has evolved over time, growing in ambition, depth and breadth. This is witnessed most evidently by its purported global reach. However, such a long-distance outlook is too recent to be assessed properly. On the other hand, the two regions under consideration have been object of the Alliance's attention for enough time to be considered as reliable test cases. In fact, as discussed before, with the MD the MENA region has been interested in NATO partnerships since their very inception. Similarly, the South Caucasus has gained a strategic importance for the US, NATO and Western Europe since 2001. Finally, regardless of the different issues and problems featuring the two regions, they are both paradigmatic of the security challenges NATO is called to face in the foreseeable future.

As concern the South Caucasus, the region has turned out to be critical for NATO with the launch of the *global war on terror*²²¹. More generally, the South Caucasus presents several security issues which undermine the stability of the region and are a matter of concern for the Euro-Atlantic community. The most important threats include: frozen conflict and separatist movements, weak state capacity and poor governance, the uncertain security of oil and gas pipelines, organized crime, arms trafficking and terrorism, and economic underdevelopment²²². During the 1990s, NATO pursued a low-profile approach toward the South Caucasus. As discussed in the previous section, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War the main focus of the Alliance was Eastern Europe's transition to democracy, a process that NATO actively supported through close partnerships, leading to security sector reforms and eventually promoting the admission of new member states. Conversely, outside Europe – mainly in Central Asia and the Caucasus – NATO launched a series of less demanding partnerships, explicitly falling short of any admission proposal.

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have all been part of several NATO initiatives: the EAPC, PfP, PARP, IPP, IPAP (Georgia was the first country to agree this form of cooperation with NATO), the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism (PAP-T), the *Virtual Silk Highway* (a computer network to share information specifically planned for Central Asia and the Caucasus), the NATO-Georgia Commission²²³. NATO's approach towards the South Caucasus has been particularly flexible, multifaceted and based mainly on bilateral relations. In fact, despite such a variety of initiatives, NATO's commitment towards the region has been ambiguous and vague. On the one hand, NATO's leaders grew increasingly aware of the strategic significance that the South Caucasus has recently assumed for the Euro-Atlantic community. Indeed, the area has an essential role for NATO's strategic projection in Central Asia, for the military intervention in Afghanistan and for the pipeline diplomacy

221 Ilan Berman, "The New Battleground: Central Asia and the Caucasus", in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Winter 2004-05), p. 59-69

222 Mitat Celikpala, "Escalating Rivalries and Diverging Interests: Prospects for Stability and Security in the Black Sea Region", in *European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2010), p. 290-298

223 Andrea Carati and Andrea Locatelli, *Total Eclipse of the Heart. NATO's Failure to Engage Azerbaijan*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the Transatlantic Studies Association, Cork (IR), 11 July 2012; Andrea Carati and Andrea Locatelli, "La Nato e l'Azerbaijan", in Andrea Carati and Andrea Locatelli (eds.), *Le relazioni internazionali dell'Azerbaijan*, Rome, Sandro Teti Editore, 2014, p. 111-112. Philipp Fluri and Viorel Cibotaru (eds.), *Defence Institution Building: Country Profiles and Needs Assessments for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova Background Materials*, Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008, p. 30, <http://www.dcaf.ch/Publications/Defence-Institution-Building-Country-Profiles-and-Needs-Assessments-for-Armenia-Azerbaijan-Georgia-and-Moldova-Background-Materials>

relative to the Black-Sea and Caspian region²²⁴. On the other hand, so far, NATO has not developed neither a consistent strategic vision, nor convincing policies to deal with the regional security issues. Actually, as Alberto Priego suggested, “NATO policy towards the PfP in general and towards the South Caucasus in particular could well be labelled as a form of *à la carte* cooperation. Concerning the South Caucasus, any of the three Caucasian Republics can select what kind of cooperation it prefers to develop in the framework of the PfP”²²⁵.

So far, the major problem with NATO’s policy towards the South Caucasus is the disjunction between its strategic interests in the region and the security guarantees it can offer – i.e. a disjunction between the security concerns at stake for the Euro-Atlantic community and the actual means or solutions that the Alliance can afford. The growing relevance of the region and the lack of strategic vision resulted in a mismatch between the perceived promises NATO could offer to the South Caucasus countries and the ability to maintain those promises. As a result, the inconsistency of NATO’s approach towards the South Caucasus has undermined the credibility of the Alliance in the region, particularly since the Georgian-Russian conflict in 2008. However, Georgia and, to a lesser extent, Azerbaijan²²⁶ still consider the Alliance as the most plausible balancing actor to the Russian influence in the region and in their domestic affairs. However, NATO is not able to offer them clear responses on the security assurance it can provide²²⁷.

The ambiguity of NATO’s role in the South Caucasus can be explained by pointing at both the heterogeneity of the region (which hampers any attempt to build a comprehensive strategic vision) and the Alliance’s internal limits. The heterogeneity of the regional context does not depend on NATO’s policies, but it thwarts the ability to hold a consistent strategic policy towards the South Caucasus. Each one of the three Caucasian republics offers different views and expectations on NATO’s role in the region²²⁸. Georgia maintains a pro-Western approach and a clear attitude towards its integration into the Alliance. Georgia considers the US and NATO as the best options to balance the Russian grip into its domestic affairs and the best bets to re-gain its territorial integrity. Similarly, Azerbaijan has shown a proactive stance towards NATO and it has been actively looking for a possible admission. At the same time, however, differently from Georgia, Azerbaijan is keen to preserve good relations with Russia and Iran. Armenia, on the contrary, is the less eager to undertake close cooperation with NATO, for it still considers Russia as the essential protector of its security interests. Thus, from an Armenian perspective, NATO has two necessary shortcomings: it is an outstanding rival of Russia and it is an organization where its greatest enemy (Turkey) plays an important role²²⁹.

Besides the regional heterogeneity, NATO has shown its own shortcomings. Two are particularly worth noting: the underestimation of Russian commitment to the region and the Alliance’s internal division over enlargement policies. How much NATO has underestimated the Russian commitment towards the South Caucasus became evident in the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. In this view, the decision to offer the future perspective of an admission proposal to Georgia and Ukraine during the Bucharest summit in April 2008 (i.e. just few months before the war erupted) was ill-conceived

224 Petersen Alexandros, *Azerbaijan’s euro-Atlantic Vision*, “Azerbaijan Focus: Journal of International Affairs”, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January-March 2010), p. 193-200

225 Alberto Priego, “NATO Cooperation Towards South Caucasus”, in *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2008), p. 50

226 Recent developments in Azerbaijan’s domestic politics seem to suggest a sort of re-approachment with Russia.

227 Andrea Carati and Andrea Locatelli, *Total Eclipse of the Heart*, *op. cit.*

228 Alberto Priego, “NATO Cooperation Towards South Caucasus”, *op. cit.*

229 And yet, this has not prevented Armenia from turning to NATO in its attempt to reform the security sector. However, this does not alter Armenia’s political stance: while willing to take advantage of NATO’s benefits, Armenia’s attitude towards NATO remains highly ambivalent. I am grateful to Michela Ceccorulli for bringing this point to my attention

for the very reason that NATO was giving Tbilisi the opportunity for a moral hazard – namely, to openly challenge Moscow with the backing of Western allies. The August Russian intervention in Georgia made the risks of such an open-ended commitment evident, so thwarting the whole initiative.

Yet, the credibility of NATO suffered the most in the aftermath of the conflict, when the allies decided to postpone the admission of Georgia and Ukraine to an undefined future, and the US president Barack Obama proposed to ‘reset’ the US-Russian relations. The first decision has been perceived as a sign of both the uncertainty of NATO’s Eastern policy and the weakness of the security guarantees the Alliance could offer. On the other hand, the Obama’s ‘reset’ diplomacy towards Russia, while potentially improving Russia-NATO relations – for the very fact it was proposed in the wake of the war – sent a clear message: for the US administration and its European allies, relations with Russia had priority over those with the South Caucasus countries – i.e. the latter could not endanger the former²³⁰.

Finally, the enlargement policy – especially towards Ukraine and Georgia – has shown deep divisions within the Alliance. Indeed, some countries – mainly the US and new members as Poland and the Czech Republic – favor the admission of other Eastern partners even if this could jeopardize relations with Russia. In contrast, some other countries, mainly the old European allies like Germany, France and Italy, reject the idea of a short-term admission. In the eyes of the Caucasian political leaders, these divisions weakened NATO’s credibility and, more generally, hampered the implementation of a functional policy towards the region.

Against this backdrop, regional cooperation on security issues, for the time being, has shown a poor record²³¹. The effects so far have been: (i) to stress bilateral relations over a multilateral or a regional approach to the area; (ii) to offer a sort of *à la carte* cooperation allowing each individual country to establish its own form of collaboration with NATO; (iii) to foster regional divisions, thus deepening patterns of amity and enmity in the regional context. So, which lessons could be drawn from this evidence? As a number of authors have stressed, NATO has replicated over time the same formula (or parts of it) that proved successful with Central European countries. However, a number of factors – like deeper animosities, weaker statehood, and Russia’s more assertive role – all contributed to thwart its ambition. Especially as concerns NATO’s most trumpeted goals – to bring about security and cooperation, to build confidence and to promote democratic values, just to name a few – the Alliance is still a long way from being successful.

Admittedly, Russia’s overwhelming presence makes the South Caucasus a unique case – something that necessarily curbs the applicability of Central Europe’s lessons to other regions. However, as we are about to see, similar considerations hold for the other area under investigation here: the MENA region. The strategic relevance of the area does not require further explanation: in the past dozen years, Mediterranean and Middle East countries have gained centre stage in world politics for the gravity and frequency of their crises²³². It is therefore safe to say that the region is critical for the Alliance for at least two reasons. First, because of the close vicinity to the European continent and US interests. Secondly, for the multidimensional nature of the security challenges involved. The issues at stake basically include the whole list of items on any state’s security agenda – from terrorism to energy security, from migration flows to state failure – and are best dealt with a comprehensive

230 Fareed Shafee, “New Geopolitics of the South Caucasus”, in *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring 2010), p. 185

231 Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, “The ‘Security Paradoxes’ of the Black Sea Region”, in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2009), p. 225-241.

232 Just to scratch the surface, one may recall the US war over Iraq (2003) and the following occupation; the enduring Israel-Palestine conflict; the Arab Springs (2011) and the following transitions from sultanistic to authoritarian regimes; the war in Libya (2011); the ongoing civil war in Syria

approach (one of NATO's buzzwords since the 2006 Riga Summit)²³³. So, little wonder if NATO tried to launch partnership initiatives in the area.

As mentioned, on paper the first partnership program was launched as early as 1994, with the MD. Compared to the current scenario, at the time the Mediterranean was far less turbulent: statehood was not challenged from within (i.e. authoritarian leaders ruled without significant opposition), state-to-state rivalry showed no sign of escalation, and no direct threat could be reasonably perceived by NATO members. In its earliest stages, then, the Alliance's engagement with the region was not really conceived to promote security and stability, but rather "to bolster NATO's normative image vis-à-vis its 'absorption' policies in Central and Eastern Europe"²³⁴. As a consequence, similarly to Caucasian states, until the early 2000s, MD partners approached the Alliance in the NATO+1 format, and mostly on low politics issues. To put it bluntly, the MD resulted in a low-profile diplomatic initiative almost exclusively focused on technical cooperation, devoid of any strategic purpose other than confidence building.

The American-led *war on terror* raised the appeal of MENA states as valuable partners in the common fight against al Qaeda. In NATO's eyes, not only these countries could play a role in maritime cooperation, but (if they wanted) they could also actively contribute to the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this view, at the 2004 Istanbul summit, NATO members tried to upgrade the MD into a more truly political partnership (including as a new instrument Individual Cooperation Programs) and, more importantly, launched the ICI. Still based on the NATO+1 format, the ICI focused cooperation on military issues: its stated goals involved NATO support for its partners in terms of: 1) defense transformation and civil-military relations; 2) advice and training aimed at increasing interoperability; 3) cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including intelligence sharing. According to Jørgensen, both partnerships have significantly increased cooperation over time, as ICI raised from 328 activities in 2007 to 500 in 2011, and MD passed from 100 activities in 2004 to 700 in 2011²³⁵. In line with the MD experience, however, the ICI did not bother much about forging a common vision or a shared strategy²³⁶. It rather insisted on a limited, technical (one may add opportunistic) form of cooperation.

Admittedly, as recognized by most analysts, it is all too easy to dismiss NATO's partnerships towards the MENA region as a failure²³⁷. However, the issue at stake in our analysis is not the stability of the area, but rather to assess whether the implementation of partnerships with MENA countries has improved their relationship with NATO. Up to a point, the answer is positive: as stressed most forcefully by liberal thinkers, institutional frameworks like the ICI (and to a lesser extent the MD) help overcome cooperation obstacles and forge common identities and values²³⁸. This argument nicely fits with NATO's purported success in low politics issues, like counter-terrorism, border

233 NATO, *Riga Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Riga on 29 November 2006*, Riga, November 2006, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm>

234 Gülnur Aybet, "The Four Stages of NATO's Partnership Frameworks: Rethinking Regional Partnerships with the Middle East and North Africa", *op. cit.*, p.105. This reading of the MD's early stages is also confirmed by the choice of seven target countries for their "favourable attitudes towards – and understanding of – the necessities of security cooperation with the West". Mohammed Moustafa Orfy, *NATO and the Middle East: The geopolitical context post-9/11*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 92

235 Jakob Aarøe Jørgensen, "NATO in the Middle East", *op. cit.*, p. 65

236 Samaan Jean-Loup, *NATO in the Gulf: Partnership without a Cause*, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome, October 2012 (Research Paper No. 83), p. 1

237 One may be even tempted to point to the variety of problems that plague the area as an evidence of NATO's irrelevance, but this would be just unfair. To be sure, in the past two decades NATO members have made big mistakes, but this is not our point here

238 For an introduction to this theoretical view, see among others Robert Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches", in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (1989), p. 379-96

security, environmental safety, search and rescue, police operation, etc.²³⁹ However, this is hardly enough to achieve NATO's more valuable goals – one above all, to improve its relationship with partners. In fact, these same examples of cooperation can be understood in less optimistic terms as a form of assistance to MENA countries. To put it bluntly, so far the areas of cooperation have been limited to military functions where NATO forces excel: little wonder, then, if MD and ICI partners willingly decided to enjoy the benefits of allied expertise. On the other hand, considering the countries involved, one may be tempted to believe that the Alliance is actually trading military cooperation for political support by pivotal states in the broader Middle East area. Given the limited military weight of ICI partners, NATO does not have much to gain from them – even if they achieve NATO standards. On the contrary, this group of states constitutes a critical resource for the Alliance (and the US in particular), since they represent some of the most stable and influential Arab regimes in the region.

If this view is correct, the ICI and MD betrayed their purported nature, as they ended up being a mere *quid pro quo*. NATO's costs (i.e. military assistance to the partners) are limited, but highly valued by partners; equally, the gains are also limited, as they depend on MENA partners' (limited) willingness to fully embrace NATO's political agenda. The low profile of this exchange is witnessed most clearly by the limited commitment of most partners to NATO's missions like Unified Protector and Active Endeavour. This leads to a sort of paradox: as long as cooperation is focused on technical issues, the chances of having *reliable* partners in the region are negligible. As forcefully stated by Gülnur Aybet:

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.²⁴⁰

In conclusion, three lessons can be drawn from this case study. The first one is that, as for Caucasian countries, NATO's policy has been lacking a strategic vision. On the contrary, borrowing templates devised for PfP countries, the Alliance framed the MD and ICI mostly in terms of piecemeal low-profile cooperation. Secondly, regardless of NATO's official concern for cooperative security and democracy promotion, when dealing with its southern flank it was mostly guided by an 'interventionist' rationale and only partially by an 'influentialist' rationale: while the first purpose has been achieved, the second one is far more controversial. Finally, similar once more to the experience with South Caucasus, NATO's appeal towards the partners depends on its credibility as a security provider. As long as the Alliance is reluctant to play this card (as witnessed in the aftermath of the Libyan war), current and future partnership agreements is doomed to rest on very shaky foundations.

Guidelines for Future Developments

With the 2010 Strategic Concept and the 2011 new partnership policy, NATO made partnerships one of the pillars of its action in the contemporary security scenario. The recent Wales Summit added a little more fuel with the PII and DCB programs²⁴¹. As discussed in the previous sections, NATO's experience with partnerships so far proved contradictory: while some degree of success is

239 Mohammed Moustafa Orfy, *NATO and the Middle East: The geopolitical context post-9/11*, *op. cit.*, p.171

240 Gülnur Aybet, "The Four Stages of NATO's Partnership Frameworks: Rethinking Regional Partnerships with the Middle East and North Africa", *op. cit.*, p.112

241 Just as cursory evidence of the political relevance the Alliance attaches to DCB, it is worth recalling that it is headed by NATO Deputy Secretary General Vershbow.

unquestionable, as it is the case with Eastern Europe, elsewhere partnerships led to limited benefits for NATO countries and partners. Perhaps, the main reason for such variation in performance is due to the lack – at least until 2011 – of a coherent partnership strategy, which eventually led to a mismatch between (very ambitious) goals and (pretty poor) resources. Things may change after the reforms brought about in 2011, which comprise: 1) a new policy; 2) a new menu of cooperation and individual programs; 3) a revised political military framework²⁴². While this may actually streamline and improve cooperation with partners, it is still too early to assess its impact.

The crucial question for the future is to understand under which conditions and/or institutional arrangements are partnerships more likely to succeed. To conclude, a very simple framework for analysis is offered along three main dimensions: 1) what purposes can partnership serve? 2) Which form of cooperation is to be preferred? 3) Are there given regions where partnerships can make a difference? Each question can find multiple, non exclusive answers (see Figure 5).

In a nutshell, as concerns the purposes, we can draw a distinction between political and military goals. While current trends seem to favor the latter, especially interoperability with NATO forces and security sector reform, the former should also be at the centre of ongoing and future partnerships. This would imply setting clear goals, although this could make eventual failures utterly evident. These goals in turn would fall within three broad categories: confidence building and/or regional stabilization, international consensus/legitimacy, democracy promotion and good governance of NATO partners. For each of these goals NATO's countries and their partners have different relative gains: for example, stabilization equally favors NATO and partners, while consensus benefits mostly NATO. The more unevenly balanced the relative gains, the more NATO must be ready to offer.

In terms of frameworks for cooperation, reference can be made to the three alternatives mentioned in section 2: multilateral cooperation is best suited for confidence building and stabilization, but it also risks ending up like the MD or the EAPC – i.e. 'diplomatic talking shops', where no decision is really taken. By reverse, bilateral forms of consultation allow to maximize NATO's bargaining power vis-à-vis the partner, but they also undermine NATO's coherence, as we have seen with Caucasian countries. Flexible configurations (i.e. '28 + n'), albeit not entirely coherent with the liberal values informing the Alliance, may grasp the benefits of the other solutions and compensate for their limits.

Finally, as for the areas of interest, table 1 lists the main regions of concern. Of course, priority goes to the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the South Caucasus, not least because of NATO's long-standing engagement in these areas. Central Asia (and the Af-Pak complex in particular) comes next. What is questionable, is the (re)current discussion over a Global Partnership – an idea that some influential authors seem willing to embrace²⁴³. But before embracing such an ambitious goal, NATO should better consider how global it really wants to be.

242 A handy overview is available in Graeme P. Herd, "NATO Partnerships. For Peace, Combat and Soft Balancing?", *op. cit.*, p. 76-78.; NATO official documents can be found on NATO's website at: http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-Partnership-Policy.pdf and http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-PMF.pdf.

243 As boldly stated by Julian Lidley-French, "In the big new world the Alliance must become the global security enabler and thus the enhanced NATO. [...] An active global Partnership for Peace must necessarily place NATO at the center of a world-wide web of like-minded states able to act collectively as an anchor of stability on the international system, expanding Alliance influence and extending those willing and able to join NATO on strategic stabilization missions. [...] The door should be open to all those wishing to join the global NATO in its strategic stabilization role. Julian Lindley-French, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, cit. p. 99.

Purposes:

Political goals

Confidence building/regional stabilisation

International consensus/legitimacy

Democracy promotion/good governance

Military goals

Interoperability

Security sector reform

Burden sharing

Framework for cooperation:

Multilateral

Flexible

Bilateral

Regions:

Mediterranean

Middle East

South Caucasus

Central Asia

Global

Figura 5 Framework for policy guidelines

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Forging The Future Of Nato's Partnerships

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Introduction

NATO is an adaptive alliance that changes according to the contours of its strategic environment. Partnership is a supporting element to NATO's work and recent efforts have focused on maximizing the value of partnerships for allies and partners alike, especially in the context of hybrid threats. By virtue of the changes that NATO has undergone since its inception—and particularly the changes over the past decade—the case can be made that as NATO transforms, so will its partnership network, which will comprise a wide range of entities from throughout the international system. This paper focuses on the evolution of NATO's network of partners over the long-term horizon. It addresses the challenges and trends likely to shape NATO's strategic context, the tools required for the Alliance to respond to them and the types of partners NATO may need to engage with in order to deal with complex challenges. The central thesis is that NATO adapts to its strategic context as means for fulfilling its mission. In the process of doing so, NATO changes, while the entities with which it interacts evolve as well in the navigation of common challenges and pursuit of shared opportunities. Using NATO's Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA) and Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO) efforts as rough guides to view the long-term horizon, it is reasonable to assume that NATO's partnership community will be different in composition and scope tomorrow from what it is today.

The drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, combined with the increased instability along Europe's southern and eastern peripheries, compels experts to ask whether or not NATO's adaptation in the domain of partnership is sufficient to address the challenges that allies and partners are likely to face together in the future. Russia's use of hybrid warfare²⁴⁴ in Ukraine forced a reassessment of the basic assumptions that served as the foundation of Transatlantic security for decades. Moreover, the rise of ISIS, combined with the continuing civil war in Syria, compromises Europe's security in areas beyond the military domain, e.g., mass migration and organized crime. It is, therefore, safe to suggest that, since the security environment is changing, partners are changing as well and NATO's means

²⁴⁴ The term 'hybrid warfare' appeared at least as early as 2005 and was subsequently used to describe the strategy used by the Hezbollah in the 2006 Lebanon War. Since then, the term 'hybrid' has dominated much of the discussion about modern and future warfare, to the point where it has been adopted by senior military leaders and promoted as a basis for modern military strategies. For more details on hybrid warfare see NATO, *Hybrid Warfare – does it even exist?*, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/Review/2015/Also-in-2015/hybrid-modern-future-warfare-russia-ukraine/EN/index.htm>

of interacting with partners is evolving in kind. The introduction of the Partnership for Peace (PfP)²⁴⁵ framework in 1994—and three other frameworks that NATO has developed since²⁴⁶—enables 41 states to be recognized as official partners of the Alliance. The introduction of the Military Cooperation Division (MCD)²⁴⁷ and its successor, the Military Partnership Division (MPD), creates a permanent point of ingress for partners to interact with the NATO Command Structure on a daily basis. In operations over the past decade, particularly in Afghanistan, partners have played important and sensitive roles to aid NATO's operations including command and combat support.

Most allies and partners agree that today's partnership frameworks are sufficient to meet current security challenges. No state has left a partnership framework permanently, with the exception of those partners that NATO invited to become allies. Each year, more partners express an interest in sending military liaison officers to strategic commands. However, more work can be done to increase information sharing amongst allies and partners, enhance decision making to be more inclusive of partners' perspectives, and define a greater role in shaping operations in which partners are likely to contribute forces. Crises in the future will likely expose gaps in policy and strategy and demand further adaptation. For this reason, the authors call for new structures in NATO to support adaptive partnerships when and where required. This includes conducting dialogue with regional powers, particularly states that share interests in assuring access and responsible use of the Global Commons²⁴⁸ of sea, air, space, and cyberspace. NATO's evolution in partnerships translates into reinforcing cooperation with partners that possess capable militaries interoperable with forces of the Alliance. In addition, partnership in the future could entail deepening relationships with other governmental agencies, like customs, gendarmeries, and coast guards. Last, the Alliance would be wise to consider developing new structures that enable quick and easy interaction with non-governmental partners that possess niche capabilities, like crisis mappers and digital humanitarians.

The first section presents key trends in the strategic environment, by using NATO's Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA)²⁴⁹ and Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO)²⁵⁰, showing that it is reasonable to assume that NATO's partnership community will be different in composition and scope tomorrow from what it is today. Both documents show important trends emerging across the international system. These trends outline an era of hybridized threats that originate from beyond the traditional military domain and which could have profound implications for allies and partners alike. Cooperation—with a broad range of actors to address complex security challenges—is a salient theme, especially as the future security environment is shown to increase both the rewards for cooperation and costs of unilateral action. The second section addresses NATO's partnership framework, showing that the current partnership is functional and efficient. However, the authors make the case that NATO's strength is anchored to its ability to craft and redefine, as well as to adapt the tools necessary to sustain its network of broad range of partners. The main objective of this part is to show, thus, that if the future trends that were discussed in the first part of the paper prove to be

²⁴⁵ The Partnership for Peace (PfP) is a programme of practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO. It allows partners to build up an individual relationship with NATO, choosing their own priorities for cooperation

²⁴⁶ These frameworks are presented later on in the chapter

²⁴⁷ Military Cooperation Division (MCD) is a NATO Division headquartered at SHAPE in Mons, Belgium. Its mission is to plan, program, coordinate, implement and assess NATO military outreach policies, activities and events at the Strategic Commands level. MCD replaces the former Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC), established in 1994

²⁴⁸ For a more detailed presentation of the challenges associated with the Global Commons see Tara Murphy, "Security Challenges in the 21st Century Global Commons", in *Yale Journal of International Affairs* (2010), p. 28-43, available at <http://yalejournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/105205murphy.pdf>

²⁴⁹ NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2013 Report*, HQ SACT Strategic Plans and Policy, Norfolk, 2013, available at <http://muntr.org/guides/tr15/Strategic%20Foresight%20Analysis.pdf>. See also NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: Interim Update 2015*, Norfolk, 2015.

²⁵⁰ NATO, *Framework for Future Alliance Operations 2015*, available at <http://www.act.nato.int/futures-ws-2>

accurate, NATO will need to develop the means to cooperate with them by engaging with partners throughout the international system, across a range of domains when and where required.

Future Trends: Toward an Era of Increased Cooperation?

For partnership in the Alliance, three trends stand out from many to define the future security landscape and, by extension, the types of partners that can help the Alliance navigate challenges and seize opportunities. First, the world is experiencing the explosive proliferation of human ingenuity through the use of technology, which has been changing our world in unpredictable and profound ways²⁵¹. This phenomenon is accelerative and is producing breakthrough technologies, e.g., autonomous systems and robotics, which could have significant implications in terms of distribution of power and warfare capabilities across a wider spectrum of actors. A second trend consists in the re-emergence of the Asia-Pacific region in global affairs, driven in large part by the growth of China and arming of both the Middle Kingdom and its neighbours. The economic power of the region fuels the deepest economic ties between Europe and Asia in history, a phenomenon that has only emerged in last two decades and with which allies and partners have to contend, both in economic and security terms. Third, the Global Commons of sea, air, space, and cyberspace are used with increasing frequency to support globalization. This has led to what some call the 'congested commons,' where the exchange of people, ideas, goods, and services is in higher demand, and where there are more opportunities for friction, conflict, and disaster²⁵². Nonetheless, partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region will be key to understanding this region of increased importance for Europe and NATO's Pacific allies in the US, Canada, France, and Britain. No one actor controls all, and it is unlikely for a leviathan or hegemon to do so in the future. NATO's partnerships with those states that share interests in the open and responsible use of these commons could be buttressed by increasing cooperation with organisations that play front line roles in the defence of sovereignty in complex threat environments.

Rapid Technological Change

Technological innovation has proven significant global benefits, but correspondingly, it has also created a greater prospect of adverse consequences as potential adversaries will have greater access to innovative science and technology²⁵³. Technology has enabled other actors, as well as states to enter and play in global and regional power structures. The ability for non-state actors to access new technologies and harness their use will continue to have an effect on all regions. Access to technology will allow more actors to participate in the global flow of financial resources, and may present additional areas of threat to the Alliance²⁵⁴.

Some new types of challenges that allies and partners are likely to encounter in the future are highlighted in NATO's Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO)²⁵⁵. The report suggests a very different world in the coming decades from the one we inhabit today. Technological advancements on the battlefield over the past 25 years have followed the broader trend of accelerative

²⁵¹ See also, European Interagency Security Forum (EISF), *Communications Technology and Humanitarian Delivery Challenges and Opportunities for Security Risk Management*, 2014, available at https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/EISF_Communications-Technology-and-SRM_October-2014.pdf

²⁵² NATO, *Assured Access to the Global Commons: Maritime, Air, Space, Cyber*, April 2011, available at http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2010/gc/aagc_finalreport.pdf

²⁵³ NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2013 Report*, op. cit., p. 2

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*

²⁵⁵ See Supra, Footnote 7

change across almost every aspect of human civilization and this trend is likely to continue. While showing that it is impossible to predict all the areas where technology could revolutionise warfare, some of the areas that could represent distinct challenges are quantum computing, electromagnetically launched projectiles, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, additive manufacturing, biotechnology and nanotechnology²⁵⁶. This phenomena has translated into better technologies at lower unit costs distributed to a wider range of belligerents, all with unpredictable effects. A key example that illustrates this trend include the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah employed drones and other advanced technologies that were, at the time, perceived to only be available to states. Moreover, the use of cellular telephones as actuators in Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) may seem unremarkable in 2015, but was revolutionary in 2005. And the use of cyber weapons was in the realm of science fiction in the 1990's, while now, allies and partners contend with hundreds of thousands of cyberattacks daily.

Thus, the emergence of key technologies presents both challenges and opportunities for allies and partners, particularly with regard to the rise of: autonomous systems that are independent of human control; minaturised capabilities that shrink units to fraction of original sizes and often with increased capabilities; and persistent efforts to optimize research and production costs that drive down the costs associated with defence procurement. Of these three phenomena, autonomous systems present the most profound challenge to allies and partners, as their presence on the battlefield may alter not only the character of human conflict, but a fundamental assumption of warfare as a primarily human enterprise. These developments have the potential to compel NATO to expand and focus its partnership efforts towards nations and states that possess niche capabilities that can be brought to bear against common adversaries using advanced technologies.

To begin with, autonomous weapons systems (AWS) have been defined as weapon systems that once activated can select and engage targets without future intervention by a human operator²⁵⁷. These systems, which include unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), anti-munitions systems, computer programs, armed robots, cyber-attack and cyber defence systems, are projected to become the centerpiece of 21st century military and counter-terrorism operations²⁵⁸. Other types of autonomous systems include sensory and information-gathering units²⁵⁹. Thinking units and networks that operate independently of human control are likely to become more sophisticated to the point of being fixtures of commercial entities and government institutions in the future. For example, improved manned and unmanned systems reduce risk and loss of life. A mixture of low and high-tech systems improves resilience through the diversification of NATO systems. New tactics, including swarm of unmanned systems, have the potential to enable the Alliance to spontaneously amass on the battlefield while reducing operational risk²⁶⁰. The emergence of autonomous systems on the battlefield presents a host of technical, ethical, and tactical challenges that allies and partners are likely to encounter over the coming decades. These systems exist today in computer networks and are highly sophisticated, playing games of cat and mouse with hackers every day. They are different from unmanned systems that are under human control. These capabilities challenge legal experts, policymakers and military

²⁵⁶ *Idem*, p. 10

²⁵⁷ Mark Roorda, *NATO's Targeting process: Ensuring Human Control over and lawful use of autonomous weapons*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam Centre for International Law, 2015 (Amsterdam Law School Research Paper; 2015-13), available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2593697

²⁵⁸ Shannon Vallo, *The Future of Military Virtue: Autonomous Systems and the Moral Deskillling of the Military*, in K. Podins, J. Stinissen, M. Maybaum (Eds.), *5th International Conference on Cyber Conflict*, Talinn, 2013, available at https://ccdcoe.org/cycon/2013/proceedings/d2r1s10_vallor.pdf.

²⁵⁹ Jenny R. Holzer and Franklin L. Moses, *Autonomous Systems in the Intelligence Community: Many Possibilities and Challenges*, March 2015 <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol-59>

²⁶⁰ NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2013 Report*, op. cit., p. 2.

ethicists to make sense of these developments within existing normative frameworks of international law.

Minuaturisation, the phenomenon of reducing the size of units is manifesting in the forces of allies and partners in interesting ways, including *inter alia*, the development of miniature drones designed to confused enemy radar systems,²⁶¹ mini-missiles for Special Operations Forces,²⁶² and nuclear technologies²⁶³. The benefits of miniaturization in the military domain offer similar benefits as they do in the commercial sector, namely: advantages in portability and manouvability, fewer materials, reductions in weight and energy consumption, and a broader range of potential applications²⁶⁴. As the process of miniaturization continues, the introduction of nano-technologies is likely to affect military operations in the future by enabling capabilities to be shrunk to a size for individual use, as well as enhancing swarm capabilities. For instance, while saving space and weight is important, this has to be reconciled with robustness and reliability across a broad span of environments.

Nonetheless, the revolution in research, development, and production, as well as the improvements in processes are enabling new ideas to become commercially viable faster and cheaper than ever before²⁶⁵. While this benefits consumers by offering better goods cheaper and sooner, the rapid distribution of technology means the technological superiority that Western states have sustained over decades is at risk. Thus, it is critical that decision-makers in allied and partner states assess risk not only in the capabilities of potential adversaries, also the capacity to manufacture technologies over the long-term. It is important for allies and partners to develop capabilities that sustain the technological advantage enjoyed for decades by the Transatlantic community.

Mindful of rapid technological trends outlined above and their potentially profound implications in the military domain, the challenge for allies and partners alike is to create sufficient reasearch and experimentation for nations and industries in North America and Europe to innovate in complementary ways, and to coordinate efforts when and where possible. As new sources of innovation throughout the world emerge, allies will have to focus efforts and make prudent decisions that sustain the technological and operational edge they have long enjoyed. For example, in the United States, the Defense Innovation Initiative focusses on capability development efforts and business processes for the 21st Century²⁶⁶. It addresses how to posture forces, improve operations, and develop capabilities in the context of complex threats and scarce resources²⁶⁷. The challenge for allies and partners is how to keep pace with American efforts to innovate, despite the structural advantages

²⁶¹ Kris Osborn, "Air Force Developing Swarms of Mini-Drones", in *DefenseTech*, May 2015, available at <http://defensetech.org/2015/05/27/air-force-developing-swarms-of-mini-drones/>

²⁶² Brendan McGarry, "Raytheon Unveils New Mini Missile for Special Forces, Infantry", in *Defense Tech*, October 2015, available at <http://defensetech.org/2015/10/12/raytheon-displays-new-mini-rocket-for-special-forces-infantry/>

²⁶³ Missile Defense Advocacy, *North Korea claims progress on nuclear 'Miniaturisation'*, May 2015, available at <http://missiledefenseadvocacy.org/threat-news/n-korea-claims-progress-on-nuclear-miniaturisation/>.

²⁶⁴ Hsu Tai-Ran, *Miniaturization – A paradigm shift in advanced manufacturing and education*, Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, available at <http://www.engr.sjsu.edu/trhsu/Miniaturization%20.pdf>

²⁶⁵ McKinsey Global Institute, *Disruptive Technologies: Advances that will transform life, business, and the global economy*, McKinsey and Company, March 2013, available at http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/business_technology/disruptive_technologies

²⁶⁶ US Department of Defense, *The Third U.S. Offset Strategy and its Implications for Partners and Allies as Delivered by Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work*, Willard Hotel, Washington DC, 28 January 2015, available at <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Article/606641>

²⁶⁷ US Secretary of Defense, *Memorandum for Deputy Secretary of Defence*, November 2014 <http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/OSD013411-14.pdf>

inherent to the United States, which already possesses some of the world's most advanced defence capabilities²⁶⁸.

What is not clear, however, is the way in which an undetermined number of multiple accelerating trends could interact in unforeseen ways and increase complexity and risk. The future is, therefore, neither completely predictable nor predetermined and there is always the possibility of strategic shock²⁶⁹. This is an important factor that has to be considered when assessing partnerships. The path NATO chooses for partnerships is critical, as they will determine whether, at best, the security domain evolves into a community of network clusters with NATO playing a key role as conductor and integrator, or, at worst, develops into a fragmented system with NATO lurching from crisis to crisis.

Re-emergence of the Asia-Pacific Region in Global Affairs

Coupled with profound technological advancement, global power shifts continue to have significant effects for the rules-based international order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War. At the political level, (re)emerging powers such as China, India and Russia have exerted increasing global influence and are likely to continue to do so. Economically, the rise of the Asia-Pacific region will continue to shape global patterns of production, trade and investments for the coming decades. In parallel, global markets, financial institutions and national economies may become even more independent, thus challenging current world economic governance architecture and increasing the risk of a cascading global crisis²⁷⁰. Militarily, the potential for a relative decline—mostly due to declining defence expenditures and slow economic growth, particularly among the European members—would threaten the Alliance's full spectrum of military capabilities. Therefore, the increased relevance of certain regions may support the pursuit of new types of partnerships and associations for the Alliance.

NATO's engagement with nations in the Asia-Pacific region is likely to grow and deepen over the long term²⁷¹. This is a region of strategic importance for the Alliance by virtue of both its source of economic output destined for European and North American markets, as well as potentially destabilising factors that can affect the security of allies, including: military build-ups, border disputes, historical rivalries, and limited tools to reduce tensions. The corresponding challenge is not from one state in the region *per se*, but the ease by which a regional crisis can become global. Thus, allies' increasing interdependence with nations from the Asia-Pacific region makes understanding the dynamics of the region important for NATO's decision makers.

The relationship between NATO and partners in the Asia-Pacific will continue to build on already established mechanisms. Since then, NATO's connections to the Asia-Pacific region have grown to include formal partnerships with South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. During ISAF, four additional nations from the Asia-Pacific region—Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore, and Tonga—

²⁶⁸ For more details on the US military innovation see United States Government Accountability Office, *DOD Rapid Innovation Program: Some Technologies Have Transitioned to Military Users, but Steps Can Be Taken to Improve Program Metrics and Outcomes*, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/670090.pdf>

²⁶⁹ This is also one of the main conclusions reached by NATO's *Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2013 Report*, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁰ NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2013 Report*, *op. cit.* See also, NATO, *Strategic Foresight Analysis: Interim Update 2015*, *op. cit.*

²⁷¹ See Michael Paul, "NATO Goes East: NATO-Japan Cooperation and the 'Pivot to Asia'", Berlin, German Institute for International and Security Studies, October 2013 (SWP Comments), available at http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2013C33_pau.pdf

provided troop contributions in Afghanistan²⁷². NATO's interaction with regional organisations, like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC), is limited but has potential for growth in light of shared security challenges, e.g., North Korea, piracy, and terrorism. Moreover, partners and allies alike seek ways to sustain the levels of trust, interoperability, and situational awareness achieved during ISAF, Operation Ocean Shield and Unified Protector into the future.

Adaptation by way of greater security cooperation between Europe and the Asia-Pacific²⁷³ region is also made stronger by what some call the globalisation of regional conflicts. In 2015, a Chinese missile frigate conducted Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations in Yemen, rescuing 583 civilians from that country's civil war²⁷⁴. It was the second such operation in Africa after what Chinese media called the Great Evacuation—the rescue of 35,860 Chinese nationals from Libya in 2012 through the combined use of air and naval assets. The presence of Chinese and Australian fighters in ISIL, and that group's kidnapping (and execution) of Japanese nationals underscore the inter-regional characteristics of the de-stabilising forces along NATO's southern periphery. The increasing penetration of Asian powers in the Mediterranean makes clear why the challenge involves the whole Alliance, and not just its Pacific Rim members. Conversely, developments in the Euro-Atlantic area could have significant consequences for other regions: for example, some partners have even expressed concern that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2013 and subsequent proxy war in eastern Ukraine may embolden other states to take expansionist actions in the Asia-Pacific region.

The growth of security-related relationships between the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific regions is accomplished by economic exchange. The European Commission states it succinctly: “Just two decades ago, China and the EU traded almost nothing. Today, we form the second-largest economic cooperation in the world”²⁷⁵. Bilateral trade between the EU and China amounted to €433.6 billion in 2012²⁷⁶. Add trade with Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, and Australia and trade between the two continents surpasses half a trillion Euros per year. While the Transatlantic link between Europe and North America is the world's most valuable comprehensive economic and security relationship, links between Asia-Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic region are growing.

The globalization of regional security challenges compels NATO to work with partners in North America, Europe (EU) and Asia-Pacific region as means to anticipate and prevent security challenges, and to seize opportunities where like-minded partners can work together on issues of common interest. This trend is likely to continue, further underscoring the importance of cooperation in security affairs with partners that share interests with the Alliance, and ensuring communication channels remain open with states that may not share the same worldview of allies and other partners.

²⁷² Karl-Heinz Kamp, *How NATO can Pivot Towards Asia*, in Hans Binnendijk (ed.), *A Transatlantic Pivot to Asia: New Trilateral Partnership*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University SAIS, 2014, p. 199-215, available at <http://transatlanticrelations.org/sites/default/files/Pivot%20chapter%208.pdf>

²⁷³ For more details on the security-related relationships between Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific see Michael Swaine et al., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: A Strategic Net Assessment*, Washington DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April, 2015, available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/04/02/conflict-and-cooperation-in-asia-pacific-region-strategic-net-assessment>

²⁷⁴ Shannon Tiezzi, “Chinese Nationals evacuate Yemen on PLA Navy Frigate”, in *The Diplomat*, March 2015, available at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/03/chinese-nationals-evacuate-yemen-on-pla-navy-frigate/>

²⁷⁵ Delegation of the European Union to China, *Questions and answers: EU-China customs cooperation and combating illicit trade*, 16 May 2014, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/20140516_en.htm

²⁷⁶ *Ibidem*

Congested Commons?

Security and prosperity of allies and partners are inextricably and simultaneously connected to the Maritime, Air, Space and Cybersecurity domains, which are interdependent. Human activity in the global commons demonstrates the increasing levels of interaction between states and regions through the transit of goods, services, people, and ideas. The global commons can be defined as those areas that are not under any national jurisdiction or sovereignty and that are potentially accessible to any and all actors, be they states, non-state, or individuals²⁷⁷. Time and again, the global commons have been used by state and non-state actors to obtain important strategic resources without substantial physical investment. Access to most of the resources found within the global commons has been difficult, although they have not been scarce. However, the advancement of science and technology in recent years and the increased demand for resources is leading to an increase in activities such as, for example, fisheries, aquaculture, navigation, flight, scientific research, and the laying of submarine cables²⁷⁸.

Currently, no unified body of international law exists that regulates or assures the right to access the global commons of sea, air, space, and cyberspace. The character and extent of existing legal frameworks for each of the domains is unique; for the maritime domain, there is a body of codified international agreements derived from common law and refined over centuries. Regulations and international law covering air and space are more recent and were developed in response to specific concerns that galvanised international action²⁷⁹. Cyberspace stands apart because it is not governed by any one body; its legal framework encompasses both national legislation and standards set by private entities²⁸⁰.

While it is tempting to discuss in a holistic manner the nature of the global commons, it is important to remember that each domain has different characteristics. Consequently, policy development and engagement with different partners will follow a different strategy, which has to be built in line with the threat environment, the nature of potential spoilers and the level of political engagement with relevant stakeholders.

Strengthening the understanding of potential threats to the domains amongst Alliance populations and governments is crucial for continued peace and prosperity of allies. In times of fiscal austerity, the Alliance must continue to build support for the policies and investments required for assured access to the commons²⁸¹. NATO relies on the global commons to carry out operations, maintain communications, generate intelligence, and meet its mandate of ensuring security for its members. The loss of access to one of these domains would limit—if not deny—NATO's ability to operate effectively in any of the others. Therefore, NATO's partnerships and its comprehensive political and military approach are crucial instruments for addressing evolving risks and threats to the commons²⁸².

Key global players outside of the Alliance view the domains of space, the maritime domains, and cyberspace as mutually supporting parts of a Global Commons to be used for legitimate purposes by all, for information exchange, commerce, and military operations. However, the global commons are also known as the contested commons. For instance, great powers such as Russia and China, which

²⁷⁷ NATO, *Assured Access to the Global Commons: Maritime, Air, Space, Cyber, Finding and Recommendations*, op. cit.

²⁷⁸ UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, *Global governance and governance of the global commons in the global partnership for development beyond 2015*, available at http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/thinkpieces/24_thinkpiece_global_governance.pdf

²⁷⁹ NATO, *Assured Access to the Global Commons: Maritime, Air, Space, Cyber, Finding and Recommendations*, op. cit., p. 4

²⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

²⁸¹ *Idem*, p. 5

²⁸² *Idem*, p. 6

are nations with a vital interest in the global commons, have their own security policies and priorities that shape their perspective on global domains and desire for global recognition and status. They are not necessarily interested in allowing assured access to the global commons as this may conflict with national interests, as evidenced by China's activities in the South China Sea and Russia's statements regarding its presence in the North.

Challenges and potential 'flashpoints' exist in each domain of the commons, which could, if not handled properly, cause competition and rivalry between actors in the Global Commons. Even within the Alliance, the US and the European members do not share identical positions. Forming national-level consensus on the global commons enables Nations to create a platform from which NATO allies can negotiate and coordinate with external partners. Akin to the ongoing discussion on Comprehensive Approach, several analysts view the majority of the challenge to be ensuring open cooperation with actors outside of NATO²⁸³. Formulation of an Alliance-wide consensus will facilitate a working relationship with outside partners, who will be necessary in moving to a global solution.

NATO's Partnership Frameworks—Room for Improvement?

As showed in the previous section, NATO's challenges are global, not regional in scope; globalization and technology have changed the character of the international system. This section advocates for the idea that NATO is adapting and transforming its force structures and commands to reflect both persistent and emerging demands, whenever and wherever they emerge. Although existing partnership tools have provided NATO with successful results in the past, the Alliance is looking to find new means to optimise its policies in order to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future with like-minded partners that share risk and reward with allies.

Current Frameworks

During NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, 51 partner states contributed troops and supported resources to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. ISAF was one of the largest coalitions in history and constituted of more than 130,000 personnel. National security interests and a common belief in the need to root out terrorism in Afghanistan compelled allies and partners to strip away barriers to cooperation in the crucible of war. Allies and partners built familiarity and trust with one another as they fought a common enemy in the Taliban and al-Qaeda. While ISAF represented a high water mark for partnership in the Alliance, it was not the first time NATO worked with partners in an operational setting. In fact, throughout its missions in the Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and subsequent operations in the Mediterranean Sea in the Operation Active Endeavour and off the Horn of Africa, through the Operation Ocean Shield, allies and partners have built pragmatic relationships based on shared risk and reward²⁸⁴.

When NATO supplanted the ISAF mission with Resolute Support, several representatives of NATO's closest partners expressed concern over the potential for disengagement between allies and partners; their logic was, given no war to fight together, there is no reason for sustaining high levels of cooperation with partners. Yet, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and the rise of Daesh in

²⁸³ *Ibidem*

²⁸⁴ For a more detailed presentation of the historical part of partnerships see Róbert Ondrejcsak and Beata Gorka-Winter (eds), *NATO's future partnership*, Bratislava, Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA) – Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), 2012, p.9-11, available at <http://cenaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/NATO-PARTNERSHIPS-FINAL.pdf>

Iraq and Syria, concerns over diminished interest in NATO regarding partnership was proven premature.

NATO's current partnership tools are functional and answer the call for most partners, as evidenced by partners' continued participation. In addition, new tools such as Partnership Interoperability Initiative and Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB), add even more ways to connect with partners, should a partner choose to deepen cooperation with the Alliance. DCB enhances capabilities in selected partner states in need of it most with minimal NATO footprint: ETEE, capabilities like CIED, cyber, and port security. Main issues right now that concern DCB are resources in NATO dedicated to the efforts, and bilateral coordination with allies already in-theatre.

As NATO adapts to its strategic context, and as it embraces the tenets of the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO), the likelihood is high that partnership frameworks in the Alliance will change as well. It is time to ask, in light of the findings of FFAO, how can NATO adapt its partnership tools to enable future success? NATO can start to answer this question by underscoring the utility of partnership with a broad range of entities throughout the international system that share objectives with allies and possess a wide range of capabilities. Partnership provides the leadership of NATO with a greater range of choices in the navigation of challenges. It broadens the options for crisis response and enduring strategy for both allies and partners. Partners help NATO offset gaps vulnerabilities in its defence posture and improve situational awareness.

NATO's four partnership frameworks are: Partnership for Peace (PfP)²⁸⁵, Mediterranean Dialogue (MD)²⁸⁶, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)²⁸⁷, and—informally—Partners across the Globe (PatG)²⁸⁸. These frameworks are used to organise and direct partnership activities across a range of tasks, from diplomatic engagement to the staffing of military billets. Through the Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM), these frameworks enable partners to work with NATO across a wide range of tasks: defence-related work, defence reform, defence policy and planning, civil-military relations, education and training, military-to-military cooperation and exercises, civil emergency planning and disaster response, and cooperation on science and environmental issues²⁸⁹.

At the Wales Summit in September 2014, NATO's Heads of State and Government agreed to adopt the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII)²⁹⁰ to incentivise partnerships and focus relationships on bolstering capabilities. This process requires continued effort between NATO and partners to get the policies right and sufficiently robust in a manner that fuels long-term success. Partner capacity involves enhancing the core capabilities, expanding the capacities of their national militaries and ensuring interoperability with NATO – all of which are at the core of collective defence, crisis

²⁸⁵ See Supra Footnote 2. For more details on the *Partnership for Peace* programme see: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm.

²⁸⁶ NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue was initiated in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council. It currently involves seven non-NATO countries of the Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. For more details on the *Mediterranean Dialogue*, see http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm

²⁸⁷ NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, launched at the Alliance's Summit in the Turkish city in June 2004, aims to contribute to long-term global and regional security by offering countries of the broader Middle East region practical bilateral security cooperation with NATO. For more details on the *Istanbul Cooperation Initiative* see: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52956.htm

²⁸⁸ NATO cooperates on an individual basis with a number of countries which are not actually part of its formal partnership frameworks. Referred to as 'partners across the globe' or simply 'global partners', they include Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan. For more details on *Partners Across the Globe* see http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49188.htm

²⁸⁹ NATO, *Partnership of Peace Programme*, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm

²⁹⁰ Recognising the essential role that partners play in addressing security threats, at the Wales Summit in 2014, the Allies launched the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, which aims to maintain and deepen the ability of partner forces to work alongside Allied forces

management and cooperative security. With the introduction of the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB)²⁹¹ cohort, the Partnership Interoperability Initiative and Individually Tailored Roadmaps, NATO shifted focus toward functional partnerships and away from geographically-based partnerships. The rationale behind this decision centred on the need to identify partners that can deliver capabilities and support the Alliance's operations whenever, and wherever required.

Halfway between the Wales and Warsaw Summits, it is clear that the duality of NATO's functional and geographic frameworks strike a balance between how best to incentivise interoperability and reconcile geography as a determining factor in security affairs. The challenge for the Alliance will be how to develop and sustain the means to manage these relationships over the long term.

New Partners—Opportunities for More Effective Cooperation

NATO's strength with regard to partnership is anchored in its ability to adapt. If the future trends we discussed in the first section prove accurate, then it is likely that NATO will need to develop the means to cooperate with them. In this regard, while increasing partnership with capable nations is important, NATO's engagement with other government organisations that have roles to play in the navigation of complex and hybridised threats is equally relevant. As a central component of innovation, partnership is important not just for coordination within the system, but also as a means to promote ideas, best practices, and garner resources from private technology developers, military research and development agencies, universities and affected people themselves. The Alliance could also partner with private sector entities that are developing innovative technologies to deliver new capabilities and drive down costs of production.

Paramilitary Forces and Humanitarian Relief Groups

A range of actors now bring unique capacities to the international humanitarian system to include businesses and local first responders. However, traditional humanitarian actors have been slow to establish partnerships that leverage the assets that each has to offer²⁹². Alongside the states and the IGO-supported troops, a host of not-for-profit development and humanitarian agencies funded by states, foundations, and direct public donations worked in war-torn areas and fragile states to support economic development and provide the public with health care, education, access to clean water, and more²⁹³.

For example, over the last decade, some 100,000 international peacekeeping soldiers, police officers, and civilian monitors coming from regional organizations such as the African Union or the sub-regional organizations, were deployed worldwide each year in war zones²⁹⁴. As piracy surged off the Horn of Africa in the 2000s, stakeholders (including not only states, but various members of the international maritime community) came together to address the problem. Eschewing formal UN structures and the constraints that come with them, the Contact Group for Piracy off the Coast of

²⁹¹ The Wales Summit Declaration officially launched the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative which aims to help the Alliance to project stability without deploying large combat forces, and which is part of the Alliance's overall contribution to international security and stability, and conflict prevention. The Declaration announced that Georgia, Jordan, and the Republic of Moldova will be defence capacity building recipient countries.

²⁹² Alexander Betts and Louise Bloom, *Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014, p.5, available at https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OP9_Understanding%20Innovation_web.pdf

²⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 12

²⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11

Somalia (CGPCS) was created as an informal multi-stakeholder network for the coordination of counter-piracy planning. The CGPCS had active participation from not only naval, intelligence, legal, and other staff from many states and IGOs, but also from NGOs and industry associations²⁹⁵.

Recent events along Europe's periphery underscore the need for organisations, e.g., Coast Guards and border services, to be more integrated into NATO's activities. While the Coast Guard of a NATO ally would not constitute a partner in the traditional sense of the term, it is important to develop the means to include them to the fullest extent possible. With the recent influx of refugees into southern Europe, capture of border guards in the Baltic States, and the importance of Coast Guards in the Asia Pacific region, it is prudent that NATO consider how it can evolve its policies to include like-minded organisations in planning and training efforts.

The previous examples show situations in which transnational actors have come together in different combinations to attempt to address specific problems with varying degrees of success. In doing so, states and non-state organizations have cobbled together frameworks for cooperation and actual responses that have proved to be more stable and predictable. This diversity of actors coming together in unique and new partnerships to form and older ones strengthened.

Volunteer Communities

Allies and partners agree that NATO has to better identify the early phases of a crisis and enable timely decision-making. But in order to do that, the Alliance must have the ability to access, analyse data, and share intelligence across all domains of strategic, operational and tactical levels. It must also have the ability to analyse networks, and evaluate potential adversarial command and control structures. Crisis management is one of NATO's fundamental security tasks. It can involve military and non-military measures to address the full spectrum of crises. However, in order to efficiently respond to the operational needs, NATO and its partners need access to trusted data in near real time. In order to ensure effectiveness and resilience, NATO's crisis management instruments have to continuously be adapted to the evolving security context.

Volunteer communities with expertise in the collection, analysis and presentation of data and the development of supporting technologies, have potential to inform humanitarian aid organizations and help increase the efficiency of their operations²⁹⁶. For example, the crisis-mapping technologies and digital volunteers are changing humanitarian organizations. The work done by the Crisis Mapping Network can offer a good example. The International Network of Crisis Mappers is the largest and most active international community of experts, practitioners, policymakers, technologists, researchers, journalists, scholars, hackers and skilled volunteers engaged at the intersection of humanitarian crises, new technology, crowd-sourcing, and crisis mapping. As the world's premier humanitarian technology forum, they engage more than 8000 members in over 160 countries, who are affiliated with over 3,000 different institutions, including more than 400 universities, 50 United Nations agencies and projects, first responders operating in both the civilian and military space, dozens of leading technology companies, several volunteer and technical community networks and global, national, and local humanitarian and disaster response and recovery organizations²⁹⁷. The increasing use of these tools in crisis situations cast a light on the political dimensions of the trend.

²⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 11

²⁹⁶ Annemijn F. van Gorp, *Integration of Volunteer and Technical Communities into the Humanitarian Aid Sector: Barriers to Collaboration*, p. 1, available at <http://www.iscram.org/legacy/ISCRAM2014/papers/p17.pdf>

²⁹⁷ Jen Zimke, "Crisis Mapping: The Construction of a New Interdisciplinary Field", in *Journal of Map & Geography Libraries: Advances in Geospatial Information, Collections & Archives*, Vol. 8, N°2, 101-117 (2012), available at <https://jenziemke.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/ziemke-draft-crisismapping.pdf>

Not only do they provide a springboard for individuals to publicly contest or legitimise the actions of governments, which can fuel or dampen crises, but they also enable a specific role of the public.

Partnering with these type of organizations would enable the Alliance to better respond to specific humanitarian crises²⁹⁸. There are plenty of occasions in which crisis mappings has been used, e.g., in mapping the election violence in Kenya in 2008; in mapping the post-earthquake needs in Haiti in 2010; and in mapping the effects of the earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku, Japan in 2011 to name just a few²⁹⁹. The benefits of working with volunteer and technical communities would be incommensurable for NATO. With technology being used as a method to communicate internally with all globally dispersed volunteers, as well as technology often a product or primary means for being able to provide their services, this experience with technology can possibly be further extended³⁰⁰. Volunteer and technological communities could, for example, provide online training to their volunteers. In addition, online communities of practice could help increase aid organizations' awareness of volunteer and technical communities activities³⁰¹.

Conclusions and ways ahead

NATO's continued adaptation is in response to the contours of its strategic environment, notably a context in which hybrid warfare presents complex challenges to allies and partners alike. The network of partnerships that NATO has developed since 1994 are a critical element for the navigation of common challenges and pursuit of shared opportunities. The mechanisms by which NATO interacts with partners, e.g., regional and functional frameworks have yielded success in partnership for over two decades. However, more work can be done to increase information sharing amongst allies and partners, enhance decision making to be more inclusive of partners' perspectives, and define a greater role in shaping operations in which partners are likely to contribute forces.

NATO's Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA) and Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO) show important trends emerging across the international system that outline an era of hybridized threats that originate from beyond the traditional military domain. These trends have the potential to create profound implications for allies and partners alike. Cooperation—with a broad range of actors to address complex security challenges—is a salient theme, especially as the future security environment is shown to increase both the rewards for cooperation and costs of unilateral action.

It is a near certainty that gaps in policy and strategy demand further adaptation in the future. New structures will be required to support adaptive partnerships when and where required to assure access and responsible use of the Global Commons of sea, air, space, and cyberspace. Moreover, partnership in the future translates into deeper relationships with other governmental agencies, like customs, gendarmeries, and coast guards. New structures that enable quick and easy interaction with non-governmental partners that possess niche capabilities, like crisis mappers and digital humanitarians, will be required.

²⁹⁸ International Review of the Red Cross, *New information technologies and their impact on the humanitarian sector*, 2011, p. 1245, available at <https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/review/2011/irrc-884-meier.pdf>

²⁹⁹ For a detailed description of each of these examples see Patrick Meier, "Crisis Mapping in Action: How Open Source Software and Global Volunteer Networks Are Changing the World, One Map at a Time", in *Journal Map of geography and Libraries*, Vol. 8, N°2, p. 89-100 (2012) available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15420353.2012.663739>

³⁰⁰ Rebecca Goolsby, *Social Media as Crisis Platform: The Future of Community Maps/Crisis Maps*, available at <http://www.techbridgeworld.org/courses/15-303/Topics/GovernancePaper.pdf>

³⁰¹ Annemijn F. van Gorp, *Integration of Volunteer and Technical Communities into the Humanitarian Aid Sector: Barriers to Collaboration*, op. cit., p. 630

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Working Group 3 – Report

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The NATO Universe of Partnerships

NATO has built up a network of cooperation almost from the beginning of its existence. The Partnership formats are very diverse, geographically and content wise. Today NATO pursues dialogue and practical cooperation with 41 partner countries. More than 1400 programs and projects can be found in the Partnership toolbox. For some Partnerships, NATO has developed a formal format, others are gathered under the ‘global partners’ heading.

The network evolved especially after the end of the Cold War. Since then, NATO has been able to sustain and further develop a narrative of ‘Partnership’. As this long-term focus is rather difficult for big organisations to keep up, NATO deserves credit. The first formal Partnership resulted from the historical and geopolitical context of the Cold War: The PfP – Partnership for Peace, established in 1994. It can be seen as a roadmap for enlargement of NATO and later of the EU. Others are the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. At the same time, NATO has individual but no less formal Partnerships with so diverse partners like Australia and Russia.

Lessons Learned – Remaining Problems

Partnerships are ‘always and everywhere around’ NATO. Partners are established with NATO deployment or engagement and they can cooperate on almost every aspect of NATO’s security related activities. This does not mean that every partner can receive every kind of support. Contrary to the rather formal Partnership frameworks, most Partnerships seem to be generated ad hoc, by a crisis to which NATO had to respond and partners became necessary. Partners helped NATO to cover niche aspects the Alliance was not able to cover as effectively, like the typical host nation support areas of commodity supplies. Only later, this *ad hoc* cooperation was transformed into formal Partnerships.

The formal-informal divide: When the Partnerships mature, become formalized and the heat of the operation has cooled down, the hollowing-out of the Partnership often seems to begin. There is a growing resistance to have an honest dialogue on the substance of the cooperation, with the partners as well as among NATO-members. This seems to be a distinct phase in which the Partnership policy becomes hijacked by the institutional processes on NATO political and military levels. Bureaucratic

politics perpetuate the formal policy frame that fails to offer the flexibility to follow the changes that occur to the relationship. At the same time, the practical work continues underneath the headlines.

NATO can hardly escape the typical tension between the formal format of Partnerships and their actualization. For instance, once the Alliance has formalized a Partnership, it has to stick to its official design, for internal reasons but also because it would cause diplomatic problems to unilaterally disengage. As a result, NATO seems to prefer the greater degree of control provided by the informal approach, as opposed to the management of the actualized type of Partnerships.

Assessing the various formal Partnership formats, the rather limited success rate becomes visible. *PfP* may be the most successful format: it has been the road into NATO for many countries. Others have at least a privileged access to NATO. The *Mediterranean Dialogue* has worsened over time as NATO is missing an objective it wants to pursue with the format. Also, the partners do not know what NATO expects from them. Moreover, due to the cooperation with many of the 'old regimes' that have been in place before the 'Arab Spring', NATO's credibility is jeopardized. A similar story can be told about the *Istanbul Cooperation Initiative*: while it focuses on the cooperation with states crucial for the fight against terrorism - thus receiving technical support from NATO - this has been a source of criticism as NATO is seen to support these regimes in suppressing their own people. Interestingly, it can be argued that the NATO - Russia Partnership has been rather successful for a certain period. It helped to manage the phase of Russian instability and NATO enlargement for 20 Years. Russia is not only still a partner, there may even be greater need for more Partnership with Russia.

Resulting Dilemmas and Realities

It seems that Partnerships regularly run into dilemma situations that then absorb loads of energy to manage them. One is the credibility issue: NATO as well as individual partners aim to achieved predefined objectives through the Partnership. But to really enter into a Partnership, both sides would have to compromise on their ideas or interests. As this compromise either does not exist or is not in line with the officially declared policy objective, the Partnership becomes plagued with conflicting goals within the Partnerships or between Partnership objectives and other NATO objectives. Moreover, NATO as a hierarchical organisation may have illusions about the ability to control the partners and to plan the future of the Partnership. Eventually, NATO finds itself in a network of cooperation. Networks, however, tend to self-organize themselves and the relationships among their members. As a result, NATO may find that exerting control over the system is almost impossible.

NATO's Partnership policy thus faces difficult choices, first and foremost the Vision - Reality choice'. The Partnership policy can be understood as a vision or policy by design, i.e. being thought as an overall means to achieve NATO objectives and then has been, deductively, informed or even created the different Partnerships – this is the official vision. This is however contrasted by reality. The reality is that Partnership policy is characterized by strategic ambiguity, which suits a political animal like NATO - that is at the same time dependent on consent by 28 - very well as it gives flexibility. Moreover, it reflects the historical path of incremental development of the policy.

Future of Partnership Policy

The context of Partnership policy is changing in three principal aspects. First, environment. Here, the legal and technological frames are evolving. Also, the defence industrial production mode is

changing. On the geo-strategic dimension, the rise of the Asia-Pacific region may lead to shifts in attention and distribution of resources. Europe as well as the US are already deepening economic ties with Asia. Across all military domains - Sea, Land, Air, Space, Cyber – partners may become more important to substitute capabilities NATO does not have in relevant amounts. A general effect of these changes is that new actors will approach the scenery, not only states and governments but also non-state actors like militias and companies, and they may have to be considered as relevant partners.

NATO has potentially initiated an important change in its Partnership policy at the Wales Summit. The first element is NATO's adjustment of its mission, and in this respect the Alliance seemed to focus more this effort more on collective defence. This also affects the role of partners from a NATO perspective. The key question is: What can partners do for us? This may lead to a (re-)prioritisation of partners. One of the way of grouping partners could be: a) the 'would be membership candidates': Western Balkans, Ukraine and Georgia, but also - with a different spin - Sweden and Finland; b) the wide range of actors targeted in the 'global NATO' approach. With the change of the overall security environment and NATO's new focus on collective defence, what has also become more important for the consideration of Partnerships is the clear distinction between partner and member regarding the security guarantees that can be given. Partners cannot expect to receive a NATO-member like security guarantee.

At the same time, NATO has further developed its Partnership tools with two initiatives: with the 'Defence Capacity Building' (DCB) and the 'Partnership Interoperability Initiative' a tool to enhance the interoperability of partners with NATO.

Pre-assumptions and Open Questions

In parallel, the discourse within NATO on how to shape future Partnerships and what their purpose is, seems to be partly plagued by normative pre-assumptions as well as questions that still need to be discussed, if NATO wants to go down the path of a Partnership policy by design. Statements on what NATO needs and what partners have to be sometimes reads like a shopping list. Partnerships should be more functional, more capable, provide choices for NATO, and allow engagement with regional powers and functional relations with capable partners. NATO aims to explore new areas of cooperation like situational awareness and ISR and to open up to other actors, while keeping the existing relations. The toolbox shall be broadened.

What is missing is first and foremost the question '*cui bono?*' – who will profit from a Partnership? Why countries may want to become partners, what are their interests not only in NATO but what do they want to achieve by using NATO? NATO has to assume that partners have a clear self-interest in a potential relationship, which also creates demands as well as political problems. A similar set of questions is to ask from the perspective of an adversary: Would he try to prevent the Partnership or use it to get NATO into trouble?

Moreover, the administrative capacity and political ramifications are to be clarified: Is NATO capable to manage all the Partnerships and how global does NATO want to be? How can NATO systematically team up with non-governmental partners? Finally, new partners may also cause changes in NATO's internal dynamics, among Europeans as well as across the Atlantic.

The Challenge: Prioritizing Cooperation – without Annoying Partners

Wales and the Ukraine Crisis may really mark turning points in the Partnership approach of NATO. It can be argued that the Wales Summit underlines that NATO shall refocus on its core missions, i.e. Article 5 and crisis management. But this then raises questions about the role of Partnerships and partners therein. Moreover, we may be talking about different partners, regarding the two core missions and regarding geography. Shall NATO move to ‘necessity’ as the defining element of Partnership and what would be the purpose in the various contexts? Who cannot be a partner in the future?

Besides these more fundamental approaches to policy, gradual ones can be imagined: NATO could see the formal Partnerships as a *reservoir* that could be activated, based on existing formal ties. Formal frameworks may be more helpful than having no framework at all. The baseline being something one can resort to if needed. This could be like the move from ‘Facebook Friends’ to ‘real life friends’ and vice versa staying engaged through formalized ties that may simply not be used as long as there is no need to work closer with this partner. This would allow for not offending partners by officially cutting ties to them. Given the bandwidth of Partnerships and possible purposes, it may be necessary to think beyond the current setting and on top of Partnerships, consider the division of labour among actors or even situations in which NATO does only play a marginal or no role at all. The other distinction could be made between ‘partners of necessity’ and ‘partners of preference’. Here, the decisive element may be the character of pay-off in the relationship: a direct pay-off or a diffuse pay-off, one might call the latter solidarity. The extreme other end of pay-off is that of security free riding. But here the question is whether one has to make a difference between NATO members and NATO partners.

Seen from the other Side: NATO’s Added Value

There is no general answer to the question where NATO can offer benefits or even a critical support in ensuring a Partner’s defence. Three perspectives may help to assess this point. First, current instruments. The DCB is partly useful as it allows offering something but has political limits: Whom do we train? Moreover, NATO is not alone. There is a DCB/SSR Market. The EU, the UN and other regional actors are active and have ‘unique selling points’. The interoperability tool can be a cheap ticket to keep others interoperable with the West. Again, it has its limits: With whom does NATO cooperate in crisis management and Article 5?

The other helpful perspective is that on specific partners of immediate importance. Sweden is again an example for an *ad hoc* cooperation need and in an Article 5 type of operation. Stockholm wants to see concrete projects and cooperation in areas that are immediately very political. It may resemble another example for the need to set up a new level of cooperation *ad hoc*. At the same time, it can build on existing experiences of cooperation with NATO: Afghanistan and Libya.

An example for division of labour is NATO-EU cooperation. The EU is a partner or even more: it can provide security on issues like migration, civilian protection and border control. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the EU even has a link towards NATO in the treaty itself. But it is an underused resource of Partnership due to political blockings.

Recommendations

The sobering element of reality may ease the policy dilemmas. The double question raised by these observations is a) the purpose of formal Partnership policy and the ability to design the policy, b) what needs to be institutionalized, i.e. real partners with added value vs. formal Partnerships. What is the purpose of defining a Partnership policy given the highly context dependent character of NATO Partnerships? NATO has to accommodate the different partners/Partnerships. A Partnership may become official policy, but that by itself does not make the relationship a 'living' one. The fact that Partnership policy may be an incremental development instead of a policy by design and thus does not offer strategic direction does not need to be a problem as long as the policy is connected to the real world. This is especially true, if NATO envisages an even wider concept of Partnerships, almost open-ended, for its future. Then a best practice approach may be better serving NATO than a strategic exercise that will always risk colliding with reality. At the same time, NATO would have to accept that due to the increasing variety, Partnerships will even become more of a buzz word.

Three main caveats or recommendations can be made.

First, whatever kind of Partnership policy NATO is going to pursue in the future, it has to ensure that its core capabilities remain or become unaffected by the partners. NATO should not become dependent on partners as it is on its own members. Second, the limited success and the ambiguous political outcomes have to remind NATO to think of negative outcomes of Partnerships: What could NATO be dragged into? Third, even if the kick-off to Partnerships is often *ad hoc* and crisis driven, to engage in serious commitment, NATO should think about the potential evolution of such Partnerships in decades. Today's partner may turn into something different tomorrow. Russia is a good example here for the difficult choice even for Partnerships that may deteriorate after time.

Plenary Two - Roundtable on “What Political Guidance for NATO?”

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Pursuant to the spirit and letter of the Wales Summit Declaration, and in line with NATO’s 2010 Strategic Concept, the Alliance is adapting to the contours of the challenging demands associated with an unpredictable and complex international security environment, both politically and militarily. The transformation of the Alliance focuses on tailoring defense capabilities, enabling exercise, training, education and evaluation tools, updating policies, developing concepts, and conducting foresight analysis. The 2015 Political Guidance aims to operationalize the Strategic Concept by setting out the framework and priorities for all Alliance capability issues in light of current security environment, as updated starting point for the new cycle of the NATO Defence Planning Process. Drawing on the information available, and given the results of the Working Groups discussion previously reported, the final Plenary tried to respond to crucial questions concerning NATO’s political readiness to face current security challenges, the solidity of the transatlantic bond and the very nature of this political community.

Politique d’Abord

«Politics», not «threats» or «security» has probably been the most quoted concept during the closing plenary session of the 2015 Academic Conference. NATO is indeed a *political*-military organization: political is its foundation, political is the identification of the security challenges, political is the choice of the means to contrast the threats, political is the definition of the long-term goal of the transatlantic community in relationship with the international environment.

Indeed, by mentioning the 2006 Political Guidance one commentator highlighted how that document descended from a specific strategic context. Nonetheless, it was noted, the ambition of politics should be to shape the security environment, not simply to adjust to it. In this view, many reflections focused on the nature of the threats that the Alliance has to face today, and in particular on their political dimension, both in terms of causes and potential consequences.

Russia, for example, was recognized by many as a major challenge, but one of a fundamentally different nature from that posed by the URSS during the Cold War. Instead of being one of the two pillars in a bipolar system, what NATO faces today is a fragile, revisionist, nuclear great power: a country that is military strong, politically weak, and economically vulnerable – one of the most

threatening combination we can imagine. At the same time, however, it is an actor whose ties of interdependence with the West are so intense that its collapse would have unknown consequences. The different threat perception emerged within the Alliance, between those who consider NATO's deterrence (particularly conventional) as currently being insufficient and those who take seriously the risk of an escalation if such deterrence is going to be enhanced, translated in a strategic advantage for Moscow by slowing down the allied response to Russian rapid moves. Definitely, as put it by one commentator, Russia "is not a gift for the Alliance": the exact balance between deterrence and *détente* toward Russia – the latter not to be confounded with appeasement – is probably the most difficult political choice that NATO needs to make today.

At the same time, there is more than Russia in terms of threats, for example by considering the MENA region, and the global scope of NATO's security challenges was remarked by many comments. Instead of focusing on specific 'flanks', NATO should perceive itself as immersed in "a single spherical security mosaic", in which both distant and close threats are intertwined, in the same way as should be the means to respond according to the three Strategic Concept's core tasks: *collective defence*, *crisis management* and *cooperative security*. Alongside with the three core tasks, *resilience* has been underlined as an area for greater NATO efforts, particularly vis-à-vis hybrid threats. Complexity is a defining feature of this scenario, in which the new challenges do not substitute the old ones, but simply add new levels and dimensions to a strategic puzzle in which the use of force *per se* seems unable to provide the solution but remains nevertheless a key element of the equation. In that sequence of crisis that has been defined as "The New Normal" (see precedent Plenary), multiple and continuous political decisions are thus becoming more difficult but even more unescapable than in the past.

Back to the Core: a Community of Values?

The quest for the political soul of the Alliance demanded also a reflection on its founding principles and ultimate goals. From the beginning the Atlantic Alliance has been a co-operative grouping of states sharing substantially the same ideals and with a high degree of common interests. However, it was noted, interests alone are insufficient and ineffective as single and main political paradigm for the Alliance in the current globalized world. Nor NATO is a classical threat-driven Alliance, otherwise it would have dissolved after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is instead a 'security community' united by shared interests and by the common faith in democratic and liberal values.

For NATO, going back to the core thus means to rediscover its original *raison d'être*: the collective defence of the member states, perceived as a distinct community of democracies. Based on shared values, their cohesion and solidarity has provided an element of stability within the Atlantic area, and could give more purpose also to the Alliance today. Democracy, it was argued by one speaker, plays such significant a role in this community that NATO should not only prevent its erosion in the member states – for example by somehow sanctioning specific violations and progressive involutions – but should also be more pro-active with its partners, for instance introducing a kind of pro-democracy element in its external relations.

The status of democracy in Western societies, however, appears questionable. The promise of inclusive political systems, in which politics would have mitigated and counter-balanced the inequalities that the free market inevitably produces, has not been maintained. Instead, the economic crisis accelerated a process of polarization, in which the social base for consumption decreases, access to welfare goods and services returns to being a luxury for a selected few, and privilege becomes an increasingly characteristic feature of our society. The growing inequalities and exclusion within Western democracy risk making the Alliance losing the socio-political foundations upon which it has

been created. Following this path, one panelist commented, “there will be nothing more to defend and none willing to fight for”: the ‘domestic flank’ in the medium term might indeed turn out to be the most difficult challenge for NATO.

Weakening Transatlantic Ties?

As the center of American interests shifts toward the Pacific, Washington seems to be more ambivalent towards Europe. Indeed, it is since the early 2000s that the Old Continent has ceased to be the main operational theater for the Alliance or its main source of troubles. Although the Ukrainian crisis has dramatically changed this situation with a renewed focus on collective defence, some trends may be of a more structural nature and their consequences are due to last for some time to come.

As emerged also from the Working Groups discussions on strategic culture and readiness, fundamental differences remain among the Allies concerning threat perceptions, attitude towards the use of force, and conception of the role of the Alliance at global level. Most Europeans seem to live in a “post-heroic world” characterized by a prejudice towards military action and the reluctance to use the force to achieve political goals. At the same time, Americans are often criticized for their incapacity to transform military victories – from Afghanistan to Iraq – in political successes. As pointed out by one commentator, the problems among the two pillars of the Alliance may lay not so much in the lack of American leadership, but in the inevitable decline in the acceptance of US leadership in a non-bipolar world.

Nonetheless, the reinvigoration of the transatlantic partnership remains an inevitable priority in order to face the many challenges posed to the West. Both deterrence and *détente* are indeed symbiotic with internal solidarity and cohesion, because without these latter the former lose any credibility. In particular, the Europeans have to find ways to prove both a more convincing political unity and practical utility for the Alliance, in order to remain relevant within the debate on NATO transformation vis-à-vis an American leadership less focused on Europe than in the past.

The Way Forward

In general terms of political guidance, the Alliance has to undergo a deep analysis of both its strength and its limits. Among the latter figure the difficulties – or even the “complete disasters” in political terms according to some – associated with the final outcome of Western crisis management missions despite the military results achieved. From Afghanistan to Libya, and by extension to Iraq and the non-intervention (so far) in Syria, it is the whole doctrine of (democratic) state building that is increasingly questioned. Nonetheless, avoiding the collapse of weak states along a geopolitical arch that goes from Ukraine to Mauritania might become one of the top priorities for the Alliance in the next future. NATO could respond to this challenge by *integrating collective defense, crisis management operations and cooperative security* into a renewed comprehensive approach. In turn, this requires a more serious re-launch of partnerships, particularly in the Mediterranean region and the Middle East.

Deterrence is another area that requires deep revisions. On the one hand, conventional deterrence assurance appears insufficient to many Allies in the security environment emerged after the annexation of Crimea, and needs to be reinforced to some extent. However, due to budget constraints and strategic choices, conventional capabilities have been generally decreasing across Europe in the last decades, while the existing ones are unevenly distributed among NATO members. Although in

Wales the Allies committed to increase their defense spending towards 2% of GDP by 2024, the necessary steps to reach this goal have still to be taken and a problem of forces generation persists. On the other hand, while NATO nuclear capabilities remain robust, the diverse threat perceptions and lack of political unity within the Alliance make the threat of their use less credible. Moreover, the connection between nuclear and conventional deterrence, especially but not only vis-à-vis Russia, has to be rethought deeply in light of the new security context.

To acknowledge NATO weaknesses does not mean to forget its strengths. NATO still enjoys huge military capabilities, technological leadership, unique expeditionary forces, and the ability to exert significant deterrence towards some threats while containing and contrasting others. In this view, the Readiness Action Plan adopted in Wales appears as an important development *to speed up military implementation of political decisions* with regards to the use of force. NATO should advance in this direction in terms of capabilities readiness and more timely decision making at political and military levels. However, to imagine that institutional mechanisms would substitute the need for member states' sovereign decision and the joint political decision within the Alliance is a dangerous illusion; one that NATO simply cannot afford. At the same time, notwithstanding ups and down, the transatlantic bond remains an unavoidable pillar of the current international system. In other words, its political solidity represents at the same time NATO's main strength and main vulnerability. In this view, in areas such as resilience and hybrid threats there is also room for an *increased cooperation between NATO and EU*, potentially beneficial for both actors.

The overall challenge posed by Russia should not be underestimated, as it poses an existential threat for the Alliance itself. Indeed, differently from what happened in the 90s, the risk of NATO going 'out of business' might come not from its reluctance to go 'out of area', but from the inability to perform its original task - implement the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and defend the member states (and specifically the most exposed in geographic terms, the Baltic Republics). While doing so, by balancing deterrence and detent *NATO should engage Russia politically*, striking a balance in the asymmetries of interests and perceptions among its member states. That means certainly to oppose Russia aggressive behaviour, but being open to cooperation where possible, integrating multilateral decisions and bilateral efforts into a coherent strategy. No peaceful order in Europe is possible without a major political effort by all actors concerned.

In conclusion, in order to remain relevant, undoubtedly NATO has to transform and to adapt its instruments, its structure, its strategy to the ever evolving security environment. Yet, the Alliance should also reflect on the shared values upon which this political community has been created and has developed for over 65 years. It is only by framing a renewed political vision based on this socio-political foundations that the Alliance would find the ambition to shape the current and future international environment, the capacity to identify specific outcomes, the courage to pursue them and the legitimacy to do so.



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



Academic Conference 2015

ISBN: 978-92-845-0195-3



ACADEMIC CONFERENCE 2015

ISBN: 978-92-845-0195-3