



Wilton Park



Image: NATO

Conference report

NATO partnerships in a shifting strategic landscape

Monday 1 – Wednesday 3 October | WP1192

In collaboration with:





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Summary of key points

Defining NATO's place and utility in a changing world ran through this conference, as did the need to make strategic dialogue central to the forging of 'strategic partnerships' with implications for global security. Within a decade strategic relationships will have been transformed both between states and institutions. NATO partnerships must be seen in that context. Partnerships should be driven by both interests and values and should be geographic as well as functional in nature. Critical will be the crafting of a new concept of partnership that re-energises existing partnerships and seeks new forms of collaboration as part of a world-wide security partnership web.

Central to future partnerships is NATO's place in America's grand strategy. This includes the possible forging of a new contract with the US; NATO takes care of security for both members and partners in and around Europe, thus easing pressure on the US elsewhere, in return for the continued American security guarantee.

The purpose of partnerships at a time when most NATO members face a 'defence cliff' is to lessen risk by shifting the balance from collective defence and crisis management to co-operative security. However, to make NATO's Partnership Strategy relevant to the twenty-first century new mechanisms and institutional solutions must be sought that serve the needs of all. NATO has no ambition to be a global Alliance, but has a critical role to play as a cornerstone institution in a world-wide security web. For such an architecture to be realised NATO must differentiate its role from that of the US and by extension its relationships with partners, both formal and informal.

At the military level NATO is but one framework provider for global partners. No major future NATO operation is likely to take place without partners and therefore NATO may have an important role to play as an 'interoperability school'. Equally, the limitations of NATO and its partnerships must also be understood. Many of the emerging risks and threats, such as food and water insecurity and rapid urbanisation, will not be solved by military means.

NATO and its partnerships are thus but one set of interlocking state and institutional partnerships vital to effective strategic governance of twenty-first century security. However, until the essential divide within the Alliance is resolved between 'globalists' and 'little Europeans' it is difficult to see NATO emerging as a formal hub of effective strategic partnerships. It is therefore vital that NATO establishes a consensus about what it wants to achieve with partners and that partners better understand NATO.

To that end NATO's partnership strategy must become core business. Indeed, NATO needs more consciously to seek a full spectrum of partnerships. However, a perceived failure in Afghanistan would impact the full spectrum of partnerships from strategic cooperation through security sector reform, disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation, democratic control of armed forces through to defence diplomacy. Before a strategic dialogue of substance can take place with partners NATO must itself determine what its role is in the twenty-first century. That will also mean agreement within the Alliance over

what it can do, and what it cannot.

In this context, NATO should take into consideration the following approaches and initiatives for its partner relationships:

- The Alliance must improve consultations about new threats, such as cyber-attack, and the mutual protection of the global commons where partnerships are of particular importance.
- There needs to be a conscious effort to institutionalise the partnerships that have been forged in Afghanistan by sharing the many lessons as the natural integrating effect will fade.
- A new agenda for partnership is needed focussed on political consultation, improved interoperability, participation in military operations and specific discussions on emerging threats such as cyber.
- The Political Declaration with Australia could well provide a model for future developed world partners, such as Japan and South Korea, and better integrate such partners into NATO planning.
- NATO should avoid seeing itself as a teacher. However, NATO could act as an interoperability school promoting 'the NATO Way' particularly as it concerns helping partners better understand standardisation and interoperability in a multilateral framework.
- Participation in exercising, training and education is the key change instrument with effective interoperability the goal via the sharing of NATO training, tactics and procedures (TTPs) and standardisation agreements (STANAGS).
- Smart Defence should be extended to partners as a critical element in promoting the kind of synergies that defence cuts will demand if the Alliance is to remain credible as a first-line military actor.
- A concerted effort is needed to ensure partners are better able to access critical information, much of which will be classified. This is particularly important if the NATO Response Force (NRF) is ever to realise its potential as a vehicle for transformation.
- NATO must move away from broad brush partnerships to much more tailored programmes, particularly for states in the Middle East and North Africa. At the same time, NATO must be much clearer about the goals of such partnerships and how they can support Alliance as well as partner interests.
- NATO should seek to overcome Chinese perceptions of it as a US tool by emphasising the diverse and pluralistic nature of the Alliance. Areas of possible dialogue between NATO and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) could concern issues related to deployments overseas where the PLA and other militaries are operating in the same theatre, confidence building, and how to co-operate to effect during operations such as maritime security and delivery of humanitarian relief. A possible NATO role to promote such cooperation with the PLA could be as a repository of tactics, doctrines and procedures. This role could potentially take the form of an exercise manual aimed at the reduction of friction when the PLA and other militaries are operating in the same theatre, such as for a national evacuation operation (NEO), and to promote a common military understanding.

"The lessons of history are forgotten unless they are embedded in institutions"

NATO partnerships around the world: The strategic stakes for the Alliance and its Member-States

1. NATO provides "strong ground" for promoting strategic partnerships that can serve as cornerstones of security not just in the Euro-Atlantic area but in the world beyond. NATO has many partners with still more applying. The importance of NATO's partnerships was demonstrated at the May 2012 '28 plus 13' Chicago summit talks.

The value of partnerships is that they provide both legitimacy and capability to NATO operations. However, it is perhaps as a framework for political consultations that partnerships are at their most effective. To that end, the Alliance recognises the need to improve conflict prevention, particularly as it concerns consultation about new threats, such as cyber-attack, and the mutual protection of the global commons where partnerships are of particular importance.

2. Implicit in the horizon-scanning work of Allied Command Transformation (ACT) is recognition that security is indeed globalised and that even traditionally big-defence spending states can no longer act entirely independently. Both North Americans and Europeans are increasingly reliant on Asia and the Alliance needs a firm understanding of developments in that region. Partnerships will thus become central to NATO's strategic method. However, for partnerships to function to effect in a rapidly changing strategic environment relationships must be reciprocal.
3. Afghanistan has been a driver of global partnerships. With major combat operations coming to an end in December 2014 there needs to be a conscious effort to institutionalise the partnerships that have been forged by sharing the many lessons, as the natural integrating effect will fade. Preserving what might be termed "The NATO Way", post 2014 will be essential, not least for the preservation of effective military interoperability and as an example of how to undertake operations democratically. In reality there will be less impetus for seeking synergy with partners and less resources (the NATO Partnership Division has suffered a 30% cut in budget). NATO members will therefore tend to focus on core tasks and missions.
4. Furthermore, current partnership structures are either too cumbersome or do not serve the strategic interests of either the Alliance or Partners. The Euro-Atlantic Partnerships Council (EAPC) is now too big, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) is very Iran-focussed, and NATO cannot deliver the energy security cooperation many seek, whilst the Mediterranean Dialogue simply does not work.
5. Partnerships should be driven by both interests and values and should be both geographic and functional. Critical will be the crafting of a new concept of partnership that re-energises existing partnerships and seeks new forms of partnership as part of a world-wide security partnership web. In addition to emerging partnerships with Australia, Japan and South Korea, reinforced partnerships are also needed. Partnerships will also involve states and institutions at very different levels of need, development and capability.
6. Russia is the most obvious partner but Moscow could well-interpret expanding NATO partnerships as adversarial. The Middle East and North African (MENA) states are also vital partners, particularly Egypt, the Gulf States, and Libya. However, the MENA will also be the source of constant friction within the Alliance, particularly over Syria. In addition the Caucasus will be vital for European energy security but is inherently instable. Some form of dialogue should be sought with China. Indeed, relations with China, a critical interest for NATO European members will become more important as the US necessarily 'rebalances' its efforts towards Asia-Pacific. The EU, OSCE and UN remain vital partners and in time ASEAN, AU and OAS might become important institutional partners. However, until NATO-EU relations become effective the Alliance will find it hard to establish enduring institutional relationships elsewhere.
7. A valuable agenda for partnership must focus on political consultation, improved interoperability, participation in military operations and specific discussions on emerging threats such as cyber. Alliance flexibility will therefore be critical as both political consultation and future coalitions will involve variable 'clusters' of both members and partners. Implicit in this step change in the concept of partnership is a fundamental question; how to organise NATO and its partnerships on a global scale? This will not only require a change in the level of Alliance ambition but also structural change.

8. Moreover, with the US reducing force levels in Europe to around thirty thousand troops, NATO, in conjunction with US European Command (EUCOM) and Africa Command, (AFRICOM) could become a facilitator of multinational operations. However, for the US, NATO will be but one option. Certainly, the US would like to see a more developed debate within the Alliance about the criteria for action with partners, but Washington will find it hard to get a proper debate going in NATO. Rather, Washington is likely to focus on those allies who have both the will and the means to act, even if they are limited. Therefore, for Washington the distinction between NATO members and partners will over time likely fade.
9. Strategic considerations must overcome political and bureaucratic obstacles within the Alliance. However, efforts thus far have stuttered. The consolidation of all NATO partnership activities into the Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM) has simply led to a 'contagion' of blocking by members.
10. Partnerships will also need to be carefully tailored. Australia, for example, enjoys "sub-conscious interoperability" with NATO but too often felt in the past that it was "not a member of the golf club". NATO is poor at reaching out to such partners, which makes it very hard for politicians in other parts of the world to sell the idea of partnership with NATO. However, the Political Declaration with Australia could well provide a model for future developed world partners, such as Japan and South Korea. Today, Australia is effectively integrated into NATO planning.

"Tailored partnerships are essential. However, partnership is losing political momentum."

Partner country perspectives on the NATO relationship

11. Differentiation between and stratification of partnerships will be essential. For smaller, regional states NATO partnerships also need to be more tailored to individual needs to enable more effective relationships. States such as Finland seek a deeper form of partnership, particularly as it concerns missile defence and cyber. Others, such as Armenia, seek a higher NATO profile to promote stability through partnership in their region. Unfortunately, the political momentum within the Alliance critical to developing such partnerships seems to be weakening.
12. The new Partnership Policy agreed at the 2011 Berlin Summit was seen by partners as an important step towards a more nuanced approach. For many smaller partners NATO is vital to the effective and efficient overhaul of security and defence sectors, thus as an instrument of defence and security sector reform. However, the problem of blocking within NATO has stalled much of the effort, leading instead to more bilateral relations in which the US and UK are particularly active. NATO is being side-lined. Moreover, NATO tends to see it as the responsibility of the partner to make partnership effective, rather than a process that needs to be jointly 'owned'. For example, Armenia sought to introduce new areas of cooperation, such as cyber and border security, but to little effect.
13. Political consultations do take place at very high level but not very often. Moreover, Berlin limited the 'entitlement to consultation' for partners, and whilst partners were consulted during the drafting of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept they do not really believe they were listened to. What is needed is a much clearer partnership agenda. One idea could be to link the agendas of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and that of the EAPC.
14. Japan is a good example of a new strategic partner for NATO. Tokyo does not expect NATO to play a military role in Asia-Pacific. However, NATO's role as a political partner matters as the Alliance is the world's strongest military grouping, making cooperation on areas such as civil emergency planning, cyber defence, defence against terrorism, non-proliferation and crisis management useful, as well as participation in military activities such as counter-piracy. However, for Japan NATO is essentially a European organisation and it is unlikely that Tokyo could imagine US-Japanese relations ever being seen in a NATO context.

“Within a decade strategic relationships will have been transformed. NATO’s military partnerships must be seen in that context.”

15. Individual NATO members already co-operate effectively with Japan in the defence-industrial sphere and there is no reason why NATO cannot have a more pronounced role in this regard. After all Japanese technology will soon be defending Europe when the new phased-adaptive array (PAA) missile defence architecture is established. For more powerful partners such as Japan reciprocity is a key factor. NATO should avoid ‘seeing itself as a teacher’, although close relations with NATO might help Japan better understand standardisation and interoperability in a multilateral framework, a goal echoed by Austria. This is important as new areas for cooperation might also emerge over time, such as the Arctic and the Northern Passage, which may bring partners into much more direct contact with NATO.

Military capability and operations

16. Partners have become increasingly important to NATO operations. In Afghanistan there are twenty-eight partners, whilst there were seven in Kosovo and five over Libya. NATO is thus becoming a coalition-enabling organisation. How can that cooperation be sustained? At sea and in the air the problem is less acute, but land presents more severe challenges. Moreover, military planning with partners is not easy in the absence of specific scenarios, which can be difficult to agree on even amongst NATO members. Thus it is hard to establish a sustained military to military relationship. Participation in exercising, training and education is the key change instrument, with effective interoperability the goal. This interoperability will underpin the adherence of partners to NATO training, tactics and procedures (TTPs) and standardisation agreements (STANAGS).
17. There needs to be much more emphasis on technology to promote synergies, for war-gaming as well as map or full exercises. The essential requirement is joint practice. In many ways Afghanistan is a laboratory where experimentation is taking place daily. However, the results of the operational experiment need to be gathered, analysed, codified and shared before the experience is lost. Problems that have been experienced need to be identified and solutions sought in a spirit of reciprocity. “We need to bottle the ISAF experience now”. Indeed, transformation should really start at the end of 2014 and the draw-down in Afghanistan because then the Alliance can return fully to the principles established in the Strategic Concept.
18. Sweden has been a key country in demonstrating how partners can help fill the many gaps that NATO now has. Swedish forces ‘plugged and played’ effectively over Libya with NATO systems. Indeed, Partner countries flew some 20% of ground attack sorties during Operation Unified Protector (OUP). This cooperation was a model for operational relationships between NATO and smaller non-NATO partners, albeit heavily-reliant on US enablers.
19. Of equal importance to the promotion of effective interoperability is a much more systematic approach to how the choices made by forces that are cutting their budgets impact on allies and partners alike. Smart Defence is a critical element in promoting the kind of synergies that defence cuts will demand if the Alliance is to remain credible as a first-line military actor.
20. If allies fail to recognise the importance of partners and insist on a very narrow set of mil-mil relationships within NATO, the US and other bigger actors will begin to step outside institutional frameworks such as the Alliance. Ad hoc coalitions will become the norm. To avoid this outcome, the current situation in which the institutional tail wags the strategic dog must end.
21. Certainly, the balance to be sought between decision-making members and decision-shaping partners in the conduct of NATO-led military led operations will never be an easy one. This is especially so when partners provide a greater balance of force contributions than many members. At the very least the Alliance needs a political mindset and a command culture that can better accommodate diversity.

22. The interoperability of NATO forces with US forces is not a given, and for strategic partnerships to work effective interoperability with non-NATO forces will also be essential. Not only do current cuts in European defence budgets make Europeans more reliant on the US, but partnerships beyond NATO's borders will almost always be part of a US-led coalition. For Washington what will matter is which states have both the will and the capability to fight, and whilst the US values NATO as a pool of allies that can add both legitimacy and some capability the US will focus on states that can deliver rather than institutions that cannot.
23. Equally, a 'pragmatic' US view of NATO could undervalue the role of the Alliance as an interoperability nexus. In that event Europeans over time will also lose interest in NATO. To avoid this Allied Command Transformation (ACT) should define an interoperability strategy in partnership with EUCOM. EUCOM should become a "global executive agency" for US combatant commands (COCOMS) with NATO allies and regional partners to establish a way of doing business to spread 'the NATO way', so that US standards and NATO standards are far better harmonised.
24. Moreover, NATO needs to be much better at ensuring its exercises are better linked into a proper force development programme aimed at enhancing the capability and capacity effect of both members and partners. This will require a much more systematic programme of exercises that also better incorporates national exercises, with all offered to partners as either observers or actors. It would then be up to the partner to decide the exercises in which to participate. That, in turn, will require a new culture within Alliance militaries in which exercises are seen as real experiments in which conceptual and operational risk can be taken.
25. There also needs to be a concerted effort to ensure partners are better able to access critical information, much of which will be classified. This is particularly important if the NATO Response Force (NRF) is ever to realise its potential as a vehicle for transformation. Equally, as NATO shifts towards becoming a more expeditionary alliance it must not forget that its twenty-first century job is not just to promote stability and security ex situ but defence and security in situ.
26. The way forward? "Just start doing it!".

"NATO must develop habits of cooperation"

Strengthening regional security and stability through NATO partnerships

27. The world is becoming Asia-centric. Some 25% of the world's oil passes through the Malacca Strait, and China is now Australia's main trading partner. Rotterdam is the world's third largest port whilst the first, second, fourth, fifth and sixth are in China. For Asian countries such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea the security relationship with the US is central and critical. However, the partnership with NATO can become important if it is long-term and sustainable, the relationship developed in Afghanistan continues, and given that the coalition is likely to be there for at least another decade, there is a focus on Special Operations Forces (SOF). This will help maintain and further develop all-important habits of cooperation.
28. Moreover, whilst NATO is unlikely ever to become a fully-blown Asia-Pacific actor, given events in the Gulf and possibly conflict in the Straits of Hormuz, NATO could well become engaged with its Asia-Pacific partners in the 'Indo-Pacific'. Therefore, whilst NATO may not be a global actor, it must have a global view. Moreover, partnerships will take time to develop, not least because the Indo-Pacific is institution-lite, whilst the Euro-Atlantic is institution-heavy.
29. Influence and effect in the coming age will require new statecraft, new reach and above all a global ambition. However, the world's "democratic states are not ready for new times". In concrete terms NATO partnerships today only reach to the Alliance's "near abroad", and most institutions, such as the UN, reflect a bygone age ill-suited to deal

with the challenges the world faces, be it Islamism, threats to the global commons or energy competition.

30. NATO could also be challenged by the EU in future as in the wake of the Euro-crisis political integration deepens and spills over into foreign and security policy. Indeed, for many EU member-states the Union could become the more effective tool in dealing with a complex world.
31. Given that context, mutual dependency and shared normative rules will be the main drivers of both relationships and partnerships. Moreover, given the increased role and influence of partners in NATO operations, legitimacy and proper representation will also be critical. Many Saharan and sub-Saharan states which felt the impact of the unintended consequences of NATO action in OUP saw the operation as illegitimate, in part because NATO did not undertake a proper dialogue with them prior to action. . Trust has been badly undermined.
32. Furthermore, it is vital NATO leaves Afghanistan with “at least some sense of a job done”. If not, many partnership activities will be damaged. Indeed, a perceived failure would impact the full spectrum of partnerships from strategic cooperation through security sector reform, disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation, and democratic control of armed forces through to defence diplomacy.
33. Particularly important will be the nature of partnership with states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). For them the devil will be in the detail. This will require NATO to move away from broad brush partnerships to much more tailored programmes. To that end NATO must become considerably clearer about the goals of such partnerships and how they support Alliance interests.

“NATO is a maritime Alliance”

NATO and maritime security cooperation: Achievements to date and scope for doing more

34. NATO understands that it is the shared interest of nations to protect the global commons and this demands deeper cooperation with both global and regional partners. The essential focus of maritime security is the preservation of the international law of the sea, and the free movement of trade, people and resources. However, the high seas are also the perfect environment for illegitimate activities.
35. NATO is already working closely with partners on maritime security operations. Operation Active Endeavour, NATO’s only Article 5 operation, has shifted from a platform to a network-centric mission that relies heavily on fusing intelligence from regional states as well as members to interdict terrorists at sea. Operation Ocean Shield off the Horn of Africa will see Ukraine join in 2013 to continue its counter-piracy work. There is also close cooperation with the EU’s Operation Atalanta and a US-led counter-piracy task force. All of these forces share the same concept of operations. NATO coordinates as well with countries participating in counter-piracy operations under national command, such as Russia and South Korea, and engages with regional states. NATO’s goal is to continue to deepen existing partner relationships and at the same time reach out to new partners. These partner initiatives are all the more critical given that only thirteen NATO members have blue water navies, and that as well as engaging in counter-piracy missions much more needs to be done to counter drug and human-trafficking.
36. NATO thus already has and will continue to develop a kaleidoscope of different partner relationships on maritime security, but the common foundation of all of these is a willingness to share information. Important progress has been made on coordination and information sharing in maritime security operations through regular Shared Awareness and De-confliction Exchange Meetings (SHADE), hosted by US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in Bahrain. The widespread use of Mercury, an IT system developed by the EU, has provided key support for efforts within the SHADE framework, enabling much greater exchange of information.

37. The future will not necessarily see NATO in the operational lead, but potentially as an essential partner and nexus for effective cooperation on information-sharing and interoperability standards. Russia, for example, has proposed working with NATO on joint doctrine for maritime security operations. Russia sees maritime security as an important area for cooperation with NATO as there are genuine common interests in areas such as counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, and search and rescue at sea. NATO-Russia cooperation at sea could well offer a model for future partnership. However, such cooperation needs to be better formalised, particularly in areas such as mutual assistance in emergencies and search and rescue, as this will help to build confidence 'free from Cold War stereotypes'. The Russian view is that a common security space should be sought with the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) serving as the hub of cooperation. For Russia the NRC is the 'natural' focus for joint activity because it can promote exchanges of 'military-intellectual staff' and 'mutually rewarding military-technical cooperation'. However, more cooperation is also needed in mutual logistics and refuelling, medical support, joint exercises and joint convoys of civilian vessels. Critical to cooperation is the avoidance of planning which could be seen as directed at a partner. The US and NATO must not act unilaterally. NATO plans for a sea-based Ballistic Missile Defence will be a key test of the partnership with Russia.
38. Given the increased frequency and growing intensity of natural and man-made disasters NATO's level of maritime ambition should be increased, with its intelligence fusing expertise perhaps applied to crises such as an earthquake in Haiti or tsunami in the Pacific. If NATO and its partners think more expansively about all sea-related instruments, including the use of space and improved legal frameworks, NATO-led missions could be of greater interest to potential regional and strategic partners.

"NATO and China are not friends, but they are not enemies"

Launching a process of NATO-China engagement: Substance and modalities

39. There are two views of NATO within the Chinese military; traditional and open-minded. The traditional view, which is dominant, sees NATO as an American tool and thus as a potential threat. Perhaps some 80% of senior Chinese officers hold this view of NATO. However, a roughly 20% minority understands that the US is the leading power within NATO but does not control it.
40. At the moment, the dominant traditionalist view within the People's Liberation Army (PLA) means that China is very sensitive to any NATO 'look to the East', and sees NATO's current orientation as simply an extension of the old anti-USSR alliance. The 1999 NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade greatly contributed to Beijing's belief that NATO 'breaks the rules' and China rejects the idea that human rights can be placed above sovereign rights. Libya reaffirmed in the Chinese mind that while the Alliance may not be an enemy, nor is it a friend. China and NATO are in effect 'suspicious, no trust partners'.
41. For these reasons 'NATO's new mission' to promote global outreach is alarming to the large majority of senior officers in the PLA. And whilst Beijing recognises NATO's help in combatting terrorism in Central Asia it does not like the fact that 'NATO has established a footprint in Central Asia'. Moreover, any attempt by NATO to establish a vigorous partnership with Japan will be seen as part of 'Tokyo's attempts to again additional support to pressure China'. That Chinese view also extends to NATO partnerships with Australia and New Zealand. To overcome such scepticism NATO must endeavour to show the traditionalists that the Alliance is a diverse and pluralistic institution. If this shift in PLA perceptions takes place NATO may have real advantages as a partner over the US or any individual European member state. NATO is not burdened by the history of Sino-American antagonism over Taiwan. NATO also still carries an aura as the largest and most successful military alliance in history, and so has a weight that is lacking to individual European members of the Alliance.
42. Dialogue will be critical but it will be difficult and slow to establish due to existing

perceptions and suspicions. That said, China is a country in which dialogue can have an impact. Areas of possible dialogue between NATO and the PLA could concern deployments where the PLA and other militaries are operating in the same theatre. Potential scenarios for this include evaluation of civilian non-combatants, search and rescue missions, and chance meetings at sea. Confidence building measures and how to cooperate to effect during operations of common interest such as maritime security and delivery of humanitarian relief could also constitute valuable areas for examination. Any such dialogue would have to be between equals as any attempt to create an agenda based on the sharing of NATO Standards will fail. Nonetheless, a possible NATO role in promoting cooperation with the PLA could be as a repository of tactics, doctrines and procedures, possibly via an exercise manual aimed at de-confliction and 'disambiguation', thereby reducing the risk of the PLA and other militaries misinterpreting the intent of each other's' actions.

43. Precedent exists for these types of interoperability initiatives. In 1972 the US and Soviet Union signed an Agreement on the Prevention of Incidents at Sea. This INCSEA agreement contained measures to prevent ships from colliding, reduced interference in naval formations, and prevented provocative manoeuvres and simulated attacks. The agreement established as well navy-to-navy channels to resolve disputes, which expanded and regularised bilateral military communication. Since then, INCSEA has served as a model for similar agreements involving over 30 navies.

44. 'Do the dialogue'.

Breakout group reports

Maintaining and enhancing military relationships forged during operations:

45. The Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) is valuable but partners must be included from the outset. Shared reflections on lessons-learned and best practice on current operations will help establish the basis for a new exercise and training programme accessible to NATO Partners. Better use will need to be made of new technologies to that end, such as the internet, and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) should be encouraged to "manage" a much more decentralised exercise programme that partners can help design and shape. Partners should also be encouraged to make better use of existing opportunities, such as the Partnership Staff Post Concept. Much of the emphasis will be on shared best practice in special operations forces (SOF), and the NATO Response Force (NRF) will be critical to that.

Capacity-building and security sector reform

46. NATO has extensive experience with defence institutional reform and military training, but does not have competences in other critical areas related to security sector reform (SSR), notably police training and rule of law. Consequently, effective NATO engagement on SSR will depend on working with partner organisations such as the UN and EU, as well as member and partner states, who are able to bring these additional competences to the endeavour and create a 'comprehensive approach' to SSR.

47. SSR is a fundamentally political undertaking, affecting the exercise of power in the country that is carrying it out. It cannot be imposed on a host country, and international contributors can work effectively only in support of local stakeholders. Trust between local stakeholders and international contributors constitutes a critical part of the equation. NATO engagement in military-to-military dialogues could play a valuable role in helping to create a foundation for future SSR programmes and a NATO contribution in the areas of defence institutional reform and military training by building trust. Relationships established in these dialogues would come into play if and when the opportunity arose to launch an SSR programme. This approach could be termed 'military fly-fishing', and analysis would be needed to identify countries with which it could be most useful for NATO to engage in this way, and how such engagement could

"If you are talking strategy but not talking money you are not talking strategy"

be launched. NATO's weight, experience, and absence of the political baggage that some member states may carry could allow it to work effectively with some partner countries in ways not available to others.

Conflict prevention and regional security

48. NATO's new Comprehensive Crisis and Operations Management Centre (CCOMC) needs to be open to partners. Early warning and early response are critical. The credible establishment of capacity-building and mentoring to help support stable government can only happen by creating a system for the effective early understanding of conflicts, and sufficient means, both military and civilian, to ensure delivery of plans and resources in the field allied to programmes to support reform. To assist this process NATO and partners could offer mutual support through enhanced civilian and military-civilian exercising. NATO can also play a valuable role in information-sharing, military to military dialogue, and public diplomacy. This will also require efforts to improve collaboration with other international organisations (IO) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Deepening and broadening NATO-partner consultation, coordination, and cooperation on maritime security

49. NATO's strategy in the area of maritime security has five current lines of operation, which could form the basis for enhanced NATO-Partner cooperation. All five reflect common concerns; freedom of navigation and open trade routes, energy flows and security, critical infrastructure, environmental security, and the interdiction of criminal and terrorist activity. For NATO, working with partners in these areas can enhance legitimacy and strengthen effect. For partners there is a clear national interest in enjoying the added influence and capabilities that NATO can bring. The focus should be on improved intelligence-sharing, training, tactics and procedures, maritime presence, diplomacy and the provision of trainers and assets. Critical will be the establishment of clear demand signals with NATO acting as a clearing house and the integrator/co-ordinator of partner contributions. The NATO Response Force could have an important role to play as a systems integrator. The US Global Fleet Station concept could also be explored to better build capacity incorporating other agencies. At some point NATO-Partner common funding would also have to be considered.

Six concluding points and two ways forward

- I. Partnerships have afforded NATO both strategic and operational benefits but they have not always been effective. What to focus on and the balance to strike between strategy, geography and interests has yet to be resolved.
- II. NATO should seek to become a clearing house and provide the framework for partners. However, there will be some partners, such as China, who will never operate within a NATO framework and that will require a new concept of partnership.
- III. Partners have different goals and interests. Therefore NATO's partnership policy must be flexible and variable. For example, beyond the fact that they have participated in NATO-led military operations, there is little in common between the Nordic countries, the Gulf States and Australia. Moreover, not all 'partners' want NATO partnership.
- IV. NATO must ask itself when and where it can really add value and avoid duplicating/complicating the activities of the US or others. For example, if the US is leading the CMF in the Gulf, what added value can NATO bring?
- V. NATO could offer perhaps additional deterrence value in the Gulf and maybe the Pacific, but the limits must be understood by the Alliance.
- VI. NATO is an important forum for strategic dialogue to take place with partners under

the co-operative security mechanisms envisaged in the 2010 Strategic Concept. They need to be elaborated and developed.

There are two constraints on NATO effectiveness that will also limit ambition; blocking and resource constraints. Given that context the two possible ways forward are either 'minor plus up' and/or 'strategic shift'. Under the former NATO should concentrate on doing more of what it is currently doing but simply do it better. The latter will demand a step change in the Alliance level of ambition for partnerships; a strategic dialogue with the likes of Iran, over challenges such as those in the Sahel and with partners in Asia-Pacific.

Before a strategic dialogue of substance can take place with partners NATO must itself decide its role in the twenty-first century. That will also mean agreement within the Alliance over what it can do, and what it cannot.

Julian Lindley-French

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