



TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS AND 21ST CENTURY RADICAL NOVELTIES

FINAL REPORT

On 14-15 May 2007 the NATO Defense College organized jointly with the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defence University (Washington, D.C.) and the German Council on Foreign Relations a seminar on Transatlantic Relations and Radical Novelities in the 21st century.

Participants included officials from NATO HQ, ACT, ACO, as well as experts from NATO nations. The seminar addressed short-term political changes and long-term challenges, and their impact on transatlantic relations and the Alliance.

- Political leadership in a number of Alliance member countries has already changed or is about to change (GE, IT, US, FR, UK). This necessarily raises the question of the nature of transatlantic policies after new governments and administrations take office and elaborate their foreign and security priorities.
- This short-term change, however, is embedded in a more fundamental long-term change in the strategic environment in which transatlantic relations will exist and evolve. Among the most important long-term challenges, the seminar addressed: demographics; the changing nature of warfare; globalization and its discontent; and globalisation of information, media and security.

SHORT-TERM CHANGES - FINDINGS

Changing Policies or Staying the Course?

The unease with the current state of affairs in the Alliance is palpable. However, it is unlikely that NATO will respond to this unease without significant change in the strategic landscape. A more realistic approach for moving NATO forward must first of all acknowledge that the transatlantic security consensus post-“9/11” is, at best, incomplete and, at worst, in disarray. One of the contributing factors is disagreement within the Euro-Atlantic community over the appropriate role of the EU as an autonomous security actor. Despite this lack of consensus in specific areas, there is no reason why NATO should not search for a new “grand bargain”, either in the form of a new document or through new initiatives.

Findings

1. While there is broad acknowledgement of the desirability of a new strategic concept, it was generally agreed that the U.S. election cycle must run its course before serious intergovernmental work can begin. Some also suggested that developing a new concept would need to follow resolution of new EU institutional arrangements.
2. Complementarity as existed under “Berlin +” is perceived as insufficient, although Berlin plus has proved adaptable in the Balkans. While instances of pragmatic cooperation exist, NATO-EU relations still suffer from a lack of political dialogue and formal and informal contacts between the two organizations at various levels..
3. “Constructive duplication” between NATO and the EU is perceived by many Europeans as necessary and desirable. At the same time, harmonisation of capabilities is also necessary, as instances of competition between the EU and NATO are generally perceived as self-defeating.
4. As architect and cornerstone of the current international system, the West should end its search for complete political agreement and live with its differences.
5. The cost of military modernisation is spread unevenly across the members of the EU. Presently, three European nations make up 60% of the total amount of defence spending, while nineteen members of the EU make up only 12%.
6. There was a sense for a need to examine closely whether transformation is on the right track. There was a consensus that “both boots and technology are needed”. There was also agreement that even if the new U.S. administration would be less enthusiastic about transformation, the Europeans would continue to transform.

LONG TERM CHANGES – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Demography Trends

The overall transformation of the world’s population will continue to reflect the slow, inexorable shift from a Euro-centric world (political, economic, social and cultural predominance of recent centuries) to a more truly global one. Population growth will be almost exclusively in the developing world (5.4 billion in 2007 to 7.9 billion by 2050) at the same time the population of the developed world remains largely unchanged (1.2 billion). Europe’s share of the gross world product (GWP) will decline from approximately 22% to 12% during this same period. Europe’s median age, if trends continue, will increase from 37.7 to 49.5 in 2050. Its active working population will also decline, leaving fewer workers to support health and social services. Islamic immigration’s impact on the internal dynamics of Europe will grow and could shape Europe’s relations with the Islamic world. Meanwhile, the U.S. portion of GWP is likely to increase from 23% now to 26% in 2050. China’s share of GWP will also grow to about 25%. At the same time the active working population of the U.S. will increase by a third, and its median age will only slightly increase from 35.5 to 36.2. Continuing Hispanic and Asian immigration could have a dramatic effect on the identity and orientation of the U.S.

Findings

1. As the Euro-centric dominance of the international community declines, the transatlantic link will be challenged.
2. Europe is slow in developing natal and immigration policies to counter demographic trends.
3. The combination of costly professional, high-tech forces and decreasing European defence budgets means that new alternatives for coping with these demographic changes must be found. Some European armed forces are raising retirement ages and encouraging more women to join.
4. Some advocated a different form of burden sharing among the forces of European allies, but cooperation among allies in the defence sector is insufficient to generate the required synergies.
 - a. There was scepticism whether technology would be sufficient to account for current demography trends. Heavy reliance by the Western nations on commercial off-the-shelf technologies means that NATO's adversaries have access to the identical capabilities as the Alliance.
 - b. Because of its risk-averse publics and shrinking military forces there was scepticism that the era of NATO putting "boots on the ground" could continue. Working to create "local ownership" of problems facing the international community is therefore regarded as essential to future success.
5. NATO's effectiveness has preserved its survival to now. As demographic trends take hold, operational success, outreach and, when selectively applied, disaster relief (e.g., as during the Pakistan earthquake crisis of 2005-06) are NATO's most powerful strategic enablers and influential instruments.
6. The influence of Western values on the international community likely will continue to decrease. Global instruments will become less and less Western.
 - a. The European Union, with only 5% of the world's population and 12% of GWP, will appear more and more to the international community as a small club of Western nations.
 - b. With China's continued economic growth, the Chinese yuan has the potential to compete with the dollar and the euro as the world's predominant currencies.

Recommendations

1. As the West continues to contract relative to the rest of the international community, the transatlantic community should begin to develop a "grand strategy" for how to preserve the values of the transatlantic community, while at the same time working together to sustain a peaceful international order.
 - a. NATO must develop coherence in its approach to crisis; NATO Allies (and PFP countries) who are also EU member states have an important role to play in assuring NATO-EU coherence, as well .
 - b. Strategies of limited aim should be considered, particularly where the degree of violence is an issue.
 - c. Article V, the glue of collective defence, should remain a core function of the Alliance, although 21st century threats differ considerably from past Cold War scenarios..

2. NATO should further develop common funding mechanisms to assist in operations as well as capabilities development and institutionalize common logistics.
3. Intelligence sharing should be enhanced and distinctions among recipient nations minimized.
4. NATO should enhance its training role as a means to extend its influence.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE

Though many of NATO's tasks are of a political nature, its success cannot be measured solely in terms of peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Its forces also must prevail in armed conflict. Technological superiority and transformation have not prepared the West for military and psychological combat against seemingly weaker actors, who can apply tactics aimed at achieving political gain without regard to human loss. Particularly during counterinsurgency operations, military forces must shoulder a variety of potentially conflicting tasks in parallel. But military forces are but one element of a larger spectrum of simultaneously applied instruments that must be planned and mustered in an integrated and comprehensive way. Conflicting priorities must also be reconciled and the political frictions they cause resolved as a priority. Some NATO members view U.S. attempts to forge global partnerships as anathema to the "Alliance spirit". Others suggest that a network of partnerships could support Alliance objectives, without NATO engaging in costly and long-term operations with large numbers of troops. Because clearly identified threats have been replaced by risks where much is unknown, there is ample room for mistrust and manipulation with the subsequent effect of making the use of force unlikely. Hence uncertainty becomes not only the greatest source of weakness in security policy, but a source of transatlantic friction.

Findings

1. There was a sense that war has not changed, but rather that the Western community of nations has changed. Western nations are increasingly using professional forces and technology to fight wars in distant lands, with the consequence that their societies are disconnected from conflict.
2. NATO is unable to develop a global policy on how to use force or in which circumstances its use is justified.
 - a. NATO's capability is limited by a lack of political will, among part of its membership, to employ force.
 - b. This leads to a lack of consensus on the development of a coherent NATO message designed to get NATO's views across with respect to its operations in Afghanistan. Questions about NATO policy, caveats and shared risks are not explained adequately to the public.
3. NATO's current adversaries are very different.
 - a. Rules of war are outdated.
 - b. There are no adequate metrics to measure success when fighting adversaries who use asymmetric warfare.
 - c. There may be no straightforward military means to "cope" with some forms of asymmetric warfare. Technology may not work.
 - d. Actions of soldiers—particularly those regarded as misconduct—can have strategic implications for the conflict.

4. Intense, expeditionary use of military equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan is destroying an entire generation of military hardware: ships, aircraft and vehicles.
5. One practical consequence of NATO's experience may be to lower expectations for future operations in terms of what those operations are able to achieve.

Recommendations

1. NATO should create a forum to understand the changing nature of war and how international law might be adapted in response.
2. The development of a new strategic concept can serve as a process to debate and discuss the new security environment, with emphasis on the changing nature of war and its consequences for the Alliance.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENT

Ten of the twenty most globalised nations are members of the Alliance, and all members are within the top thirty-five. It is worth considering whether there is a connection between this fact and the fact that the most important mission for NATO is presently in Afghanistan, thousands of kilometres from the North Atlantic area. The most important consequence of globalisation is that it puts change on the political agenda, and it might be argued that many of the issues that divide North Americans and Europeans stem from different approaches to globalisation. There was a tendency in the 1990s to regard the relative peace and quiet after the end of the Cold War as a permanent condition. The new reality is that the 21st century security environment, although different, will be just as dangerous. NATO became used to the fact that NATO or its members had a monopoly on intervention, but reduced transaction costs that derive from globalisation mean that more powers will increasingly have greater power projection capabilities. What happens, and how will the Allies respond, when the capability to intervene in the affairs of other nations is more widespread? Globalisation makes conflict easier and enables non-state actors to take part in armed conflict simply because war is affordable, and they have access to the same technological capabilities that states do. It is probable that in a few decades the Western powers will no longer be the only ones with a high tech military. NATO has continued to "do strategy" by the old geopolitical concepts, but in a globalised world geography makes little strategic sense. The challenge for NATO will be to manage security risks arising from all over a globalised world.

Findings

1. Global institutions will become less and less Western, and NATO's western orientation may increasingly become an issue in its relations with them.
2. There is a lack of consensus among the Allies on how best to approach globalisation. In national defence markets in particular there is growing protectionism. North America and Europe are likely to continue to adapt at different speeds.
3. As many states are no longer perceived as able to protect the security and economic prosperity of their citizens in a globalised world, the power of the state is eroding.

- a. Technology enables citizens to be better informed on issues, independent of what the state tells them.
 - b. Because the contract between the state and its citizens is eroding, citizens are less willing to fight on behalf of the state, the institutions to which it belongs, or in support of the values the state claims to stand for.
 - c. Similarly the United Nations, NATO and the EU are perceived as less capable of coping with global security challenges. Hence a “virtual alliance” that includes global partnerships may be crucial to NATO’s relevance and effectiveness in the 21st century.
4. Hostility to globalisation is evident by the actions of other countries and entities in response to what they view as a Western phenomenon. Seen through this lens, the dark side of globalisation—terrorism and the acquisition of WMD—become mechanisms for expressing discontent.
 5. Whoever develops an inexpensive source of energy will dominate the international economic environment, much more so than the Arab world has with all its reserves.

Recommendations

1. NATO must be aware of the tension introduced by the need to respond to the negative forces of globalisation and the corresponding need for a more global view of partnership.
2. NATO’s ability to project power and stability is vulnerable to a lack of solidarity. Consequently, it remains to be seen whether globalization ultimately will serve as a unifying or dividing force for the Allies.

GLOBALISATION OF INFORMATION, MEDIA AND SECURITY

Virtually all forms of recorded information can be digitized, and it can be stored with ever greater fidelity in ever greater quantities and processed ever faster. The merging of communications with digitized information has set in motion radically new ways of transforming, manipulating, and thinking about how to use information. This is most evident in the development of the Internet and the rapid evolution of portable media devices such as the mobile phone, laptop computers, IPODs and digital cameras; and the use of email and “text messaging” as the preferred means for many people to communicate with friends and co-workers. The growth of wireless networks means that information can be exchanged between any two points on the globe and presented to a worldwide audience in real time. Conflict in the 21st century is as much a war of ideas as it is a war between combatants, and the continuous availability of information on every aspect of a conflict blurs even more the distinction between information and intelligence. Slow to recognize these changes, the West has been no match for a new breed of adversary adept at propaganda and which puts a priority on “marketing” its side of the conflict. As part of their marketing, extremists have created a “planetary space” of violence and extremism on the Internet that is infecting a growing number of young people with extremist ideas.

The media reaches its worldwide audience primarily through television. While the “CNN effect” can still have devastating consequences as the first provider of information—often before governments become fully aware of rapidly unfolding events and their magnitude—in general it is declining. Thousands of television

channels and thousands of websites, including an explosion in the number of CNN clones that broadcast news 24/7, continuously broadcast current events in real time. This information overload has driven viewers to select their news sources, and they do so not on the basis of coverage but because the news is broadcast in a particular language, is associated with a particular religious identity, or because it supports a particular ideological or cultural orientation. Furthermore, Western values no longer dominate the international media. The result is that there is no “ground truth” that forms a basis to debate security policy either nationally or internationally.

Findings

1. NATO media policy is fractured and much less effective than required for today’s conflicts. “Managing the message” and avoiding national sensitivities have become more important than developing a common message to explain and defend policies on behalf of the Alliance.
2. Military commanders vary in their effectiveness—whether due to political constraints or lack of training or both—to address the media. The inability of the military chain of command to keep pace with events, coupled with restrictions levied on public information officers, can inhibit media relations.
3. Politicians who address the media may have national, party or personal agendas that undermine NATO objectives and solidarity.
4. There are more conflicts yet fewer journalists. Likewise, there are fewer specialist reporters with knowledge of the military.
5. Journalists have become targets in the war of ideas and have lost access to important areas of hostility, unless embedded with forces.
6. The tyranny of 24-hour news incites a hunger for sensational stories that attract the public’s attention. The long-term nature of modern conflict reinforces this mindset and encourages extremist acts by radicals who wish to influence public opinion.
 - a. There is little scrutiny over quickly developing stories, and “citizen journalists” have no standards for filtering their opinions.
 - b. Coverage may compromise security, provide comfort to the enemy, and disclose tactics, techniques and procedures used by Allies.
7. News developed for Western audiences may be misinterpreted by Muslim communities, and vice versa. Specifically, the preferences of Afghan audiences may directly contradict what Western audiences want to hear.
 - a. Stories must be tailored for a particular audience. Likewise, sources to disseminate the stories must vary according to emphasis.
 - b. However, this does not preclude a news broadcast from having negative “spillover” effects because of the globalisation of media.

Recommendations

1. A flexible and robust NATO standard for how NATO and partner nations deal with information concerning NATO operations should be developed.
2. A Centre of Excellence specifically addressing media policy and media communications, current NATO operations, and the relationship between information and intelligence should be considered. Best practices, lessons learned, and the strategic consequences of “white collar” soldiering should all be addressed.

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