

NATO: Bucharest and Beyond

Executive Summary

NATO faces significant challenges as it pursues complex operations, especially in Afghanistan, that are very different from the territorial defense missions conceived during the Cold War. These challenges include the development of common assessments of the 21st Century opportunities and threats facing the Alliance, an agreed strategy to pursue those opportunities and counter evolving threats, new military capabilities required for the broad spectrum of NATO missions, and improved results from the force generation process to meet the Alliance's political commitments. NATO's response to these interrelated challenges at and beyond its Bucharest Summit (April 2-4, 2008) will have broad ranging implications for the future U.S. role in NATO and the equitable sharing of risks and responsibilities among all Alliance members.

To explore these issues, the symposium featured five panels composed of serving and retired Allied policy officials and military officers, including individuals working in NATO's civilian and military structures. General John Craddock, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and

Commander, U.S. European Command, made the keynote presentation via video-conference link from NATO-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul. Some 340 U.S., Allied, and Partner officials, military officers, non-government researchers, academics, and media attended the symposium. To encourage candid dialogue, the entire event was conducted under National Defense University's standard non-attribution rules (similar to "Chatham House" rules) whereby panelists speak on a personal and/or unofficial basis and participants agree not to quote or attribute any comments by the panelists or other participants.

Among the key points raised during the symposium:

Force generation issues:

The NATO-ISAF operation poses the most critical test to date of NATO's ability to generate the military forces required to meet its level of political ambition. In several categories, ranging from maneuver battalions to helicopters to C4ISR assets to Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) intended to build the capabilities of the Afghan



National Army (ANA), Allied nations as a group are not filling the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements (CJSOR) set by NATO Military Authorities. This allows opposition forces to operate in the space between what NATO-ISAF has and what it requires.

There are several reasons for this, none of which is susceptible to a purely "technical" solution. Foremost among these is a lack of "political will" among Allies whose publics and parliaments are questioning the goals and strategy of the Alliance commitment and, in some cases, are increasingly worried about casualties suffered by their forces and/or incidents of collateral damage affecting Afghan civilians. In addition, numerous Allies lack the required capabilities and/or funding to deploy and sustain their forces, particularly in the

more challenging operational environment of Afghanistan. For some Allies, this is complicated further by their competing commitments to other operations (e.g., in the Balkans, Lebanon, and Africa.) In retrospect, Allied governments have underestimated the tasks of simultaneously stabilizing the security situation, dealing with a complex set of opposition forces (Taliban, narco-terrorists, and tribal “warlords”), and developing a basic Afghan governmental capacity in a society wracked by decades of warfare and corruption. That said, there are important, albeit underreported, signs of progress in Afghanistan, and the strategic stakes remain high, for the region as well as the Alliance.

Multiple and mutually-reinforcing steps are necessary to address force generation shortfalls. At the political level, Allies are working to produce a document for approval at the Bucharest Summit that sets realistic NATO goals and strategy for Afghanistan. Such a document should make the case for a comprehensive approach that includes NATO’s close cooperation with Afghan authorities and other international actors --especially the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN). Within NATO, a variety of steps are underway to improve Allied individual and collective capabilities to deploy the forces and assets necessary for expeditionary missions, although resource limitations are a significant underlying problem. Within NATO and individual Allied forces,

increased emphasis is needed on training military personnel and sharing “lessons learned” for complex and multinational counterinsurgency (COIN) operations with a heavy civilian-military component. At the same time, “naming and shaming” or “finger pointing” at Allies whose forces are not engaged, for various reasons, in the most dangerous areas will be counterproductive. In addition, serious effort is needed to improve NATO’s strategic communications capabilities with the Afghan population.

NATO’s role in missile defense:

The proliferation of ballistic missiles and their increasing sophistication (for example, their transition in some cases from liquid to solid fuel propellant) pose serious security threats to the United States and its Allies, especially if combined with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Although assessments might differ on when worrisome states like Iran will deploy intermediate and longer-range ballistic missiles, the trends toward improved capabilities are not in serious dispute.

According to U.S. estimates, an Iranian ballistic missile capability to threaten northern and central

Europe could be in place by 2015. Approximately four years are required, once a deployment decision is made, to put in place a limited missile defense system of the type proposed by the United States for Poland (10 Ground Based Interceptors, or GBI) and the Czech Republic (X-band radar). Hence, final governmental agreement to proceed in late 2008 should result in an initial operating capability by 2013. The U.S. system for Poland and the Czech Republic will protect northern and central Europe while providing enhanced protection for the U.S. homeland. Moreover, it will be designed to allow its integration with a NATO missile defense system able to defend against a limited missile attack against southern and southeastern Europe. Such a limited system would not replace the need for other forms of deterrence, including nuclear weapons, nor would it pose any threat to the Russian



Lt Gen Patrick de Rousiers, French Air Force, MG Patrick O’Reilly, US Missile Defense Agency and Ms. Elaine Bunn, INSS (left to right) discuss key strategic and technical issues regarding NATO’s role in missile defense.

nuclear forces; indeed, the United States has proposed a number transparency measures to reassure Russia on this point. However, in a crisis, the European missile defense envisaged by the United States would provide the Alliance with additional options beyond undertaking preemptive action against--or conceding to demands from--a threatening state or non-state actor armed with ballistic missiles.

France is considering its approach to missile defense within the context of its ongoing preparation of a new “White Paper on Defense and Security” to be completed this spring. Former President Chirac held that no missile defense system could guarantee complete protection, but acknowledged in 2006 that it can complement nuclear deterrence. The new French government is not opposed to missile defense, but numerous technological and command and control issues (including rules of engagement) need further consideration, as do issues involving cross-border implications—e.g., the possible effect of debris from intercepted missiles and warheads. The cost of allocating scarce defense resources also must be taken into account.

Multilateral capabilities development:

NATO’s operational experience in the Balkans and Afghanistan has prompted Allies to look increasingly to multinational cooperation on logistics, which

can be viewed as the “bridge” between deployed forces and the national industrial base that produces the weapons and materials required by forces to complete their missions. The Cold War model wherein nations were responsible, with a few notable exceptions, for providing logistical support to their forces is no longer sustainable given the costs of weapon systems and expeditionary missions compared with limited defense budget resources. In NATO-ISAF, for example, the size of the logistics support tail is as large as that of the combat force, in part because each contributing nation has deployed many of its own logistics support capabilities.

NATO policies and doctrine have been developed to institutionalize the principles and practices of multinational logistics. Multilateral solutions are increasingly sought for the NATO Response Force (NRF) and ongoing operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan, whereby one or more lead nations provide designated services—e.g., transportation, medical, recovery, and contractor support—to fellow Allies engaged in the same operation. Such solutions are not restricted to NATO Allies; for example, Finland, a Partnership for Peace member, has provided transportation and medical support for Allies within the NATO-led Kosovo Force. Multilateral coordination and cooperation to improve strategic airlift and sealift capabilities is expanding as well; for example, the Strategic

Airlift Capability initiative involves a commitment by fourteen NATO and two Partner/EU nations to purchase three C-17 aircraft.

Within the broader context of its defense planning process, which remains somewhat cumbersome, NATO is looking at various options to build capabilities through joint acquisition. NATO does not have a dedicated acquisition budget *per se*, but its armaments community is open to various creative approaches. Information sharing systems (such as the Air Command and Control System and NATO Friendly Force Tracker) and certain infrastructure projects (pipelines and ground communications systems) make sense to purchase collectively. Future systems (such as missile defense) would be difficult for most Allies to undertake on a national basis. Faced with current operational pressures, many Allies are reluctant to embark on potentially costly new projects. Multilateral acquisition is not a panacea, however, and if only a few countries participate to purchase a system that benefits all Allies, conflicts of interest and arguments over “burden sharing” are certain to result.

U.S. role in NATO:

Notwithstanding public perceptions a few years ago that the United States had “lost interest” in NATO, the American commitment to the Alliance remains strong and enjoys broad bipartisan support. Europe has not lost its vital geo-strategic importance with the end of the Cold War, and recent events in Kosovo and the rise in Russia’s

power and assertiveness serves as a reminder that there is still a security requirement for U.S. engagement in Europe. U.S. cooperation with Europe, especially through NATO, is also critical to dealing with 21st Century threats emanating from outside Europe, as demonstrated by Afghanistan. Most feel this broad thrust of U.S. thinking will continue through the next Administration. At the same time,

Americans are impatient with the relatively slow growth of Allied capabilities and their disproportional investment in Cold War-style systems. And while most of the U.S. defense establishment has come to recognize (with experience gained in Iraq and Afghanistan) the need for better civilian and civil-military capabilities and better coordination with military forces to deal with today's

partnerships and interoperability that we need with Allies and Partners. On balance, continuing the "dual hatted" practice for major U.S. commanders in the NATO military structure benefits the Allies as well as the United States in practical and political ways. That said, changes to the command structure should be considered, for example, to facilitate greater French participation in NATO's military arm and to assign full-time command of the NRF to the Lisbon Joint Force Headquarters. The newly-established African Command (AFRICOM) also presents new opportunities for cooperation with European states in Africa, focusing on civil-military tasks and building African capabilities rather than building bases or conducting large-scale operations. To date, the United States has been reluctant to engage in defense-related issues directly with the EU, preferring to keep such issues in NATO-EU channels. However, the option of establishing more direct contact between AFRICOM and the EU deserves consideration.



NATO Secretary General Japp de Hoop Scheffer (center) and Supreme Allied Commander, General John Craddock (right) - February 2008 ISAF (NATO).

the next Administration will face tough situations with Iraq, Iran, and possibly elsewhere, which could lead Washington to increase its expectations of European security contributions.

Hence, the challenges to maintaining NATO's effectiveness cannot be easily dismissed. Allies do not share a common view of NATO's role as a "global" security provider. This makes it harder, for example, to develop a common approach to "sanctuary denial"—a major threat facing Western forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition,

COIN and stabilization challenges, some Europeans still seem reluctant to embrace close NATO-EU cooperation or closer NATO cooperation with non-government organizations involved in the same theaters of operation.

The projected reductions in U.S. forces stationed in Europe will not go as low as initially planned under the previous Secretary of Defense. Defense planners understand that below a certain "critical mass," it would become very difficult to maintain a credible force structure in Europe and the long-term security

Toward a new Strategic Concept:

There is broad agreement within the Alliance that the 1999 Strategic Concept needs to be updated with a clear and convincing explanation, in the post 9/11 environment, of what Allies expect from the Alliance and, conversely, what the Alliance expects from its members. A new Strategic Concept would ideally serve to set a vision of where the Alliance should be over the next ten years. Such a

document would serve the purposes of providing policy guidance from Heads of State and Government, demonstrating a renewed consensus on the aims of the Alliance (frayed in the wake of divisions over Iraq), and serving as an important “public diplomacy” tool with Allied parliaments and publics.

There is also broad agreement on many—albeit not all—of the key issues that must be dealt with in a new Strategic Concept. Dealing with NATO’s operational challenges and the long-term threat of international terrorism should be at the top of the agenda. The scope of NATO’s action and its relationship to international law—e.g., whether a UN Security Council resolution is necessary for the use of force—will need to be considered, as well as the relevance of Article 5 (the collective defense provision of the 1949 Washington Treaty) to new threats such as cyber attack. The document also needs to cover the key requirements of a continuing transformation of the Alliance, to include capabilities development (with an emphasis on deployable forces), adequate funding, and a real and effective “comprehensive approach” to complex stabilization operations that incorporates military, civil-military, and non-military elements in close coordination with the EU, UN, and other international actors. And the Alliance should have an enhanced role as a forum for a strategic dialogue among transatlantic partners, where broad strategic issues could be discussed even if agreement is not reached on specific NATO actions.

Admittedly, all of these involve

politically-sensitive questions, which makes the timing and process of developing a new Strategic Concept even more important. Regarding timing, a number of Allies would be reluctant to rush the effort, given that a new U.S. Administration (taking office in January 2009) would want to take at least several months to formulate its position. Germany’s parliamentary elections, widely anticipated to take place in autumn, 2009, might complicate Berlin’s ability to complete an agreement, as well. Regarding process, various options are possible, ranging from a drafting group of “wise men” nominated by Allies (but not drawn from serving officials) to a more traditional inter-governmental effort undertaken through the North Atlantic Council.

Rapporteurs: Emily Slagle and Aaron Stanley. Final report reviewed and revised by INSS members Leo Michel, Jerry Faber, and Kimberly O’Connor.