

CLOSER NATO-EU TIES: IDEAS FOR THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT

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NATO's new strategic concept is unlikely to dwell extensively on the subject of NATO-EU co-operation; it is too narrow a subject for the kind of 'grand strategy' the document is meant to be. But the issue looms in the background. Poor co-operation between the two institutions makes it difficult for NATO and the EU to adopt a truly 'comprehensive' approach to warfare, which integrates civilian and military capabilities. Limited NATO-EU relations may also undermine attempts to re-assure Central European governments that NATO takes seriously their worries of a resurgent Russia, and that it is able to address any challenges from their large neighbour with a range of tools.

With civil-military co-operation and 'reassurance' likely to be front and centre in the new strategic concept, the EU and NATO governments should relaunch their efforts to boost cross-institutional co-operation. The EU's newly adopted Lisbon Treaty also opens up new possibilities for resolving the institutional blockage.

This paper recommends practical ways to move forward. Some of the recommendations can be implemented in the near-term; others may only be relevant when a lasting thaw in Greek-Turkish-Cypriot relations occurs and when the dust from the Lisbon Treaty settles. But it is important that EU and NATO governments keep trying. As defence budgets come under pressure across the alliance, greater NATO-EU cooperation is not only a luxury, but a necessity for both organisations.

Comprehensive Approach:

The first and most urgent place where NATO-EU cooperation is needed is on the battlefield. The key lesson from NATO's recent operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Afghanistan is that military operations must be fully integrated with civilian-led reconstruction activities: building governance and courts, training police, restarting agricultural production, providing water, electricity and healthcare services, removing sewage etc.

Though NATO is now undertaking a number of non-military tasks, such as police assistance, the alliance has moved into this field in an *ad hoc* manner while individual NATO allies have grappled with the tasks of building their own civilian capabilities in isolation from each other. NATO has no mechanism for generating, let alone commanding or co-ordinating civilian capabilities, even when no other actors fill the gap (e.g. in southern Afghanistan). Efforts to build even modest capabilities inside NATO to date have been stymied by competition

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with the EU. Each time the idea is raised, one or more European allies dismiss it as unnecessary duplication of the EU's capacities.

The EU has civilian assets, an embryonic civilian operational HQ and has undertaken far more civilian missions than NATO, though its efforts leave a lot to be desired, both in terms of capability, and strategy.² But because of a bureaucratic-political desire to build the EU's assets in isolation from NATO as well as the Turkish-Greek impasse between the two blocs, NATO has no recourse to the EU's resources. By the same token, though the EU has a military dimension and recourse to NATO assets through the Berlin Plus arrangements, few expect EU deployments to engage in high-intensity combat in the near-term.

In short, both the EU and NATO lack a proper integrated civilian-military capacity, capable of planning and commanding the full spectrum of operations. In an ideal world NATO and the EU would have single such capacity, shared between the two.³ But until EU-NATO relations improve – allowing NATO to draw on the EU's civilian resources in operations (and benefit from those of other international organisations as well) – developing some kind of rudimentary NATO civilian planning and command capacity is the second best option. Yet it, too, remains beyond grasp because of poor co-operation between the EU and NATO.

Reassurance:

The second major NATO-EU issue is how to deal with Russia. Many expect the new strategic concept to propose new measures to reassure allies in Northern and Central Europe, who worry about a possible confrontation with Russia. But military measures of the sorts discussed to date – contingency planning or military exercises – will do little to allay the concerns of those member-states like Slovakia or Bulgaria that worry primarily of non-military threats from their large neighbour: cyber-attacks, oil and gas-cutoffs or the takeover of key energy infrastructure.

While they look to NATO for protection, this is not necessarily because the alliance has the tools to address non-military threats, but because NATO involves the US, who the Central Europeans think more likely to act than the EU. The reality is that NATO alone can do little to defend against cyber-attacks or disruptions of vital energy supplies. Many countermeasures (e.g. improved safety standards for critical Internet nodes or better interconnections among gas grids) fall under the EU's purview, rather than NATO's.

To better reassure Central Europe allies, the EU needs to start thinking about these new threats more strategically – to clearly articulate their impact on the member-states' safety and security, and to draft joint defensive strategies. Naturally, this is a task largely for EU member-states and institutions. But NATO could in theory help by, for example, sharing intelligence on Russia with the EU or by imparting lessons learned in its cyber-terrorism centres of

² Daniel Korski and Richard Gowan, "Can the EU rebuild failing states? A review of Europe's civilian capacities", ECFR, October 2009.

³ See Tomas Valasek, "France, NATO and European defence", CER, May 2008.

excellence. None of this will be possible, however, unless the EU and NATO start co-operating more closely.

Recommendations

Some of the following initiatives could be considered:

Strategic Concept

- Insert **specific language about NATO-EU relations** into the strategic concept, which lauds the ESDP accomplishments and the EU's unique role (in part to assuage fears among some European allies) but lays out a strategic rationale for closer ties both on civil and military development and in the planning, conducts and assessment of missions.
- Insert **language in the strategic concept about confronting “common challenges jointly”**, using the range of instruments that both organisations control.

Comprehensive Approach

- Order a joint study on the **Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)** concept with a view towards making recommendations for better integrating civilian and military capabilities from both organisations in some future local-level organisation.
- Agree a joined-up programme of pre-deployment training with a view to developing a broader **EU-NATO Defence Education Concept** and in time a **NATO-EU School for Post-Conflict and Stabilisation** to provide training. Bosnia-Herzegovina, where both organisations cooperate and EU (uniquely) has the main military role, could be an ideal venue.
- Appoint an **EU/NATO State-Building Policy Council modelled** on the Defence Science Board, to provide input on how to improve NATO-EU cooperation in this area and enhance links with other organisations e.g the UN, AU, OSCE.

Reassurance

- Institute **high-level, table-top joint EU-NATO exercise**, which involves the NATO Secretary General and the EU high representative and the Head of Governments of the EU Presidency Troika. Some of these exercises should focus on scenarios of concern to the Central and Northern Europeans – e.g. staged unrest involving Russian minorities in countries neighbouring Russia.
- Improve links between the **EU SitCen and NATO SitCen**, appointing liaison officers and organizing informal away-days with a view to eventually drafting a joint product, e.g. on Bosnia or Russia.

- Establish working relationship between **NATO-accredited Centre of excellence on cyber-defence and the EU's military staff**, allowing for regular exchange of lessons learned.
- Create a **joint NATO-EU centre of excellence on energy security**, tasked with studying implications and possible responses in case of gas and oil cut-offs.
- Jointly fund the drafting by a group of think-tanks a **Euro-Atlantic Intelligence Assessment**, modelled on the National Intelligence Estimate, to be discussed in the NAC and the PSC.

General

- The NATO secretary-general and the new EU 'foreign minister' should **jointly visit theatres where both EU and NATO assets are deployed**, starting with a visit to Kosovo, then to ships off the Horn of Africa and finally to Afghanistan. They should also do **joint op-eds** e.g. on issues of common concerns, for example energy security or Ukraine.
- Examine the possibility of **merging the NATO and EU maritime operations off the Horn of Africa** or, at the least, developing a joint project by the two missions to support regional coastguards.
- Three defence ministers could form an **informal group to host discussions on improving NATO-EU cooperation**, on the model of the "RC South meetings" held by the countries deployed as part of ISAF's southern command. The three ministers can either be chosen specifically, e.g. the Polish, Canadian and Spanish – or picked from the EU Presidency Troika
- The EU and NATO should host a **joint conference on "Berlin Plus"** to assess the workings and recommend updates/new agreements for the NAC and Defence Ministers.
- NATO Secretary General and the EU high representative for foreign policy should jointly chair a study of **how NATO and EU can collaborate on security sector reform** in a potential theatre of joint operations, based on past experience for example of the concomitant deployment of ISAF and EUPOL in Afghanistan.
- The EU and NATO should jointly commission a think-tank, with assistance from Allied Command Transformation and the EU Military Staff, to draft the first set of **joint NATO/EU concurrency assumptions**, investigating how many (and at what operational tempo) both organisations can manage. The aim would be for ACT and EUMS to eventually collaborate on a joint document rather than the two separate (and therefore unrealistic) processes that exists today.
- Jointly commission a study of how **NATO's capability process and EDA can cooperate** more in generating alliance-wide capabilities without

jeopardising each organisation's process. A joint op-ed, for example, by the NATO SecGen and the EU HR/SG on common ideas to improve military capabilities would also be noticed

- Encourage more EU officials to **attend the NATO School in Oberammergau** – perhaps setting aside a number of places – while asking the **European security and defence college to invite NATO officials** to give occasional lectures on EU-NATO cooperation on the ground.
- Institute a **NATO-EU Fellowship** consisting of 20 mid-level officials (Head of Section or below) from NATO IS, EU institutions and member states who over a two year period will undertake short-term secondments in each other's offices, work on joint projects and meet quarterly for dinner with the NATO SecGen and the EU SG/HR to present conclusions. Specific projects could include looking on UAV requirements, and coming up with a list of recommendations for both organisations.
- Formally appoint a **military-only advisory body** to provide advice on how to improve NATO/EU military cooperation and future force planning.
- Encourage **all EU NATO members to “double-hat” their Military Representative**, giving them both EU and NATO roles, such as the UK has already done, to enforce greater policy integration in the capitals.
- Create a new **NATO-EU partnership on disaster management** that creates links between each and the WHO global health security network. Commission a study of how to integrate the EU Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) with NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response and Coordination Centre (EADRCC) perhaps with a view over to creating a joint NATO-EU Disaster Management Center.
- Float idea in a speech of a joint **EU-NATO Conflict Prevention Task Force** with a permanent secretariat housed in the EU institutions to coordinate intelligence about developing conflicts, produce joint analyses and propose conflict-mitigating strategies for discussion.
- Propose that the NATO-supported **network of Atlantic Association be expanded and renamed to Euro-Atlantic Associations**, covering both NATO and EU issues, and reporting to a NATO-EU management.
- Organise **joint NATO/EU delegation to visits the 28 legislatures** of the NATO and EU member states to discuss euro-Atlantic security issues.