

## Highlights from the second Strategic Concept seminar

The second Strategic Concept seminar took place in Brdo, Slovenia, on 13 November, focusing on NATO's operations, the "comprehensive approach," the challenge of new asymmetric threats, and NATO's engagement in the Middle East and South West Asia. Led by the Group of Experts, the event consisted of four panel discussions among military and civilian representatives of governments, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions.

The purpose of the seminar was to stimulate candid and lively discussions and not to come to any conclusions at this point. The highlights below, prepared by NATO's International Staff, are derived from the seminar discussions or from individual participants presenting their own views. They do not reflect the views of the Experts, Governments, or NATO's official views. The Group of Experts will continue to discuss and explore these and other issues in the coming months.

The Secretary General commended the efforts of the Slovenian hosts and other organizers and welcomed the efforts of the Group of Experts to lay the foundation for a new Strategic Concept. He identified four areas where improvement would be necessary: strategic alignment, planning, relations between security and development, and partnerships.

### Lessons of recent operations

- NATO's operations in the Balkans have shown the need for a comprehensive approach, the importance of stabilization and reconstruction activities to longer-term success, and the positive effect of political and military endurance (e.g. Kosovo).
- Every operation is unique – there is a fundamental need for flexibility and adaptability both in forces and command. Well-trained forces capable of sustained expeditionary operations in difficult and complex environments are likely to be needed.
- Success in future missions requires a shared comprehensive vision of the goals, a clear understanding of the requirements, a resource plan, public and parliamentary support, and effective information operations.
- Recent operations have also shown the need for NATO forces to engage with different types of actors, each with distinct agendas: host governments, local players, the UN and its agencies, contractors, and international and non-governmental organizations.
- Mentoring of indigenous security forces is central to success and a key part of any exit strategy.
- Several participants contended that more common funding would help equalize burdens among all member countries, at least for strategic movement. One participant argued that common funding may not be good for NATO, and that countries contributing forces are not necessarily those most committed). Burden sharing should also take into account the differences among countries in overall defence spending and investment in modernising and training their armed forces.

- Suggestions for ways that NATO could generate the resources required for operations include: having nations spend two percent of GDP on defence, reducing large territorial forces in some nations, increasing contributions to the common budget for countries not providing forces, and raising the rates for common funding. One participant proposed that the term “burden sharing” be replaced by the notion of “duty sharing.”
- NATO needs to optimize its political weight through its member nations. Three nations are permanent members of the UN Security Council, 21 are members of the European Union, and several are also members of the G8 or G20. NATO should also improve its crisis response planning.

### **New asymmetric threats**

- Planning against threats today is done in a context of considerable uncertainty. One option for dealing with this unpredictability is to develop a range of plans and capabilities to deal with types of threats. Another option is to approach threats through political consensus about NATO-agreed tasks.
- One important question is how far NATO should go in countering new threats, such as acts of terrorism or piracy, before they are launched against a member nation or its citizens. Should such threats be countered at an embryonic stage?
- NATO should avoid a “fortress mentality,” but neither should it move towards heavy reliance on special operations to defeat or counter emerging asymmetric threats around the world. Article 5 calls for collective self-defence against an armed attack, but the new Strategic Concept needs to redefine what this means in an age of terrorist and cyber attacks.
- In a period of globalization, there is a continuum between security at home and abroad, but there has been little progress in translating this into practice. NATO has to do more on homeland security and resilience in a confusing environment. NATO should also tackle issues of legitimacy and legality upfront.
- NATO’s potential role in climate change and other global challenges should be approached with caution. NATO may well need to deal with various security consequences of climate change.

### **NATO’s engagement in the Middle East and South West Asia**

- There was a general recognition that NATO was not new to the Middle East and broad agreement that it should pursue a more active engagement in the region, including through practical cooperation and soft power instruments, while never supplanting the UN.
- Several speakers said that Allies have yet to develop the full potential of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Operation Active Endeavour has gone beyond simple maritime cooperation to extensive information sharing with Mediterranean partners. Its success suggests possible scope for strengthening MD and ICI, including strategic dialogue and further

cooperation on issues of mutual concern. One participant suggested NATO should transform the MD into a Partnership for Freedom in the Mediterranean and involve partners more in decision making and information sharing.

- Another said that the value of the MD and ICI was exhausted and NATO should develop deeper individual partnerships with countries in the Greater Middle East. This participant noted that the Israeli government would welcome such a partnership and argued that eventual Israeli membership should not be excluded once there is an Arab-Israeli peace agreement.
- One speaker argued for a regional approach that would take better account of regional dynamics. NATO should not discard any potential cooperation.

### **Comprehensive approach**

- Several participants observed that NATO's cooperation with the UN could be improved.
- The UN and NATO need to meet each other half way. NATO should not dictate the approach, and both organizations should look at comparative advantages, assess past experiences to better understand each other's roles, agree to more cooperative planning at strategic and policy levels, and share more information and analysis. NATO could offer the UN enhanced information sharing and more assistance with transportation in operations.
- NATO's ability to "plug and play" with other international actors (including non-governmental organisations) and local authorities is essential for success in future operations. NATO can play a key role as a platform for the civil-military transatlantic dialogue and cooperation.
- The comprehensive approach has five elements:
  - shared assessment and agreement on goals
  - integrated civil/military mission planning
  - effective training
  - adequate funding
  - local ownership
- The comprehensive approach requires better integration of civil and military efforts and identification of effective partners at the earliest planning stage. The civil effort, because it is more complex, has often lagged behind military operations. Another problem with the comprehensive approach is that it easily becomes hostage to spoilers, so the question is what to do if NATO's interlocutors do not respond. The poor practical co-operation between the EU and NATO in Afghanistan poses a particularly difficult challenge.
- Participants disagreed on whether NATO should develop its own civilian force planning goal and a force generation mechanism for civilian capabilities, as one speaker suggested. This could include a standing civilian capacity for first respondents (similar to the U.S.); better common doctrine and training for civilians; and a centre of excellence for the comprehensive approach. Others argued that the

right framework for generating civilian capabilities was through partnership with the UN, the EU, the OSCE, and NGOs.

- NATO does not, cannot and should not possess all civilian capabilities, but rather focus on its core areas of competence. NATO should recruit people with broader skill sets and competencies on the civilian side to ensure that its military engagements fit with civilian activities by other actors.

### **Rapporteur's conclusions**

- NATO will need to accept limits to its vision. Any strategy will have to be flexible, while including mid- and long-term planning.
- A major element as regards the future of partnerships will be relations with the post-Lisbon EU, which should lead to a more active European Security and Defence Policy.
- The comprehensive approach cannot be a grand design, but should be based on functional cooperation and should take into account the global context. NATO should focus on what it does best: security sector reform and training.
- Other issues that the new Strategic Concept should address are legitimacy and legality issues; NATO's identity and where it is going.