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Report on the NATO's
New Strategic Concept Workshop
(Kingston, 23 April, 2010)
in light
of the Group of Experts Report
(17 May, 2010)

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Report on the NATO's New Strategic Concept Workshop
(Kingston, 23 April, 2010)
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Overview

On 23 April, 2010, discussions on NATO's New Strategic Concept initiative were held in Kingston under the auspices of the Centre for International Relations, Queen's University and the Centre for Defence and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, with the support of the Special Projects Fund, Security and Defence Forum, Department of National Defence. This one day workshop consisting of Canadian academic experts and representatives of Foreign Affairs and National Defence, examined a range of issues directly germane to NATO and the formulation of a New Strategic Concept in five sessions - the Emerging Security Environment and NATO's Fundamental Tasks, NATO and Europe: Regional Defence and Regional Partnerships, Transatlantic Cohesion: NATO and the EU, Rethinking NATO's Global Engagement, and NATO Transformation and Capabilities.

Initially intended as a stand alone report of the workshop's deliberations, the subsequent release of NATO's Group of Experts Report, established by the Secretary-General and chaired by Madeline Albright, on 17 May provided the opportunity to place these deliberations (hereafter the Workshop) in the context of the analysis and recommendations of the Group of Experts (hereafter the Report).¹ In so doing, the findings of the Report are used to organize the findings of the Workshop for comparative purposes. Naturally, not all of the issues discussed within the Report were examined in the Workshop due to time constraints, and the natural diplomatic tone of the Report is different from the academic tone of the Workshop. Nonetheless, placing the deliberations of the Workshop in the context of the findings of the Report provides a more useful and policy relevant outcome.

Security Environment and NATO's Core Tasks

Largely consistent with previous NATO assessments of the international security environment since the end of the Cold War, the Report concludes that, "conventional military aggression is unlikely..." The report otherwise identifies primary threats as ballistic missile attack, nuclear or otherwise, international terrorism, and "cyber assaults of varying degrees of severity" (17). Lesser threats are "disruptions to energy and maritime supply lines... global climate change and financial crisis." In terms of implications, the Report drew attention to a range of issues the above "unconventional threats" pose to the alliance, including what constitutes an attack relative to Article 5. Even though a direct threat to the alliance was downplayed somewhat, the Report reiterated that NATO's first core task was Article 5 deterrence and defence, noting that this "should be reaffirmed in unmistakable terms" and that the alliance "must be prepared to defend against (and deter) such threats regardless of their point of origin" (19). Related, the second and third core tasks are contributing to Euro-Atlantic security and providing a venue for transatlantic "security consultations and crisis management"

¹ All subsequent page citations are drawn from *NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement*. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO. 17 May, 2010 <<http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf>>

which “reflects both the political and military dimensions of the alliance and merits more attention in light of the diversity of today’s security threats...”(21).

Echoing these assessments, Workshop participants were in near complete agreement that the alliance does not presently face any ‘existential threat’ to the security of its members, even though participants recognized differences of view amongst member states with regard to the importance of Article 5 territorial deterrence and defence. Regardless, there was recognition that the alliance does not require an existential threat to justify its existence. Moreover, there are numerous other threats, which confront the alliance from state and non-state actors that do not necessarily involve a violation of national territory. It was further recognized that the Article 5 issue remains problematic, especially in an absence of a clear definition of targets. Nonetheless, most agreed that the new Strategic Concept should remain broad and general in its definition of threats and targets to ensure wide support amongst the member states, and to enable the alliance to respond flexibly to future uncertainty.

Workshop participants, in some senses, did part company with the Report, depending upon one’s interpretation of the definition of Euro-Atlantic security. In the context of Arctic security issues and the recognition of growing European interest in the region, especially amongst non-Arctic European allies, consensus indicated that the alliance *should not become involved* in these issues. Even the suggestion, that NATO’s infrastructure fund, which has exclusively paid for European sites, could be applied to reduce Canadian costs in developing Arctic defence and security infrastructure, was widely condemned. Implicitly at least, NATO’s contribution to Euro-Atlantic security actually means Europe and its immediate periphery, *sans* Arctic and in effect North America.

At the same time, many felt that independent of the debate on threats per se, NATO is for Canada an *international organization of necessity* as the only multilateral vehicle to conduct forward-based defence. NATO is the only functional defence and security actor, which contain North American and European commitments to international stability. In other words, the specifics of the international security landscape are somewhat secondary to the fundamental importance of the alliance to Canada. In this regard, as discussed further below, it is in Canada’s fundamental political interests to ensure that NATO remains the primary defence and security organization. At the same time, a significant minority, positing that NATO is primarily a security institution, which no longer meets the needs of the current world, believes that the alliance is becoming less relevant with implications for Canada’s strategic and political interests.

Russia

Not surprisingly, both the Report and Workshop paid a great deal of attention to the question of Russia and its relationship with the alliance. Both recognize that the Russian question is one of three dominant issues facing the alliance and the new Strategic Concept (alongside the relationship with the EU and NATO’s global vocation). Noting that the current relationship with Russia contains both positive and negative elements, the Report emphasizes the importance of the New Strategic Concept in “unifying allies

views on Russia, clarifying NATO's intentions towards Moscow, and laying the groundwork for more substantive cooperation" (16). The Report identifies engagement with Russia as one of, if not implicitly the only unified allied view in this regard, reiterates support for the joint NATO-Russia goal of Europe as "a common space of security and stability, without dividing lines and spheres of influence limiting the sovereignty of any state", and calls for a more re-vitalized (and meaningful) NATO-Russia Council (27). Even so, the Report implicitly suggests that the future relationship will hinge significantly on Russian actions, and forcefully calls for the Strategic Concept to reiterate "NATO's resolve if the security of any of its members states were to be threatened."

In this regard, the Workshop participants in a separate session on Russia emphasized the significance of the NATO Article 5 commitment, and the need to consider closely the areas and issues of relevance to allied commitments in the context of recent Russian behaviour. These include, *inter alia*, the cyber attack on Estonia, the conflict with Georgia, and the employment of Russian oil and gas for political purposes. Reflecting the aforementioned importance of flexibility relative to the Article 5 question and the need for alliance solidarity, there was no consensus on appropriate responses or options facing the alliance – only that solidarity is the key. At the same time, participants were sensitive to the drift towards bilateralism in relations between Russia and several NATO members, which raise concerns about alliance solidarity and the ability of the alliance to speak with a single voice in response to Russian actions.

Although the Report does not address the full range of issues facing the NATO-Russia relationship, it does identify Russian "concerns about past and prospective NATO enlargement." At the same time, the Report does call upon the alliance in the New Strategic Concept to "reaffirm NATO's open door policy" based upon agreed principles (35). Reflecting an interesting balancing act, the Report also separately addresses NATO's relationship with Ukraine and Georgia, whose potential candidacy was a major catalyst in worsening relations over the past several years (alongside the issue of ballistic missile defence). In so doing, attention is focused exclusively on the two respective NATO partnership Commissions and their importance relative to 'defusing crises and building trust' (27).

Workshop participants were near unanimous in identifying NATO's enlargement policy as the source of tensions with Russia, and that the 'open door' will likely continue to generate suspicion and distrust in Moscow. While no one suggested that the 'open door' policy should be abandoned, many felt that Russia now exercises a *de facto* veto with respect to future enlargement. In this regard, a small number of participants argued in favour of Russian membership, or at least signaling to Russia an 'open door, as a means to transform NATO in a positive direction towards becoming a truly pan-European political alliance and reducing tensions in the region.

Underpinning discussions of the NATO-Russian relationship was the assertion that Great Power politics, akin to mid-nineteenth century Europe were returning, and that Russia will continue to act according to its own agenda, rather than accepting the norms and assumptions of most NATO members. In effect, Russian Great Power politics will

likely drive to separate the allies by pursuing bilateral policy initiatives, and this feature of relations with Russia is a growing tendency. In addition, Russia's willingness to use its energy resources as a foreign policy weapon is a major concern, raising the thorny question of whether the cutoff of a NATO nation's energy supply warrants consideration under Article 5.

At the same time, however, Russia does not wish to be ignored by the alliance, and has some interest in aligning its policy with NATO, where alliance interests coincide with Russian ones. While endorsing the importance of the Russia-NATO Council as a beneficial forum for constructive debate, and the need for good cooperative relations, it was recognized that future relations will be a difficult balancing act. In this regard, the Workshop echoed the importance of the New Strategic Concept in emphasizing its fundamental Article 5 commitments, and, as noted above, the importance of alliance solidarity in dealing with Russia.

The European Union

The Report's assessment of the alliance's relationship with the European Union is embedded within a larger discussion of alliance partnerships. Even so, the Report fully recognizes that the EU "is a unique and essential partner" (23). Noting that mechanisms for cooperation have been problematic in the past, there is an essential need "to forge a comprehensive and cost-effective approach to security when both are involved in a stabilization mission" (24). The New Strategic Concept should be the means to affirm this approach. That being said, the Report rejects the idea of a division of labour between the Alliance and the EU on the basis of military (NATO) and non-military (EU) responsibilities. However, it also does not envision a significant expansion of NATO civilian capabilities for complex stabilization operations. Instead, the Report recommends the establishment of "a small civilian planning unit within NATO to maintain points of contact, share information, and engage in joint planning with partner countries and organizations" (42). The task of developing civilian specialists belongs with the member states. Although not specified in the Report, one can assume that these national specialists would form the backbone of the planning unit through secondment, and/or that they would be seconded into a NATO operation, depending upon NATO state participation.

In Workshop discussions of NATO's relationship with the EU, there was a clear consensus linking the development of a civilian-based capability within NATO in order to address issues confronted by the alliance and the importance of collaboration with EU's existing strength and capacity. However, in detailed discussions, this consensus broke down into two broad schools of thought. One largely saw the issues confronting the relationship in status quo terms, and the other as portending the possibility of significant change with major implications for the alliance and Canadian interests. Concerning the former, it was argued that an implicit division of labour, or perhaps more accurately emphasis of labour exists, and will continue – NATO will remain primarily a political-military organization and the EU a political-economic one. The EU has no intention of becoming a military-heavy organization. NATO should continue to focus on its military strengths, and the EU on its civilian, notwithstanding the

importance of the comprehensive approach in current and future stabilization missions. In so doing, there is a vital need to reduce overlap, confusion, and competition. While the Lisbon Treaty arrangements may enable the Europeans to develop collectively their military capabilities, enhance the capacity of its members to act in concert, and contribute more effectively to coalitions of the willing, elements of the Treaty do allow for greater EU-NATO cooperation, and the development of mechanisms for greater and more efficient cooperation. This reality provides Canada with an opportunity to play a mediating role between the EU and NATO, in which managing complex stabilization operations under a NATO-EU division of labour in terms of developing mechanisms and consultative procedures and protocols as a focus of Canadian policy.

Somewhat related to the aforementioned EU military developments that may come out of Lisbon, there was also the suggestion that a geographic division of labour should be considered. In this regard, and noting EU access to NATO military capabilities as a function of common membership, the reality of finite (and declining) dual-hatted military resources of European states, and recent EU-led operations, that the EU should be assigned responsibility for Europe and Africa, and NATO the rest of the world.

The second school of thought focused upon the division of labour issue in terms of competition, and duplication in an environment of scarce resources, and its implications for the comprehensive approach (whole of government) to stabilization operations. It is unlikely that new NATO-EU mechanisms for cooperation within a single complex mission will be successful. Instead of such mechanisms promoting efficiency, the underlying politics are more likely to have the opposite effect. In this regard, it was noted that the complex division of labour within the Afghanistan mission reduced cohesion of effort, and that a division of labour with the EU in an operation is likely to compound the problem. Furthermore, the additional problems of coordination in a comprehensive approach, is also likely to be compounded through any division of labour with the EU.

In addition, if the implementation of the military elements falling out Lisbon is successful, it will create the political foundation for a European bloc within the alliance. Notwithstanding the political implications of a two-bloc alliance – North America (US) and Europe – on the future of the alliance itself, unless NATO develops comprehensive capacities, Canada would become increasingly marginalized. It would limit Canada to a military role in stabilization operations, and potentially in certain circumstances, militarily engaged in a complex operation EU-led with no direct input into senior decision-making levels. Such a situation would likely be unacceptable to Canada, as found in the Balkans after the transfer of responsibility from NATO to the EU. Moreover, this outcome is in direct conflict with Canada's peacekeeping history, national self-image, and current national 'whole of government' policy.

Overall, both the idea of a division of labour between EU and NATO, or a NATO limited to the military-security side of the equation is an anathema to Canadian political and strategic interests. Canada should be a major proponent of a comprehensive approach that entails the build-up of NATO civilian capacity. Furthermore, it would prove problematic to leave Europe to the Europeans, given the recent Balkans experience,

notwithstanding the development of greater EU experience and capacity obtained since 2003.

In the end, a loose consensus emerged that NATO faces two options – a minimalist and maximalist. The minimalist, echoing the Report, posits the alliance acquiring a capacity to integrate civilian capabilities in upstream planning to ensure operational integration downstream. The maximalist would see NATO require a full range of ‘independent’ civilian planning and operational capabilities to support disarmament, reintegration of fighters, security sector reform, humanitarian services, and infrastructure and reconstruction capacities. As the maximalist is likely too much to expect from the alliance, the goal, regardless, is to ensure NATO can effectively work with other organizations in winning the peace. This may mean that NATO only develops a limited civilian capacity at the front end of stabilization operations when security is the prime concern and once a secure environment is generated, NATO shifts into a secondary role in peace-building. Above all else, Canada should take a lead in the context of the New Strategic Concept to push for the comprehensive approach whereby NATO develops the capacity to fully integrate military and civilian capacity for overseas missions.

Global Engagement

As part of NATO’s third core task, the Report identifies an alliance “interest in protecting global lifelines that sustain modern societies and in promoting security and stability well beyond its immediate borders” (21). In light of these interests, and as function of NATO’s engagement outside of Europe, and in cooperation with the United Nations on one hand, and numerous non-NATO states on the other, the Report argues for the development some type of partnerships arrangements preferably with other existing international organizations, such as the African Union, Organization of American States, and the Shanghai Cooperation Council, or with new regional subgroups. In emphasizing that the Alliance is not a global organization, has limited resources, and competing priorities, NATO should not accept any missions “that other institutions and countries can be counted upon to handle.” As such, the Report emphasizes the importance of prescribed guidelines within the New Strategic Concept, and offers a list of eight factors to consider.

In effect, the Report’s framing of the out-of-area question implies that the alliance should be the organization of ‘last resort,’ notwithstanding the first factor or guideline related to the “extent and imminence of danger to the Alliance members” (33). The authors clearly recognize, in part as a function of the lessons of Afghanistan that the alliance cannot and should not commit to operations beyond its abilities, and without solid domestic support.

The workshop’s discussions on NATO’s global vocation largely echoed the Group of Experts Report. A ‘global NATO’ is problematic not least of all, because of the problems and tensions it creates for the institution. Only if the threat is clear and alliance solidarity present, should NATO act ‘out-of-area’. Otherwise, such actions will only prove counter-productive. As such, the New Strategic Concept should speak of NATO as a security actor with global partners. Above all else, a level of ambiguity is necessary to

allow for flexibility, and at the same time provide some planning guidelines to allow for mission prioritization.

With regard to partnerships, it was generally agreed that a UN Security Council (UNSC) mandate is the preferred foundation for NATO expeditionary missions. At the same time, NATO should not be dependent upon, or held hostage to a UNSC mandate and become obligated to act. Although no attention was paid to developing formal partnerships with other international organizations, discussions about relationships with non-NATO states concluded that not all partnerships should be formalized, and the relationship with potential partners determined on a case-by-case basis. As a marginal disagreement within the group, some felt that reference should be made to the goal of formalizing such partnerships within the New Strategic Concept, albeit with few details on specific relationships, whereas others believed that there was no need to go beyond reference to their possibility and utility.

At the same time, the formal Partnership for Peace (PfP) was seen as vital mechanism for creating good civilian-military governance relationships and enhancing stability outside of NATO, and that the New Strategic Concept should consider the various forms in which such relationships are structured. Noting that the meaning and value of NATO 'partnerships', formal and informal, vary amongst the various partner and contact countries, the New Strategic Concept should approach the overarching partnership question in a flexible manner.

Underlying the general consensus on the partnership issue was the issue of common values underlying alliance solidarity and the alliance itself. There was strong agreement that shared liberal-democratic values remain the cornerstone of the alliance. Implicitly, these should be the same values that guide NATO partnerships. Ideally, NATO should be obligated to formal partnerships only with other liberal democracies possessing shared values. Certainly, under certain circumstances, the alliance may have little choice, but to compromise their collective commitment to liberal-democratic values in forming temporary strategic alliances with non-democratic states – a reality according to some already demonstrated. Regardless, the New Strategic Concept should avoid any rhetoric of a 'global NATO' or 'league of democracies.'

It was also suggested in light of the Afghanistan experience and declining resources, that the New Strategic Concept should emphasize its interoperability and force generation role amongst members states. While not entirely eschewing overseas missions, but rather as a military organization of 'last resort', NATO has, and should continue to be a facilitator for coalitions of the willing, rather than an operator per se. While such an emphasis would have a positive impact on the financial and related resource constraints facing the alliance, the future of the alliance may be threatened given that 'out-of-area' operations have become a central rationale for NATO's existence.

Nuclear Deterrence

In noting that the alliance “relies upon a mixture of conventional and nuclear weapons” for deterrence purposes, and recognizing that the “Alliance should be prepared for in-depth nuclear consultations on the future role of nuclear weapons in its deterrence strategy” (43), the Report implicitly recommends that the New Strategic Concept should re-iterate the maintenance of “secure and reliable nuclear forces” (44). In so doing, these forces should be at the minimal level necessary relative to the security environment, with “widely shared responsibility for deployment and operational support.” At the same time, the Report recommends discussions with Russia on the full range of nuclear issues, and the re-establishment of the Special Consultative Group on Arms Control. Finally, the Report advocates the addition of “territorial missile defence as an essential mission of the alliance” in order to “enhance deterrence and transatlantic sharing of responsibility, reinforce the principle of that security is indivisible, and allow for concrete security cooperation with Russia.”

The workshop’s discussion began with the assertion of the ‘problematic’ nature of NATO’s nuclear weapons deterrent. NATO’s nuclear threat is a legacy strategy that lacks credibility given the alliance’s conventional capabilities and the current security environment in the absence of an existential threat, is of no value in deterring terrorist attacks, and undermines alliance credibility with respect to its non-proliferation posture. In contrast, it was noted that nuclear weapons are here to stay, and continue to have utility to deter a dramatic shift or cumulative shift in the global balance of power. Furthermore, many NATO members, focused upon the importance of Article 5, continue to rely upon NATO’s nuclear deterrent, especially given changes in Russian military doctrine, which emphasize nuclear weapons. These nations are unlikely to accept any reference to de-nuclearization, and given the differences among NATO members on the nuclear question, it may be best to put the nuclear question aside as best as possible. NATO can neither reduce nor eliminate its nuclear forces in the absence of a parallel Russian commitment. This, in turn, will be dependent upon US-Russian START negotiations. As for the ballistic missile defence question, it was noted in a very brief discussion that the embedding of territorial missile defence as an alliance mission may prove somewhat problematic for Canada given its current policy on North American missile defence.