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NATO Initiatives for an Era of Global Competition

The transatlantic partnership has historically been at the heart of U.S. foreign policy, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been at the heart of the partnership. But the factors that long made “transatlantic” the dominant foreign policy construct have fundamentally changed – and with it has come a need for concomitant strategic and operational changes to meet new requirements.

Lisbon Initiatives

NATO is currently engaged in a philosophical review of its foundational principles as it undertakes to develop a new Strategic Concept to be adopted this November at the Lisbon Summit. **The words of the concept will have little impact, however, unless they are implemented by a series of consequential initiatives that make NATO an effective organization in a new era of global competition.** This issue brief recommends five such initiatives for NATO, which would be approved at Lisbon, designed to respond to global challenges, both immediate and longer term.

The initiatives are:

- Enhancing NATO’s capacity for civil-military interaction, and specifically creating **a civil-military plan for Afghanistan**;
 - Building effective defense with limited resources by **creating focused multi-national formations** that meet critical Alliance needs;
 - Enhancing NATO’s ability both to respond to new challenges for allies and to utilize partner capacities by
- **expanding training and education capabilities of Allied Command Transformation (ACT)** on new requirements (e.g., counterinsurgency, cyber) and on partner needs;
 - **Establishing an arms control agenda for NATO**, including tactical nuclear weapons;
 - Making NATO an effective place to discuss security issues of consequence by **establishing an “Enhanced**

The Strategic Advisors Group

To tackle the tough issues facing NATO and the transatlantic community, the Atlantic Council created the Strategic Advisors Group (SAG). Co-chaired by Atlantic Council Chairman Senator Chuck Hagel and Airbus CEO Tom Enders, the SAG is comprised of North American and European preeminent defense experts. Founded in 2007 by then-Atlantic Council Chairman General James L. Jones, General Brent Scowcroft, and Fred Kempe, the SAG provides timely insights and analysis to policymakers and the public on strategic issues in the transatlantic security partnership through issuing policy briefs and reports, hosting strategy sessions for senior civilian and military officials and providing informal expert advice to decision-makers.

The SAG and its activities are generously sponsored by the Scowcroft Group, EADS North America, and Airbus.

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North Atlantic Council (NAC) Forum” which could review issues beyond traditional defense (e.g., cyber, energy, Iran) and could add partners as appropriate (e.g., the European Union, Pakistan) to the topic for discussion.

The Era of Global Competition

The dominant factor of the current era is globalization in its multiple manifestations. The thrust of a global world is the need for an expanded focus – both geographically and functionally. To the transatlantic nations, China and India have become important as have climate change, worldwide financial flows, and international health issues. The recent institutionalization of the G-20 is the exemplar of the global world.

At the highest levels, the leaders of the transatlantic nations have asserted the criticality of the transatlantic partnership in the globalized world. Chancellor Angela Merkel speaking to the United States Congress in November 2009 stated that, “globalization is an immense opportunity” and that “there is no better partner for Europe than America” and “no better partner for America than Europe.” Secretary of State Clinton in Paris in January 2010 stated, “A strong Europe is critical to our security and prosperity. Much of what we hope to accomplish globally depends on working together.”

NATO gets its full rhetorical due. President Obama, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, said flatly that “NATO continues to be indispensable,” a sentiment echoed by Chancellor Merkel in her speech to the Congress: “there is no doubt that NATO is and will continue to be the crucial cornerstone of our collective defense.”

But beyond those powerful words, there is a degree of uncertainty as to NATO’s place – an uncertainty reflected, first, in historical changes and, second, in different perspectives and actions taken on each side of the Atlantic in response to globalization.

Historically, there has been a very significant shift from what one might call the transatlantic historic baseline. That baseline consisted of five reinforcing elements:

- Security looked to NATO, flexible response and U.S.-USSR arms control;

- Politically, the key elements were the European Union’s development, the Helsinki Act, the fall of the Wall and the end of the USSR;
- Economically, development ran from the Marshall Plan to European Union (EU) expansion to creation of the Euro;
- Socially and culturally, there was a theme of common values which were fundamentally “Enlightenment-focused;” and
- Internationally, the key elements were the 1945 institutions of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, GATT/World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

If one reviews the current key elements in the five categories that historically made up the baseline, a very different picture emerges. The picture is both global and highly competitive:

- Security has included Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and East Timor;
- Politically, while EU development continues, China has emerged as a critical factor, Russia’s significance is far less than was the USSR’s, and the dispersion of power worldwide is exemplified by the emergence and importance of the G-20;
- Economically, there has been very substantial development of numerous economies exemplified by China, India and Brazil; energy (and potentially climate) has become a key factor; and intellectual property is now widely spread;
- Socially and culturally, there are various challenges to the Western model, including state capitalism, sovereign democracy and radical Islam;
- Internationally, while the 1945 institutions continue, new non-Western institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the “10 plus 3” in East Asia, and the Islamic Development Bank have emerged – and non-governmental actions such as the “color” revolutions or the impetus for the International Convention to Ban Landmines have important consequences; and

- Transnational issues such as health and human rights have received increased focus.

The changes in the baseline have led to some significantly different approaches on the opposite sides of the Atlantic. Some of the most basic:

- The United States considers itself a country at war. President Obama, in his Nobel Prize speech, said, "I am the Commander-in-Chief of a nation in the midst of two wars." There are few (and perhaps no) European leaders who would describe themselves or their nation in such terms – and some who actively deny such rhetoric.
- As a nation at war, the United States has steadily built its military capabilities, both in resources devoted and doctrine and capabilities developed over the past nine years. Europe, in general, has gone in the other direction.
- Al-Qaeda is an active target of the United States worldwide – and the fight is not only in Afghanistan, but in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the trans-Sahel and elsewhere. European militaries and civilians have taken on significant burdens in Afghanistan (and many previously in Iraq), but the worldwide focus is different.
- Public support for such actions varies in all countries, but support for NATO's actions in Afghanistan is much stronger in the U.S. than generally in Europe – as exemplified by the recent fall of the Dutch government.
- The ability to bring power to bear is somewhat easier from Washington as Europe is working its way through the development of the European Union and the relationship of the Union to national sovereignties. There is one American president, but three EU presidencies – to say nothing of one American Secretary of State as compared to multiple national foreign ministers along with an EU high representative.
- Priorities differ in many ways:
 - When the United States was attacked on 9/11, NATO was the entity that responded – but when the 2004 Madrid terrorist attacks occurred, Spain went to the EU;
 - The United States is engaged with Russia on many classic security issues including arms control, Afghanistan, and Iran – but Europe's focus is more on energy.

These transatlantic differences are further exacerbated by additional complexities. In Europe, different nations view Russia or Afghanistan or energy differently. The role of the EU is still emerging – and the energy devoted to that project by Europeans reduces focus on other matters. Within NATO, there are different views on whether and how new security matters such as cyber and energy should be dealt with; or whether NATO should be a principal focus for discussion of issues such as Iran, Pakistan, or the greater Middle East; or whether "after Afghanistan" the Alliance should reach well beyond the European continent. And, globally, the common value of democracy – which while a bedrock component of the Alliance – is often not enough to generate common conclusions, with Brazil's recent refusal to support sanctions on Iran and the diverse views at the Copenhagen conference on climate change being only the latest examples.

NATO and Global Competition

The import of the foregoing is that, while at the highest levels the United States and Europe agree, underlying that agreement there are often important differences which show themselves at the levels of implementation and operations. Thus, because the rhetoric of NATO's leaders is congruent, there is every likelihood that there will be agreement on the wording of a new NATO Strategic Concept. But that agreement will be of little consequence unless implemented by actions of the Alliance which generate important results in the new era of global competition.

Taking into account what leaders have already said, if one were to put the probable new Strategic Concept into one (slightly lengthy) sentence, it most likely would read along the following lines:

"NATO needs to be a collective security alliance focused on the problems of the 21st century (including both Article 5 and Article 4), able to engage all elements of power throughout the Euro-Atlantic area and proactively beyond in order to establish stability and security through efficient multinational means that provide security greater than that which could be accomplished by individual countries."

Article 5 is, of course, reaffirmed and will remain central, but the key new elements are:

- “collective security” – so beyond just defense;
- “all elements of power” – so more than military;
- “throughout the Euro-Atlantic area” – so creating security with Russia as possible;
- “proactively beyond” – so both preventative and reaching to the sources of problems; and
- “efficient multinational” – which has always been true, but is even more important given today’s resource constraints.

The key issue for the Alliance, therefore, is not whether it will agree on a Strategic Concept – it will – but what will it do in light of agreement on words. The virtue of the Alliance, of course, is that it works together – that is the critical element of consensus which, as noted, is a bedrock principle of the Alliance. The Alliance now needs consensus on actions for the future – and for the Alliance to be important in this changing world of global competition, they must be important actions. The initiatives described below, which could be approved and implemented at the upcoming Lisbon Summit, meet that criterion.

1) **Civil-Military Roadmap for Afghanistan.** The Alliance is deeply engaged in Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan at the time of the Lisbon Summit will heavily impact how the Alliance is viewed. All would like to achieve success, and there is common agreement that success demands more than just a military effort. The Alliance will need to demonstrate that its efforts are being effective and will continue to be so. An announcement of a civil-military roadmap – built on the work that is now being done and will need to be continued in the future – would provide such a demonstration. Currently, NATO is heavily engaged in the “clear” part of “clear, hold, build,” but presumably by the time of the summit, the “hold, build” effort will have become more obviously relevant. A roadmap that lays forth how that “hold, build” will be accomplished, including not only by NATO, but also by critical partners – the host nation at various levels (central government, regional, etc.) as well as key international partners (international organizations, important NGOs, etc.) – would be a demonstration that NATO knows how to use

all elements of power and would validate the comprehensive approach.

- 2) **Focused Multinational Formations.** Focused capabilities meeting specific NATO requirements would enhance the Alliance’s ability to effectively undertake operations. A significant, directed effort to expand the number of multilateral formations with focused capabilities would have multiple benefits. Multilateral formations reduce overhead and increase interoperability, thus increasing both efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, multilateral formations between and among countries increase both the perception and the actual understanding of security needs and requirements and create a response to those needs and requirements, thereby adding to the credibility of the Article 5 guarantee, as well as to the seriousness and common purpose with which Article 4 efforts should be undertaken. It is true that a decision by one country not to go forward could impact the availability of another engaged in the multinational formation, but there are structural approaches that could reduce such impacts, and the political value of working together along with the interoperability/efficiency benefits means that multinational formations could have high value (and, in fact, have had such value already in the Alliance).
- 3) **Expanding ACT’s Training and Education Capacities.** New capabilities and new approaches including proactive and preventive measures are an important element of 21st century security. Counterinsurgency, stabilization and reconstruction, and cyber are three examples of new requirements, and, in the proactive/preventive arena, the capability to create capacity in partners to deliver their own security is crucial. There is, of course, a good deal of learning and expertise being developed in connection with ongoing efforts in all these arenas. Formalizing and expanding the Alliance’s capability to perform such tasks and putting the capability under ACT will increase the Alliance’s ability to produce results, as well as increase the ability and inclination of countries to work with the Alliance.
- 4) **NATO Arms Control Track.** NATO historically has pursued dual track strategies including utilizing arms control as an important element of security. Currently,

there is a significant imbalance in tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, with the Russians having several thousand and NATO much less. Consistent with President Obama's goal with respect to nuclear weapons, an arms control approach to tactical nuclear weapons could significantly reduce (and perhaps eliminate) such weapons from the continent. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty had such an effect on theater weapons, and from NATO's perspective, a significant imbalance could be ended. In order to open such a negotiation, there would need to be intensive NATO consultations – and especially on the role of tactical nuclear weapons on extended deterrence – but there is enough time to make a good deal of progress before the Lisbon Summit. The Russians, of course, would have to be willing to participate, but they have been serious partners in arms control before. An arms control approach would also meet the German (and perhaps other nations') desire to put tactical nuclear weapons on the NATO agenda, but without all the negative aspects of what had initially appeared to be rather “unilateralist” suggestions.

- 5) **Enhanced NAC Forum.** Globalization is about expanded focus. For the Alliance, there would be great value in a forum in which there could be effective discussion of the impact of globalization and particularly critical 21st century security problems. At the moment, no such forum exists – and the efforts to generate discussion are limited by perceived institutional constraints and also by poor procedures that generate “talk at” rather than “talk with” meetings. The transatlantic nations need a place where there can be effective discussion of such problems as cyber, energy, Pakistan and Iran. While it would be possible to establish a new Euro-Atlantic Forum, the Alliance itself could create an “Enhanced Forum” that could serve precisely that function. Such a forum would consist of the countries of the Alliance and, as appropriate for the discussion, key partners. It would be up to the Secretary General to determine who would be such

partners. The European Union would be one obvious choice (for perhaps virtually all discussions), but there would be no guaranteed places for non-members of the Alliance. The output of the discussions would be to generate strategic consensus and direction, which the participants could then seek to implement via appropriate institutions. To simply use cyber as an example, a discussion – more likely discussions over time – would likely generate multiple steps, some of which focused on military networks and/or intelligence and might significantly involve NATO, but others of which would be considered/implemented at national levels or perhaps in other international fora ranging from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

In sum, the new Strategic Concept will be an important milestone for the Alliance. But only an appropriate set of initiatives can make the concept a living and effective effort. The initiatives discussed above can help make NATO a key participant in the new era of global competition.

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STRATCON 2010

The Strategic Advisors Group's STRATCON 2010 project seeks to shape and inform the transatlantic debate over NATO's new Strategic Concept. STRATCON 2010 will issue publications to define the critical issues NATO must confront in drafting a new Strategic Concept. For more information about the SAG or STRATCON 2010, please contact Vice President and Director of the Program on International Security Damon Wilson at dwilson@acus.org or Program Associate Director Jeff Lightfoot at jlightfoot@acus.org.

The Atlantic Council of the United States has as its mission the renewal of the Atlantic community for 21st century global challenges through constructive U.S.-European leadership and engagement in world affairs. Led by Senator Chuck Hagel, Chairman, and Frederick Kempe, President and CEO, the Atlantic Council embodies a network of policy, academic and business leaders who foster transatlantic ties through non-partisan and cross-national discussions and studies.

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