



# DIIS REPORT

**AFTER THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT**  
TOWARDS A NATO VERSION 3.0

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## Executive Summary

NATO now has a new Strategic Concept entitled *Active Engagement – Modern Defence*, agreed at the Lisbon Summit on 19 November 2010. The new Strategic Concept is heaped with high expectations, that it will produce what US Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder has called a ‘NATO Version 3.0’, which will ensure that the Alliance is fit for facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

By all accounts the successful adoption of the long awaited new Strategic Concept is a positive achievement, and Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has been applauded for the well-managed open and inclusive process leading to its adoption. Furthermore NATO now seems set to be a very different NATO from the NATO founded in 1949 (Version 1.0) and from the ‘New NATO’ of the 1990s (Version 2.0). The hope is that the 2010 Strategic Concept will end a rather traumatic period in the history of the Alliance (Version 2.5), which has been dominated by a ‘crisis narrative’ in which the role of NATO has been unclear, relations between allies have been strained and success in the primary engagement in Afghanistan has been sadly lacking.

It is argued in this report that the success of the Strategic Concept will depend on two parallel processes. Firstly, success is dependent on the successful implementation of the rather ambitious intentions expressed in the Strategic Concept such as a new relationship with Russia based largely on cooperation on missile defence, radical changes in NATO’s command structure, the adoption of the Comprehensive Approach, a new and more constructive relationship with the EU, a review of NATO’s deterrence and defence posture as well as a much less territorial interpretation of Article 5. These are all demanding tasks that if implemented successfully are likely to result in significant improvements.

Secondly, success depends on the ability of NATO to establish a ‘strong narrative’ and a stable and positive self-identity, which together might furnish the Alliance with ‘ontological security’. Narrative, identity and ontological security are however mutually constitutive as ontological security can rarely be maintained in the face of policy failure whilst successful policy implementation is much more likely in an organization that already possesses ontological security. The challenge is that NATO’s new Strategic Concept may well produce a NATO that is very different from previous versions (a Version 3.0), but it is by no means certain that NATO

Version 3.0 will endow the Alliance with the necessary 'ontological security'. The possibility exists for a 'deformed' version 3.0., that may be different from the NATO that we currently know – but which may not have achieved the ambitions expressed in the Strategic Concept, and which may not have endowed the Alliance with ontological security.

The report is divided into four main parts, starting out with a brief outline of the content of the Strategic Concept and the accompanying Lisbon Declaration agreed in November 2010. The outline will focus on two 'bundles of issue areas' in the 2010 Strategic Concept, which are assumed to be particularly important for the achievement of a strong narrative and ontological security. The second part is a theoretical section, which outlines the contours of a theoretical framework which links narrative construction processes with identity construction processes and the role of action. The theoretical framework demonstrates how practical experience through action is an important, but often overlooked aspect of ontological security. The third part adopts a historical approach by outlining NATO's past versions and past narratives and their function during the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods. Finally in part four, the report assesses the prospects for NATO's new Strategic Concept in producing a (healthy) NATO Version 3.0 as outlined by Ambassador Daalder and in line with the ambitions expressed in the 2010 Strategic Concept.

The findings presented in this report suggest that although action of a functional variety, such as that currently taking place in Afghanistan, has the potential for delivering a strong and healthy narrative and to reinforce a positive self-perception, it also holds a considerable risk of leading to a weak and fragmented narrative, which ultimately can establish itself as a persistent 'crisis narrative' and have severely detrimental effects on ontological security and internal cohesion. The task for NATO following its adoption of its new Strategic Concept will therefore be to seize the moment for changing the currently negative dynamics flowing from the current practical action in Afghanistan.

The report concludes with the following policy recommendations;

1. Although the Strategic Concept speaks of NATO being prepared to address the full spectrum of crisis management, NATO should only undertake such missions after careful consideration and extended negotiation to make sure that all allies are prepared to contribute and after having established that other international actors are not better suited.

2. Although NATO clearly is very much aware of the need for public diplomacy and the need for constructing a narrative that enhances the positive qualities of the Alliance to an always sceptical public, NATO could do more to consciously contribute to a narrative of success. In this regard, NATO should learn from the EU as crisis management actor by more clearly defining the objectives of its missions and by outlining clear benchmarks for achievement and for handing over responsibility to other organizations following a Comprehensive Approach between different international actors.
3. NATO should enhance existing institutional structures for internal dialogue and negotiation. Although many committees and a lot of talk may go against the grain of reform in NATO, NATO must ensure that adequate facilities for dialogue and negotiation are maintained.
4. NATO must continue its partnership and dialogue program as a form of functional action that has a good potential for being of the reinforcing variety. The specific institutional architecture of NATO's partnership and dialogue program is in need of reform but is basically a sound policy that is likely to benefit NATO and international security.
5. NATO needs to refrain from attaching symbolic significance to specific missions, specific relationships and other activities such as was done with the mission in Afghanistan. Missions can never prove the worth of the Alliance, as this can only be done through political commitment and continuously shared values.

NATO must continually strive towards having a balance between rhetorical action and functional action – a one legged approach will always carry significant risks for ontological security.





## Introduction

NATO finally has its long awaited strategic concept: a crisp, eleven-page document entitled *Active Engagement – Modern Defence*, agreed at the Lisbon Summit on 19 November 2010. The new Strategic Concept is loaded with high expectations that it will produce what US Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, has called a ‘NATO Version 3.0’,<sup>1</sup> which will ensure that the NATO entering the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not only a fundamentally altered – and hopefully much improved – global alliance, but also that it is a global actor.<sup>2</sup> It is hoped in NATO circles that the new Strategic Concept will furnish the now mature Alliance with a so-called ‘Madonna Curve’<sup>3</sup> and define NATO as “*a modernized Alliance*” and a “*cooperative team player in a globalized world*.”<sup>4</sup> Such a change has become urgently needed because although the NATO of today is far more active than at any previous time in its history, its purpose and value are less clear than they have been in the past, and success has become more difficult to demonstrate, whilst at the same time public attention on NATO has increased as a result of its ongoing missions, especially in Afghanistan (Experts, 2010).

By all accounts the successful adoption of the long awaited new Strategic Concept is a positive achievement, and Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has been applauded for the well-managed, open and inclusive process leading to its adoption. Furthermore, the NATO entering the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century now seems set to be a very different NATO from the NATO founded in 1949 (Version 1.0) and from the ‘New NATO’ of the 1990s (Version 2.0). The hope is that the 2010 Strategic Concept will now provide yet another fresh start for NATO by ending a rather traumatic period in the history of the Alliance (Version 2.5), which has been dominated by a ‘crisis narrative’ in which the role of NATO has been unclear, relations between Allies have been strained and success stories from NATO’s primary operational engagement in Afghanistan have been sadly lacking. The adoption of the New Strategic Concept, however, only represents the start of a process of rectifying

<sup>1</sup> Ivo Daalder, *NATO, Afghanistan and Russia*, speech at New America Foundation, Washington DC. The argument builds on an article by G. John Ikenberry (2009) pp. 71–87.

<sup>2</sup> Ivo Daalder quoted in Rogin (2010).

<sup>3</sup> In an article in *NATO Review* Peter van Ham (2008) suggested that, to avoid irrelevance, NATO should reinvent itself in a similar fashion to the way to the singer Madonna who has reinvented herself on several occasions.

<sup>4</sup> NATO Secretary General discusses Summit, strategy and reform in Lisbon, 2 July 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-56305363-FB5AC1EC/natolive/news\\_64812.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-56305363-FB5AC1EC/natolive/news_64812.htm) accessed 7 July 2010.

problems that cannot be addressed through a simple updating and reformulation of NATO's strategic vision, but which require that the vision expressed in the Strategic Concept is successfully implemented and that NATO manages to establish a new strong narrative, which can highlight NATO's contribution to international peace and security to a wider audience and serve to summon up political will on the part of NATO's 28 member states.

It is argued in this report that the success of the Strategic Concept will depend on two parallel processes. Firstly the hoped-for positive effects of the new Strategic Concept are clearly dependent on the successful implementation of the rather ambitious intentions expressed in the document such as a new relationship with Russia based largely on cooperation on missile defence, radical changes in NATO's command structure, the adoption of a Comprehensive Approach, a new and more constructive relationship with the EU, a review of NATO's nuclear posture and the role of NATO's remaining American non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNWS), as well as a new, much less territorial, interpretation of Article 5. These are all demanding tasks that, if implemented successfully, are likely to result in significant improvements and perhaps lead to an end to the current 'crisis narrative'. However, as will be shown in this report, they are also tasks that are demanding from an implementation perspective and which require positive action from a number of different actors over whom NATO has no control.

Secondly, it is argued here that for the new Strategic Concept to be counted as successful it must furnish NATO with a 'strong narrative' and a stable and positive self-identity, conceptualised here as 'ontological security'. Narrative and ontological security are, however, mutually constitutive as ontological security can rarely be maintained in the face of policy failure whilst successful policy implementation is much more likely in an organisation that already possesses ontological security. Such an interdependent relationship has a tendency to create self-sustaining dynamics that can be difficult to control and, if developing in a negative direction, may be almost impossible to shift to a more positive and constructive level. The challenge is therefore that although NATO's new Strategic Concept may well produce a new NATO that is very different from previous versions (a Version 3.0), it is by no means certain that such a NATO Version 3.0 will endow the Alliance with 'ontological security' and a strong narrative. The possibility also exists for a 'deformed' version 3.0 which may well be different from the NATO that we currently know – but which may also not achieve the ambitions expressed in the Strategic Concept. Understanding how ontological security is achieved and maintained, and understanding the function of

different forms of practice for constructing a stable self-identity and a strong narrative may well increase the chances of success.

One aim of the report is to demonstrate the importance of a strong narrative and stable self-identity for the maintenance of internal cohesion and operational effectiveness. The main aim of the report, however, is to assess the prospects for NATO to achieve the ambitions expressed in the 2010 Strategic Concept; to produce a new NATO that lives up to the expectations expressed by Ambassador Ivo Daalder and others *and* which at the same time ensures that NATO maintains a stable and positive self-identity and a strong narrative.

The report is divided into four main parts, starting out with a brief outline of the content of the Strategic Concept and the accompanying Lisbon Declaration agreed in November 2010. The outline will focus on two 'bundles of issue areas' in the 2010 Strategic Concept, which are argued to be particularly important for the achievement of a strong narrative and ontological security. Following the initial presentation of the 2010 Strategic Concept the report will move onto a more theoretical section which outlines the contours of a theoretical framework that links narrative construction processes with identity construction processes and the role of action. The theoretical framework demonstrates how practical experience through action is an important, but often overlooked, aspect of ontological security. The framework highlights how different forms of action may have different effects on NATO's ability to maintain ontological security. It is argued that action always has the potential for either reinforcing or undermining narratives and identity and thereby may hold the key for explaining how ontological security is maintained or lost, leading to either negative or positive dynamics within organisations. It is argued here that the patterns of action in NATO have changed, which may well explain the ups and downs of NATO's ability to maintain its ontological security. As NATO's new Strategic Concept looks set to lead the Alliance towards more rather than less action, understanding these dynamics is important.

Following the section devoted to the theoretical approach underpinning the analysis of this report, the third part adopts a historical approach by outlining NATO's past versions and past narratives and their functions during the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods. It is suggested that most of NATO's activity during the Cold War could be characterised as 'political talk' to ensure the cohesion of the Alliance and ensure the credibility of the extended deterrence. Following the end of the Cold War, NATO's activity changed in two ways as NATO took a major step towards an active

'out-of-area' military role in the conflicts in the Balkans, and as NATO adopted its open door policy of enlargement and developed a wide-ranging partnership and dialogue program (Lucarelli, 2005). Finally, in part four, the report will assess the prospects for NATO's new Strategic Concept producing a (healthy) NATO Version 3.0 as outlined by Ambassador Daalder and in line with the ambitions expressed in the 2010 Strategic Concept. The analysis will focus on the increased practical activity in NATO which, arguably, has changed the Alliance from being an organisation characterised by a 'practice of talking' to one characterised by a 'practice of doing'. The challenge faced by the new Strategic Concept is therefore to successfully contribute to a new narrative in a situation where NATO's increased action aims to be reinforcing of a positive self-identity and a strong narrative, which together can support a high level of ontological security.

The findings presented in this report suggest that although action of a functional type, such as that currently taking place in Afghanistan, has the potential for delivering a strong and healthy narrative and for reinforcing a positive self-perception, it also holds a considerable risk of leading to a weak and fragmented narrative, which ultimately can establish itself as a persistent 'crisis narrative' and have severely detrimental effects on ontological security and internal cohesion. The task for NATO following its adoption of the new Strategic Concept will therefore be to seize the moment for changing the currently negative dynamics flowing from the present practical action in Afghanistan.

## Part I – NATO’s New Strategic Concept

### What is new in the new Strategic Concept?

NATO has previously undertaken the process of formulating new strategic concepts six times, as new strategic concepts have periodically been agreed in response to perceived changes either in the external security environment or within the Alliance itself.<sup>5</sup> This is, however, the first time that the process has been so open and inclusive and surrounded by so much public interest. All strategic concepts, regardless of whether they have been public or classified, have expressed the operational and dynamic view of the founding treaty, which lays down the core values of the Alliance as well as the rights and obligations of its members. Together the two documents – the unchanging treaty and the periodically updated Strategic Concept – have described what NATO is and what NATO should be doing. The main function of reviewing the Strategic Concept, therefore, has been to define NATO’s role and missions in the security environment of the time, but always in accordance with the values and procedures outlined in the Washington Treaty. The new Strategic Concept agreed in Lisbon can therefore be seen as simply an updating of NATO’s strategic document to create a better fit with the current international environment and follows closely in the footsteps of previous strategic concepts. Yet in many ways the recently agreed strategic concept is also different from its predecessors as it was agreed under different circumstances, followed a different path towards adoption and is likely, despite its arguably conservative sounding wording, to bring about fundamental change in NATO.

It was widely agreed that the major changes in the international environment following 9/11 necessitated a new strategic document. However, the conditions within the Alliance did not constitute an environment that was conducive for major strategic revisions. The serious divisions within the Alliance, especially surrounding the Iraq war and the Bush Administration’s apparent downgrading of the transatlantic relationship led to an implicit agreement to wait for a fresh start with a new American administration after the 2008 presidential elections. As a result, a decision to start the process towards formulating a new strategic document was delayed and meant that NATO was stuck with a strategic document which was clearly outdated and

<sup>5</sup> The six strategic concepts are DC6/1 (1949), MC3/5 (1952), MC14/2 (1957), MC14/3 (1968), The Alliance’s new Strategic Concept (1991) and the Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999). In addition NATO agreed on a so-called Comprehensive Political Guidance in November 2006, which in many ways can be seen as an interim strategic concept (Rynning & Ringsmose, 2009).

did not take major changes in the international environment into account. It was therefore with more than usual anticipation that the decision to start the process towards formulating a new strategic document was taken at the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in April 2009. In the following months NATO's outgoing Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, in cooperation with NATO's incoming Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, started a process of consultation and discussion consisting of several seminars with a large number of stakeholders, diplomats and scholars. The Secretary General was assisted by a 'Group of Experts' under the leadership of Madeleine Allbright who, after the lengthy process of consultation, published a set of recommendations in May 2010 in the report *NATO 2020: Assured Security: Dynamic Engagement* (Experts, 2010), which formed the basis for the final document formulated by Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

With its more than fifty pages, the report by the Group of Experts is considerably more detailed and comprehensive than the only eleven-page long Strategic Concept. Nevertheless, the final text of the Strategic Concept largely follows the recommendations of the Group of Experts, albeit the four core tasks identified by the Group of Experts are collapsed into just three core tasks in the final document summarised as the 'three C's' – collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. The three C's are described in the Strategic Concept as (emphasis added):

- *Collective defence.* NATO members will always assist each other against attack in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. That commitment remains firm and binding. NATO will deter and defend against *any threat* of aggression, and against emerging security challenges *where they threaten* the fundamental security of individual Allies or the Alliance as a whole.
- *Crisis management.* NATO has a unique and robust set of *political and military* capabilities to address the *full spectrum of crises* – before, during and after conflicts. NATO will actively employ an appropriate mix of those political and military tools to help manage developing crises that have *the potential to affect Alliance security* before they escalate into conflicts; to stop ongoing conflicts *where they affect Alliance security*; and to help consolidate stability in post-conflict situations *where that contributes to Euro-Atlantic security*.
- *Cooperative security.* The Alliance is affected by, and can affect political and security developments beyond its borders. The Alliance will engage actively to enhance international security through partnership with relevant countries and other international organisations; by contributing actively to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament; and by keeping the door

to membership in the Alliance open to all European democracies that meet NATO standards.

The division of core tasks into these three broad sections is important because by listing all three as 'core tasks' NATO implicitly acknowledges that all three are of equal importance. In so doing the new Strategic Concept takes an important step towards assuming that security is derived from the two-pronged approach identified in the 1967 Harmel Report (but never incorporated into the strategic documents) as defence and cooperation, towards a three-pronged approach which has elevated crisis management and cooperative security to core tasks on a par with the commitment to Article 5 expressed as collective security. By adding crisis management and cooperative security as a core tasks the 2010 Strategic Concept goes some way along the line of the so called 'globalizers', who see NATO as an Alliance that increasingly should be able to meet security challenges where and when they occur (and hence be expeditionary), whilst the emphasis on collective defence in accordance with Article 5 attempts to reassure those who would prefer NATO to primarily be a territorial (and hence a quite static) defence alliance. On the overall score sheet however, NATO has moved (on paper at least)<sup>6</sup> in the direction of more global engagement, as all three core tasks (including collective defence) have a global and expeditionary dimension and as specific references to 'the territory' of the Alliance or of member states have been removed. This indeed represents a major departure from the two previous post-Cold War strategic concepts which did refer to 'armed attack' or 'aggression against' *the territory* of any member state. In the new Strategic Concept 'territorial defence' is now focused on missile defence. The section 'Core Tasks and Principles' (§5), however, also contains text designed to reassure those Allies who want to stress the importance of Article 5, as it emphasises that NATO remains a unique and essential transatlantic forum for consultations on all matters that affect the *territorial integrity*, political independence and security of its members.

Although NATO documents are notoriously bland in order to facilitate consensus between all 28 member states, the 38 paragraphs of the document are nevertheless clear in the sense that the document endorses an Alliance that will remain fully com-

<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of crisis management as a core task should not, however, be assumed to signify an appetite in NATO for further crisis management missions. The experience of Kosovo and of the ongoing ISAF mission in Afghanistan has left some NATO allies with 'mission fatigue' which suggests that NATO is unlikely to rush into any new demanding missions. Indeed such 'mission fatigue' may well be the main reason for NATO's reluctance to commit to any engagement in enforcing the no-fly zone agreed by UN Security Resolution 1973 in March 2011.

mitted to Article 5, but which has also clearly made the transition to being a security organisation with an interest in looking beyond its own territorial confines. With the new Strategic Concept NATO is now documented as no longer being simply a 'defence alliance', but can now more accurately be described as a security institution; regionally based but aware that security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is global. This is of course a trend that has been evident for some time, but the new Strategic Concept consolidates that position and has elevated it to Alliance policy. Thus the de-territorialisation of Article 5 means that Article 5 threats can now be seen as *any* threat to the *security* (rather than to the territory) of member states or to the Alliance as a whole, regardless of the geographical origin of the threat and covering a much wider spectrum of threats. In order to be able to effectively deal with the so-called 'new threats' the Strategic Concept specifies that NATO needs to develop capabilities to counter cyber attacks, threats to critical infrastructure (for example threats to shipping from piracy or to energy supplies from terrorists), and an enhanced capability to detect and defend against terrorism and to act across the spectrum of crisis management. In order to be effective across this wide spectrum and to be able to counter threats *wherever* they occur, the Strategic Concept commits NATO to develop its military capabilities for expeditionary operations and to form a modest civilian crisis management capability (§25). All in all, these must be said to be ambitious plans in an environment of fiscal restraint and contracting economies.

Apart from the ever-returning 'capabilities question' and the attempt to settle the general question about what NATO is, the new Strategic Concept also contains a number of much more functional and specific recommendations, which are likely to have important repercussions for established practices within NATO, and which may shift the balance towards a greater emphasis on more functional action – an ambition that is clearly alluded to in the title of the Strategic Concept with the reference to *Active Engagement*. It is not the intention here to provide a comprehensive description of the whole content of the 2010 Strategic Concept,<sup>7</sup> but merely to focus on those elements of the Strategic Concept which are likely to change long established practices and to change the action patterns of the Alliance towards a more functional direction. These include the decision to adopt a Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) (§19) and simultaneously to develop a new relationship with Russia based on cooperation on missile defence (§19, 33 and 34); the (implied) decision to work towards a review of NATO's nuclear posture and working towards reductions of US

<sup>7</sup> Such a comprehensive description and assessment of the various parts of the 2010 Strategic Concept can be found in Ringsmose & Rynning (2011).



European-based nuclear weapons (§26); the decision to work towards establishing a Comprehensive Approach (§21) including the aim of so-called ‘global connectivity’<sup>8</sup> (§28–32); and the commitment to security through crisis management covering the whole spectrum of crisis management (§20–25). As missile defence, nuclear posture, arms control (especially reductions of NSNWs) and the relationship with Russia hang intricately together, these will be considered below under one heading, as will the other closely connected issues of crisis management, Comprehensive Approach and global connectivity.

*Towards missile defence, cooperation with Russia and a nuclear posture review*

NATO’s new Strategic Concept took the bold step of agreeing to install a Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) and inviting Russia to cooperate on the new system. At the same time the new Strategic Concept commits the Alliance to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, although it also states that as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance. The whole bundle of issue areas connected with nuclear posture, deterrence posture, missile defence, arms control and relations with Russia is deeply intertwined and expressed in a language that can best be described as bland and brief. Therefore in order to get as full a picture as possible of NATO’s intentions in these intertwined areas of policy it is necessary to read all the Lisbon documents (the Strategic Concept, the Lisbon Declaration and the NATO–Russia Council Joint Statement).<sup>9</sup> Even so the outcome at Lisbon on the bundle of issue areas surrounding NATO’s nuclear and deterrence posture is rather ‘enigmatic’<sup>10</sup> and characterised by what in NATO circles is known as ‘constructive ambiguity’. Such constructive ambiguity is a useful policy instrument in the absence of Alliance-wide consensus on how to proceed. The ambiguity therefore reflects the lowest common denominator for which Allies could agree whilst at the same time giving the Secretary General room for manoeuvre in the aftermath of the adoption of the Strategic Concept. Therefore, on a first reading of NATO’s new Strategic Concept the document sounds rather conservative on nuclear policy and the uninitiated reader could easily miss the significance of the brief mention of missile defence, and the rather brief and only slightly changed wording on the role of nuclear

<sup>8</sup> Although the term ‘global connectivity’ is not used in the document, it has been used on several occasions by the Secretary General and by staff closely associated with the Secretary General. It is used here as a shorthand description of the aim to establish closer relationships with a number of actors in the global environment, including rising powers such as China and India, NGOs and IGOs – and especially the relationship with the EU.

<sup>9</sup> The documents can all be found at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events\\_66529.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events_66529.htm)

<sup>10</sup> The outcome of Lisbon in the field of nuclear policy has been described by a NATO representative as ‘enigmatic’ (referred to by Simon Lunn and Ian Kearns, 2011).

weapons. Yet a more close reading of the Strategic Concept suggests that what the 2010 strategic document actually opens up for is a gradual, but nevertheless fundamental, revision of NATO's nuclear policy and deterrence strategy, which may end long established practices related to burden and risk sharing and to long-held (and arguably outdated) truisms about the role of nuclear weapons in ensuring cohesion in the Alliance and the credibility of Article 5.<sup>11</sup>

The preface of the Strategic Concept agreed in Lisbon starts out with declaring implicit support for President Obama's goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, by stating that "*it commits NATO to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons*". The word 'conditions' is important and can be interpreted to refer to the interlinkage between NATO's adoption of a missile defence with a renewed and cooperative relationship with Russia and to reductions (perhaps elimination) of the American non-strategic nuclear weapons stationed in Europe (§26). However, the commitment to a world without nuclear weapons is clearly a long-term commitment as it is also stated that "*as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance*"; but as the concept does not specify which nuclear weapons NATO will base its nuclear status on, the documents leave open the possibility that NATO's nuclear status might in the future be based solely on the strategic arsenals of the US, Britain and France. Indeed this view is underscored in the Strategic Concept as it is declared that "*the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States; the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France*" (§18). That NATO may be moving towards greater reliance on its strategic forces is further indicated in §26, where it is stated that NATO will seek to "*create the conditions for further reductions in the future*" of non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe – which is linked in the same paragraph to Russia's stockpile of non-strategic weapons and to conventional arms control.

The issues are somewhat clearer in the Lisbon Summit Declaration as the interlinkage between nuclear and conventional posture and missile defence is further specified in the Summit Declaration (§30), which states that "*NATO will maintain an appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear and missile defence forces. Missile defence forces will become an integral part of our overall defence posture*". The Summit Declaration further tasks

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller analysis of the Strategic Concept on nuclear and deterrence posture see Flockhart in Ringsmose & S. Rynning (2011).

the Council to “*continue to review NATO’s overall posture in deterring and defending against the full range of threats*” and that essential elements of the review should include “*NATO’s nuclear posture, and missile defence*” and that “*this only applies to nuclear weapons assigned to NATO*” i.e. not the strategic forces of the United States, Britain and France. This is indeed a point that has subsequently been backed up by events as, at the beginning of February 2011, President Obama informed the Senate that the United States in consultation with NATO expects to hold talks with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs also known as NSNWs) within a year of the new START Treaty coming into force.<sup>12</sup>

The Summit Declaration also provides a little more detail on the issue of missile defence by specifying its aim as being to provide full coverage and protection of all NATO European populations, territory and forces against the increasing threats posed by proliferation. The Summit Declaration hints at a more internal role for missile defence as a means of burden and risk sharing as it specifies that missile defence should be based on the “*principles of the indivisibility of allied security and NATO solidarity, equitable sharing of risks and burdens*”. This is indeed a reiteration of the view presented by the Group of Experts under the leadership of Madeleine Albright, which stated that “*A NATO missile defence system would enhance deterrence and transatlantic sharing of responsibility, reinforce the principle that security is indivisible, and allow for concrete cooperation with Russia*.”<sup>13</sup> That the new Strategic Concept is more wide-ranging than indicated by the text itself, can be glimpsed in remarks made at the 2011 Munich Security Conference by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, as she indicated that the transatlantic relationship will continue to evolve “*according to a planned move to modernize and enhance the European security architecture*” that culminated with the approval of the New Strategic Concept. She goes on to say, “*now that the strategic concept has been approved, we are reviewing its implications for the US force structure in Europe*.”<sup>14</sup> Although, of course, a review of the US force structure in Europe is likely to also include conventional US forces, the recurring references to force structure review in conversations about non-strategic nuclear weapons indicate that major force structure changes are planned in NATO’s overall nuclear and deterrence posture. This is indicated in the 2011 Strategic Concept in paragraph 19, which states that NATO will:

<sup>12</sup> Message to the Senate on 2 February 2011, reported in RIA Novosti, 3 February 2011. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110203/162430188-print.html>

<sup>13</sup> *NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement*, May 2010, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Hilary Clinton, speech at the 47<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference, 5 February 2011.

...ensure the broadest possible *participation of Allies* in collective defence planning on nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces, and in command, control and consultation arrangements

...develop the capacity to defend our populations and territories against ballistic missile attack as a *core element* of our *collective defence*, which contributes to the *indivisible security* of the Alliance. We will actively seek cooperation on missile defence with Russia and other Euro-Atlantic partners. (Emphasis added).

Although the texts certainly are ‘enigmatic’ and rather few and far between, and although there are many steps ahead before a new NATO defence and deterrence posture is in place, there appears to be little doubt that the combination of changes envisioned in relation to missile defence, nuclear weapons and cooperation with Russia will profoundly change NATO, as these are issues that go straight to the heart of NATO’s long-held reliance on nuclear deterrence by punishment in which the participation of all Allies is ensured through nuclear planning and/or nuclear hosting.<sup>15</sup> This is recognized in NATO, and the Summit in Lisbon therefore tasked NATO with undertaking a comprehensive review exercise of NATO’s defence and deterrence posture. The exercise is currently taking place in the ongoing Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR), which must be completed in time for NATO’s 2012 Summit in Chicago. The DDPR represents an unprecedented opportunity for forging NATO consensus on the capabilities needed to implement the new Strategic Concept and to set out a political-military framework for common NATO defence planning. Moreover the DDPR will require the Alliance to take a comprehensive look at traditional defence, deterrence and nuclear posture in the new security environment after the introduction of missile defence, including what combination of North American and European military capabilities might best sustain the transatlantic link and ensure the indivisibility of Alliance security. It seems likely that the combination of the political aim of moving towards Global Zero, and the adoption of BMDS and practical security cooperation with Russia are only first, albeit important, steps towards changing NATO’s outdated nuclear posture and deterrence strategy and part of an overall plan, which contemplates the end of American Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons (NSNWs)<sup>16</sup> based in Europe before the next strategic concept will have to

<sup>15</sup> France is the only NATO country that does not participate in NATO’s main forum for nuclear consultation and planning, the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). However, as France contributes to NATO’s strategic deterrence posture with the French *Force de Frappe*, even France participates in NATO’s nuclear sharing.

<sup>16</sup> American nuclear weapons based in Europe are commonly referred to as ‘Tactical Nuclear Weapons’. However, this name is specific to planned military use during the Cold War. The more precise term ‘Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons’ is therefore used here.

be agreed around 2020.<sup>17</sup> Together the envisioned changes in the bundle of issue areas are therefore likely to fundamentally change both established practice in NATO and associated action patterns.

*Towards crisis management, a Comprehensive Approach and 'global connectivity'*

Another bundle of issue areas that is likely to impact on NATO's action pattern is the commitment expressed in the Lisbon documents to an increased role across the full spectrum of crisis management and to undertaking a so-called Comprehensive Approach (CA) and increased cooperation with other international actors such as other IGOs and NGOs in an increasingly global reach of partnerships – in shorthand known as 'global connectivity'. Considering the relative brevity of the Strategic Concept overall, a significant amount of space is allocated in the document to this particular bundle of issues. For example the section on 'Security through Crisis Management' stretches across five paragraphs, whereas paragraph 32 dealing with the NATO–EU relationship alone takes up over half a page. Although the number of words allocated to a particular issue certainly should never be taken as an indication of importance or agreement (sometimes quite the contrary), the centrality and the interconnectedness of these issue areas are indicated already in the preface to the Strategic Concept as it commits the Alliance to “prevent crises, manage conflicts and stabilize post-conflict situations, including by working more closely with our international partners, most importantly the United Nations and the European Union” and to offer “partners around the globe more political engagement with the Alliance, and a substantial role in shaping the NATO-led operations to which they contribute”. Granted, crisis management is not a new issue area for NATO, but has been a recurrent issue in both of NATO's previous post-Cold War strategic concepts and clearly engagement in crisis management is nothing new to a NATO that has been deeply involved in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. What is surprising however is that the elevation of crisis management to a core task, effectively on a par with collective defence and cooperative security, has taken place even though crisis management has been difficult for NATO. Indeed, as suggested by Jamie Shea (Shea, 2011), rather than abandoning a role in crisis management after NATO's difficult experience in Afghanistan, the focus in the Strategic Concept is on learning from past experience and becoming better able to carry out crisis management operations in the future by developing the Com-

<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of the background to NATO's planned reduction or elimination of NSNWs see Flockhart (2010). See also Flockhart (2011).

prehensive Approach and by better coordinating and integrating the efforts of all relevant international actors.

The specific issues related to the mission in Afghanistan that were discussed at the Lisbon Summit are dealt with in the two separate documents; 'Declaration by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on an Enduring Partnership' and the 'Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan'.<sup>18</sup> The Strategic Concept itself therefore, quite appropriately, only pays limited attention to the specific circumstances and conditions in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it is clear that the shadow of Afghanistan infuses the document in its expression of the intention to learn from the experience of the previous seven years of NATO-led engagement in Afghanistan. It is precisely because of lessons learned in Afghanistan that the concept of a 'Comprehensive Approach' holds a prominent place in the Strategic Concept and in related documents. In paragraph 21 – the paragraph that most fully elaborates on the Comprehensive Approach – it is suggested that the lessons learned from operations in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans necessitate a comprehensive political, civilian and military approach for effective crisis management. This is hardly an earth-shattering revelation given that the necessity for cooperation and coordination between military and civilian approaches and actors is somewhat of a 'no brainer'. Nevertheless the fact that the Comprehensive Approach has made it into the Strategic Concept itself and figures prominently in the Lisbon Declaration can be seen as an implicit acknowledgement that there is room for improvement on the crisis management undertaken so far, especially in Afghanistan, and can be seen as a clear acknowledgement that military means alone cannot adequately address the complex and interconnected issues involved in crisis management. Moreover, efficient crisis management is tied closely to NATO's ability to work better with other international actors, especially the EU and the UN, suggesting that the term 'Comprehensive Approach' covers both different approaches to problem solving (military and civilian) and increased multilateral cooperation between different international actors, especially between NATO, the EU and UN and a number of other key international actors.

Comprehensive Approach (CA), initially known as Concerted Planning and Action (CPA), is a concept that has recurred in NATO documents since it was first intro-

<sup>18</sup> All Lisbon documents and a number of related speeches can be found at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events\\_66529.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events_66529.htm)

duced at the Riga Summit in November 2006.<sup>19</sup> The intention of Comprehensive Approach has never been that NATO should be the centrepiece of cooperation or a coordinator of other actors, but has merely been an attempt to seek positive change in a cluster of international actors dealing with crisis management and peace support operations (Petersen et al., 2010, p.78). The widespread acceptance (at least in theory) that complex conflicts and crises require a wide range of internal and external actors and a networked approach, combining civil and military instruments, is a challenge because it requires that a range of different actors with different traditions and organisational cultures work together across institutional barriers. Therefore, although it may be a ‘no brainer’ that a Comprehensive Approach is necessary, and although the inclusion of a commitment to CA in the Strategic Concept represents a considerable achievement, integrating a wide range of issue areas under such different headings as politics, security, development, rule of law, human rights and humanitarian dimensions in international missions, represents a considerable implementation challenge. This seems to be recognised as it is specified in the Lisbon Declaration that the effective implementation of the Comprehensive Approach “*requires all actors to contribute in a concerted effort, based on a shared sense of responsibility, openness and determination, and taking into account their respective strengths, mandates and roles*” (§8). However, in the next paragraph an implicit doubt about other organisations’ ability or willingness to deliver on crisis management is raised, as the document seems to indicate that NATO needs to develop a “*modest civilian capability to interface more effectively with other actors*” (§9). The reasoning for developing a civilian capacity with the ability “*to plan for, employ, and coordinate civilian as well as military crisis management capabilities*” seems to be a concern that other organisations may not be able or willing to undertake crisis management, which is why a NATO civilian capability is needed for “*circumstances which may hamper other actors from undertaking these tasks*” (§9). However, the problem is that this is a move which could be construed as effectively duplicating the civilian capabilities of the EU, and which could be seen as an expression of a lack of confidence in the EU.

Not only does some of the text in the Lisbon documents convey an ambivalent message about the precise nature of the relationship and the division of labour between NATO and other international actors – especially the EU, but as long as effective political cooperation between NATO and the EU is blocked by a few member states

<sup>19</sup> The inclusion of civil–military interaction and cooperation with other key actors on the agenda at the Riga Summit was the result of extensive lobbying by the Danish government, which had started with a seminar convened by the Danish government in June 2005.

of the two organisations, the commitment to cooperation will remain hollow. This is implicitly recognised in paragraph 32 of the Strategic Concept, which is the paragraph devoted to the NATO–EU relationship. However, although the paragraph is ‘wordy’ its content is actually little more than a declaration of intent and a commitment to work towards a more constructive relationship as the document expresses a determination “*to make our contribution to create more favourable circumstances*” to “*strengthen the strategic partnership with the EU...enhance our practical cooperation in operations...broaden our political consultations to include all issues of common concern*” and to “*cooperate more fully in capability development*” (§32). A similar declaration of intent is expressed in the Lisbon Declaration with the added ‘encouragement’ for the “*Secretary General to continue to work with the EU High Representative*”. Although it is specified that the Secretary General will report to the North Atlantic Council on ongoing efforts at the NATO Foreign Ministers’ meeting in April 2011, the fact remains that both documents only express ‘intent’ that may in effect almost amount to wishful thinking as long as there is no political solution to the relationship between Cyprus, Turkey and Greece.

The two bundles of issue areas described in this section are of great importance to the successful implementation of the many interconnected intentions expressed in the 2010 Strategic Concept. Yet, as outlined in this section, these are also issue areas that may present the Alliance with considerable implementation challenges and which are likely to change long-cherished practices and beliefs that may affect NATO’s self-perception, its ability to construct and maintain a strong narrative and its ability to maintain ontological security. The reasons why these are important ingredients of any organisational structure and the conditions necessary for maintaining ontological security will be investigated in the next section.



## **Part 2 – Theory and Concepts**

### **Ontological Security and its link with narrative, identity and practice**

A strong narrative and a stable identity are the key ingredients of ontological security. Ontological security is defined by Anthony Giddens as when an agent has as stable and as positive a view of self as possible and where a sense of order and continuity in regard to the future, relationships and experiences is maintained (Giddens, 1991). It is argued here that an adequate level of ontological security may be a precondition for institutional effectiveness, as a lack of ontological security is likely to divert attention towards establishing an acceptable level of ontological security through enhanced identity and narrative construction processes, and as the existence of ontological security furnishes agents with a ‘can do’ attitude that makes them more willing to undertake, sometimes risky, action.

To be ontologically secure is to possess answers to fundamental and existential questions and to keep anxiety limited at a manageable and acceptable level. All individuals and organisations develop a framework for ontological security, which is closely related to ‘doing’ (practice and action) and ‘being’ (identity and shared knowledge) (Kinnvall, 2006), which in turn is facilitated through the constitution and re-constitution of identity and biographical continuity through the development of narratives. In other words ontological security is created and maintained through the close interaction between narrative and identity constructions and through everyday practice and different forms of action. It is through a reflexive recollection of the past that the continuity of the narrative in the present is ensured and it is through social processes of identity construction that inter-subjective understandings of what constitutes good practice and shared knowledge are achieved.

The relationship between identity and narrative has been characterised by Felix Ciutâ (Ciutâ, 2002) as a dynamic process called a ‘narrative shuttle’ in which narratives and identities are continuously reinterpreted and realigned against each other in a process of ‘shuttling’ back and forth between ongoing narrative and identity construction processes, producing a continuous process of reconstruction of both narratives and identities. ‘Events’ will continually happen which are likely to necessitate a reformulation of the narrative and adjustment to self-perceptions through identity construction. For example the intervention by NATO in Kosovo in 1999 necessitated not only that NATO constructed a narrative about the event itself, but

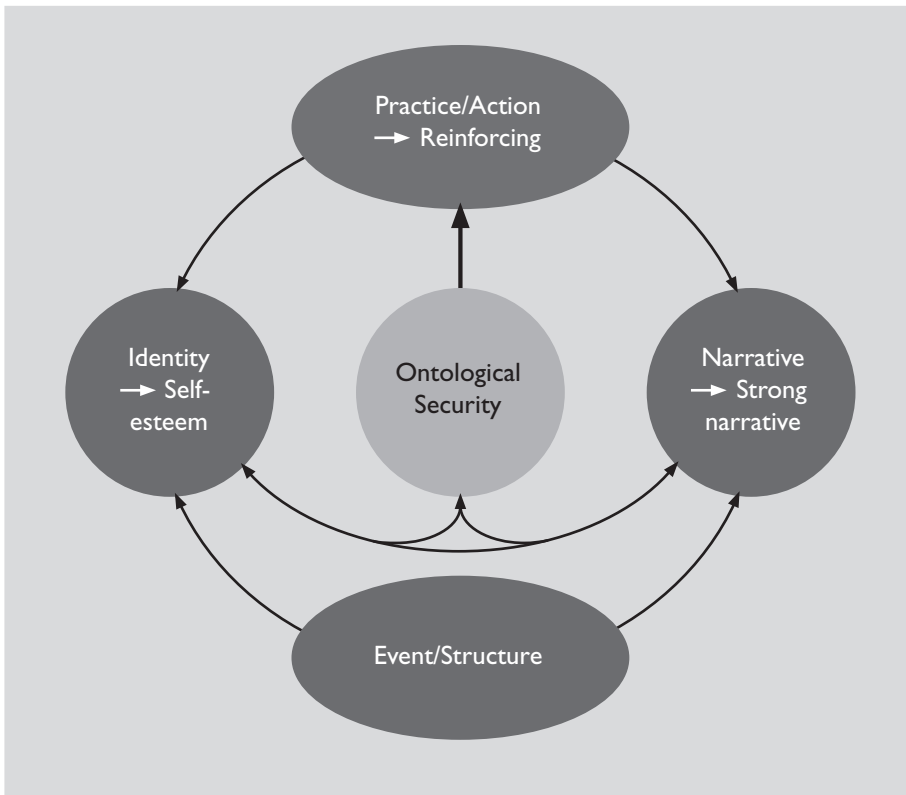
also necessitated a re-construction of NATO's identity from that of being a defence alliance to being a security actor that was able to go 'out-of-area'. The overall aim of engaging in the 'narrative shuttle' is to achieve the highest level possible in terms of a positive and status enhancing identity supported by a coherent and positive narrative. The point where this aim is achieved is identified as 'ontological security'. It is suggested in this report that equilibrium in the 'narrative shuttle' is when a sufficient level of ontological security has been achieved through ensuring a stable identity and a strong narrative.

Narratives are more than simply 'stories'. Narratives describe the history, purpose and achievements of a collective entity such as NATO, and they contribute in the process towards its unity and facilitate its continuous transformation (Somers and Gibson, 1994). A strong narrative is a narrative which supports ontological security by supporting the social identity of the agent in question and by being constitutive of identity. As any organisation will need to have an acceptable level of ontological security, organisations will strive towards constructing a narrative that either maintains or increases the organisation's ontological security. However, although a narrative is actively constructed it cannot be wholly fictive and without relevance to 'real world events', but must continually integrate events which occur in the external world and sort them into an ongoing 'story' (Giddens, 1991). Although it may be possible to construct and to maintain narratives that are based on myth or deception, most narratives are founded in an interpretation of the past and an ordering of events that are widely accepted as 'real'. As such, most narratives only have a limited repertoire of representations available which can be narrated and narratives cannot simply be fabricated at will, as the narrative must be seen to be based on real experience in order to remain legitimate and to resonate with a wider audience.<sup>20</sup> A narrative is therefore more than simply an agreed version of what to say about a specific topic. A fabricated narrative will inevitably appear insincere and dishonest, which can only have detrimental effects on the legitimacy of the organisation and the strength of the narrative. Narratives are, therefore, a combination of knowledge management (whereby knowledge is elicited and disseminated from past experience), generating and maintaining of self-identity, memory and meaning-making (Ezzy, 1998). Narratives both construct and maintain identities and, once created, appear solidified and are viewed as accounts of an objective reality.

<sup>20</sup> There is clearly a possibility that untruths can be constructed as narratives – as swathes of conspiracy theories attest. However, such fabricated narratives are dependent on the ability of those concocting a narrative to have complete control over information. Generally speaking, narratives as tools for maintaining biographical continuity have to be constructed within the boundaries of what is accepted as 'true' by the participants.

An important question is therefore how a strong narrative and ontological security are generated and maintained – and specifically whether NATO’s new Strategic Concept will contribute to maintaining (and preferably increasing) NATO’s ontological security? It is argued here that the key to answering this question must be found in the *practice* undertaken by the Alliance. This is a view that is supported by the recent ‘practice turn’ in international relations theory, which suggests that practice has been an important but largely overlooked influence on both narrative and identity.<sup>21</sup> By linking narrative, identity and ontological security with practice, it is suggested that engagement in different forms of practice has a capacity to either *undermine* or *reinforce* the always-ongoing narrative and identity construction processes and effect change in ontological security. The connection between narrative and identity through the ‘narrative shuttle’, and the influence of ‘past events’ and practice seen as either rhetorical action or functional action, is illustrated graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Narrative, Identity and Practice (NIP) – the NIP Framework



<sup>21</sup> See for example Pouliot, 2010 & 2008; and Adler, 2008.

Practice is understood here to be inherently social and grounded in particular identities and normatively sanctioned repertoires of conduct (Reus-Smit, 2002, p.129) where specific norms will serve to categorise a given practice as appropriate or inappropriate for an organisation like NATO or as successful or unsuccessful for achieving the organisation's formulated goals – in this case expressed in the new Strategic Concept. Practice is however seen as a generic term, which apart from referring to pre-intentional and non-reflexive practice also covers different forms of intentional and reflexive action – conceptualised here as either reinforcing or undermining 'rhetorical action' and 'functional action'. 'Rhetorical action'<sup>22</sup> is located at the language level and consists mainly of verbal and written statements that do not require any further action. 'Rhetorical action' is similar to J.L. Austin's concept of speech acts in the sense that when individuals 'say things', they also 'do things' such as declaring, agreeing, promising or warning (Urmson, 1962). However, as rhetorical action is 'only words', rhetorical action allows for a certain amount of ambiguity and fuzziness. 'Functional action' on the other hand involves deeds rather than just words and therefore implies that agents 'put their money where their mouths are', thereby depriving this form of action of ambiguity. The point is that reinforcing practice will strengthen or maintain narrative and identity, whereas undermining practice will weaken – perhaps even destroy – the ongoing narrative and the basis for a stable identity. By introducing the reinforcement/undermining factor, four types of processes are revealed. The outcomes of different forms of action are outlined in the matrix (Figure 2).

By introducing reinforcement processes through action a new dimension has been added to our understanding of why narratives and identities sometimes and unexpectedly are strengthened or weakened in international organisations such as NATO. Moreover, with this knowledge, policy makers are furnished with a framework for understanding how positive narrative and identity construction processes can be maintained, clearly suggesting that policy makers should always aim for processes that reinforce (the left-hand column of the matrix) rather than processes that undermine ongoing identity and narrative construction processes (right-hand column). In particular, the framework suggests that if functional action cannot yield positive results and allow for ontological security to be either increased or maintained, it is far better to stay at the level of rhetorical action. The problem

<sup>22</sup> I do not use the concept in the same way as Frank Schimmelfenig (2001) does in 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union'. Here, he uses the term 'rhetorical action' to mean when agents strategically say they have adopted a particular value or principle, but may in fact only have done so to achieve specific benefits.

Figure 2. Possible outcomes of action processes

	<i>Reinforcing</i>	<i>Undermining</i>
<i>Rhetorical</i>	A strong narrative and maintenance of ontological security.	A weak or fragmented narrative and weakening of ontological security.
<i>Functional</i>	A very strong narrative and strengthening of ontological security.	A crisis narrative, which may threaten institutional functionality and lead to a severely weakened or even collapsed ontological security.

is, however, that NATO’s new Strategic Concept does not really allow for this as it is overwhelmingly located at the functional action end of the spectrum. As will be highlighted in the analysis at the end of the report, it is precisely a change in the nature of these reinforcement processes towards a more functional role that has had a profound effect on NATO’s ontological security over the past decade and which has produced a sense of crisis characterised by a low level of self-esteem and a persistent crisis narrative.

**Crisis Narratives – a sign of impending change**

If a strong narrative is where ontological security is maintained or improved, then we must ask what happens when an organisation such as NATO is characterised by a crisis narrative. A crisis narrative exists when it is not possible to construct a positive ‘story’ and when the narrative that can be constructed fails to enhance self-esteem and to reach a point of equilibrium where ontological security is maintained. When a crisis narrative is present, a high level of activity will be present in the ‘narrative shuttle’ as agents continually seek to find equilibrium and to re-establish ontological security. Crisis narratives therefore tend to characterise the social context in which existing value constellations and existing practices are somehow deemed insufficient or illegitimate (Dunne and Koivisto, 2010). However, in some cases crisis narratives perform an important sociological function by either bringing about change, or by giving the impression that change (and improvement) is underway, which in some circumstances can make the crisis situation appear more acceptable. As suggested

by Colin Hay (Hay, 1999), crisis narratives are political articulations of existing problems and outlines of new trajectories of governance and organisation and are likely to constitute the prelude to decisive intervention, leading to adaptation and transformation or to the eventual collapse of the institutional and ideational order (Ikenberry, 2008). Most crisis narratives are therefore temporary constructs which sooner or later will give way to a new narrative in the continual endeavour to maintain ontological security.

In some cases, however, a crisis narrative may become persistent because it may be impossible for the agent to construct or maintain a strong narrative in the face of unsuccessful practice and negative past events, but where the malfunctioning institutional order nevertheless continues to 'limp on'. Moreover, not all narratives are self-constructed, but may have been deployed by external agents in an attempt to undermine legitimacy, or they may have been self-deployed as a political gambit for specific purposes. For example, as suggested by Hay (Hay, 1999), invoking a crisis narrative could be a political move in which crisis narratives are political constructs that can be designed either to *bring about change* or for *change to only appear imminent*. For example NATO has, on several occasions, invoked a crisis narrative about burden sharing. Even though few expect the problem of burden sharing to be solved, the ongoing crisis narrative has provided the appearance that change is underway as Allies work towards set goals whilst simultaneously underscoring the position of the United States as *primus inter pares* and as the generous provider of security for European allies who are – plain and simple – not willing to pay for their own security. As long as the crisis narrative is ongoing, different suggestions for change and multiple imagined futures may co-exist. In such situations an otherwise undesirable situation can be allowed to persist without infringing on the overall level of ontological security. In such situations actual change can sometimes be deferred indefinitely and the crisis narrative may become an integral part of self-perception.

A cursory glance at the literature on NATO throughout most of its more than sixty years of existence reveals that NATO more often than not has been described as 'in crisis' or even on the brink of collapse. Indeed, as suggested by Stanley Hoffmann (Hoffmann, 1981/82), NATO's history *is* a history of recurrent crises, which over the course of the history of the Alliance has generated a huge 'NATO-in-crisis' literature. Of course scholars (and journalists) are more likely to write about crises than about successes, but even so the prevalence of 'crisis' in the NATO literature is remarkable. The apparent fixation with NATO's crises rather than interest in NATO's successes is especially curious as history has seen no other example of an Alliance that has proved

as enduring, as successful, and as continuously based on shared values and trust among its members (Thies, 2009). In fact, Thies presents a convincing argument that the success of NATO is the most remarkable thing about the Alliance. This is especially so as NATO is nothing like a traditional alliance. All previous alliances have lasted only as long as the alliance augmented national power. Allies in traditional alliances fear each other as much as their enemies, which meant that alliances before NATO were for the most part temporary, ad hoc affairs between states who had little in common and who sought to use each other to pursue their individual goals. The story of the traditional alliance is a story of secret deals and diverging goals, wheeling and dealing as well as cheating and swindling (Thies, 2009). In that sense NATO as an enduring alliance based on shared values – even friendships – is as much a *sui generis* in international relations as is the European Union and NATO is, comparatively speaking, a very successful alliance. The puzzle is therefore why NATO continuously battles with ‘crisis narratives’ and whether some crisis narratives are political ploys, while others are real threats to NATO’s ontological security.

## Part 3 – Past Versions and Past Narratives

### NATO Version 1.0 – a Golden Age of rhetorical action

Although this is certainly not the place for a comprehensive account of NATO's many crises, a backwards look into history will reveal that there have been many and that most of NATO's recurrent crises have been crises over decision making. Decision making in NATO has always been a precarious process, because it inevitably holds the unwelcome potential for showing disunity and in so doing exposing the structural tensions and contradictions that are an inherent feature of NATO. As an intergovernmental organisation with no transfer of sovereignty to NATO's institutional structures, all decisions in NATO have to be consensus decisions. At the same time unity in decisions has always been seen as proof of alliance cohesion, whereas disunity has been seen as having the potential for undermining the credibility of the nuclear guarantee and the credibility of NATO's resolve to honour Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. It became a commonsensical truism that unity in NATO was especially important to maintain, as the structural character of the Alliance always made the promises contained in the Treaty appear rather dubious.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, at times during the Cold War it seemed as if the major fear amongst the European allies was decoupling from the United States rather than attack by the Soviet Union! Practically all decisions in NATO therefore came *inter alia* to be seen as related to cohesion and the credibility of the extended deterrence, which led to a constant rhetorical reaffirmation of the shared values of the Alliance and a latent fear of disunity. As a result decision making in NATO has always been based on consensus, where the reaching of consensus for some decisions has taken years of careful negotiation and persuasion with the United States acting as a firm but patient leader.

From the perspective of the 2000s where NATO arguably has been a mission-driven organisation (Aybet and Moore, 2010) and more busy than ever, it may seem as if nothing happened during the first forty years of NATO's existence, where no

<sup>23</sup> NATO's structural tensions arose from NATO being bound together only by a treaty and being separated by a geography whereby the main defence of the members (the strategic nuclear arsenal) resided across the Atlantic Ocean whilst those to be defended shared a land border with the main enemy. This structural problem gave rise to very different interests on each side of the Atlantic on when nuclear weapons would be deployed. For the Europeans the main interest was therefore to prevent any armed conflict as even a conventional war would devastate Europe, hence leading European allies to emphasise the early use of nuclear weapons, whereas the Americans saw nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort, to be used *after* a conventional war had been fought in Europe and after the use of short-range nuclear weapons.



military missions were undertaken and functional action was confined to military exercises, strategic (especially nuclear) planning and internal procedural decision making. For example, the discussions about how to address the shortcomings of NATO's conventional forces in the aftermath of the Korean War led, after protracted negotiations, to agreement in 1952 on the Lisbon Force Goals in which NATO set the standard for what was regarded as the minimum conventional requirement for defending Western Europe against a Soviet conventional attack. However, as the Lisbon Force Goals were overly ambitious, NATO never managed to live up to its own ambitions, which resulted in a persistent crisis narrative that concentrated on the failure to achieve the set goals and which cemented the perception of NATO as conventionally inferior to the Warsaw Pact. The perceived conventional inferiority subsequently set the tone for the rest of the Cold War and consolidated NATO's so called 'nuclear addiction' – which predictably led to yet more crises, but which also constructed the problem of conventional inferiority as part and parcel of NATO's identity supported by a persistent crisis narrative about capabilities.

Crises over decisions relating to nuclear weapons – so called 'hardware decisions' (Schwartz, 1983) – started with the adoption of NATO's third Strategic Concept of Massive Retaliation in 1957, followed by protracted negotiations leading to the adoption of the next strategic concept known as Flexible Response. Not only were the negotiations leading to these nuclear dominated Strategic Concepts surrounded by the usual practice of negotiation and associated with crises of decision making, but also agreement on Flexible Response was only made possible through the withdrawal in 1966 of France from NATO's integrated military structure. In addition, both Strategic Concepts were based on the principle of extended deterrence and included a heavy reliance on nuclear weapons, which periodically necessitated Alliance decisions on nuclear deployments to ensure the necessary coupling between the European and North American parts of the Alliance. Since the early 1950s NATO has made a number of so called 'hardware' decisions, which on each occasion have launched the Alliance into crisis. From the debates in the 1950s and 60s on tactical nuclear weapons, deployment (and subsequent withdrawal) of Thor and Jupiter missiles,<sup>24</sup> the Multilateral Force (MLF),<sup>25</sup> to the public outcry in the late 1970s in connection with the Neutron Bomb (or Enhanced Radiation

<sup>24</sup> A total of 105 missiles were deployed in 1959–60 in Britain, Turkey and Italy. However, as the missiles were both vulnerable and cumbersome (on open launch pads and liquid-fuelled) they were withdrawn following the Cuban Missile Crisis.

<sup>25</sup> The MLF was a proposal to deploy a shared, sea-based nuclear force. However, the proposal was never adopted although NATO spent more than three years in the early 1960s discussing its merits.

Weapon) and the extended crisis over NATO's dual track decision to deploy Pershing 2 and Cruise Missiles in the 1980s – nuclear decisions have caused one crisis after another throughout NATO's Cold War history, giving the impression of a continuous and persistent crisis narrative.

From the perspective of this report, what is interesting about NATO during the Cold War is that it was implicitly understood that the functional action involved in 'hardware' decisions held a latent potential for crisis and a threat to Alliance cohesion, whereas rhetorical action – often referred to as 'software solutions'<sup>26</sup> – were recognised as the most likely method for securing Alliance cohesion. Yet nervous European leaders repeatedly demanded 'hardware solutions' to solve what was essentially a political problem about the willingness of the United States to sacrifice Washington for Wuppertal and New York for Nîmes. On each occasion the resulting crisis had to be contained through extensive rhetorical action: through affirmation of shared values and American reassurances about the credibility of the extended deterrence. More than anything, however, the extensive use of rhetorical action allowed NATO to shroud problematic questions, such as precisely when nuclear weapons would be deployed, in ambiguity of the highest order. Flexible Response was without a doubt a magnificent example of using ambiguity in rhetorical action to its maximum potential, as it enabled each side of the Atlantic to believe that their interpretation of the role of nuclear weapons in Alliance strategy had prevailed. All member states were complicit in this strategic use of rhetorical action, and all Allies agreed implicitly not to challenge the ambiguity. As a result NATO developed a practice of careful negotiation without challenging the essential ambiguity, and a deep-seated reluctance to engage with decisions leading to change through functional action. As a result, throughout the Cold War NATO was occupied with 'talking', whilst it engaged in very little 'doing'. It is therefore no wonder that NATO earned itself the reputation of being a 'talk shop'. In terms of the options outlined in the matrix in figure 2, the experience from the Cold War showed very clearly that 'functional action' carried a significant risk of undermining ontological security through undermining Alliance cohesion, whilst 'rhetorical action' often calmed turbulent waters and was regarded as the safest method for maintaining an acceptable level of ontological security through supporting Alliance cohesion and a sense of shared values – albeit with different interests vis-à-vis the role of nuclear weapons.

<sup>26</sup> 'Software solutions' referred to political ways of solving NATO's structural problems through essentially political guarantees and rhetorical affirmation of NATO's shared values. The implicit bargain that was struck was that the Alliance was built on common values, but that risks and burdens were unequally distributed in a situation where the Europeans suffered the greater risk, whilst the Americans accepted a greater burden.

## **NATO Version 2.0 – a Golden Age of functional action**

It is well known that the end of the Cold War presented NATO with a dilemma and catapulted the Alliance into a deep identity crisis. Yet what is often overlooked is that the crisis was short-lived and that the NATO of the 1990s was characterised by a high level of self-esteem and a gradually strengthening narrative emphasizing NATO as a successful organisation that others clearly wished to join. NATO's swift move to adoption of a new strategic concept in 1991, the start of the enlargement and outreach process from 1994 and the perception that NATO's involvement in Bosnia effectively brought the war to an end (Reichard, 2006, p.52), made NATO appear a dynamic and successful security organisation, albeit an organisation whose role was not always very clear.

During the 1990s NATO was able to construct a convincing narrative of an organisation which successfully stretched out the hand of friendship to former adversaries, and which contributed successfully to the establishment and consolidation of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, thereby constructing for itself a new identity as a promoter of democracy and as an agent for change in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time NATO contributed to the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina – thereby being able to claim at least a sort of success, where both the EU and UN were largely perceived to have failed. The narrative construction was reinforced through functional action in the setting up of a number of structures for socialisation purposes such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), Partnership for Peace (PfP), the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and Membership Action Plan (MAP) and, of course, enlargement itself. During the 1990s NATO was therefore in the position of having a strong and coherent narrative, which comfortably backed up the identity construction process and which was reinforced through both rhetorical and functional action. The result was a NATO displaying a high degree of self-esteem and, as the decade progressed, an increasing degree of ontological security. There is no doubt that it is precisely in the areas of norm promotion through enlargement and an elaborate system of partnerships and dialogue forums with non-member states, that NATO has had the most unambiguous practical success. The social practices and institutional forums established during the 1990s to be able to cope with enlargement have, in most cases, been a positive experience and this is seen as one of NATO's major successes, which has contributed to the Alliance's self-esteem at a time when many actually thought that a NATO without the Cold War would be an anachronism.

Being able to construct a strong narrative about enlargement and partnerships also had the positive effect of taking some of the attention away from NATO's involve-

ment in the Balkans. Although the decision to 'go out of area rather than go out of business' allowed NATO to add to its strong narrative as the most dynamic of Europe's security organisations, it should not be overlooked that armed conflict is by definition a messy activity where human tragedy and the wrong decisions are likely to prevail in the public eye. Constructing a strong narrative on the basis of functional activity in armed conflict will therefore always carry a significant risk of appearing calculating by seeking benefit from tragedy, as well as the ever-present risk of things going badly wrong. This was particularly evident in the case of the Kosovo conflict in 1999. Although the outcome of the operation ultimately was considered a success as the Serbs were driven out of Kosovo, and as NATO did take the important decision to take part in a substantial 'out-of-area' campaign to stop ethnic cleansing (Flockhart and Kristensen, 2008, p.9), the actual handling of the conflict showed internal divisions and highlighted the great gap in capabilities between the American and the European Allies. Therefore, despite the significance of the decision, the experience of Kosovo turned out to be partly negative as it resulted in considerable transatlantic disagreement and mutual recriminations.

The disagreements over how to bring peace to Kosovo were all centred on problems related to functional activity, which ended up undermining NATO's otherwise positive identity and narrative constructions. NATO therefore came out of the Kosovo conflict with a damaged self-perception with regards to its practical ability to perform as a cohesive actor in a militarily demanding environment. As a result the European NATO members experienced a crisis of confidence in their ability to perform in the kind of practical tasks that had been defined as NATO's primary military role, whilst the Americans came out of the conflict vowing never to fight a 'war by committee' again. The result was that the European allies experienced a 'bruised' self-conception and an acknowledgement that a significant capabilities gap existed and that, in practical military cooperation, the American position was likely to prevail.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the narrative that was constructed, and certainly widely accepted, was one of a successful and expanding Alliance that had faced up to the challenge of ethnic cleansing on the European continent by going out-of-area, whilst at the same time letting in new members and continuing to pursue a vigorous enlargement process. This is a strong narrative that NATO has striven to maintain ever since Kosovo, but alas in a less permissive environment. At NATO's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday therefore, on the eve

<sup>27</sup> The main effect of the European bruising from the Kosovo conflict was, however, mostly felt in the EU, which once again had failed to have a ready ESDP for when the next, long-predicted, Balkan conflict erupted. Kosovo was therefore a wake-up call for the EU and resulted in a subsequent rapid development of the ESDP. This is, however, outside the scope of this report.

of the Kosovo campaign and with the successful admission of three new member states, NATO's ontological security and feeling of self-esteem was probably at the highest level it has ever been.

### **NATO Version 2.5 – deformation and the end of ‘war with no tears’<sup>28</sup>**

Ivo Daalder only speaks of a NATO Version 1.0, 2.0 and the possibility of a NATO Version 3.0 following the adoption of the new Strategic Concept. This is an understandable perspective from Daalder's current position as a diplomat,<sup>29</sup> but it overlooks the fact that during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century NATO experienced a fundamentally different pattern of rhetorical and functional action. Although the NATO of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century retained some of the features of NATO Version 2.0, such as its extensive new relationships through NATO's partnership and dialogue programs and although NATO became increasingly engaged in demanding international missions, the beginning of the new millennium witnessed a rapid decline in NATO's ontological security. Several factors contributed to the rapid decline in self-esteem and in NATO's ability to maintain the strong narrative of the 1990s, so that NATO from 2003 came to be seen as being in deep crisis and as an organisation that had effectively lost its ability to maintain cohesion through rhetorical action. As a result the NATO of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a deformed version of the dynamic and successful NATO that had emerged following the end of the Cold War. This version of NATO is referred to here as 'NATO Version 2.5'.<sup>30</sup>

Since 2001 NATO has been more active than ever through its engagement in the demanding missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo as well as a number of smaller, but nevertheless significant missions such as the counter-terrorist operation to monitor the Mediterranean, counter-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, support to the African Union, assistance following the earthquake in Pakistan and following hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, and a training mission in Iraq. In other words NATO has been deeply engaged in 'functional action'. Yet, few will disagree that the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup>

<sup>28</sup> This phrase was coined by Jamie Shea (2010).

<sup>29</sup> In his more usual capacity as a scholar my guess is that he is well aware of the existence and the deformation of NATO Version 2.5.

<sup>30</sup> G. John Ikenberry also refers to a Liberal Order 2.5, which is a Liberal Order where the George W. Bush administration sought to save the American hegemonic order by fundamentally altering its bargains, where the United States would remain aloof from various realms of rule-based order by opting out of a number of sovereignty-restraining treaties and international agreements, see Ikenberry, 2009. Arguably NATO Version 2.5 is an outcome of Liberal Order Version 2.5.

century has not been NATO's best. The lingering negative effects of the war in Kosovo related to the perception of operational incompatibilities and the lack of European high-tech capabilities effectively created a 'bad atmosphere', which detracted significantly from the successes in Kosovo and from the achievement of having moved 'out-of-area'. In addition, events took a sharp turn for the worse with the uncompromising rhetoric and lack of commitment to multilateralism in the new Bush Administration. However, when the planes crashed into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, the European Allies nevertheless invoked Article 5 for the first time ever in support of the United States, albeit only to have the offer politely declined. Therefore, although the events of 9/11 gave rise to an outpouring of European sympathy and strong declarations of unity, transatlantic relations nevertheless started a steady decline from early 2002, culminating with possibly the most serious crisis ever when, in February 2003, France, Germany and Belgium refused authorisation for advanced NATO military planning to help defend Turkey in the event of war in Iraq. The refusal essentially amounted to a refusal to honour Article 4 of the Washington Treaty. The incident was described in NATO circles as a 'near death experience', and gave rise to an avalanche of literature which described the 'terrors in Transatlantia' (Cox, 2005), deemed that NATO was under threat from 'friendly fire' (Pond, 2004) and that "Americans were from Mars and Europeans from Venus" (Kagan, 2003). The rather sudden switch from a high level of ontological security, to an almost collapsed ontological security is a clear indication of the importance of functional action, and of its potentially damaging effects when functional action is of an undermining variety.

What was particularly resented by the Europeans in the run-up to war in Iraq was that the American action violated the constitutive norms on which the transatlantic community had been built (Risse, 2003), which basically referred to the lack of consultation, and the high-handed manner in which the issue was driven relentlessly towards war. In other words, the manner in which the Bush Administration proceeded on a number of counts symbolised a fundamental break with the established practice of negotiation and persuasion and the importance of continued use of rhetorical action for reaffirmation of the shared values and cohesion of the Alliance. The result was that during the first George W. Bush presidency the traditional rhetorical action for affirmation of Alliance cohesion was almost completely absent, which effectively robbed the Alliance of tried and tested methods of overcoming its regularly occurring crises. Although some improvement could be seen in the second George W. Bush administration, the damage had been done, leaving negotiation and rhetorical action in a radically reduced form throughout the Bush years. Moreover, although the significant changes in the international system and the changes in NATO's functional action pat-

terns clearly called for a review of the existing strategic concept agreed in 1999, the lack of trust and the virtual end of negotiation practices rendered NATO unable to make the necessary review of its strategic concept. As a result NATO during the 'zeros' was moribund in taking strategic decisions, yet it stumbled headlong into a number of practical missions thereby increasing its functional action – without being able to secure unity through rhetorical action. This was indeed a dangerous cocktail.

More than anything NATO's increasing involvement in Afghanistan from when NATO took over the command of the ISAF mission in 2006 has contributed to fundamentally changing the action pattern of the Alliance away from rhetorical action towards high-end combat functional action. Apart from the obvious human and material costs associated with the mission in Afghanistan, NATO has been unable to construct a strong narrative about the mission, whilst the mission itself has had negative consequences for some of NATO's long-established practices such as equal sharing of risks. The practical cooperation associated with the mission in Afghanistan has shown up cracks and weaknesses in the Alliance that had previously been hidden behind rhetoric and ambiguity because the mission in Afghanistan clearly demonstrates which countries are willing to take their share of responsibility for a conflict that has turned out to be much harder than anticipated. The problem for NATO is that the engagement in Afghanistan has endowed the long-running crisis narrative on burden sharing and the cherished principle of equality of risk with a whole new character. Risks and burdens in relation to Afghanistan are clearly unequally distributed causing significant consternation among NATO allies and raising the very real spectre of disunity. This goes straight to the core of the established narrative about an Alliance in which all European allies share equally both benefits and risks, whilst the Americans (grudgingly) carry the main burden, but in return receive status and decisive influence within the Alliance.

To make matters worse, the engagement in Afghanistan is characterised by a weak and inconsistent narrative about why NATO is in Afghanistan. It is simply unclear whether NATO is in Afghanistan to bring democracy (hardly likely), to save Afghan women from exploitation and unfair marriage laws, to stop heroin from appearing on the streets of Europe and the US, to stop bombs from exploding on European commuter trains, to bring stability to an unstable part of the world, or to prevent terrorist camps from taking hold once again.<sup>31</sup> Not only is the list long and confus-

<sup>31</sup> Although the latter is probably the strongest reason for NATO being in Afghanistan, the sad fact is that whilst NATO is busy preventing terrorist strongholds embedding in Afghanistan, such strongholds are being established elsewhere out of NATO's reach in, for example, Pakistan and Yemen.

ing, but it is hard to demonstrate that NATO has made any significant and positive contribution towards attaining any of the variously stated goals. Practical cooperation in a hostile environment is necessarily a risky business, but without being able to point to specific achievements in relation to specific goals and without being able to point to a shared and equal effort of the Alliance acting in unity, it is hard to see how a narrative of success about Afghanistan can be constructed. Added to that is the high visibility of the operation as well as the fact that its failures are about the injury and death of young people placed in harm's way for reasons that are not crystal clear. With more than 2000 fatalities to date, the war in Afghanistan indeed marks the end of 'wars with no tears' for NATO (Shea, 2010). The Afghan engagement has added problems to an already troubled Alliance by showing up differentiation between individual European allies, and by increasing manifold the problems arising from complex functional action whilst the opportunities for rectifying, rhetorical, action have been reduced. In relation to the model presented in this report it is clear that the mission in Afghanistan has constituted *undermining functional action*, which has had severely detrimental effects on NATO's ability to construct a strong narrative and to maintain a stable and positive self-identity and has, consequently, undermined ontological security. The NATO of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has therefore become a deformed 'NATO Version 2.5'. The question is whether the new Strategic Concept will be able to reverse these troubling developments and turn 'NATO Version 2.5' into a healthy 'NATO Version 3.0'.



## **Part 4 – After the Strategic Concept**

### **Towards a NATO Version 3.0?**

The model presented in part two of this report clearly suggests that an organisation's ontological security is dependent on a strong narrative and a stable self-identity, both of which are likely to be either reinforced or undermined through either functional or rhetorical action. It was also suggested that although reinforcing functional action has the potential for producing the necessary strong narrative and high level of self-esteem that can lead to enhanced ontological security, the opposite might also be the case when undermining functional action takes place. The adoption of the new Strategic Concept in November 2010 is NATO's chance to end the period of deformity and to produce a new NATO along the lines suggested by Ivo Daalder. However, whether the new NATO version 3.0 turns out to be a healthy – or a deformed – version will depend on NATO's ability to establish action patterns that are reinforcing and to avoid persistent crisis narratives, so that NATO Version 3.0 is an Alliance with a sufficient level of ontological security. Given that much of the emphasis in the new Strategic Concept is on functional rather than rhetorical action, the question therefore is what will happen if the required reinforcing functional action cannot be achieved?

Having achieved the adoption of a new Strategic Concept has already had a positive effect on NATO's self-perception and has facilitated a strengthening of NATO's narrative. However, as was outlined in the first part of this report, the new Strategic Concept contains an extremely ambitious agenda for the next decade, which is likely to lead to changes that will alter many established practices and which may be challenging to implement successfully. Moreover, the changes outlined in the new Strategic Concept – especially the elevated position of crisis management, cooperation with Russia, the emphasis on a Comprehensive Approach and increased cooperation with other international actors such as the EU – are likely to shift NATO's action patterns towards an increased use of functional action. As suggested by the theoretical framework presented in this report, it is absolutely imperative for a healthy Version 3.0 that the new functional action is of the reinforcing variety rather than the undermining variety, but this will in large measure depend on successful implementation, which given the challenges outlined in section two, has to be a cause for concern.

## The challenges of a more functional NATO

It is clear that the combination in the Strategic Concept of the decision to adopt a Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS), coupled with a renewed cooperative relationship with Russia and a reduction (or a possible elimination)<sup>32</sup> of the American non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe is designed to be a bold and decisive initiative, which could lead to a fundamentally altered NATO and a fundamentally altered security environment. If successfully implemented, the decision holds a historic potential for NATO–Russian cooperation and for a change from nuclear sharing to missile defence sharing. Moreover, such a change would fundamentally alter a number of established, but ultimately outdated and illogical practices related to deterrence by punishment and to archaic thinking about the role of nuclear weapons as a means of coupling the European and North American parts of the Alliance. The current nuclear posture is clearly both illogical and outdated and, as such, a missile defence system would seem to be a much more timely response to NATO’s most pressing security issues. However, the path towards implementation is a treacherous one. Missile defence without Russian cooperation is likely to do more harm than good and Russian cooperation cannot be assured despite Medvedev’s agreement in principle at the Lisbon Summit. Furthermore, changing established practices related to extended deterrence may prove to be more difficult than anticipated. Indeed, the missile defence system itself may turn out to be difficult to implement in practice, in relation to the architecture of the system, command and control as well as technical issues in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> phase. As a result the decision to change NATO to a NATO Version 3.0 through adoption of missile defence, enhanced cooperation with Russia and the possible withdrawal of NATO’s American based non-strategic nuclear weapons does have the very real potential to become an undermining form of functional action.

The other functional action decision which may have considerable implementation issues is the ambition to establish a much more positive and constructive relationship with the EU. It is baffling to many how these two organisations in which, of NATO’s 28 members and the EU’s 27 members, 21 are members of both organisations and which are both situated in the same city and share common strategic interests can have so little actual cooperation with each other. Unfortunately, however, the fact remains that for as long as Turkey blocks the development on the NATO side and Cyprus blocks the development from the EU side, there is going to be limited

<sup>32</sup> For an analysis of the real intentions regarding NSNWs see Flockhart, 2010.

leeway in how far the relationship can go. Therefore the ambition to build a truly comprehensive and cost-effective partnership with the EU is regarded by many as wishful thinking, and is certainly also unlikely to be possible until full complementarity between non-EU NATO members and non-NATO EU members is achieved (Experts, 2010). Such a prospect, however, seems somewhat distant in a relationship where NATO is the 'suitor' and where some EU member states (especially France) have serious reservations about getting too closely involved with NATO, fearing that the EU will simply become NATO's 'clean up agency' to move in after NATO has finished high-end combat operations of primarily American choice. Therefore, although the Strategic Concept is quite explicit in its wish to establish a closer and more constructive relationship with the EU, significant obstacles stand in the way to achieving that goal.

The ambition for a stronger relationship with the EU is also closely related to the ambition expressed in the Strategic Concept to establish a Comprehensive Approach (§21) in which the Alliance will utilise political, civilian and military approaches for effective crisis management and engage actively with other international actors (especially the EU and UN) to maximise coherence and effectiveness of the overall international effort. Whilst a Comprehensive Approach is no doubt a laudable ambition and an absolute necessity for efficient international crisis management, it is also an extremely challenging functional action task. Not only does CA include the need to work across different institutional and agential structures and cultures, it also needs to do so in hostile environments and under severe time constraints. If functional action is difficult at the best of times, because unexpected events inevitably happen and because practical cooperation leaves no room for ambiguity, then functional action as a Comprehensive Approach is likely to be the most difficult form of functional action – with plenty of pitfalls that can turn the experience into an undermining form of functional action.

Finally the decision in the Strategic Concept to elevate crisis management to a core task on a par with collective defence and cooperative security is likely to propel NATO into a constant oscillation between reinforcing and undermining functional action. Crisis management is by definition a complex endeavour that is firmly located on the functional action side of the matrix and which has a bewildering potential for things going seriously wrong, or for simply not being able to demonstrate achievements within a politically relevant timeframe. Therefore, although by claiming a role as a crisis management actor rather than as a defence alliance, NATO may well have ensured its own relevance in the security environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it may

have done so at the cost of having shifted its action patterns from a preponderance of rhetorical action towards functional action.

### **Conclusion and policy recommendations**

As the examples above indicate, the ambitions in NATO's Strategic Concept may indeed be worthy and would, if successfully implemented, transform NATO into the desired NATO Version 3.0. However, the examples also show that successful implementation is by no means certain, and that many elements contained in the new Strategic Concept hold a significant risk of becoming the damaging form of undermining functional action. Moreover, the experience so far of increased functional action in the many missions that NATO has engaged in has not been altogether positive, as all missions have been overshadowed by the inability of NATO to establish a strong narrative about the mission in Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup> As the new Strategic Concept is clearly opening up for NATO to be involved across the whole spectrum of crisis management, it seems likely that there also exists a potential for further examples of undermining functional action in international missions in the future. Indeed the current mission in Libya may well turn out to be precisely such an example. The worry, therefore, is that NATO may indeed transform to a NATO Version 3.0 by adopting a missile defence and shifting from nuclear sharing to missile defence sharing and that NATO may continue its high level of functional activity in a variety of new and existing missions, but that the new Version 3.0 may also be deformed.

To avoid such an unattractive outcome NATO must learn from the experience in Afghanistan. One of the most important lessons to be learned from the mission in Afghanistan is the need for clearly defining the mission *before* engagement takes place. NATO stumbled into the mission in Afghanistan without a clearly defined objective, without a clearly worked out strategy and without a clearly formulated exit strategy or division of labour with other relevant international actors in Afghanistan. Such a situation must *never* be allowed to happen again. Instead NATO could do well to learn from some aspects of the EU's approach to crisis management. Since the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) became operational in 2003 the EU has undertaken 25 ESDP missions. Most have been small, of limited duration and with very limited objectives, which has allowed the EU to leave once these limited objectives have been fulfilled. This has allowed them to be able to claim success for

<sup>33</sup> The rather chaotic entry into the mission in Libya would however indicate that NATO has not learnt this lesson.

missions even though the overall problems clearly still continue (for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo). NATO needs to follow the EU in more clearly stating the objectives of missions before stumbling headlong into situations that may have no overall solution within a definable timeframe. Furthermore NATO needs to take its own goal of a Comprehensive Approach to crisis management very seriously, by ensuring a clear division of labour and responsibility amongst crisis management actors *before* engagement takes place. The security environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century clearly calls for NATO to take on a crisis management role, but such a role does not imply that NATO should take on crisis management operations lightly or because no one else will.

Apart from careful consideration of every crisis management operation undertaken, NATO must look to NATO Version 2.5 to elicit possibilities for creating different action patterns than those which exist(ed) in NATO Version 2.0. As has been pointed out in this report, one of the most striking features of NATO Version 2.5 was not just the high level of undermining functional action but, and perhaps more importantly, the low level of reinforcing rhetorical action as a consequence of the break with the long-established practice of negotiation and persuasion within NATO's internal structures. It is instructive to bear in mind that during the Bush Administration rhetorical action through negotiations and dialogue with allies in NATO had a very low priority, which may well have contributed to the depth of the crisis of the first half of the decade. The problem in constructing a healthy NATO Version 3.0 with a high level of ontological security is that no one can be certain in advance whether a certain form of action will be reinforcing or undermining although, since international cooperation in hostile environments by definition are demanding, it would be prudent to assume that a sizable portion of the functional action arising from the new Strategic Concept will be of the undermining kind. With this in mind, it is imperative that NATO chooses its functional activity with great care and that it maintains a beneficial balance between functional and rhetorical action. The lesson from NATO Version 2.0 during the 1990s surely must be that NATO had the right balance between rhetorical and functional action, where some was reinforcing and some was undermining.

Another constructive lesson from Version 2.0 is that NATO's partnership and dialogue program has been a positive form of functional action, which has a good potential for being reinforcing rather than undermining. Although the current institutional structure for NATO's partnerships surely needs rethinking, the basic policy is a sound one and has furnished NATO with a welcome avenue for reinforcing functional ac-

tion. The aim expressed in the Strategic Concept of expanding NATO's relationships with relevant international actors should therefore be explored, whilst the different categories of partnerships and other relationships need to be brought more into line with partners' contributions and with their actual relationship with NATO.

As mentioned earlier, the new Strategic Concept does contain one paragraph (§5) which stresses rhetorical action by emphasizing that NATO remains the unique and essential transatlantic forum for consultations on all matters that affect the territorial integrity, political independence and security of the Alliance. In addition paragraph 19 states that NATO will ensure broad participation in collective defence planning on nuclear roles, command, control and consultation arrangements. Indeed the Group of Experts specifically recommended that NATO should re-establish the Special Consultative Group on Arms Control for the purpose of facilitating internal dialogue about the whole range of issues related to nuclear doctrine and arms control. These elements of the new Strategic Concept have received little attention so far. However, it is suggested here that in the implementation of the Strategic Concept NATO would be well advised to pay special attention to those elements of the Strategic Concept that emphasise internal dialogue and dialogue with partners. The new Strategic Concept is not a balanced mixture of functional and rhetorical action, which leads to the concern that the new NATO that could emerge as a result of the new Strategic Concept will be a NATO standing on just one leg – the leg of functional action. Although such a strategy does hold the potential for facilitating a strong and dynamic Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it also brings with it significant risks of producing an Alliance that is continuously experiencing undermining functional action with deeply troubling consequences and a weakened ontological security. A greater emphasis on negotiation and dialogue within NATO would provide NATO with more balance between functional action and rhetorical action and hence reduce the risk associated with a low level of ontological security and the potential for ending up with a deformed NATO Version 3.0.

On the basis of the analysis presented in this report the following policy recommendations seem appropriate:

1. Although the Strategic Concept speaks of NATO being prepared to address the full spectrum of crisis management, NATO should only undertake such missions after careful consideration and extended negotiation to make sure that all Allies are prepared to contribute and after having established that other international actors are not better suited to the task.

2. Although NATO clearly is very much aware of the need for public diplomacy and the need for constructing a narrative that enhances the positive qualities of the Alliance to an ever-sceptical public, NATO could do more to consciously contribute to a narrative of success. In this regard NATO should learn from the EU as a crisis management actor by more clearly defining the objectives of its missions and by outlining clear benchmarks for achievement and for handing over responsibility to other organisations and by following a Comprehensive Approach between different international actors.
3. NATO should enhance existing institutional structures for internal dialogue and negotiation. Although many committees and a lot of talk may go against the grain of reform in NATO, NATO must ensure that adequate facilities for dialogue and negotiation are maintained.
4. NATO must continue its partnership and dialogue program as a form of functional action that has a good potential for being of the reinforcing variety. The specific institutional architecture of NATO's partnership and dialogue program is in need of reform but it is basically a sound policy that is likely to benefit NATO and international security.
5. NATO needs to refrain from attaching symbolic significance to specific missions, specific relationships and other activities such as was done with the mission in Afghanistan. Missions can never prove the worth of the Alliance, as this can only be done through political commitment and continuously shared values.
6. NATO must continually strive towards maintaining a balance between rhetorical action and functional action – a 'one-legged' approach will always carry significant risks for ontological security.

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