NATO's Fight Against Terrorism
Where Do We Stand?

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Contents

Terrorism has played a major role in shaping the global security landscape over the last decade, one important manifestation of this being its consequences for NATO. The 9/11 attacks resulted in a considerable and unexpected commitment for the Alliance, which subsequently experienced a reorientation towards new challenges; within a very short time, terrorism reached the very top of NATO's agenda. A decade after 9/11 – and with the Alliance nourished by the lifeblood of the New Strategic Concept – it is time for a critical assessment. What has NATO done? What are the shortcomings of its actions? What is left to do? The role played by the Alliance, together with the goals thus achieved, will be brought into focus in the first part of this study. Following this, an investigation into the real limits NATO encounters in combating terrorism will lead us to ponder the efforts which are still to be undertaken, highlighting potential future recommendations.

DOES NATO STILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY?

Ten years after the events of 9/11, no further terrorist attack of comparable scale, method or symbolic value has taken place. Considering that a precedent has now been set, to generate a similar amount of attention and devastation terrorists would need to implement a proportionally larger form of attack (i.e. using chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons). Although such a threat may appear less immediate than in the recent past, statistics[2] and reliable investigative reports reveal it is still present and likely to persist for years to come. Terrorism clearly still represents a shared security concern for all NATO members, though involving them to differing degrees. It is therefore still relevant to recognize an albeit limited role for NATO in thwarting this scourge.

The main limit to NATO's role is the very nature of terrorism. The threat is highly asymmetric, demanding a form of response which obviously cannot be set up by a massed military power like NATO. Disrupting the increasingly atomized terrorist menace is not first and foremost a military problem, while NATO remains at its very core a military organization, unable to play more than a limited specific role in thwarting terrorism.

Furthermore, though 9/11 lifted terrorism from an essentially domestic scale to a global security dimension, it is still widely believed that the major responsibility in tackling terrorism is within individual states: terrorism is ultimately seen as a local phenomenon. This implies that the bulk of actions to counter it are undertaken at a bilateral-national

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[2] Brian Michael Jenkins, "Would-be Warriors - Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001", *RAND Occasional Paper*, 2010. See also National Counterterrorism Center, Country Reports on Terrorism 2009, Annex of Statistical Information http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/140902.htm (accessed November 2010).

level by law-enforcement and intelligence agencies. Particularly in Europe, terrorism is seen above all as a crime, which can best be addressed by crime-fighting procedures and methods, rather than by military actions[3]. This perception encompasses the consequence management area – indeed, it led the UK and Spain, after the major terrorist attacks they experienced, not to ask for NATO's aid, suggesting that Member States tend to respond individually to terrorism and do not see the Alliance as the main tool for dealing with the problem.

NATO's STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

Prior to 9/11 NATO did not have much experience in fighting terrorism. The 1999 Strategic Concept identified terrorism among "other risks of a wider nature", together with sabotage and organized crime, but no practical measures were adopted[4]. The 2001 attacks dramatically changed the scenario: terrorism rapidly turned into the major international security problem and, as outlined by the 2006 Comprehensive Political Guidance[5], is likely to remain among the principal threats over the next 10 to 15 years.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 the Alliance demonstrated its determination to cope with this new menace by agreeing on eight measures to support the United States – ranging from increased intelligence sharing to more stringent security measures for facilities, and access to ports and airfields in NATO countries for operations against terrorism.

Following this momentum NATO undertook its first, and still ongoing, counter-terrorism operation, *Active Endeavour*, followed shortly after by *Operation Eagle Assist*, which ended in May 2002.

A coherent operational framework to face the terrorism threat was created with the adoption of the *Military Concept* for defence against terrorism (MC-472)[6]. Approved by the North Atlantic Council and then endorsed by Heads of State and Government at the 2002 Prague Summit, MC-472 made defence against terrorism an integral part of the Alliance forces' mission. In this regard, MC-472 indentified four roles:

- Anti-Terrorism: this combines all defensive measures dedicated to reducing the chances of being attacked or the vulnerability of potential targets. It is a long-term effort towards undermining terrorism by addressing its root causes, directly acting on the environments which enable it. Although national authorities are the main actors in charge of defending population and infrastructure, NATO has a role in this defensive

phase, mainly through the *intelligence-sharing* tool. Anti-terrorism measures include the NATO-wide standardized threat warning conditions and defensive procedures, assistance in air and maritime protection, and assistance to a nation wishing to withdraw its citizens or forces from an area of increased terrorist threat[7].

- Counter-Terrorism: this refers to offensive/active strategies used to reduce the vulnerability of forces, individuals and property to terrorism. Including repression and suppression, counter-terrorism measures are intended to reduce terrorists' capabilities, constituting a mainly short-term goal. Counter-terrorism operations are predominantly joint ones, in which NATO could either act in the lead or in support.

- Consequence Management: this includes reactive measures to be adopted in order to mitigate the destructive effects of a terrorist attack once it has occurred. Although consequence management is mainly a national responsibility, NATO plays a significant role by providing military support.

- Military Cooperation: this refers to NATO's effort to harmonize its procedures of intervention with civil-national authorities, cooperate with major international organizations, and capitalize on existing programs (i.e. the Mediterranean Dialogue -MD, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative - ICI, and the Partnership for Peace - PfP), in order to optimize its effectiveness in tackling terrorism.

According to MC-472, NATO's approach acknowledges that primary responsibility for defence of citizens and infrastructure rests with Member States. Since reduction of vulnerability is considered mainly a "national affair", the Alliance's goal is to help Member States deter, defend, disrupt and protect against terrorist threats from abroad, as and where needed, upon the approval of the North Atlantic Council. In this way the Alliance has chosen to operate largely in support rather than taking a leading position.

The role played by NATO is nevertheless not just supportive, but it is primarily *preventive*[8]. Although MC-472 covers the full gamut of actions from defensive to offensive, stressing the importance of the latter in counter-terrorism measures, NATO has not yet conducted straight combat operations in a counter-terrorism role within a NATO-commanded operation. It is surely engaged in a number of valuable initiatives but has not tailored an offensive strategy, the imperative so far being to "restrain". Even NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – which had its origins in the terrorist attacks of 9/11 – was not born primarily

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[3] David Aaron, Ann Beauchesne, Frances Burwell, Richard Nelson, Jack Riley, Brian Zimmer, 2004. "The Post 9/11 Partnership: Transatlantic Cooperation against Terrorism", *Atlantic Council Policy Paper*, p.12.

[4] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, The Alliance's Strategic Concept 1999, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm (accessed October 2010).

[5] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Comprehensive Political Guidance, 2006 http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b061129e.htm (accessed November 2010).

[6] An unclassified version of the MC-472 can be found at http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/terrorism.htm (accessed November 2010).

[7] It is noteworthy that, though a number of commentators use the terms "anti-terrorism" and "counter-terrorism" interchangeably, the Military Concept draws a clear distinction between the two terms.

[8] The Bush doctrine has generated an intense debate over the terms "pre-emption" and "prevention". Though they are often interchangeably used, they are not synonymous. The former refers to the first use of military force when an enemy attack already is underway or at least is very credibly imminent; the latter indicates an action initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve greater risk. In NATO documents the preference is for the verb "prevent", in the sense of creating an environment unfavourable to the development and expansion of terrorism. The preventive role outlined in this paper has therefore to be understood as a "precautionary" role.

as a counter-terrorism operation[9]. ISAF rules of engagement only cover a peace-enforcement mission, with a limited mandate which does not include counter-terrorism (even if it occurs in a counter-terrorism context).

The recently adopted New Strategic Concept puts more emphasis than its predecessor on NATO's role in fighting terrorism. It recognizes that "terrorism poses a direct threat to the security of citizens of NATO countries, and to international stability and prosperity more broadly. Extremist groups continue to spread to, and in, areas of strategic importance to the Alliance"[10]. In order to face this threat the Alliance will "enhance the capacity to detect and defend against international terrorism, including through enhanced analysis of the threat, more consultation with our partners, and the development of appropriate military capabilities, including to help train local forces to fight terrorism themselves" [11]. NATO has thus renewed its commitment to combating terrorism, espousing a preventive approach.

Positive achievements

Since its inception in the wake of 9/11, NATO's fight against terrorism has certainly recorded some positive achievements. At a theoretical level, the Alliance has elaborated impressive structural, strategic and partnership schemes to fight terrorism. Yet there are still several impediments which concur to jeopardize these efforts on a very practical level; these will be the focus of the following part of the study, "Obstacles and Limits".

Within the anti-terrorism perspective, NATO has been well aware of the pivotal importance of timely, accurate and reliable intelligence in the prevention phase. Increased intelligence sharing has therefore become a high priority. For this purpose, a Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit (TTIU) was established in the aftermath of 9/11, becoming a permanent structure in 2003. It deals with so-called strategic-level intelligence, based on assessments and trends, rather than with immediately actionable intelligence. The involvement of both NATO and Partner Countries' resources underpins the importance of a multilateral approach, enhanced through the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council / Partnership for Peace (EAPC/PfP) Intelligence Liaison Unit in Mons, Belgium. The flurry of efforts to improve intelligence sharing includes the setting up of the Intelligence Fusion Centre (IFC) in Molesworth, UK, whose ultimate aim is to produce intelligence that supports military planning and decision-making at the operational level [12].

The other major structural innovation was the establishment of the Emerging Security Challenges Division (ESCD), in August 2010. It focuses on terrorism, proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, cyber defence and energy security, stressing NATO's willingness to bring new security challenges to the fore among its commitments. The basic idea behind the creation of this division is to bring the different strands of NATO's work in this area under one roof, considering that much of the effort was previously scattered across many parts of the Alliance. However, the concrete scope and mission of this new division still need to be fully clarified. An organization accredited to NATO is the Centre of Excellence - Defense against Terrorism (COE-DAT), inaugurated in Ankara in 2005 with the aim of conveying expertise on terrorism-related issues to NATO members, PfP and MD partners. An overall rationalization of the organization's structure has been completed. While this is a step in the right direction, it remains to be seen what lasting benefits it will bring.

In the anti-terrorism area, given the importance of science and technology in adequately addressing modern threats, NATO has been developing a cutting-edge plan. The Defense against Terrorism Program of Work (DAT POW) [13], endorsed at the 2004 Istanbul Summit, focuses on ten critical areas where technology is believed to help prevent or lessen the effects of a terrorist attack. The main areas covered are: defence capabilities against CBRN attacks, technology for Intelligence Reconnaissance Surveillance and Target Acquisition (IRSTA), countering IEDs, and protecting critical infrastructure. Each single project is led by an individual Member State. The program – which is still in progress, with its results awaited – has now migrated into the newly created ESCD, thus offering a broader platform for development of a wide-ranging DAT capability. The constant predicament in the area of technology is how to fill the gap between the USA and its European Allies, especially regarding intelligence sharing and the expeditionary operations required to conduct most anti-terrorist operations [14].

With regard to counter-terrorism, the Alliance has been seeking to play a role at the operational level, engaging itself militarily in the strategically important Mediterranean basin and, indirectly, in Afghanistan and the Balkans.

NATO's only functioning counter-terrorism operation, called Operation Active Endeavour (OAE), started in October 2001 [15], its aim being to patrol the Mediterranean and monitor shipping to help detect, deter and protect against terrorist activity. Started as an operation mainly relying on deployed forces, OAE has progressively achieved a new "information focus"; gathering information and intelligence through a network of sensors and databases has become its new operational pattern. By opening OAE to its partners, NATO has *de facto* formalized the importance of operational counter-terrorism cooperation in a multilateral framework, putting extra emphasis on the key role played by interoperability among Allies and Partner Countries in data sharing. Overall, the operation is having a positive impact, for at least two reasons:

- First, it acts as a major deterrent against terrorist activities in the Mediterranean area, having a beneficial effect on regional security. NATO's naval presence in the basin has become an acknowledged fact, constituting a disincentive to potentially illegal activities,

[9] Brent Ellis, "If it's not terrorism, it's not relevant: evaluating NATO's potential to contribute to the campaign against terrorism", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Fall 2004, Vol. 7, Issue 1, p. 7.
[10] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, 19-20 November 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm (accessed November 2010)
[11] Ibid.
[12] For further information on the IFC, see: Laurence M. Mixon, "Requirements and challenges facing the NATO Intelligence Fusion Center", Air War College, 2007, https://www.afre-search.org/skins/rims/q_mod_be0e99f3-fc56-4ccb-8dfe-670c0822a153/q_act_downloadpaper/q_obj_9a47b0f3-9dcb-41d3-b677-79544cdd6921/display.aspx?rs=enginespage
[13] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Topic: Defense against Terrorism Programme, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50313.htm (accessed November 2010).
[14] Brent Ellis, Op.Cit.
[15] The deployment started on 6 October and was formally named Operation Active Endeavour on 26 October 2001.

including terrorism. There has thus been a greater perception of security for all shipping. According to 2008 figures, NATO forces have monitored more than 100,000 vessels, boarding some 100 suspect ships. In addition, over 500 ships have taken advantage of NATO escorts through the Strait of Gibraltar. NATO's OAE assets have successfully detected, reported and intercepted hundreds of suspicious vessels, many of them engaged in transport of illegal explosives, drugs or other contraband.

- Secondly, it represents an effective tool through which Allies and Partner Countries have strategically enhanced their international cooperation and expanded maritime security, with involvement of international organizations and coastal authorities. The operation initially involved only Member Countries, but since 2004 Partner Countries have also contributed, formally agreeing to support the effort with information exchange and/or provision of ships (physical assets have already been deployed, for example, by Russia and Ukraine, and Tactical Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with Israel, Georgia and Morocco). In this way OAE has acted as a catalyst for greater regional engagement.

Indirectly, NATO is also playing a part in fighting terrorism in its biggest operational commitment, Afghanistan, where it has been leading ISAF since August 2003. Although it is not primarily a counter-terrorism operation, ISAF is making a significant contribution to removing the conditions in which terrorism flourishes.

NATO peacekeeping forces continue to act against terrorism in the Balkans, focusing on illegal movements of people, arms and drugs (widely recognized as important assets for the terrorist network) and supporting regional authorities in ensuring the level of border security necessary to prevent a terrorist attack.

In the consequence management area, NATO has sought to strengthen its capabilities through Civil Emergency Planning, within which Allies and Partner Countries set up a pool of competencies, both civil and military, ready to be used when needed. The platform used as a means of coordinating disaster relief efforts – despite its very modest size – is the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC); since 9/11, the centre has also been tasked with managing the consequences of CBRN incidents. Even though its mandate has been extended to cover terrorism, EADRCC has never been called upon for this purpose.

A step forward was made in December 2003, with the establishment of the Multinational CBRN Battalion. Based in Liberec, Czech Republic, this provides NATO's capability to respond to and defend against the use of weapons of mass destruction.

As far as military cooperation is concerned, NATO's awareness that most of today's security perils – including terrorism – are no longer confined to the Euro-Atlantic region has prompted the Alliance to significantly extend its commitment to partnerships,

especially in the regions where the threats originate. One of the landmark initiatives launched at the Prague Summit was the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism (PAP-T), a cooperation framework between Allies and Partner Countries with the following essential goals: management of operations and exercises in combating terrorism, assistance to Partners' efforts against terrorism, actions targeting terrorist finances, civil emergency planning, and cooperation with other international organizations[16]. The organizations concerned here are the UN, EU and OSCE, with results of cooperation to be further assessed. Interestingly, the plan also envisages the establishment of a PfP Trust Fund to "assist individual member states in specific efforts against terrorism", noting that the Fund may be particularly relevant to Partners from Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans. This suggests that the Alliance collectively recognizes the significant contribution that can be made in this area. To date, the only ongoing NATO/PfP Trust Fund projects involve support to Partner Countries in destroying surplus and obsolete munitions or hazardous materials that could pose a security risk in the hands of terrorists.

Within this military cooperation perspective, a major role is played by NATO's program of exercises to develop and practise integrated civil-military operations, enhancing the interoperability of different forces and bringing together expertise and know-how. By using comprehensive NATO standard operating procedures, a wide range of countries (Member States and Partners) are developing the capacity to work closely together to respond to a hypothetical terrorist attack[17].

OBSTACLES AND LIMITS

Divergences on how to deal with terrorism

The extent to which the Alliance can expand its role in fighting terrorism is constrained by the absence of a broadly agreed general definition of "terrorism", and by lasting divergences on how to deal with this phenomenon, not only between the USA and the European allies but also between "old" allies and "new" Eastern Europe member countries. These divergences of opinion are briefly indicated below:

- Transatlantic discrepancies: war-fighting vs. risk management

    In facing the terrorism threat, the USA has adopted a "war approach", promoting a massive mobilization of assets and resources at the expense of individual freedoms, as in the provisions of the Patriot Act. On the contrary, most Europeans consider it inappropriate to address the phenomenon as a war and opt for a "risk management approach" – meaning that terrorism is dealt with as a perilous hazard to be managed, not as a war to be won[18]. Even if not mutually exclusive,

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[16] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO – Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism, http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b021122e.htm (accessed November 2010).

[17] For example, in 2008 a major field test, Trial Imperial Hammer, was held in Italy to exercise counter-terrorism technology while seeking to forge a joint all-source intelligence architecture. Cooperative Lancer and Cooperative Longbow are live land exercises which have counter-IED elements. Similarly, Cooperative Marlin is a maritime live exercise with elements of counter-terrorism. At the Istanbul Summit NATO leaders attempted, among other tasks, to enhance cooperation with partners in the area of civil emergency planning, including the possibility for MD partners to have direct access to the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre. In the context of this cooperation, field exercise "Armenia 2010" was the first consequence management exercise open to participation by these partner countries – even if the only one which contributed teams to the exercise was Israel.

[18] Richard Nelson, Expanding NATO's counter-terrorism role, NATO Review, autumn 2004, available at http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue3/english/analysis.html (accessed 8 November 2010).

these two perspectives lead to different priorities and trade-offs. From the American standpoint, pre-emptive measures are far more strongly emphasized, compared with the widespread European preference for defensive measures. This distinct approach is reflected in the wording used on the two sides of the Atlantic: while there is widespread acceptance in the USA of the concept of *war* and the attendant emphasis on military terms and means, Europeans have a preference for *fighting against* terrorism by prioritizing the use of "soft power" – i.e. political, legal, diplomatic, economic and cultural efforts.

Additionally, in the view of several European allies, the USA made a big mistake in choosing to lead the operation against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan unilaterally instead of ceding the initiative to the Alliance, thus undermining confidence in NATO. This determination to bypass NATO has been driven to a considerable extent by the capabilities gap between the USA and its European Allies, as well as by the so-called "threat/ response gap" – i.e. the gap between the USA and EU in terms of perception of the terrorist threat and the counter-terrorism responses this requires. While the USA are inclined to favour military answers, the Europeans tend to emphasize the importance of the so-called "root causes approach".

- Intra-European discrepancies

European Allies do not share a common threat perception or represent a wholly united front on how to tackle terrorism. Eurobarometer polls reveal that public perception of the terrorist threat varies across Europe, with Eastern European countries generally reporting a low threat from Islamic terrorism, mainly in relation to each country's track record and current experience of the phenomenon[19]. European countries differ greatly in terms of terrorist incidents experienced, Muslim communities' integration and anti-American sentiment. Additionally, new NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are largely concerned by other security matters – namely energy security and Russia – rather than international terrorism. Not least, in the Islamic fundamentalism perspective, CEE is not perceived as the "West" to the same extent as the USA or other European countries.

In the light of these considerations, it is not surprising that consensus on how to best face terrorism is hard to achieve.

Intelligence Sharing

Perhaps intelligence is the first line of defence against terrorism, but the process of sharing it implies the need to overcome a number of obstacles. Concerns about the security of intelligence have fostered a prudent approach towards the idea of intelligence sharing, especially on a multilateral basis. Intelligence tends to remain a national prerogative and any sharing of data usually occurs on a bilateral, case-by-case basis[20]. Allies and partners have different languages, procedures, databases, training and capabilities, so that the main challenge is how to bind all of this together into an efficient effort. The first priority of an intelligence network is to ensure the secrecy of this broadly distributed information, but also the resolution of any sensitive issues regarding intelligence sources and methods, as well as appropriate vigilance of counterintelligence[21]. Elevating these obstacles to a multilateral level inevitably makes the picture more complex. As Reveron points out, "with some foreign intelligence services regular meetings may suffice to share information. Other cases require common training, classification criteria, standardized security clearance procedures, and compatible intelligence systems"[22]. In substance, the gap in capabilities that has been a constant predicament for NATO is emphasized when it comes to the area of intelligence; problems of interoperability are thus increased, both among Allies and between Allies and partner countries.

Why is intelligence sharing within the NATO framework still fragile?

- It is valuable to note that NATO has no mandate for intelligence gathering, and does not even possess its own intelligence sources, except when NATO forces are deployed. As a result, it inevitably relies on information from Member States[23]. NATO's intelligence apparatus is dedicated to *interpreting* information, but cannot *produce* raw intelligence usable to prevent terrorism.

The levels of trust, the value of intelligence and existing diplomatic relationships with other countries are all factors to be considered in any assessment of shared intelligence. Most of the time, they inhibit the process in a broad multilateral approach. This is why the majority of intelligence sharing occurs bilaterally rather than in a composite organization like NATO.

Although intelligence sharing has increased since 9/11 (as reflected in the establishment of the TTIU, the IFC and the EAPC/PfP Intelligence Liaison Unit), a number of factors continue to hamper this process and limit NATO's added value in this area. In addition to the separation of civilian and military intelligence, the approach towards intelligence within NATO differs greatly, lacks coordination and, to a certain degree, entails overlaps[24].

[19] Eurobarometer 72 (2009), p. 102 http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_vol1_en.pdf (accessed December 2010). See also: Eurobarometer (2006) "The European citizens and the future of Europe", p.17 http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/quali/ql_futur_en.pdf (accessed December 2010).
[20] Stéphane Lefebvre, "The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 16: 4, 2003, pp. 527-542.
[21] Derek S. Reveron, "Old Allies, New Friends: Intelligence-Sharing in the War on Terror", *Orbis*, Vol. 50 Issue 3, Summer 2006.
[22] Ibid.
[23] John Kriendler, "NATO Intelligence and Early Warning", Conflict Studies Research Centre - *Special Series 06/13*, March 2006, http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/special/06(13)JK.pdf (accessed November 2010).
[24] Ibid.

- The USA, for instance, are more inclined to tailor bilateral relationships around clearly defined shared objectives, a much safer and more manageable strategy than a multilateral engagement in organizations such as NATO. This perhaps provides a greater audience for intelligence; such contexts are likely to generate counterintelligence concerns, potentially greater than the value of the intelligence itself. Additionally, even when the USA have agreed to share information with the Allies, the process of sharing has been constrained by delays and restrictions, which in the end have inevitably compromised operational feasibility.

- Even in the case of Europe, the bulk of intelligence gathering occurs outside NATO, being conducted mainly by domestic intelligence organizations and national police forces, and is subsequently shared through bilateral arrangements or within the Berne Group network. Also known as the Club of Berne, this was established in 1970 as a European forum for the Heads of National Security Services and, since 2001, has had its own Counter-Terrorism Group. Despite the "*need to share*" rhetoric which became pervasive after 9/11, translating this into a core function means addressing significant cultural and technological barriers. These mainly stem from the problem of ensuring protection of sources when information is disseminated, the disparity in data protection standards between the USA and EU, and domestic legal restrictions on intelligence collection methods. Not least, it should be considered that intelligence services which used to work against each other in the past are still distrustful of each other[25].

- Arab partners are naturally the major focus of Western intelligence-sharing efforts, given their geographical and political proximity to the threats of terrorism. NATO's outreach efforts towards the Arab world have, in this respect, increased over the last decade, though there are still a number of obstacles.

Intelligence sharing is on the menu of options which Partner Countries can choose to include in their International Cooperation Programmes (ICP) with NATO. Given the classified nature of these documents, it cannot actually be revealed if the option has been chosen or not. Yet it is evident that Arab partners are collaborating with NATO in intelligence sharing. For instance, in 2009 an agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was signed for the sharing of information, this agreement being a facilitator for the exchange of classified information between NATO and the UAE. Serious commitment of regional security agencies is, however, far from being achieved. In the words of Secretary General Rasmussen, "it is of utmost importance to have not just a dialogue but also cooperation, for instance intelligence sharing, so that we can improve the efficiency of our common fight against these common scourges of today"[26]. This cooperation, especially when it comes to intelligence sharing on the threat of terrorism, should be a priority within the MD and ICI platforms.

Bearing in mind that intelligence cooperation is necessarily about building confidence by long-term efforts, it should not be a surprise that the bulk of data sharing in the region still occurs bilaterally with individual NATO members – most importantly the USA, seen as the regional security provider.

Though far from being achieved, the multilateral intelligence-sharing approach seems to lead to global networking. Nevertheless, bilateral relationships are still the favoured approach.

Operational engagement

Operation Active Endeavour, which is NATO's only current operation in combating terrorism (albeit actually involving less and less naval support)[27], is limited by several factors. First and foremost, the boarding of a suspicious vessel can be conducted only with the compliance of the captain of the ship and the flag state (so-called compliant boarding). In all other cases NATO forces can only follow the vessel and alert the port of destination, whose authorities will proceed with inspection. Second, the operation is highly dependent on the Automatic Identification System transmitter, use of which is mandatory only for ships over 300 tons. Identifying any smaller vessel is therefore complicated and unlikely. Third, OAE is hampered by the shortage of allocated refuelling ships, which are constantly under heavy demand for domestic needs[28]. That said, NATO's role in the Mediterranean is inevitably partial and constrained, limited in practice to deterrence.

Cooperation: yes, but to what extent?

Though "cooperation" became the mantra of the post-9/11 international community, developments suggest that a truly deep level of cooperation still has to be reached. First and foremost, a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention has not been agreed yet, mainly because of the notorious lack of a commonly shared definition of terrorism. Divergences of opinion regarding the legitimacy of the use of violence for political purposes have made it impossible to draw up an all-encompassing and legally binding definition.

The ultimate legitimacy of the international fight against terrorism is provided by UN Security Council Resolution 1373. NATO is committed to supporting the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and contributes to the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). Furthermore, the 2008 UN-NATO Joint Declaration has brought some optimism regarding future cooperation. However, as recently pointed out by the Chairman

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[25] Lefebvre Stéphane, Op. Cit.

[26] Mina Al-Oraibi, "NATO Chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen Talks to Asharq Al-Awsat", 29 October 2009, http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=3&id=18626 (accessed November 2010).

[27] As of today (December 2010) the current naval support to OAE is as follows: Direct Support: 2x surface vessels, 1x submarine; Stand-By (National Operational Control): 4 surface vessels.

[28] NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Committee Reports, 2008 Annual Session, 158 DSC 08 E bis – NATO Operations: Current Priorities and Lesson Learned, http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1476 (accessed December 2010).

of the CTC, H.E. Mr. Ertoğrul Apakan, "we can definitely do more to exchange information on what we are each doing and how we see the evolving threat of terrorism […] We could further our dialogue at various levels"[29].

Regarding counter-terrorism cooperation between NATO and the EU, extensive talks have taken place, but to what extent cooperation has materialized is still not clear. What appears to characterize the NATO/EU relationship in this area is the divergence in approaches and methods – and even a degree of competition – between the two organizations, which inevitably hampers mature and efficient cooperation. The idea of creating a joint NATO-EU counter-terrorism unit, for instance, has never resulted in a concrete project.

As far as NATO's relations with the OSCE are concerned, cooperation mainly takes place at headquarters level: the Alliance exchanges views with the OSCE's Action against Terrorism Unit, but it has proved difficult to move forwards to a more pragmatic and effective level of cooperation.

Future Recommendations

Ten years after the events of 9/11 we are experiencing a sobering reality: terrorism is still an imperative priority, but not a determining factor in NATO's *raison d'être*. The question is therefore whether NATO, an alliance developed as a response to a state-based military threat, is suited to the fight against terrorism, and to what extent it can make a beneficial contribution. The key contributions the Alliance can continue to offer are in the following areas:

- providing coordination and a framework of cooperation among Allies, and between Allies and Partner countries

- granting a forum of discussion and representing a platform for sharing of strategic information

- concentrating on the military aspect of the process of fighting terrorism.

All other issues, related to areas of key importance in combating terrorism such as law enforcement, immigration and financial control, are well beyond NATO's area of competence and should be handled elsewhere. The EU, in particular, is the international actor with recognised expertise in these fields. Taking into consideration the financial constraints the Alliance is experiencing, NATO's primary goal should be to capitalize on existing assets, focusing on the following opportunities to improve:

Greater intelligence sharing

As General Hayden, former CIA director, stated: "the war on terrorism is an intelligence war"[30]; this means that intelligence sharing should be regarded as a key enabler of the international response to terrorism. In this respect NATO could play a crucial role in mobilizing states to overcome the reluctance and mistrust which ultimately vitiate the intelligence-sharing process. The Alliance has spent considerable resources in reorganizing the intelligence structure, but there are dangers in treating reorganization as a cure-all remedy – namely the risks of compartmentalization, duplication and overlap. The Alliance should optimize the mechanism for more effective intelligence sharing by better coordination among all the units concerned, and by establishing clearer institutional relationships between all of them. Additionally, the technological gap between the two shores of the Atlantic should be narrowed for purposes of intelligence sharing in combating terrorism.

Deeper cooperation with Arab partners

Bearing in mind that today's security threats – including terrorism – are no longer confined to the Euro-Atlantic region but are global in nature, NATO should better exploit the established network of cooperation in the Arab region. The variety of security interests and threats it shares with its partners in the region provide a clear rationale for this. Enhancing partnerships with ICI and MD countries is a crucial step in creating regional stability. An improvement of these partnerships could be achieved by:

- developing – in parallel with the current "customer approach", which basically leaves up to partners the identification of their desired area of cooperation – a coherent NATO strategy, with a comprehensive consensus on the desired end-state;

- training, a vital niche where NATO has a lot to offer and which should be better exploited to make partner countries able to develop their own counter-terrorism capabilities;

- engaging more MD countries in OAE, as the Alliance has to date engaged only two of them – i.e. Morocco and Israel – in this operation. This engagement should be on two fronts: attracting physical naval assets to the operation, and enhancing intelligence sharing;

- maintaining NATO diplomatic efforts with a view to persuading Saudi Arabia to accept a cooperation agreement with the Alliance, despite the Saudi government's cool response to ICI. It is indeed of crucial importance to involve Saudi Arabia, especially in combating financial support to terrorism.

However, in all its efforts to improve cooperation, NATO will be confronted with the fact that, in particularly sensitive areas like intelligence sharing, many Arab states prefer bilateral agreements (particularly with the US) instead of working with NATO as an Alliance.

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[29]Statement by H.E. Mr. Ertoğrul Apakan, Chairman of the Un Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, at the NATO Council (Brussels, 9 December 2010).
[30]See Remarks of Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Gen. Michael V. Hayden, at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 30 October 2007 – available at https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2007/chicago-council-on-global-affairs.html (accessed November 2010).

Focus on military aspects

Capitalizing on the fact that NATO is above all a security organization with a long-standing record of expertise in the military field, the Alliance should concentrate its efforts in this area. For instance, expanding its role in civil emergencies – although this is an area of civil/military cooperation – should not be over-emphasized as the focus priority. The added value NATO can offer is in assisting and fostering the development of Member States' and partners' counter-terrorism capabilities, through dedicated training of their armed forces for possible anti-terrorism tasks (including explosive detection and CBRN defence). In this regard, high priority should be placed on Arab partners, considering their presence in the area where terrorism flourishes; enhancing their capabilities to thwart terrorism will thus benefit the security of Alliance members too. Another opportunity for improvement is in coordination of various Member States' Special Forces, whose role in the anti-terrorism campaign will be critical [31]. Considering additional roles for NATO, e.g. protecting critical infrastructure in energy and other fields as a potential target for terrorism, might be misplaced and outside NATO's area of competence.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

In the light of the aforementioned considerations, in the widespread field of combating terrorism NATO cannot have an all-inclusive role. To face a composite threat like terrorism, it is necessary to move towards a multifaceted approach whereby NATO concentrates on the military aspects of combating terrorism. This is where it enjoys a comparative advantage. There are many other international actors, such as the United Nations, the EU, the World Health Organization, Interpol and the IAEA, which should deal with the diplomatic, law enforcement, judicial, communicational and other aspects. No single approach can be sufficient on its own: a military action, for instance, can temporarily annihilate a terrorist group's operability, but can hardly ever remove the root cause of the threat. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine NATO playing a major role in the economic or financial domain of counter-terrorism. This is the reason why the Alliance needs to cooperate closely with other organizations, providing an efficient level of coordination in order to avoid any pointless overlapping of effort.

In the final analysis, it has become clear in almost a decade of fighting terrorism that the role NATO can play is limited by the obstacles discussed above, and that the Alliance will not become a primary tool in this field. Though not playing a leading role, its support to the campaign against terrorism will nevertheless undoubtedly remain of crucial importance.

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[31]Philip Gordon, "NATO and the War on Terrorism: A Changing Alliance", The Brookings Institution, 2002, http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2002/summer_globalgovernan-ce_gordon.aspx (accessed November 2010).