



Atlantic Treaty Association - Association du Traité Atlantique

General Report

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Introduction

The challenges NATO faces are clear. New, modern security threats; shifting economic power and influence to the East and South; and economic crises and shrinking defense budgets in the transatlantic community, just to name a few, are forcing the Alliance to rethink its strategic agenda. And while some may suggest that these challenges are a threat to the Alliance's relevance, the discussions of the 58th General Assembly have proven the opposite. The transatlantic values on which NATO is founded and that tie its members so closely together—democracy, rule of law, international peace, and the transatlantic link—continue to lend it credibility and make it an attractive partner to countries around the world. At the same time, the transatlantic community cannot become complacent; NATO must enhance its capabilities and be prepared to address global threats in order to continue to protect those that share its world vision.

To that end, there are a few policy priorities and associated recommendations that will be key in shaping NATO's and the ATA's agendas moving forward. They are organized into three main categories: capabilities for NATO 2020; NATO Partnerships; and enhancing the Alliance in the face of financial challenges.

NATO 2020

As the Alliance pulls out of Afghanistan and thereby shifts to a contingency posture, it will have the opportunity to augment its readiness to address tomorrow's modern security challenges. Looking internally, NATO should prioritize the rebalancing of both the organization's capabilities and political engagement of its members. The Alliance must address the issue of financial burden sharing—the United States provides 72 percent of NATO's total spending—but it is necessary to look beyond just the matter of budgets and recognize that Europe must also take a huge step forward in terms of its political commitment to the Alliance and to improving its operational capabilities. Increased commitment from Europe will not only help to instill US confidence in its transatlantic partners, but will also help to solidify Europe's global role as a security provider.

Looking externally, NATO 2020 should allow for a more agile Alliance, ready to respond to global, 21st century security challenges. To that end, it will be important that NATO advances its intelligence, as well as its capacity to share information among members and with key partners.



Since security threats are oftentimes no longer geographically contained, it is imperative that the Alliance be able to think globally; cyber security, weapons of mass destruction, piracy, and energy security are all issues which NATO could put on its agenda going forward.

Recommendations:

- Given that US foreign policy increasingly prioritizes the Asia Pacific region, and US domestic issues consume the majority of the new Obama administration's time, NATO has the opportunity to prove itself as a crucial partner to the United States that can advance its post-Afghanistan security goals. To do so, NATO will need to:
 - Provide a deployable alliance with highly specialized units that can respond to global issues and address new threats where and when it is appropriate, particularly nuclear non-proliferation, cyber security, and energy security.
 - Enhance interoperability within the Alliance and with its partners.
 - Demonstrate its willingness to assist in military training in other regions to foster democratization.
- NATO should continue with its efforts to develop pragmatic cooperation and coordination with European Union bodies and institutions. Currently, the division of labor is too rigid, leading to miscommunication, operational failures, and strategic shortcomings. Closer ties with the EU will also help soften the blow of defense spending cuts by reducing duplication and helping to streamline efforts, particularly related to crisis management and improving civil-military cooperation.
- The major threats facing the Alliance today derive primarily from outside the transatlantic community's borders. Therefore, NATO should project itself globally, establishing closer ties with other regional organizations such as the African Union, the Arab League, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and ASEAN. Additionally, it should remain engaged with the BRICS countries, recognizing that emerging powers will have a major effect on the future of international security.

NATO Partnerships

Cooperative security has proven critical to recent NATO operations and consequently is one of the key pillars of the new Strategic Concept. In Afghanistan, ISAF troop contributors comprise 22 NATO partners, including global partners like Australia and South Korea. Partners lend the Alliance additional legitimacy by providing crucial knowledge of outside regions and important lessons in interoperability. In the case of the Arab Awakening, for example, NATO's ties to the MENA region



via the Mediterranean Dialogue granted the organization crucial insight into the game-changing political and security developments.

While the importance of partnerships cannot be denied, managing and institutionalizing them is not always straightforward. NATO's relationship with Russia, for instance, is a complicated one, particularly as NATO makes progress on a missile defense system. As NATO moves forward in strengthening its commitment to cooperative security, it will need to develop a specific agreement of how to engage with partners in the long-term. Addressing disparate capabilities and effectiveness, and—perhaps most importantly—diverging values will be major challenges.

Recommendations:

- When engaging with partners, the Alliance should think about how it can best employ public diplomacy. Each partner and potential partner has different security concerns, capabilities, and perceptions of NATO; therefore, NATO's relationship with each country should be approached accordingly.
- NATO should recognize the critical role that Turkey can play in advancing the Mediterranean Dialogue, as it acts as a natural bridge between the region and the West. In addition, its strong economy and growing international clout make Turkey a key player in maintaining the Alliance's relevance to potential partners.
- Partnership with Russia is still crucial and cooperation should be continued when possible. NATO should maximize gains of working with Russia in Afghanistan, as it is a key example of when the relationship works well.

Addressing Financial Challenges

Security threats will not stand idly by as the United States and Europe work to recover from financial crisis. The time to enhance capabilities and implement effective partnerships is now, so shrinking defense budgets will have to be incorporated into NATO's strategy for 2020—not used as an excuse for lack of action. Smart Defense and pooling and sharing are important steps in the right direction, but they demand better coordination and prioritization, and must be founded on mutual respect among members.

Moreover, as the Alliance moves forward with Smart Defense, it needs to do so with a long-term perspective and not see it as a temporary fix to address today's economic problems. If at all possible, key projects that will have enduring impact, like the development of a ballistic missile defense (BDM) capability, should not be delayed due to cuts in spending. The spending reductions that are made today will be felt for many years to come, so long-term thinking is key.



Recommendations:

- Budget cuts should be made strategically and member countries, particularly smaller ones, should be given the opportunity to develop specializations, so that cuts are not made horizontally but rather in a way that reduces duplication

- When reducing defense expenditures, Allies should strive to still invest in more modern capabilities, with an emphasis on intelligence and surveillance. New technology and methods to address emerging threats will pay off in the long-run.
 - Cyber security is a prime example of this. Investments in research and the development of more defensive cyber platforms will be crucial to minimizing the vulnerabilities of the transatlantic community in the long-term.

Conclusion

In his remarks at the Munich Security Conference NATO Secretary General Rasmussen maintained that the completion of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan “presents us with a big opportunity [...], an opportunity to plan for the future.” Just three days later, the ATA gathered in Rome with some of the foremost experts on NATO and its future to address what this potential plan could look like. Now it is the job of the ATA to engage with its constituencies on these ideas—policy makers, business leaders, think tanks, the media, and of course, future young leaders.
