

## *Working Paper*

### **Comments relating to**

### **the “Next Steps for NATO” and the new Strategic Concept**

#### **A. The future of NATO and the project of a new strategic concept**

1. Why a new strategic concept just now ?
  - a. There are at present good reasons to develop a new strategic concept for NATO:  
(1) The international environment has changed and the security dimension has become less secure, more global and world wide. (2) NATO is deeply engaged in Afghanistan and the NATO intervention is likely to drag on. (3) The new American Administration has suggested a new approach for the objectives to be reached by the NATO intervention in Afghanistan. (4) There is also the growing conviction that the terrorist tread of the Taliban does not involve only Afghanistan, but also its neighbour Pakistan. (5) The hardening of the Russian attitude both internally and towards its neighbours calls urgently for a renewed attention. (6) And for all this reasons, NATO has some homework to do in terms of solidarity, military adjustment, risk and burden sharing in order to face the present challenges in the best conditions. (7) Last but not least, strategic concepts are also an unique occasion to explain to the public opinion what NATO stands for and intends to do.
  - b. If the need of the concept is accepted, then the question arises what kind of document one can expect. Is it going to be mainly a justification for what NATO is doing at present and intends to do in the future? Or has the moment come for bold and far reaching steps? My experience as Ambassador to NATO some ten years ago teaches me that strategic concepts are not likely to be neither a public relation exercise nor a grand design. They almost always are the confirmation of transformations that are already under way but that need to be imbedded in a more structured conceptual framework. In real life, political and military actions are by nature responses to immediate diplomatic and security challenges. But an overall strategic approach remains nevertheless essential, even if it comes in a later stage.
  - c. So the need for an overall strategy remains, even if the concept is in part a confirmation of what is already happening. But it can and has to be based on the lessons learned, thus contributing to a successful outcome. One should therefore not expect big changes in NATO's policy or major institutional changes, but rather a better structured and adjusted confirmation of what is at present already under way, with responses to he questions one may have.
  - d. The list of the items to be covered by the new strategy relates logically to the problems NATO is facing at present and in the future and to the lessons that have been learned from past experiences. These problems are well-known: Afghanistan, the new Pakistani dimension of the NATO's intervention there, the importance of keeping the security solidarity among NATO-members, the

relations between the EU-and North America in he field of security, the sharing of risks and costs, the adjusting of military and other security instruments to the new security threads and the relations with Russia.

2. What is likely to contain the new strategic concept ?

a. Afghanistan:

- i. The new strategy should provide responses to the problems that present themselves both for the operation in Afghanistan and for other possible interventions in the future. With the prospect of a never-ending war, the objective of the intervention in Afghanistan has to be redefined. Until now the central objective for the intervention was to establish peace and security in Afghanistan through the build up of a normal democratic country. Much as already been realised, but this ambitious objective remains nevertheless still far away and many even fear that Afghanistan never will become a “normal country” according to the Western standards One of the “lessons learned” is therefore that the objective of the operation has to be slightly modified. What is now intended is that the country should not represent a serious international security risk any more. It was the unacceptable terrorist security tread of the Taliban that motivated the Western intervention and it should logically also become the threshold to end the operation. So once the security tread has disappeared, the Western forces should be withdrawn. Of course promoting democracy, respect for human rights, good governance and better living conditions for the local populations will also be further pursued but they are not the thresholds for ending the intervention in Afghanistan.
- ii. The strategic concept will also have to encompass the other lessons that have been learned in Afghanistan, with among others the need to insist on the responsibilities of the local Authorities; to concentrate on the training and the equipment of the local military and police forces who will have to provide stability and security once the NATO and the other allied forces have left; to deal also with the non-military aspects of the peacemaking process such as reconstruction, good governance, economic development, education, drug traffic...
- iii. Guiding principles for other possible NATO interventions elsewhere are likely to be added. They will reflect the lessons learned in Afghanistan, but also from in other places such as in Kosovo. And there is certainly much to say about how to bring peace in regions that have suffered form excessive violence, poverty and lawlessness. But drafting a standard manual for future peace making operations would not make much sense, because the local situations and particularities will always call for different actions. But with the sometimes painful experiences of Afghanistan in mind, the drafters of the new strategic concept are likely to be very careful not to engage lightly in the future into similar interventions without having made a thorough evaluation of the dangers involved and of the means available.
- iv. The specific Pakistani dimension of the Afghan security problem deserves an increased attention. There is today an awareness that the key to neutralise the

Taliban tread in the region is to be found in Islamabad. But the Pakistani Authorities still see India as their main security tread, refusing to admit that it is at present the Taliban cancer that is profoundly destabilising the entire country from within. There is, in other words, a need to convince the Government of Pakistan that today the main task of the army is to contain and to neutralise the Taliban terrorists. This task will not be easy, but with the generous American support as convincing argument, it must not be impossible to achieve.

b. The transatlantic relationship

- i. The establishment of a lasting and balanced relationship between the EU and the USA and Canada is crucial for the survival of the Alliance, especially after the tensions that existed at the time of President Bush. Thanks to the new approach of President Obama, who is ready to listen and consult his allies, and to his broader acceptance of multilateral cooperation, the relationship across the Atlantic is likely to develop in the right direction.
- ii. But institutional changes are not really considered at present in NATO circles. They prefer at the present stage to build on the existing goodwill so as to create mutual trust through dialogue and practical forms of cooperation. So the idea of a two-pillar construction within NATO that was often talked about in the past seems still premature. Priority should indeed be given to build a strong bridge – that is common to the two sides - rather than to the pillars that will have to support it – that are separate and could be divisive.
- iii. The decision of President Sarkozy to join the military structure of NATO is an important contribution to strengthen the transatlantic cooperation. The new strategic concept will also have to deal with this essential question that has to do with the place the French would obtain in the military command structure and with its participation to the military cooperation's of NATO.
- iv. There is at present also a “window of opportunity” for a more structured cooperation between the EU and NATO, but rather by a step-by-step approach than by trying to make big jumps forward. But there are still obstacles – difficult to remove - arising from the Turkish frustrations in its relationship with the UE and with the attitude of Greece and Greek Cyprus towards the UN plan for the reunification of Cyprus. But the cooperation between the EU and NATO, both practical and institutional, is a matter to be considered by the two Organisations and cannot be done by NATO alone. A declaration of intend and of good will could however be considered, with suggestions for practical arrangements based on the lessons learned in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Why not start with a list of possible fields of cooperation between the two organisations in order to allow a bilateral discussion to start on how the cooperation can be organised?

c. The cost and risk sharing within NATO

The item of cost and of risk sharing among NATO-partners has almost permanently been present on the agenda of NATO policy-documents. It is by nature a difficult and often irritating question. The concept of solidarity

supposes that all members contribute equally to the efforts that are made. But not all the members accept the same risks nor contribute to the same extent to NATO operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere. But since NATO is engaged in military operations, soldiers die and this gives a new dimension to this sensitive question. It will not be enough that the new strategic concept repeats once again the principle of equality of rights and obligations for all NATO members. There will have to be more precise guidelines and indications so as to give credibility to the engagements that are subscribed.

d. Military adjustments:

Much has already been done to transform the armies of yesterday to make them able to cope with the security missions of tomorrow. But there is nevertheless a great urgency to press for faster progress in this field. But the political will and the necessary financial means are lacking almost everywhere. And the recent financial and economic shockwaves limit even further the possibilities of Governments. But the new strategy will nevertheless have to stress these priorities, with appropriate additional guidelines to obtain results in a not too distant future.

e. The relations with Russia:

i. This item has become lately a delicate and important issue for NATO and for the West, but not all the member States have the same priorities and assessments of the intentions of Moscow. After the dawn following the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the relations between the West and Russia were moving closer, but lately they have become more strained, partly because, feeling richer and stronger, Russia has become more assertive both, internationally, in its relations with its neighbours and, in the country itself, towards the dissidents against the regime. The divergent views that exist relate to the following three areas:

1. There is, in the first place, the view that, because Russia is still an essential partner for the West, priority should still be given to dialogue and cooperation. A large range of international security problems cannot be solved without involving this country, either because of its veto-right in the Security Council or of its geographic situation. This is among others the case of Iran's ambition to become a nuclear power, where the West needs the support of Russia.
2. Then there is the western dependency on energy where Russia occupies a key position. With its vast reserves, Russia could become a more stable supplier of oil and gas than the Middle East, where there often is a temptation to blackmail the West for both political and economic reasons. But today Russia also uses energy as a leverage to increase its income and to regain political influence in world affairs. By playing skilfully the trump card of "divides ut impera" it has strengthened its position both economically and politically, while dividing the West between those who were ready to give in and those who are not.
3. President Poetin and his successor Medvedev have recently adopted a harder line towards those who are against the regime and towards neighbour countries such as Georgia and Ukraine. For many observers,

Russia is slowly turning its back to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance and there is a growing feeling within the West that the country cannot any more be treated as a decent partner.

- ii. These three policy lines are however difficult to reconcile and there is no agreement among NATO members about their level of priority. The only possibility is therefore that the right balance has to be found between them. And it is crucial to come to a common stand so as to make sure that Moscow cannot go on playing the policy of dividing the West.

**B. The overall security trends:**

- a. This paper takes the view that the new strategic concept has an important role to play in creating a common conceptual framework for the kind of policy that is already under way. It is, in other words, not going to become a “grand project” aiming at solving the world security problems of tomorrow. These are too large and too numerous for only one security Organisation, even being as important as NATO. And NATO has built-in limitations: in terms of geography (being Western); as a predominantly military and diplomatic Organisation with no overall competences and as the champion of the Western values. The difficulty for NATO intervening outside Europe has therefore nothing to do anymore with the old “out of area concept” of the cold war, but it is to be found in the fact that the Organisation is almost inevitably perceived as an instrument of Western power and interests, with in the background the colonial past of many of its members. It is therefore not realistic to expect that upcoming world powers such as China, India and Brazil will accept that NATO should become the main instrument to provide for a more peaceful and secure world. This means that NATO cannot solve all the world security problems for the future and that its strategic concept cannot engage in such a large and overall exercise.
- b. What should be the main security problems in the present world environment?
  - i. The biggest problem is certainly the incapacity, at World level, to take action in dangerous and tragic situations that only will get worse if nothing is done. There are many examples of such situations where almost everyone agrees that urgent action is absolutely needed, such as in Darfur, Zimbabwe, Sudan or Congo or the wildly destructive Somali piracy. These are all dramatic developments that everybody condemns but that the international community is simply unable to stop. But solutions for problems of this kind can only be found through a reform of the Security Council of the United Nations. The two essential measures that are needed are well known, but they meet with strong resistance: making the Council more representative of the present world community and making it impossible for a big individual country to paralyse international security decisions for reasons of pure national interest. But, even at the world level, no international Organisation can guarantee peace and security alone. The problems are too complex, too numerous and too heavy to be treated just by one body. A reformed Security Council can and should provide the necessary legitimisation for interventions in crisis situations, but it cannot be expected to run efficiently, from New York, several peacemaking operations scattered world wide, as it is the case at present. It would be better that “more on the spot” organisations would have the responsibility of the operational part

of peace making, because they would then be more easily accepted by the local populations; they would involve troops that are closer to the local situations and countries that have a direct interest in having their region fully pacified.

- ii. One could therefore argue that there is a real need for security Organisations at the regional level, next to NATO, but in the other continents, possibly beginning with Africa where most of the failed states can today be found. NATO could be helpful with its expertise, financial support, training and advice. But an appropriate regional security Organisation in Asia would also make sense. If extreme tensions should one day arise opposing giants such as China, India and even Russia, would it not be precious to have a framework where local dangerous situations can be timely discussed and appropriate initiatives be taken? And Latin America should not be left aside because it also has regional tensions, but perhaps with less worldwide consequences than in the other continents.
- iii. How and when an African, an Asian or a Latin American Security Organisation should be created is not in the first place a Western business, but it would nevertheless be a reasonable Western concern that they should one day exist and should be able to cope with their local security needs in the future.

**C. Concluding remarks:**

A new NATO strategy has a real "raison d'être". Since NATO is engaged in large and faraway field operations such as in Afghanistan, it becomes indeed urgent to define the general approach to be followed in such occasions. And achieving a more balanced NATO and realising a closer cooperation between the EU and NATO are also urgent priorities since some time, where not much progress has been achieved. Stressing NATO solidarity is uncontested, but it remains essential and has therefore to be accompanied by guidelines on how it could be translated into reality. Russia is and will remain an important player for the West. The question is to find the right balance between the areas where the cooperation with this country can be enforced and those where divergences have to be recognised and nevertheless pressed forward but from the strong basis of common Western positions.

The new strategy of NATO is essential to keep its members together and to allow them to engage efficiently where and when the necessity arises. But for peacekeeping missions the document cannot be seen as a binding manual or military action plan but will in essence remain a framework for later individual decisions.

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