NATO’s Partnerships Before and After the Chicago Summit

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Evolution of NATO’s Partnerships

From Berlin to Chicago – future of NATO’s partnerships

Areas of common cooperation between NATO and Partners:

The Chicago Summit of NATO once again confirmed that global security challenges require global collective responses. The Chicago Summit also tested a new partnership policy adopted by Foreign Ministers in Berlin in April 2011 following months of profound discussions amongst the Allies on the role of partners that started before the adoption of the new strategic concept and was concluded at the Lisbon Summit. The Allied Heads of State and Government recalled the Berlin partnership policy and committed the Alliance to “continue to actively pursue its further implementation with a view to strengthening NATO’s partnerships.” At the Summit, several meetings with partners were held in new formats such as an extended ISAF meeting, meeting with thirteen partners, and the meeting with aspirant countries (2012, Francois).

So why is NATO so interested in expanding its partnership networks and where is the connection with NATO’s main tasks as defined in its Strategic concept – collective defence and crisis management? In the latest strategic concept, adopted by Allies at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, the third core task of NATO was defined as cooperative security. This can be achieved only through a wide network of partner relationship with countries and organizations on a truly global scale (2011, Rasmussen,). In the period of economic turmoil, major political and geopolitical changes in North Africa and the Middle East, downsizing of NATO’s major military operation in Afghanistan, NATO needs to evolve and re-focus itself once again. It has to do more with fewer resources, it has to streamline its command and control structures and it has to acquire new and modern military capabilities in times of austerity. So where do the partners fit in? NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen believes that for NATO to remain relevant, it has to invest in strong partnerships, modern military hardware, and flexible forces. “Partnership is not a choice between staying at home or going global. It is not peripheral to our business – it is part of NATO’s core business” (Chatham House Speech, 4 July 2012). As security challenges develop and become more global, NATO’s outreach to partners must become global as well. In order to be able to successfully fight security threats such as terrorism, cyber
terrorism and piracy, NATO needs to re-invest in its partners and facilitate consultations, information sharing and interoperability of forces.

**Evolution of NATO’s Partnerships**

NATO’s partnerships underwent a truly historical development from the beginning of 90’s to the current times.

The London Declaration on a Transformed NATO from July 1990 officially refers to the new strategic environment in Europe and the need to re-think the relationship between NATO and the Central and Eastern European countries. The first official reference calling for partnerships can be found in revision of the Strategic Concept from November 1991. Following on the developments in Eastern Europe from November 1989 onwards, NATO and its 16 Allies have recognized the importance to reach out to the former Communist bloc. There was an urgent need to fill up the security vacuum in Europe and to assist the countries in transition with defence and security sector reforms (2006, Barany). In December 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council was established as a forum for security dialogue between NATO and its new partners, which led to the establishment of the Partnership for Peace, PfP, a major programme of practical bilateral cooperation between NATO and individual partner countries.

But the membership and new policy areas handled by the Partnership for Peace were not perfectly aligned with the more limited approach of the original North Atlantic Cooperation Council (2007, Simmons Jr.). That is why in the late 1990s a special group was established, chaired by the then Deputy Secretary General, to develop a political framework which encompassed both the wider membership and broader goals of NATO’s partnership with most of the countries of Europe. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was established at a meeting in Sintra, Portugal on 30 May 1997.

Since 1994, the PfP has grown to 34 countries (currently 22), of which 12 became members of the Alliance over the years. There are currently four more countries wishing to join the Alliance and are in different stages of the accession process.¹ Not only has the PfP contributed to the consolidation of Europe in the turbulent years after the end of Cold War, it was also a powerful engine for enlargement (1997, FAS).

¹ Current aspirants are Bosnia Herzegovina (MAP granted with a condition), Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* are in the MAP process and Georgia aspiring for MAP. *Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name
Since the PfP has proven to be an excellent mechanism for cooperation, several other partnership formats have been established since, most of them based on geographical locations such as the Mediterranean Dialogue, MD, (1994)\(^2\) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, ICI, (2004).

When the first NATO operations started in the Western Balkans, a new momentum occurred – side by side with the Allies, partner nations contributed their own troops. Such was the case in Bosnia Herzegovina,\(^3\) KFOR (Kosovo)\(^4\) and ISAF (Afghanistan). When NATO deployed its peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the mid-90s, troops from 14 partner countries deployed to serve alongside their Alliance counterparts as the Implementation Force (IFOR). By the time this mission concluded in December 2004, some 21 partner countries had participated in it at different times. It is notable that for both operations, Russia made the single largest non-NATO country troop contribution.

The unprecedented number and geographical variety of 22 partners from five continents contributing to ISAF (see table 1) has created a new momentum for NATO and its partnership policy. New partners such as Australia or Japan rank amongst the biggest contributors in troops and donations. Operational issues but also the necessity for strategic decisions created an opportunity for NATO to review its approach to operational partners and the need for more inclusiveness in operational planning, command and control structures and decision-making (2008, NATO PA Annual Session).

**ISAF Contributing Nations**

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<th>Albania</th>
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\(^2\) Partners in Mediterranean Dialogue: Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Morocco, Jordan and Israel.

\(^3\) Partners in ICC: UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar.

\(^4\) KFOR contributing partners as of July 2012: Austria, Ireland, Finland, Morocco, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine.
During the operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya, partners also played an important role, securing consultation, intelligence sharing and operational involvement with Allies (Sweden, Jordan, Qatar, UAE). In addition, important links and consultations with regional organizations such as the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council and African Union took place during the operation. \(^5\) NATO’s Secretary General was also invited to all meetings of the Contact Group on Libya with NATO having a seat at the table. This ensured a new level of contacts for NATO and diversification of its partners or a more profound relationship of an already existing one. Qatar was for example a member of the ICI initiative since 2004, but only during the OUP did Qatar become much more active with NATO by becoming a vital operational partner.

Stemming from the wide-ranging number of partners contributing to ISAF, but also from the increased importance of some countries for the Alliance, NATO developed relations with a new set of countries, defined as Partners across the Globe.\(^6\)

When describing NATO’s vast network of partners, one cannot omit to also mention Russia and Ukraine. Even if both have been PfP members since its creation, the importance of these two countries has called for a more profound relationship that resulted in a creation of NATO-

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5 For example, the visit of the Chairman of AU Mr. Jean Ping to NAC, 6 April 2011
6 Partners across the Globe – Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Republic of Korea.
Ukraine Commission in 1997 and NATO-Russia Council in 2002. After the August 2008 events in Georgia, the Allies agreed to also establish a NATO-Georgia Commission.

Global security challenges, crisis management needs; including disaster relief operations, in and outside of the Euro-Atlantic area in the past 20 years have demonstrated that NATO needs its partners more than ever to ensure global peace and security.

**New Partnership Policy – a need for reform**

The number of partners that NATO deals with currently numbers 41 – operational partners, PfP, Mediterranean Dialogue, ICI, but also global partners such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. In addition to individual countries, there is also an array of international organizations: EU, UN, OSCE, Red Cross, UNHCR, OCHA, etc. that NATO has established cooperation with, referred to as the Comprehensive Approach.

NATO defines the strategic objectives of NATO’s partner relations as following:

- Enhance Euro-Atlantic and international security, peace and stability;
- Promote regional security and cooperation;
- Facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation on issues of common interest, including international efforts to meet emerging security challenges;
- Prepare interested eligible nations for NATO membership;
- Promote democratic values and reforms;
- Enhance support for NATO-led operations and missions;
- Enhance awareness of security developments including through early warning, with a view to preventing crises;
- Build confidence, achieve better mutual understanding, including about NATO’s role and activities, in particular though enhanced public diplomacy.

According to the new Strategic Concept, NATO is to offer its partners “more political engagement with the Alliance, and a substantial role in shaping strategy and decisions on NATO-led operations to which they contribute.” A need for reform of NATO’s partnerships policy was imminent because the existing tools and frameworks were outdated and did not correspond to the new needs.

The first step came during the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, where Allies agreed to make the dialogue and cooperation more inclusive, flexible, meaningful and strategically oriented.
They also acknowledged a need to streamline the existing partnership tools in order to open all cooperative activities and exercises to all partners and to review the political-military framework for NATO-led PfP operations in order to update the way NATO works together with partners and shapes decisions on the operations and missions to which they contribute.

Following up on the Lisbon Summit decisions, Allied foreign ministers meeting in Berlin in April 2011 approved the More Efficient and Flexible Partnership Policy. The revised Political-Military Framework for partner involvement in NATO-led operations was also noted by ministers. The Berlin Ministerial Meeting gave a new impetus to the partnership policy and enabled the development of new partnership tools, better engagement with partners across the globe who contribute significantly to security but also helped to develop new flexible meeting formats (such as the 28+N format) and introduced individual cooperation menus with all partners.

While respecting the specificity of existing partnership frameworks, all partners are offered access to the whole spectrum of partnership activities NATO offers. All partners with which NATO has an individual programme of cooperation – be they Euro-Atlantic partners, or partners in the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, or partners across the globe – have access to a new Partnership Cooperation Menu, which comprises some 1,600 activities.

The new policy was set to further develop existing frameworks, at the same time allowing new partners (Iraq, Australia, New Zealand etc.) to benefit for the already established array of cooperation programs.

The PfP remains the most developed framework and assists the countries that wish so, to pursue their aspirant ambitions. Years of a close military, technical, civil emergency cooperation have resulted in a well-established process such as the Individual Partnership Actions Plan or the Membership Action Plan.

The individual partnership programmes of the Mediterranean Dialogue are being harmonized with the post-Berlin tools. Of course, the regional dynamics, follow-up from the Arab spring and persisting security problems in the region draw setbacks to a more dynamic expansion. Nevertheless, NATO has offered support for transition to several countries in the region. The relations with ICI countries have on contrary experienced a much bigger boom, esp. with providing logistical and other support to the mission in Afghanistan, and an important political/military role they provided during the Operation Unified Protector. Kuwait has generously offered to establish an ICI Regional Centre that will serve for enhanced cooperation.
between NATO and the ICI Gulf countries. These countries are particularly interested in deepening cooperation with NATO in the area of energy, maritime and cyber security.

Progress was achieved with a number of partners across the globe in particular in signing a Joint Political Declaration with Australia, and singing of the individual partnership cooperation menus with a number of countries: Australia, Iraq, Mongolia, New Zealand and Republic of Korea. Japan is interested in a similar formulation of relations with NATO.

One of the main prospects for the new policy and tools is to build on acquired expertise from operations. The unique experience gained by Allied and partner troops from operations must not be lost. It should be preserved by training initiatives, common exercises and joint simulations between Allied and partners forces (Rasmussen, 2012).

The new policy also allows for flexible meeting formats in the future that are substance-driven. This is not to say that EAPC or NATO-Russia Council will no longer exist. But it will, in addition to already existing meetings in ISAF or KFOR format, allow for meetings on a thematic basis or events driven: such as for example a NAC held in 28+N format in September 2011 to discuss counter-piracy. The meeting included representatives from 47 nations involved in counter-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean. The new policy is to ensure a more coherent, connected and capable NATO. The fruits of the reform were tested in Chicago in May 2012.

**From Berlin to Chicago – future of NATO’s partnerships**

The meeting in Chicago allowed the Allies to review the preliminary results of Berlin policy whether a deeper political and practical engagement between partners and Allies was achieved.

The Summit in Chicago in May 2012 was to be a first major event based on the new partnership policy and its more flexible format meetings: the usual ISAF format was extended to include the Central Asian republics, Russia and Pakistan. It was for the first time that these countries participated at an ISAF meeting since they are not troop contributing nations. It was however recognized that when discussing issues such as post-2014 Afghanistan, transit of troops and equipment from Afghanistan, these countries play a central role and need to be engaged on a discussion on the future of NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan.
In addition, NATO organized a meeting with thirteen partners who have recently made particular political, operational and financial contributions to NATO-led operations (paragraph 24, Chicago Summit Declaration, 21 May 2012). The meeting was to demonstrate the new flexibility and even if the selection of partners might have been a sensitive issue, it was a much needed test for the effectiveness of the new partnerships policy. As Allies recognized the importance of pursuing NATO’s open door policy, they also agreed to hold a meeting with the four countries aspiring for membership. The meeting was not to discuss enlargement but to motivate the countries to continue in their reforms and to enhance discussions on common threat perceptions and new challenges. In comparison with the thirteen partners meeting, this meeting was held at a level of Foreign Ministers. The gathering was to reconfirm the decisions taken at previous summits (Riga, Bucharest and Lisbon) but not to make any new announcements on enlargement.

The added value of NATO’s new partnership policy, as demonstrated in Chicago, is that it can set a new course of action, if need be, and the partnerships become more pragmatic.

In addition, the new policy has also the potential to facilitate dialogue and practical cooperation with a broad and diverse set of partners, including those like China or India. Even if these countries have so far limited contacts with NATO (outside few senior official visits and couple of public diplomacy activities such as visits of Indian diplomats or Chinese academics), the variety of topics for discussion and consultations are unlimited.

A critical challenge for NATO will be to preserve the existing partnerships beyond the current common interests (such as current operations) and to offer an added value for new partners to join NATO in its network as a global security hub (Shea, 2012).

New security challenges could be a common denominator to enhance the raison d’etre of the wide network of NATO partners – they are global and need a common and coordinated response such as cyber defence, counterterrorism, training and security sector reform, maritime security etc. (Shea, 2012).

NATO’s Secretary General outlined his vision for the new role of partners in his speech on 4 July by introducing clusters of common interest where Allies and Partners can cooperate, such as training and education; emerging security challenges and Smart Defence. According to him,

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7 Australia, Austria, Finland, Georgia, Japan, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Morocco, New Zealand, Qatar, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates.
clusters should be flexible enough to accommodate different partners yet focused enough to deliver concrete results (Chatham House Speech, London, 4 July 2012).

**Areas of common cooperation between NATO and Partners:**

*Smart Defence*

Decreased defence budgets but also major capability gaps led NATO to look for innovative and new initiatives such as the Smart Defence. Based on a concept of multinational cooperation and pooling and sharing of resources, it aims to deliver much needed new and critical capabilities for the Alliance. However, NATO partners are also becoming increasingly interested in Smart Defence as well – particularly those who have for many years participated to NATO operations and would, side by side to Allied troops, make use of critical capabilities such as Air Ground Surveillance, Air-to-Air refuelling etc. But Smart Defence became also an interesting concept for a regional cooperation where Allies and partners share common borders (Conference on Smart Defence in South East Europe, Tirana, 23 April 2012 or Panel on Smart Defence, 2BeSecure Forum, Budva, 8 June 2012). In some cases, partners already participate in a pooling capability such as the Strategic Airlift Capability (www.nspa.nato.int). As the NATO Deputy Secretary General and SG Special Envoy for Smart Defence, Amb. Alexander Vershbow states, the success of Smart Defence can be enhanced if NATO finds a way to “plug” the partners in (2012, NATO Review).

*Maritime Security*

NATO participates in the anti-piracy operation off the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden since 2008. It is also a member of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia established under the UN auspices in 2009 together with over 70 members including Russia, China, India and the EU, and other actors. Cooperation and common encounters between NATO vessels under operation Ocean Shield and Chinese and Russian vessels are relatively common as they all operate as convoy escorts in the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) as part of the international counter-piracy efforts to disrupt piracy attacks and assist in capacity-building of countries in the region to disrupt attacks themselves. This coordinated effort has helped to improve the security situation off the coast of Somalia. According to the European Union Naval Forces Somalia data, the security situation improved in 2012 and 2011: while there were 151 attacks on ships in 2011, only 25 were successful hijacks compared to 47 successful hijacks in 2010.

*Cyber terrorism*
Cyber threats are another example for a potential cooperation between NATO and its partners. Symantec Intelligence Report (Oct. 2011) states that cyber security is an unavoidable issue and the threat is growing daily. In the last 12 months, security experts monitored more than 286 million new threats and the volume of web-based attacks has risen by 93 per cent worldwide. It also places Brazil and China in the top spot for cyber attacks. After Estonia became a victim of nation-wide cyber attacks in 2007, NATO established its Centre of Excellence in Tallinn in 2008. Today it is one of the most capable computer incident response centres around the world and NATO has developed a system for exchanging and assessing intelligence on cyber threats (Shea, 2012). But it can also help to shape the future cyber environment by promoting information-sharing and confidence-building measures among its partners – especially those most affected by cyber crime such as Brazil, China and India (Norton Cyber Crime Report, December 2011).

As described above, common topics of interest between NATO and its partners are wide-ranging both in substance as well as in geographical sense. Frühling and Schreer argue that due to the lack of a coherent strategy of NATO on partnerships, NATO conducts a “customer-driven partnership” concept (Frühling, Schreer, 2010). But if NATO is to ensure a wide range of security tasks on a global platform, the approach to partnerships must be pragmatic and flexible. The new flexible Partnership policy adopted in Berlin provides both a political guidance for NATO’s partnerships as well as a set of pragmatic and practical solutions.

In the 90’s, the partnerships were promoted on a notion of sharing liberal democratic values and facilitating difficult transitions in Eastern Europe. They were also a tool for a successful enlargement (2009, Brzezinski). During NATO’s operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya, partnerships helped to share the burden of military interventions. In the new decade, NATO’s partnerships will develop further to maximize the cooperative effort in delivering international security – be it fighting together security threats and challenges or operating together in crisis situations.

Global risks and threats require a global answer and NATO should be a part of the answer: “This is why cooperative security is fundamental to the Alliance’s way of doing business. It means NATO must be able, and willing, to engage politically and militarily with other nations, wherever they may be, and with other international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union.” Anders F. Rasmussen, Secretary General of NATO.

Reference:


