

NATO's Chicago Summit: not 'just' an implementation Summit

NATO's Chicago Summit on 20-21 May 2012 will not be 'just' an implementation Summit of the Lisbon Summit Declaration. Besides Afghanistan, the nuclear issue and the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review, and Missile Defence, developments since the Lisbon Summit have broadened the agenda. Among them are the international financial crisis and 'Smart Defence', NATO's intervention in Libya and the United States moving its center of gravity from Europe toward the Asia-Pacific region. NATO's biggest challenge will be to slim down, while retaining the capabilities to handle the global security agenda of its members.

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NATO 3.0

According to U.S. ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, we are now living in the era of NATO 3.0, which was born at the summit of NATO leaders in Lisbon.¹ NATO 1.0 existed during the Cold War. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO 2.0 emerged, which was fundamentally focused on stabilizing and transforming Central and Eastern Europe. The current NATO 3.0 has two fundamental characteristics, Daalder says. Firstly it is an alliance that is focused on operations. In 2011 there were six NATO operations on three continents. But secondly, NATO is not only an operative alliance; it has also become a hub for global security. In Afghanistan, there are not just 28 NATO countries that are involved, but 22 non-NATO countries, 50 in all that are providing military capability in order to help the Afghans to secure their own future.

However, contrary to the optimism of ambassador Daalder, taking into account the widespread public disappointment with large-scale military interventions and rapidly declining defence budgets along with personnel and equipment cuts, it will be difficult for NATO governments to conduct a mission of this sort again, even if they can muster

the political will. The Alliance, which aspired only a few years ago to become a global military actor, faces a future of reduced means and more modest ambitions. Afghanistan has been an unique but not a very successful event, and is not an example for future NATO operations, as has been stated for a long time by the United States.

New developments

The forthcoming NATO Chicago Summit has for some time being considered as an 'implementation summit' at which the Alliance's political leaders could assess the progress of the ambitious work programme agreed on in the Lisbon Summit Declaration. However, new developments have broadened the agenda and will make Chicago a summit in its own right.²

Those new developments since late 2010 have changed the international security agenda. Some

¹ Ivo Daalder, *NATO and the Transatlantic Alliance, the American Perspective*, Speech at the Chicago Council of Global Affairs, 1 March, 2012

² Karl-Heinz Kamp, 'NATO's Chicago Summit: A Thorny Agenda', *Research Paper*, Research Division – NATO Defense College, Rome, No. 70 – November 2011, p. 8

examples. The revolutions in the Arab world and NATO's military intervention in Libya have refocused the Alliance's attention on the Middle East and to Northern Africa. The international financial crisis will also have a substantial impact on NATO's members' defence budgets. And the debate on transatlantic burden sharing and solidarity within the alliance has again been emphasized by the speech of outgoing U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, in Brussels, last June.

Gates bluntly criticized his European allies for the slow progress in the Libya intervention against a weak opponent and for failing to invest in the capabilities that the United States was forced to provide, such as air-defence suppression, smart munitions, ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) and aerial refuelling.³ Gates was wondering, how much longer the United States would see NATO as a military useful partner, when the Europeans did not plug those gaps.

United States withdrawal from Europe

The United States also now presents itself more as a Pacific, than a European power. This preference was made explicit in President Obama's review of military strategy in the beginning of this year.⁴ As the United States moves its center of gravity toward the Asia-Pacific region and withdraws two combat brigades from Germany, the future role of the United States in NATO will inevitably be discussed in Chicago. Nevertheless, even after withdrawing the two brigades, the United States will still have 37.000 troops in Europe and 28 bases. It has assigned one U.S.-based combat brigade to the NATO Response Force, which will return to Europe every year for training.

That said, the United States has made clear to European Alliance members, that it expects the Europeans to take the responsibility for security in Europe and on Europe's periphery, with exception of an Article 5 contingency. It also expects Europe to take the lead in supporting the transitions that come out of the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East. The Libyan war provides a likely formula for many future NATO operations. During the conflict, the U.S. left its European allies to lead, taking on a limited, supporting role for the first time. Most Europeans seem to lack in their DNA the sense of global responsibility that drives US foreign policy; they simply want to be 'a big

Switzerland: prosperous and safe, but reluctant to worry about problems in other parts of the world', according to a cynical but realistic Charles Grant.⁵

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is and remains the key and most important priority for the Alliance. One of the challenges will be, how to portray the ISAF operation in Afghanistan still as a success. At the NATO summit in Lisbon, NATO leaders and President Karzai agreed that the Alliance would support an Afghan-led transition process, which would begin in 2011. The transition of responsibility for the security of all Afghan provinces should be completed by mid-2013.⁶ Even so, the ISAF combat mission will continue as planned until the end of 2014. The withdrawal of fighting troops will be gradual and will take between 12 and 18 months. During this time, ISAF will continue to provide combat support and to train Afghan security forces in the fields of logistics, medical support and special operations. But in the meantime some countries are already unilaterally withdrawing their troops (Australia, France, Poland etc.). A number of member countries have contributed to ISAF out of solidarity with the United States.

It is expected that in Chicago a 'new strategic plan' for Afghanistan will be presented on the role to be played by NATO in the period to follow the withdrawal of the combat troops between now and December 2014. When ISAF's time in Afghanistan will come to an end in 2014, NATO will almost certainly remain engaged in the country, training the Afghan security forces and carrying out a long-term partnership arrangement to assist in areas such as defence reform and military education.

The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uri Rosenthal, has declared in Parliament, that the Netherlands will keep involved in Afghanistan after 2014, by making money available for supporting the Afghan Security Forces. However, one has to realize that a sustainable solution for Afghanistan is a political one, in which the role of NATO is rather limited.

3 Robert Gates, *NATO Has Become Two Tiered Alliance*, Brussels, 10 June 2011

4 Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership – Priorities for 21st Century Defense, Department of Defense, 5 January 2012

5 Charles Grant, 'How to make Europe's military work', *Financial Times*, 16 August 2009

6 *Europe Diplomacy & Defence*, No. 505, 19 April 2012, p. 1

Deterrence and Defence Posture Review

At the Lisbon NATO summit member states tasked NATO to undertake a review of its overall posture in defending and deterring against the full range of threats to the Alliance in light of the changes in the international security environment. The Deterrence and Posture Review (DDPR) was intended to be a vehicle for resolving key questions about the future role of nuclear weapons in NATO policy. The Netherlands together with Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Norway already initiated before the Lisbon Summit a serious debate within NATO regarding the Alliance's policy on nuclear weapons. NATO, however, has agreed that nuclear issues will be addressed by the Alliance as a whole, not unilaterally. An agreement was eventually reached by broadening the proposal to a review of overall NATO deterrence and defence posture, including but not limited to its nuclear component.

Most allies understand that – quite apart from their deterrent role – those weapons play an important part in reassuring allies who feel more exposed to external threats, such as the Baltic and Central European states. Indeed, the nuclear issue today is more about reassurance than deterrence.

The precise contents of the 'appropriate mix' of conventional, nuclear, and missile defence capabilities envisaged in the Lisbon Summit Declaration have yet to be identified. Costs stand out as an important factor.⁷ However, NATO is unlikely to resolve the question of what to do about its forward deployed nuclear weapons before or at the summit.

A related question is the future of dual capable aircraft. In addition to weapons intended for U.S. aircraft, there are also German, Belgian, Dutch, and Italian aircraft which can carry nuclear weapons. However, in the German air force, the Tornado, which is their dual capable fighter, will probably be retired in the next five to ten years. Germany so far has decided that its successor, the Euro Fighter, will not be wired for nuclear weapons. Consequently, the German air force is right now on track to get out of the nuclear business.

Missile Defence

In Lisbon, the 28 member states agreed that NATO would create and deploy a missile defence system to provide protection for NATO European populations, forces, and territory. President Obama

removed, for the US-Russian relationship, the missile defence system which was foreseen by his predecessor George W. Bush, by proposing a new architecture 'European Phased Adapted Approach'(EPAA). It will focus at least initially on medium-range threats for Europe coming from the Middle East (Iran), and only in the longer run on intercontinental missiles threatening the United States. NATO intends to use the Chicago Summit to declare the 'Interim Operational Capability' operational. The Alliance will be in a position in Chicago to take command and control of this missile defence system and to provide a limited defence against a ballistic missile threat, with the intention of achieving full operational capability by 2018.

The Dutch government has decided that it will invest 250 million euros in upgrading radars on its advanced air defence and command frigates, so that those radars can track ballistic missiles as they are flying to targets in Europe. The Netherlands will also make its Patriot missiles available for the missile defence system.

Smart Defence

'Smart Defense' is a new topic, which is not related to the Lisbon agenda. The Smart Defense initiative, together with the EU's 'pooling and sharing' programme, clearly point the way ahead, provided that NATO and the EU can also pool and share their own respective projects. 'Smart Defence is all about creating a new mindset', according to NATO's Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.⁸ 'About better aligning our collective requirements and national priorities. And about focusing our efforts on prioritisation, cooperation and specialization'.⁹ At Chicago, those 'smart defence' issues will be turned into a long-term capability strategy.

This strategy comprises three major components: firstly, a tangible package of multinational projects to address critical capability shortfalls; secondly, longer-term multinational projects that include missile defence, Alliance Ground Surveillance

7 'Carrying Forward NATO's Deterrence Review: A Report on a Workshop in Brussels, 25-26 October 2011', *Workshop Report*

8 Remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Allied Command Transformation Seminar, Washington DC, 28 February 2012

9 Ibid

and air policing; and thirdly, strategic projects for 2020 covering areas such as Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and air-to-air refueling. Rasmussen hopes members will agree to more than 20 projects before the Chicago summit, each led by one member country. These are practical ways to provide security while minimizing cost to any nation.

NATO-Russia

An almost traditional topic on the list of a NATO Summit is the NATO-Russia relationship. Despite efforts on both sides this remains a tough issue. NATO's eastern European member states still have concerns about Russia, while Moscow's often harsh words and deeds vis-à-vis neighbours or former allies do little to alleviate fears of Russia.

An important obstacle for NATO-Russia relations is a common missile defence system, which has been insisted by Russia. In this common project both sides would jointly decide on whether or not to intercept an incoming missile. However, this is far too great a step for NATO, and especially for its eastern European members. In the absence of an agreement there will be no NATO-Russia Council meeting in Chicago. As regards anti-missile defence, no progress is anticipated before the elections in the United States (November 2012).

Partnerships

Another goal in Chicago will be to expand NATO's global partnerships. As a transatlantic organization, NATO member states face problems today which are not limited to one ocean. NATO must be capable of operating globally, for its own security. More than 20 non-NATO countries are providing troops and resources for ISAF in Afghanistan. Elsewhere, NATO works with non-NATO partners to fight piracy, counter violent extremism and keep peace in Kosovo. While the NATO Chicago Summit will no doubt underline the desirability of partnerships, clear guidance on who will partner with NATO and for what purpose is unlikely.

The risk exists that so-called coalitions of the willing will emerge as an increasingly serious competitor to the Atlantic alliance and its traditional role as the primary pillar of Western security policy.¹⁰ NATO is generally considered as a values-based community built on common interests, commitments, solidarity and risks. In contrast, coalitions of the willing are more limited associations of con-

venience, leaving countries free to pick and choose specific issues, locations, and moments of cooperation based on their individual calculations of the national interest. Some NATO-watchers see the Alliance in a state of strategic drift, lacking a clear cut identity, and increasingly driven by outside events rather than by collective Allied interests. There is a danger, that the Alliance will become a military toolkit for coalitions of the willing. Ultimately, this will degrade the necessary political cohesion between the members of NATO.

Concluding remarks

'Business as usual', 'A Thorny Agenda' and 'A chance to ignore the issues once again', are some of the different views from NATO watchers on the forthcoming NATO Chicago Summit.¹¹ NATO's history reveals that it does not evolve according to grand designs (Strategic Concepts), but rather by reacting to concrete challenges, as the intervention in Libya has shown. However, Jamie Shea, rightly states that the biggest challenge for NATO will be to slim down, while retaining the capability to handle the global security agenda of its members.¹² A related challenge is how to deal with the lack of American interest.

¹⁰Karsten Jung, 'Willing or Waning? NATO's Role in an Age of Coalitions', *World Affairs Journal* (<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org>) 29 April 2012

¹¹Jamie Shea, *NATO's Agenda in the Run-up to the Chicago Summit*, lecture, The Hague, 24 October 2011; Karl-Heinz Kamp, 'NATO's Chicago Summit: A Thorny Agenda', Research Paper, Research Division – NATO Defense College, Rome, No. 70 – November 2011, p. 1; Andrew M. Dorman, 'NATO's 2012 Chicago summit: a chance to ignore the issues once again?', *International Affairs*, No. 2, 2012, p. 301.

¹²Jamie Shea, 'Keeping NATO relevant', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Policy Outlook*, April 2012, p. 1

Conclusions and recommendations

- NATO's Chicago Summit is more than just an implementation Summit of the Lisbon Summit Declaration, as NATO's intervention in Libya, the U.S. withdrawal from Europe, the financial situation and Smart Defence have broadened the Chicago agenda.
- The Strategic Plan for NATO's presence after the end of ISAF in Afghanistan, will be a top priority in Chicago, just as the challenge to portray NATO's operations in Afghanistan still as a success
- Large-scale, long-term NATO interventions are no longer realistic, due to cuts in finances, personnel, equipment and a lack of political will. NATO is in need of a new narrative, another identity
- The different views on the role of U.S. Non Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe will hamper consensus on the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review
- Smart Defence is a new label for the old idea of pooling and sharing and will be, due to the financial crisis, more successful than in the past
- NATO-Russia relations will not improve before the elections in the United States in November 2012
- The risk of expanding NATO partnerships is, that the Alliance will become a military toolkit for 'coalitions of the willing', neglecting the NATO pillars of solidarity and sharing risks, common values and common interests.
- Strict criteria for NATO partnerships should be developed
- For the average citizen, threats only exist if they are close to home. NATO and its members should send the message to the public that the alliance must be able to operate also effectively outside the NATO area, both politically and military, if it is to guarantee security within the NATO-area.
- NATO's intervention in Libya underlines NATO's history, that it does not evolve according to grand designs (Strategic Concepts), but rather by reacting to concrete challenges. Therefore, expectations should not be too high for major breakthroughs at the Chicago summit

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