European Union Partners - NATO

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Introduction

NATO and the EU share a strategic partnership, face common security challenges and threats, are working together in key crisis management operations and are cooperating, *inter alia*, in the fight against terrorism, in the development of coherent and mutually reinforcing military capabilities and in civil emergency planning.

This presentation will focus on three main essential items of these strategic partnerships. Firstly we give the broader perspective of the subject; secondly we talk about operations, thirdly about capabilities and finalize with a prospective approach to a possible relationship in the future.

1. NATO-EU strategic partnership

The European security architecture is a complex and dynamic bargain. A deal between US-Europe on the one hand, and an understanding among the Europeans on the other. The two dimensions manifested in the EU and NATO respectively, mutually influence each other and need to be seen together (Toje, 2009).

NATO and the EU share common values, strategic interests and cooperate in a spirit of complementarity and partnership. The two organisations are working together to prevent and resolve crises and armed conflicts in Europe and beyond.

Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration stated that the Alliance is determined to improve the NATO-EU strategic partnership, to achieve closer cooperation and greater efficiency; to avoid unnecessary duplication in a spirit of transparency, and always respecting the autonomy of the two organisations.

Institutionalized relations between NATO and the EU were launched in 2001, building on steps taken during the 1990s to promote greater European responsibility in defence

matters (1991 and 1999 Strategic Concepts), and the political principles underlying the relationship were set out on 16th December 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The US attitudes towards ESDI were embraced with some hesitation by the president Bill Clinton. Madeleine Albright´s, Clinton administration´s Secretary of State, was the expression of Americas conditions for supporting the ESDI: the famous tree Ds (not duplicate NATO assets, not to discriminate against non EU NATO members or attempt to decouple the EU from the transatlantic security architecture) (Brimmer, 2007).

The current US policy is shifted away from maters European (Toje, 2009). The world is changing; strategic priorities are changing and changing quickly. Now US expect a different burden share, and Europe should take responsibilities for their own regional security. Today we see a great difference, a new sense of nurturing the EU efforts rather than contain them, so, we can talk about a rethink of the tree Ds. Victoria Nuland (2008), the former US ambassador to NATO put in plain terms: “Europe needs, the US needs, NATO needs, the democratic world needs - a stronger, more capable European capacity”.

Saint-Malo can be considered as an important milestone for the “birth” of ESDP. The Franco-British initiative was paramount for the resolution to increase Europe´s military capacity.

The Declaration on ESDP from 2002, reaffirmed the EU assured access to NATO’s planning capabilities for its own military operations and reiterated the political principles of the strategic partnership.

The relationship between NATO and EU is currently governed by the so-called ‘Berlin Plus’ arrangements, adopted in March 2003. These arrangements “provide the framework for the strategic partnership between the two organisations in crisis management”, by allowing the EU to have access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led operations, including command arrangements and assistance in operational planning. In effect, they allow the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged.

Within the framework of the Alliance, EU Member States take decisions that affect the security of all Europeans in a vital way, and yet such decisions are not concerted among the EU’s members. A European position on NATO could stem from some form of reinforced cooperation between the 21 NATO EU members (Vasconcelos, 2009). We think that cooperation seen as complementing is the best way to avoid unhealthy competition or unnecessary duplication of efforts (Kosonen, 2008).

NATO-EU interaction is well known. Despite overlapping members and missions there is surprisingly little substantial cooperation between the two (Toje, 2009). So, for such cooperation to be possible and credible, the difficulties that hamper NATO-EU cooperation over Cyprus/Turkey relation, and undermine the NATO mission’s

effectiveness must be overcome (Vasconcelos, 2009).

Both NATO and the EU are committed to combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They have exchanged information on their activities in the field of protection of civilian populations against CBRN attacks. The two organisations also cooperate in the field of civil emergency planning by exchanging inventories of measures taken in this area.

Despite institutional NATO-EU policy disagreements at the Brussels level, cooperation and coordination are proceeding in the field (Carp, 2006).

2. Cooperation in the field - Operations

The notion that the two organisations would have separate zones of influence and interest seems less true than ever; they both find increasingly operating in the same places, from the Balkans to Southern Asia and also in northern Africa.

Permanent military liaison arrangements have been established to facilitate cooperation at the operational level. A NATO Permanent Liaison Team has been operating at the EU Military Staff since November 2005 and an EU Cell was set up at SHAPE.

The EUFOR operates under the “Berlin-Plus” arrangements, drawing on NATO planning expertise and on other Alliance’s assets and capabilities. The Commander of the Operation is the NATO Deputy SACEUR.

In Kosovo EU has deployed 1.900 law enforcement personnel to work alongside with almost 14.000 NATO soldiers.

Although independently, the EU and NATO are providing support to the African Union.

In Afghanistan, NATO welcomed the EU’s launch of an ESDP Rule of Law mission (EUPOL) in June 2007. The EU is also helping to fund civilian projects in NATO - run PRTs that are led by an EU member country.

While NATO is thus perhaps seen by some to be mandated to deal only with security matters, experience shows that current military operations, implies multifaceted tasks in a volatile security environment requiring military, political and economic tools, and one of the key issues for operational success depends on inter-institutional cooperation between NATO and other organisations and civilian agencies.

Experience also shows that due to the particular characteristics of each conflict situation, solutions always have to be somewhat tailored.

Beyond cooperation in operations, other key priorities for cooperation are to ensure that both capability development efforts are mutually reinforcing, as well as to combat

terrorism and the proliferation of WMD.

3. Cooperation in the Field - Capabilities

In Strasbourg-Keel NATO welcomes the European Union's efforts to strengthen its capabilities and its capacity to address common security challenges.

Meetings to discuss issues of common interest at different levels take place on a regular basis. There are also regular staff contacts between NATO's IS, and the EU Council Secretariat and Military Staff as well as the EDA.

I can give here the exemple of a group which I´m a member, the NATO/EU Capability Group. This group is a body for exchanging information on a transparency basis in the domain of capabilities common to both organisations (EUBG, NRF, QBRN, UAV, Air and maritime strategic transport), in order to ensure the coherence and mutual reinforcement of NATO and EU capability development efforts. The group doesn´t have any power to decide, only exchange information's. In reality, the group "does not allow fruitful debates, there is no spontaneous dialogue, controversy is avoided and the rule is superficial exchange of views" (Collins; Williams, 2009).

In Prague, Alliance leaders assume the Prague Capabilities Commitment and create the NRF. To accomplish this task the Conference of National Armaments Directors has a major role to play.

NATO transformation forces create a gap in military capabilities, threatening interoperability. To avoid the increase of this gap on the European side, in July 2004, the capability driven Agency of the EU, EDA was created to coordinate work within the EU on the development of defence capabilities, armaments cooperation, acquisition and research.

EDA among other documents also elaborate the Capability Development Plan that identifies capability needs, trends and shortfalls, and provide assistance to Member States in developing their national capability plans in line with those needs.

To increase capabilities, industry has a major role to play; but we must be realistic, European defence Industries are losing their competitive edge due to under investment in R&D (US spends 9% of the budget, and EU combined only 1.5%) and the rising protectionism of markets (Toje, 2003). Europe must spend more efficiently too achieve more and better European Military capabilities.

Defence spending levels are a concern to both organisations. European Defence budgets have been kept at historic lows, and as a result, some national Force catalogues look-like half-empty bookshelves (Toje, 2009). The main question is how to modernize forces in a period of strong financial constraints, so that they can better carry out the new missions as deployable forces while maintaining a sufficient capability to comfort a major

continental contingency that could suddenly arise, because we shouldn´t forget, that the war of five days in Georgia last year, put territorial defence back on the agenda.

The 21 NATO European states need to allocate resources from their defence budgets to both requirements, the Prague Capabilities Commitment and European Capability Action Plan. We must stop wasting valuable money and effort by duplicating our capabilities and development programmes. Forces are national, and the EU and NATO have exactly the same needs (Schefer, 2008). One option is multinational approaches to capability programmes and the pooling of resources, including for operations and Units, like NRF and the EUBG.

Capability development is an area where cooperation is essential and where there is potential for further growth, and one of the most important elements is mutual reinforcement, that means the ability of EU Member States and NATO nations to develop rapid reaction forces that can be made available to one or the other of the two organisations, within appropriate timelines.

From NATO side the creation of NRF is seen as catalyst for the transformation of the Alliance, but also to bridge growing gap between US and European military capabilities.

As to the EU, originally had focused on civilian instruments to promote peace and democracy. Later the organization recognized that its room for maneuver was curtailed by the lack of a military dimension. This shortfall was addressed with the inception of the ESDP. Under this umbrella, member states agreed to provide military forces for crisis management operations, and the concept of EUBG was set up with the Head Line Goal 2010, adopted in 2004.

Both formations (NRF and EUBG) depend on the contributions of the member states. *De facto*, NRF and EUBG are constituted by nearly the same forces wearing different hats every rotation period.

One of the main differences between NRF and EUBG concerns the strategic context in which NATO and the EU may act, and they also reflect the different approaches and levels of ambition of both organisations.

As most of the EUBG framework nations are also NATO members, they can use their special position to create and disseminate common or similar standards and concepts, thereby ensuring mutual reinforcement of the initiatives. This is also necessary because EUBG are certified according to the same criteria as the NRF.

4. A possible future

Although the two organisations have different natures they have scope for synergy in several areas as well, and we think the big test will be whether NATO's new strategic concept can be brought in line with the values and interests outlined in the European

Security Strategy (Schefer, 2008).

Berlin plus, conceived more than a decade ago, was based in particular on the premise that NATO and the EU would not be present in the same theatres of operation. But now, although with different missions, both operate more often in the same places. Berlin plus, being useful, "has become too often a straitjacket rather than a facilitator" (Schefer, 2008), that is why we shouldn't make it the only template for this strategic relations.

While there are no quick fixes to the Turkey-Cyprus issue there are the other bottlenecks that can be removed to allow for more effective EU-NATO interaction on a practical level (Toje, 2008), like pragmatic working procedures for joint planning, technical agreements and operational coordination that correspond to the reality of what we are actually doing.

The credibility of the European voice in NATO will depend on the Europeans themselves, on their unity, on the coherence of their action and also on their commitment (Vasconcelos, 2009). We see positive signs in the vast informal dialogue, which is likely to prove essential when seeking to transform the relation among the two organisations into an effective partnership.

Division of strategic labor that sometimes happened among the two organisations is no longer desirable (soft side for the EU and the heavy lifting for NATO). NATO - no less than the EU - has no interest in an EU that is only able to do the "soft side". If the soft side becomes the planning standard in the EU, the European Allies in NATO will inevitably focus on these things in NATO too and invest even less in high-tech, state-of-the-art military capabilities. Both will suffer as a result (Schefer, 2008).

Some conclusions

NATO and the EU face today common security challenges and their political agendas are increasingly overlapping, which would seem to call for some form of commitment to inter-EU consultation and alignment (Vasconcelos, 2009).

The evolution of NATO/EU strategic partnership will depend on the nature of the perceived threats and how members of the two organisations react to them will also depend on each institution's honest assessment of what is desirable for the future (Davis, 2003).

NATO and the EU will remain distinct in their decision-making, missions, mandates, capabilities and modes of operation. There is simply no consensus within the EU to act as caucus in NATO at this time. However, this should not keep them from striving towards a pragmatic partnership of equals.

We can´t forget to link this debate with the Euro-American security cooperation. NATO remains the most important security mechanism in Europe and remains the primary vehicle for keeping the US engaged in European security affairs. No other organization can effectively plan and coordinate the diverse military forces from all the contributing

nations, including the American military presence.

In the EU side, the machinery created ten years ago to undertake military or civilian operations abroad (still young compared with NATO) has developed and has managed 22 operations overseas with a reasonable degree of success.

EU defence have now to deliver in terms of real capabilities. It is important to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, to ensure transparency and to respect the autonomy of the two organisations. To that endeavour the establishment of a genuine joint consultative mechanism, not as a decision-making body but as a forum that would allow NATO and the EU to exchange timely information and perhaps plan together, would be a step in the right direction (Carp, 2006).

Although we are right to expect tangible results in the short to medium term, one should not expect too much, efforts should therefore be seen in a long term perspective. To conclude I state Robert Cooper: "Anything worthwhile takes time, so we have to be patiente in the daily slog of diplomacy".

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* Comunicação apresentada no 1º Seminário de Política Europeia de Segurança e Defesa - *European Union Partners - NATO*.

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