EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

BRIEFING

NATO after the Wales Summit: Back to collective defence

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Abstract

At their September 2014 summit in Wales, the heads of state and government of the North Atlantic Council – the principal political decision-making body of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – reaffirmed their commitment to fulfilling all three core tasks set out in their 'Strategic Concept': collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security – NATO's 'triple C'. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, NATO leaders confirmed that collective defence efforts should go beyond missile and cyber defence. The Ukraine crisis has imbued the conventional task of defending European territory with fresh verve. Reinvigorating European defence is first and foremost a task for Europeans – it is a task for the EU Member States, individually and jointly, and it is the duty of the EU institutions to support the Member States in their efforts. NATO-EU cooperation is essential for European security and defence. If this cooperation stumbles, substantial risks arise, for both organisations and for their members. A failure of the cooperation on collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security will not serve European or transatlantic security interests.

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1 The summit's declaration in brief

At their September 2014 summit in Wales, the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council – the principal political decision-making body of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) reaffirmed their commitment to fulfilling all three core tasks set out in their Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security[1] – NATO's 'triple C'. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, NATO leaders confirmed that collective defence efforts should go beyond missile and cyber defence. In large part, this can be linked to the Ukraine crisis, which has imbued the conventional task of defending European territory with fresh verve.

Many practical measures discussed at the summit involve NATO nations – the countries that are members of the organisation – or NATO as an institution. Some measures cover areas where NATO and EU interests overlap, such as NATO's relations with partners – states and organisations that NATO cooperates with – and the NATO-EU relationship itself.

Improving readiness and responsiveness

The NATO Readiness Action Plan (RAP)[2] was endorsed to improve responsiveness and readiness. The plan comprises measures to respond to security changes in areas of concern to NATO allies, both around their borders and further afield. The RAP is meant to reassure[3] allies facing security challenges, either from Russia, or from other forces in NATO's southern neighbourhood, the Middle East and North Africa.

The core of the RAP is enhancing the responsiveness of the NATO Response Force (NRF)[4], which, in turn, involves establishing a 'Very High Readiness Joint Task Force' (VJTF). Some ideas for this force have been discussed in the public – for example, that its core component would be a land force, with appropriate air, maritime and special operations forces also available. However, the precise shape of the VJTF has yet to be determined. The NRF, to give a concrete comparison, maintains an 'Immediate Response Force': around 13 000 of its 25 000 troops, in a state of greater readiness. If the VJTF were to keep forces at an even higher level of readiness – deployment within 48 hours has been discussed – this would generate substantial extra costs. The US is likely to encourage its European allies to develop VJTF capabilities to supplement those the US currently has.

A number of on-going efforts to improve the capabilities of NATO' and NATO nations' will continue as planned. These include the connected forces initiative (CFI)[5], Smart Defence[6] projects, Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)[7],

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At their September 2014 summit, heads of state and government of the North Atlantic Council – the political body of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – reaffirmed the alliance's 'triple C': collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.

NATO hopes to improve readiness and responsiveness to address the security challenges posed by Russia and by forces in NATO's southern neighbourhood.

NATO's new 'Very High Readiness Joint Task Force' would include European allies as well as the US and Canada.

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[1] www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm
[2] The RAP itself is not publicly available. The public information available
[3] http://www.aco.nato.int/nato-assurance-measures.aspx
[4] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm
[5] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_98527.htm
[6] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_84268.htm
[7] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49635.htm

Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS)[8], Airborne Early Warning and Control Force (AWACS)[9] and Cyber Defence[10]. They will be adapted to the changing strategic environment where necessary, and will be accelerated to meet the recent challenges.

Strengthening Decentralised Structures

Another priority that emerged from the summit was enabling NATO's command structure to take effective command and control of simultaneous operations. This implies that tasks relating to regional expertise and cooperation (e.g. in training and exercise), intelligence, situational and strategic awareness will be shifted to regional headquarters, including to the Multinational Corps Northeast headquarters.

Regional headquarters will play a stronger role in operations' command and control, as well as in regional cooperation.

This 'regionalisation' will be accompanied by an exercise programme[11] focusing on collective defence and comprehensive responses to complex civil-military scenarios, including notably hybrid warfare[12] threats, for which a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are addressed in a highly integrated design.

The NATO Framework Nations Concept[13] endorsed at the summit will allow groups of nations to work together on multinational forces' and on developing capabilities in Europe. Three groups have been formed:

- Ten allies will deliver logistics support; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protection; and fire-power from land, air, and sea. Germany will serve as the framework nation for this group, which will have a 'deployable headquarters'.

The Framework Nations Concept could allow to European capabilities to be developed.

- Another, rapidly deployable force will be capable of conducting the full spectrum of operations, including high-intensity operations, based on existing and emerging military capabilities and units. The framework nation for this group is the United Kingdom.

- A third group, for which Italy will be the framework nation, will improve stabilisation and reconstruction capabilities, provision of enablers[14], the usability of land formations, and command and control.

Spending more and cooperating better

NATO leaders seek to reverse defence

NATO member states have set objectives for defence spending. They reaffirmed past targets: to spending 2 % of gross domestic product, or GDP, on defence (a target the Alliance has not yet met). They also set new targets:

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[8] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48892.htm

[9] http://www.e3a.nato.int/

[10] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm

[11] http://www.aco.nato.int/exercises.aspx

[12] http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2014/Russia-Ukraine-Nato-crisis/Russia-Ukraine-crisis-war/EN/index.htm

[13] The Framework Nations Concept itself is not publicly available. The think tank community has worked on this concept, e.g. the Atlantic Council or European Geostrategy.

[14] Enablers are e.g. air-to-air refuelling or satellite communications, capabilities that enable deployed military operations.

spending trends and meet spending objectives.

to devote 20 % of the annual defence spending to major new equipment and related research & development[15]. Both targets should be met by the end of the decade. Defence budgets should be no longer be reduced, and defence spending trends should be reversed.

Participants at the NATO summit also clearly wished to strengthen the coordination between NATO and other organisations in order to better share information, consult on political matters, and improve staff-to-staff coordination.

The NATO-EU relationship needs to be deepened, and cooperation with partner countries and organisations should be continued.

This last point – staff-to-staff coordination – suggests that the NATO-EU relationship will be strengthened, without removing or altering the Member States' fundamental reserves.

The summit also confirmed the continuation of NATO's open door policy[16] on membership – even though no new such perspectives were opened – and of the Partnership for Peace (PfP)[17], the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD)[18] and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)[19].

2 NATO's partnership policy and enlargement

The Wales Summit underlines the importance of 'cooperative security', listed as a top priority.

The Wales Summit Declaration underlines the importance of 'cooperative security' – one of the principal goals set out in the 2010 Strategic Concept. In order to achieve this goal, NATO has focused on strengthening its tailored partnerships with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Western Balkans and the Mediterranean.

A reform of NATO's partnership policy was introduced at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 and formalised one year later, at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers. The altered policy offered greater opportunities for NATO partners, increased the visibility of their engagement in NATO operations and enhanced bilateral dialogue on common security issues.

Two new instruments were introduced to strengthen assistance for NATO's partners.

Two new instruments were introduced at the Wales Summit: a Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative and Partnership Interoperability Initiative. The first is intended to support the security and stability of partners without deploying large combat forces, while the second focuses on maintaining partner forces' cooperation with allies'.

2.1 Georgia and Moldova

Significant progress towards the Euro-Atlantic Alliance was made by the European Council conclusions from June 2014. These conclusions welcomed the signature of the Association Agreements (AAs), including Deep Comprehensive Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), and with Georgia and Moldova.

Georgia has become

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[15] This commitment was already made by member states within the EU framework, however never met ever since, refer to 'The European Council on defence matters: Time to deliver?', Policy Briefing, European Parliament, December 2013.
[16] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49212.htm
[17] http://www.nato.int/pfp/
[18] http://www.nato.int/med-dial/home.htm
[19] http://www.nato.int/ici/home.htm

NATO's most active partner.

Under NATO's Open Door strategy, Georgia has become the most supportive and active partner. The cooperation is channelled by the NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC) that oversees NATO assistance to Georgia after its conflict with Russia in 2008. In parallel, the military cooperation was initiated under the Military Committee that allowed Georgia for a military involvement in NATO operations.

This has allowed Georgia to participate in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan; the country has provided more troops than any other non-NATO partner to the two infantry battalions of the US forces. Georgia's contribution includes troops serving in Kabul with the French contingent, as well as individual staff officers and medical personnel. Georgian troops had previously been present in Kosovo (1999-2008), where they assisted the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and served alongside a German brigade and a Turkish battalion task force.

Moldova's cooperation enhances the capacity of the 22nd Peacekeeping Battalion forces.

Georgia was also a participant in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 2001, 2002 and 2007, when its activities focused on comprehensive defence-related activities.

On the reform side, The Individual Partnership Action Plan frames Moldova's cooperation with NATO in areas of defence training and planning, budget and administrative work assistance. Regarding Moldova's operational support, two of its 'combat-ready' units have been engaged in KFOR since March 2014. The country has also assisted in the areas of cyber defence, disaster response, and the security sector. Additionally, Moldova's cooperation with NATO has enhanced the capacity of the 22nd Peacekeeping Battalion's forces that are deployable These troops can be deployed for crisis management missions and peacekeeping operations.

2.2   Western Balkans

The Wales Summit noted also the substantial contribution of Western Balkans countries –specifically, Montenegro, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Bosnia and Herzegovina – to NATO operations.

An intensified dialogue was launched with Montenegro following its contribution to international security operations in Afghanistan. Initially, Montenegro donated weapons and ammunition in order to equip Afghan National. In 2010, the country also sent troops to serve alongside the Croatian unit.

The summit welcomed the substantial contributions of Western Balkans countries – in particular Montenegro – to NATO operations.

An invitation to FYROM to join NATO has been put on hold until the country resolves its name dispute with Macedonia. Yet FYROM has been operationally active alongside ISAF since 2002 and has supported KFOR. The country currently contributes 150 troops.

The alliance has conducted an 'Intensified Dialogue' with Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2008. Once all the country's immovable defence properties are under state supervision, the first Annual National Programme will be issued. The country was assisted by NATO operations between 1992 and 1995.

2.3 Ukraine

The Wales Summit strongly emphasised the tragic events in Ukraine and condemned Russia's illegal activities in eastern Ukraine. Yet Ukraine's membership application status is still unclear. Under President Viktor Yanukovych, the country's 2010 security strategy did not list 'Atlantic Alliance integration' as a priority. More recently, President Petro Poroshenko declared that the opposition of Ukraine Russian population to NATO membership meant the country was not ready to join.

Ukraine is one of the most complex of NATO's partners, while it contributes militarily to several missions: the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and Ocean Shield.

Ukraine is one of the most complex of NATO's partners. The country contributes militarily to various missions (ISAF, KFOR, and Ocean Shield) and cooperates in wide-ranging reform programmes. The 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership set the formal basis for NATO-Ukraine cooperation, and was followed by the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) and the Declaration to Complement the Charter of 2009. As a result of recent developments in Eastern Ukraine, the relationship has been strengthened in order to deter Russia's intervention.

The likelihood of Ukraine's participating in Euro-Atlantic structures was strengthened when the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was signed on 27 June 2014. Whether the Ukraine-NATO relationship will be formally completed is unclear. For now, the only certainty is that the Russia-Ukraine crisis poses a challenge to Euro-Atlantic security and complicates Ukraine's prospects of NATO membership.

2.4 The EU and the NATO partner countries

The EU has established cooperation – in the form of bilateral partnerships – with all the alliance's current partners in the Union's eastern and southern neighbourhoods. The EU's recently strengthened political and economic relations – affecting trade, mobility and democracy – with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The same is true of the Western Balkans region, where cooperation is framed by Stabilisation and Association Agreements. The EU is also enhancing relations with the Mediterranean region through a complex structure of programmes touching on various issues.

The EU is strengthening its established cooperation with all the alliance's partners.

3 Implications for the EU-NATO relationship

The EU's new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) and NATO's new Secretary-General created a new, joint press point on 4 November 2014[20]. This was the first such joint press service in the decades-long history of the two Brussels-based organisations, and the first common message. It served as a symbol of possible renewal in the NATO-EU relationship. 'To some extent, it can also be seen as the first new accomplishment to have emerged from

A common press point has been created by the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP) and

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[20] http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_114452.htm

the NATO's new Secretary-General.

Norway can be an example for others, including the EU.

After 10 years of cooperation, the NATO-EU link needs to be rejuvenated.

Operational cooperation should continue and develop – at home and abroad.

the NATO summit'.

The summit declaration refers to non-EU allies[21] who 'continue to make significant contributions to the EU's efforts to strengthen its capacities to address common security challenges'. 'For the strategic partnership between NATO and the EU,' the statement continues, 'non-EU allies' fullest involvement in these efforts is essential'.

This involves two elements: the EU's efforts to strengthen its capacities and the common security challenges. Each of the non-EU allies can contribute to one or both – the EU capacities, the common challenges – as can the EU.

Norway's engagement in the European Defence Agency and its contributions to EU-led operations is the most advanced engagement among the allies. More non-EU allies must be offered possibilities for contributing, particularly when facing common security challenges. In particular, greater efforts should be made to allow Cyprus to participate in formal EU-NATO meetings[22].

NATO recognises the importance of a stronger and more capable European defence. As the allies suggested in the summit declaration, the organisation also understands that the EU will play a more active role. Reserve and reticence exist on both sides, and in the capitals of both sides. The framework for NATO-EU cooperation is now more than ten years old, and the Lisbon Treaty has permitted the EU to offer more than it did in 2003. Furthermore, both organisations have almost doubled their membership since, and the needs, views and ideas of those new members could help rejuvenate the NATO-EU relationship.

A review process could be launched to reflect on what is needed over the coming decade. This could involve practical steps, such as liaising regularly on capability planning and on strategic developments. The EU battle group preparations could be better aligned with the NATO Response Force (NRF) or 'Very High Readiness Joint Task Force' (VJTF) exercises, and EU civilian capabilities could be coordinated with NATO-led exercises.

Operational cooperation in the field should and will continue, including in areas such as maritime security, defence and security capacity building and hybrid threats. This should encompass cooperation abroad and at home. Whereas on the NATO side advances will remain incremental unless the Turkish veto on Cyprus is removed[23], the EU could advance its contribution to collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security through all means at its disposal under the Lisbon treaty. This should encompass

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[21] Albania, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Turkey and the United States
[22] Unlike Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden, Cyprus is not member of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and has no security agreement with NATO. All other EU member states are also NATO member states. **Unlike Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden, Cyprus is not member of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and has no security agreement with NATO. All other EU member states are also NATO member states.**
[23] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/25/world/europe/25iht-letter.html?_r=0

moving towards qualified majority decision making in the Council where this is foreseen under Chapter V of the TEU[24] - this concept, however, is politically extremely sensitive[25] and needs to be approached with prudence.

Faults in NATO-EU cooperation will not serve European or transatlantic security interests.

Deploying EU instruments and policies to meet the objectives formulated in the NATO framework should become standard when this is appropriate. An example of such an adaptation of EU policy could involve dedicating EU funds[26] to improve infrastructure, networks and facilities, to provide training, or to make investments to building the defence and security capabilities relevant for Member States and for the common security and defence policy.

The European Parliament could review the NATO-EU relationship and could address the topic in depth, including in the EP's interparliamentary work. And the Parliament should support the new NATO-EU top team through the means at its disposal: taking political initiatives with a view to fully implementing the security and defence policy provisions of the Treaty on European Union, and mainstreaming effective support to security and defence policy into its legislative Work.

Reinvigorating European defence is first and foremost a task for Europeans; it is a task for the EU Member States, individually and jointly, and it is the duty of the EU institutions to support the Member States in their efforts. NATO-EU cooperation is essential for European security and defence. If this cooperation stumbles, substantial risks arise, for both organisations and for their members. A failure of the NATO-EU cooperation on collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security will not serve European or transatlantic security interests.

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[24] Articles 41 (3), 45 (2) and 46
[25] 'Fox drops pledge to quit EU defence agency' Financial Times, November 28, 2010, online 10:49 pm
[26] e.g. under the structural, space, research or industrial policies