



Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs

NATO 2020 and the Armed Forces: Way Ahead

**Summary and Conclusions of the Conference
held on October 2-3, 2012 in Bratislava**

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I. Panel Discussion: Beyond 2014: NATO's Mission in Post-Afghan Era

The first Panel discussion's four speakers focused on ALLIANCE'S future, especially after the current NATO mission in Afghanistan comes to an end in 2014, but also on outcomes of the NATO summit in Chicago and their impact on future developments.

Amb. Hüseyin Diriöz, Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning, focused on future of Smart Defence and highlighted the importance of this initiative for building common allied capabilities. He also emphasized the defence spending gap between two sides of the Atlantic and the current trends of American strategic thinking, including the shift of American strategic focus towards the Pacific. **The ASG also touched on the topic of operations and their impact on defence budgets - he described the tension between financial needs for securing operations and its impact on modernization. Amb. Dirioz also predicted the decreased operational pace after the end of current NATO operation in Afghanistan and called for analyzing of the consequences for armed forces of member states. In that context he emphasized the need to maintain the current level of interoperability and to redistribute budget which remains after operations for common exercises of armed forces of NATO members.**

Amb. Miloš Koterec, State Secretary of Ministry of Defence of Slovak Republic,

expressed strong political statement calling on Europe to once again begin to spend the necessary funds on defence. At least for the upcoming several years however it does not look as though the decreasing trend in defense budgets will change, therefore Amb. Koterec expressed support for the new NATO programs, stating: "we need to think smart and spend funds wisely." **The State Secretary also focused on current cooperation between Slovakia and Czech Republic and expressed his wish to shape it into the form of an exemplary future cooperation for other NATO members.**

All speakers agreed that despite the launch of programs within the framework of Smart Defence, there is a need to continue to invest in the armed forces, to ensure the acquisition of new technologies, development of **interoperability** and other areas **Amb. Dirioz emphasized that smart defense is not only about saving money, but this money should be used for further development. Smart Defence cannot be the objective, but only a means to overcome the current unfavorable situation.** Regarding the future of NATO Amb. H. Dirioz also mentioned the general procedure for defense planning, which plays an important role in planning for the next decade of Afghanistan. Smart defense becomes a determining factor for the European NATO members in the coming years.

Amb. István Gyarmati, President and CEO of International Centre for Democratic Transition, described several important challenges for NATO's future. **First, in his view the United States is the only NATO country that taking care of Asia and the developments there. Second, the defence cuts are not about financial and economic crisis but about the fact that Europe resigned on her defense and entirely lost ambitions.** He also raised the question of what the US and Europe can do together. His conclusion was that because of lack of will, the opportunities are limited. The

different priorities of the societies' and political elites are also important determining factors for this state of affairs. Amb. Gyarmati recounted the most important European countries from the point of view of Europe's defence and commented on future developments. He also pointed to EU's approach to Turkey, where according to him the EU is repeatedly making a mistake. Amb. Gyarmati also pointed to the relationship NATO – EU stating that some people are afraid of a strong EU at the expense of NATO, concluding that it is more than certain that in the near future it will be necessary to further analyze and define this relationship.

Col. Jean-Christophe Noel, French Policy Planning Staff, in charge of Political and Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, focused on the most important recent developments in France as well as on the French approach to NATO. **He elucidated the French perspective on NATO's future whereby the Alliance will become something of an "agency" for its members for defence cooperation.** Col. Noel also stressed the French commitment towards the security and stability of Afghanistan and declared that France will be present in the region beyond 2014. He presented two simultaneous processes taking place in France. First, Mr. Védrine's expert group on future of French participation in NATO's integrated command. Second, the reevaluation of the French White Book (Livre Blanc). According to the strategic importance attached to both initiatives, it is true that their outcomes will shape not only the French security and defence policies, but also the future of NATO.

Keynote Speech: NATO and UN together in Afghanistan

Amb. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to Afghanistan, declared that NATO and UN share together one effort, but

provide for separate operations. Although they have two separate mandates, their cooperation is very close, based on everyday discussions to secure suitable conditions for non-military actors. **UN mandate in Afghanistan is non-military and focused on several political missions with the aim to ensure stability and prosperity after the end of the ISAF operation.** Amb. Kubiš reminded the participants that the dire situation in the Afghan society should be taken into account. Civilian population is suffering as a result of the military campaign, daily suicide attacks by radical Islamists, killings and targeting of civilians, as well as everyday landmines explosions.

Major achievements and scope of cooperation between ISAF and UN can be seen e.g. in the training of Afghan National Security Forces to be able to fight to protect the civilian population after the end of major combat operations in 2014. Amb. Kubiš emphasized that the UN mission UNAMA is also focusing on protection of civilians and monitoring abuses of international humanitarian and human rights laws in Afghanistan, particularly concerning women and children. Amb. Kubiš also remarked that the question of the future of Afghanistan regarding the withdrawal of ISAF mission is crucial. The possibility of ISAF's support role for Afghanistan in providing food, logistic support, back-up support for Afghan security forces, safe voter registration in the upcoming elections and other areas is an important contribution. **The main role of UNAMA mission and the Special Representative should therefore, according to Amb. Kubiš, be to support democratic elections and subsequently to integrate civilians as well as to provide for peasant reconciliation.**

The following speaker in the discussion, Mr. Svetík, Political Director of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, also focused on the future of Afghanistan, especially the role of Slovakia in the near future. He expressed a view that in regards to supporting the development of security,

democracy and rule of law of Afghanistan, **Slovakia has been contributing to these efforts since 2003.** Much has been achieved, but much still needs to be accomplished. In his view, setting an end-date for the mission has two sides of the coin. It is necessary to send a message to our citizens, that after 10 years we came to a point where Afghans are more able to ensure their security by themselves. Efforts of the international military involvement have given the opposition a new hope and strength. The success that was achieved means that opposing armed elements today carry out their attacks only on 10% of the territory.

During the Chicago summit in May this year, Allies and partners agreed that NATO will finish the ISAF mission by the end of 2014 and will start a new training and advising mission. There are currently about 350,000 Afghan armed personnel and NATO forces are already passing the lead role in ensuring security to the national government and security forces. **In July 2012, the Operational Mentoring and Liaison teams transformed to Military Advisory Teams - bringing the focus from training to advising and this should be an example for future activities of the Alliance.** So the post-2014 mission will be a non-combat mission with smaller personnel deployment, with tasks of assisting and training the Afghan security forces.

Mr. Svetík declared that Slovakia has currently approximately 340 personnel deployed to ISAF in various theatres. **In July this year, the National Council of the Slovak Republic adopted a new mandate for our engagement in Afghanistan until 2014** which modifies the nature and size of the Slovak engagement. The strongest focus will be on mentoring and training of Afghan forces – this goal de facto defines the Slovak participation.

Ministry of Defence has decided to withdraw those Armed Forces elements, which had the smallest transformation effect on the

Slovak Armed Forces and for the operation itself. This led to the decision to continuously withdraw our guarding and engineering units and replace them by more training staff. Mr. Svetík also mentioned the plans to train and mentor the Afghan Special forces after 2014, e.g. plans to deploy a self-sustainable Special Operations Task Group of over 100 personnel. This would represent a major contribution of the Slovak Republic to NATO's efforts in Afghanistan, and also have a positive effect on our capabilities.

The training and mentoring mission is not only about providing the staff but also about all the support which makes it possible to operate. Although Slovakia is looking for ways to strengthen the mentoring part of the mission, we shall not forget how important the capabilities are. Additional communication and discussion on the issue of capabilities among NATO partners is necessary. **Mr. Svetík agreed with Ján Kubiš that the development of Afghanistan is not only a matter of military means. In this context, Slovakia is putting forth efforts aimed at strengthening its civilian and development projects. By the end of 2011, the law on deployment of civilian experts in international crisis management was passed. At the International Donors Conference in Tokyo this year, Slovakia agreed to increasing development resources by another million US dollars, which is a clear sign of our commitment to the international support to the Afghan people.**

Panelists expressed their belief that Afghans will soon prove that they are willing and capable of self-governance. The fact is that Afghanistan still faces serious challenge, which cannot be ignored by the international community. Afghans have lost trust in government and its activities and 5% of population is armed. There is an emerging need for establishing and adopting better institutions outside of the scope of political

ambitions. The collective effort and communication, cooperation and collaboration between all the partners in this area are therefore necessary. After all, **the end of ISAF operation will not mean the end of the UN mission, because UNAMA will still be in Afghanistan after 2014.** Because of the upcoming presidential elections in 2014 and provincial election in 2015, Afghanistan needs support not only with elections assistance but also with the implementation of Tokyo Agreement and its commitments such as improvement of child and women rights, education and health care.

II. Panel discussion: The Future of the Smart Defence

The concept of Smart Defence is tailored to offer a possible solution to NATO member states burdened by the economic and fiscal crisis. States which are no longer capable nor willing to maintain the expenditures to the defence on the level necessary to provide for defence, Smart Defence offers pooling and sharing of capabilities and cooperation among member states. **Chiefs of Staffs of the Slovak Republic and Czech Republic, and Generals from General Staff of Hungary and Poland discussed how the Visegrad 4 countries could engage in the programs of international or regional cooperation and opportunities and for enhancing the efficiency of cooperation.**

The second panel dealt predominantly with the military take on Smart Defence introduced by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in Munich in February last year and military cooperation in the CEE region.

Chiefs of Staffs of the Slovak Republic and Czech Republic, and Generals from General Staffs from Hungary and Poland agreed that the traditional approaches to capabilities development and defence planning are no

longer able to address the new challenges. As was emphasized by General Petr Pavel, Chief of General Staff of the Czech Republic, the important factor is the changing strategic environment in Europe caused by the natural **shift of the strategic interest of the United States from Europe to Asia**, as a reaction to the rising power of Russia, India and China. This does not mean that Europe if left on its own needs to re-evaluate its burden-sharing in NATO. The current state when the US is contributing 75% and Europe only 25% is not sustainable. **Europe needs to do more, but for less, because of budgetary restrictions caused by the financial and fiscal crisis.** Smart Defence offers precisely a way of doing more for less and achieve better cooperation, specialisation and prioritisation.

Generals from Visegrad 4 countries also welcomed the idea of cooperation in terms of achieving the goals and capabilities which would otherwise be a challenge for a single nation. **As General Vojtek, Chief of General Staff of the Slovak Republic, remarked in order to fulfil the requirements of cooperation, prioritisation and specialisation, Slovak Armed Forces, among others, participate in five projects proposed by the Multinational Approaches Task Force dealing mostly with training. The cooperation between fewer similar countries can be more effective than cooperation among many partners of different size and potential, which is why the idea of regional cooperation within the framework of Visegrad Group with the active involvement of NATO as the facilitator of the cooperation makes sense.**

However, as General Vojtek pointed out some potential risks that must be considered. The impact of giving up autonomous decisions on sovereignty and effects on industry must be taken into account as well. Therefore, trust between partners is crucial and we should start with small projects to build it up. The cooperation will also require much patience. For military

cooperation, it is necessary to have the political will first to share and develop new capabilities and rules to ensure fair burden-sharing between partners. **To minimize the possibility of the small nation being outvoted by other nations on an issue of its vital interests, speakers agreed, that it is important to establish clear rules for the availability of capabilities procured jointly by all participants.** On the other hand, they also stressed that NATO is still the only guarantor for ensuring the security and integrity of our states and giving up of additional sovereignty based on legally-binding documents is the only way to preserving our capabilities for the future.

Cooperation is becoming even more important than in the past. General Frigyer, Director of Logistic Directorate, General Staff of the Armed Forces of Hungary, claimed that given the fact that the Visegrad countries face common challenges, similar problems and common framework of NATO and EU, cooperation in the context of Central European countries can become more comprehensive. General Antczak from Strategic Planning Directorate of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Poland also agreed that multinational cooperation is the only viable option to cope with the effects of the international financial crisis and praised NATO and the concept of Smart Defence as the best solution to provide the necessary capabilities, otherwise unattainable by any one country alone.

In conclusion, panelists expressed optimism on the future of cooperation in Central Europe agreeing that the V4 countries have great potential to overcome partial interests for the sake of cooperation. As it is much easier to develop cooperation among few countries than within a large group, regional cooperation appears to be more effective and easier given the cultural similarities and common interests. Thus Visegrad 4 countries have high chances for developing effective regional cooperation.

Keynote speech: NATO Partnerships: Regional Actors and Comprehensive Approach

The main aim of the keynote speeches on NATO partnerships was to assess the solutions to new emerging threats and security challenges in the broader context of NATO relations with partner countries.

According to survey results presented by Amb. Peter Burian, State Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, the majority of people on both sides of the Atlantic considers NATO a crucial part of their security. 61% of Slovaks understand the importance of NATO for our security. Nevertheless, currently there are new emerging threats and security challenges to which NATO has to evolve appropriate tools and capabilities to lasting and sustainable solutions to security. Military means are essential, however not the only means to meet all these challenges. **NATO needs to provide and be the facilitator of sustainable crisis management for the majority of possible crisis situations. To achieve this, NATO needs to further develop its tools and mechanisms.** In the Alliance, there are still some concerns with regard to entering into partnership with countries of Eastern Europe, which are either not members or do not aspire for full partnership, namely that cooperation with them cannot be stable. These concerns are well justified, because even though these countries want to distance themselves from some of NATO's decisions in selected areas on one hand, on the other, there is high level of ongoing cooperation in others. For example in the Western Balkans, marked by a very complex and sensitive situation, almost all partners supported NATO's operations. Georgia is yet another good example of contributing in Afghanistan. **Regardless the successes NATO has to establish a new partnership policy, along with new structures**

and mechanisms which will be more flexible because a global outreach is what the Alliance needs. Amb. Burian emphasized that NATO's soul is not only in operations themselves, but also in post-conflict situations and reconstruction, as well as logistical support, cooperation and interaction with international organizations and NGOs. He described the EU as a crucial strategic partner for the Alliance, but also underlined that there is still lot of room for improving this partnership. A case in point is the operation in Libya that has demonstrated the need for partnership and cooperation with regional organizations like the League of Arab countries and others. It is also necessary to enhance cooperation with UN as was declared at the Chicago summit.

According to Amb. Burian, NATO's expertise could be more efficiently used in some UN programs, especially those combating terrorism. NATO has also built partnership with Russia, Ukraine, Australia and new global emerging powers like China and India which are strategically important for the UN. **NATO's new 21st century partnerships must be based not only on shared interests but also on shared responsibility.** Even though the financial situation is affecting almost every country in terms of shrinking budgets, every member state has to provide additional resources and programs for cooperation. In this context it is necessary to realize, that it makes for a good investment that we will appreciate in the future. It is crucial to build regional capabilities to deal with regional crisis with the involvement of regional partners. In this regard, there is a need to strengthen relations with the African Union, among others. Here, Slovakia and other Allies are willing to share their transition experience. As an example, the MFA's State Secretary mentioned the example of Tunisia where Slovakia and the Netherlands are helping the country go through transformation and transition. **Amb. Burian's concluded that cooperation**

between all partners is a crucial condition of security.

Alexander Nalbandov, Ambassador of Georgia to Slovak Republic in his contribution focused predominantly on the relations between Georgia and NATO and the contributions of Georgia to NATO's missions. **Georgia is a strong supporter of the transatlantic alliance, and currently is the second largest non-member NATO ISAF troop contributor. Moreover, if the current redeployments and troop surges end, Georgia will become the biggest non-NATO contributor to ISAF. This is a clear signal that the country wants to be not only a security consumer, but also provider.** Georgia is willing to participate in new assistance and training mission in Afghanistan and is ready to aid NATO for example by simplifying procedures on the borders. **The Georgian Ambassador emphasized that, 77% of Georgia's citizens support the country's membership in NATO, which means that integration ambitions are supported not only by the political elite but also by the majority of the population.** Amb. Nalbandov declared that during the last few years, relations between Georgia and NATO have advanced significantly also thanks to instruments deployed within the framework of mutual cooperation, for example the NATO-Georgia commission and a range of programs. Georgia is still actively cooperating within partnership programs. Amb. Nalbandov also saw the results of the Chicago summit as very positive for Georgia due to the fact that progress has been recognized since the Bucharest summit.

As was emphasized in the discussion following the contributions, if one looks at the geographic map, one will see that Georgia is very close to Afghanistan. It is therefore in its vital interest to continue to make further contributions to security and stability in this region. The need for regional stability is therefore a crucial aspect of the partnership and it may be achieved also by other than military means, such as trade, because as

discussants agreed, business can help bring stability to Afghanistan.

With respect to Slovakia-Georgia relations, **Ambassador Burian has expressed his appreciation for the very cultivated and organized approach to the elections in Georgia. He claimed, that it was well organized and fulfilled all rules of the EU and other institutions overseeing the election process. He expressed his conviction that Slovakia fully supports Georgia in forming its new government and it is also prepared to share its transformation and integration experience.** Euro-Atlantic aspirations are still strong in Georgia and Georgia will continue in the set course, so Slovakia and other countries can continue supporting the country's aspirations.

III. Panel discussion: Operations beyond Afghanistan: Impact on Armed Forces

The third panel discussion focused predominantly on the changing environment and the future operations after 2014, as well as the impact of these changes on the nature of the deployment of armed forces, with emphasis on the U.S. and Slovak point of view.

All three speakers treated the issue of the changing situation after 2014. In his talk, **General William Etter, Assistant to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Guard Matters, affirmed that the environment continues to change, but U.S. interests remain quite the same: seeking the security of the nation, its allies and partners, striving for prosperity that flows from an open and free international economic system, seeking of international order, where the rights and responsibilities of a nation and peoples are upheld.** Nevertheless, there are new challenges that require application of all elements of national power. Even though Al-Qaida is less capable, there are still extremists; therefore, we have to continue to counter these

threats by monitoring the activities of non-state actors and establishing control over ungoverned territories.

On the one hand, as General Etter stated, many regions are of strategic importance for the U.S. **India is crucial for security in the broader Indian Ocean region; Asian-Pacific allies and key partners are critical to future collective stability of the region and involvement is needed in the Korean peninsula in order to maintain peace. Middle East is still a strategically important region for U.S. as well, where strategic opportunities and challenges are present. Although the results of the Arab awakening are uncertain yet, there is a great chance that this region will become more stable and a reliable partner for US.** The aim of U.S. defence efforts will therefore be mainly countering violent extremists and defusing threats. Last but not least, **Europe remains a strategic partner in the process of seeking global security.** U.S. is aware of the fact that there are still some regions within Eurasia that have security issues, but General Etter assured that U.S. will continue to support peace and prosperity in Europe. **Speakers also agreed that most European countries are now rather producers than consumers of security.** Currently, the proliferation of WMD, and especially nuclear technology, has the potential to make the regional rogue state actors even more capable. Thus another goal of US in seeking global security in the changing environment will be to enhance the capabilities to conduct effective operations to counter proliferation of weapons of massive destruction. Europe has been facing very serious challenges for decades, such as aging of its population, but the import thing is how we deal with trends depends mainly on the political will.

A wholly separate question is the **NATO relations with Russia. Panelists have agreed that there is also symbolic political value in reassuring of the members of alliance, for**

example, members from Central and Eastern Europe who could be threatened in the future by for example, Russia. Relations with Russia will go ahead in line with as NATO's commitment, however nuclear weapons should be the subject of further negotiations.

Colonel Babiar, Chief of Capability Planning Branch of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, addressed the issue of the changing nature of expeditionary operations especially in the Balkans and the Middle East. In his view, NATO's operations have been mostly peace building and peace keeping. **ISAF has been the leading mission of NATO, and with this mission NATO changed its approach to expeditionary operations. A new mission should be able to execute counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations as well as to rebuild failed states and its institutions – military, as well as civilian.**

According to Matthew Rhodes, Professor at George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, the negative outlook on post-Afghanistan environment is influenced by predictions that we can expect geographical balancing as well as less US forces in Europe, less political motive for more intensive operations and further economic decline within the NATO framework. **Panelists discussed two possible medium-term scenarios: the stimulation around the middle point of spending or decline in engagement. Given that NATO exists as a forum of sharing security challenges, we have now the opportunity to refresh our militaries and capabilities, but we need to focus on common issues, interests and share strategies.**

On the other hand, **Mr. Rhodes mentioned the positive outlook on the possible influence of Afghanistan's challenges on the future of armed forces. We may appreciate the post-Afghanistan situation as the opportunity for our militaries to catch their breath, to refresh and to learn lessons.** Maybe there will not be any

operations after Afghanistan, or Afghanistan-like operations, but new challenges will still be there. Past decades of very intensive involvement of forces in theaters such as Afghanistan and Iraq can be seen as successful, although there have been some mistakes, shortcomings and wrong decisions. Nevertheless it was a remarkable and difficult learning process and our success is going forward, because there is going to be significant institutional presence on the Afghan territory.

To answer the question of what will be the driver of modernization after 2014, when we take into the account that **the Afghanistan mission was the opportunity for new member states to make their armed forces more operable and deployable, speakers agreed that the motivation for Europe will start with the realization that we need to defend our resources and are ready to bear the related costs.** In other words, European states need to spend the cash to maintain the responsibility. As Mr. Rhodes stated, there is also a belief that there is a strong reason for cooperating within NATO to be prepared for the possibility of the so-called new cold wars, for example with Russia and China. More likely, the direction of cooperation and development will be in supporting the Middle East and facing conflicts and crisis situations in this region arising from political tensions. ■

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