

## **The Future of NATO and the Role of the European Union<sup>1</sup>**

*NATO's upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary Summit in April 2009 is crucial for the future of the Alliance. As the context in which NATO operates has changed fundamentally, a new strategic concept has to be drafted. The new concept is supposed to guide the Alliance in confronting terrorism, cyber attacks and even the problems resulting from climate change. Enlargement with two more ex-communist states - Albania and Croatia - will be another topic on the agenda. The new US president Obama already declared that a major focus will be on Afghanistan and wants the Europeans to make a greater contribution. As this is a potentially dividing issue, the Czech presidency will try to keep it from the agenda and instead invite Obama to discuss it on the afternoon of 4th April in Prague with the EU leaders. French President Sarkozy is expected to announce formally that France will rejoin the NATO command structure after 33 years of absence. He hopes for a stronger French and European influence within NATO. One thing is sure: fundamental changes in transatlantic relations are required and, if Europe wants more influence, it will also have to deliver. What will the new Alliance look like after the April summit?*

NATO does not have a *raison d'être* independent from what it does. Unlike the EU it does not have a vision of achieving a closer integration among its members which would survive setbacks. NATO is very much a performance based organisation: if it fails in one of its important present missions like Afghanistan, it makes it harder to define what it could be doing in the future. Afghanistan today is NATO's most difficult operation to date which occupies about 80% of its time.

NATO is an institution that lives very much in the presence. It doesn't draft constitutions. Instead of putting theory into practice, NATO does things in practice and if they work they become part of the NATO "theology". NATO is very responsive to the international security environment: its future is very much tied up with the world beyond its borders.

Of course, there are interesting possibilities for NATO's future ability. It could take more security challenges on and become a more global actor, but there is certain reluctance among member states to do that before NATO passes the Afghan test. In the NATO capitals Washington and London the sense is predominant that nothing what NATO does should disturb from Afghanistan.

### **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan will also be the dominant topic on the April summit. It has to be discussed where we are in this endeavour. The Americans are putting in extra troops and they will provide a new strategy. The significantly larger military effort has to do

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<sup>1</sup> Guest speakers were: Sven **Biscop**, Director Security & Global Governance Programme, EGMONT, Royal Institute for International Relations, Visiting Professor for European Security at the College of Europe (Bruges) and Ghent University; Muriel **Domenach**, Deputy Director of Policy Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France and Jamie **Shea**, Director of Policy Planning in the Private Office of the Secretary General of NATO. The event took place under Chatham House Rule. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

with the awareness in Washington that you cannot have development without security. In the meantime one has to reassure the Afghans that we are not giving up on democracy or development. But there will be a more local, more bottom-up approach as centralisation and the capital do not mean very much for many Afghans. Also, Pakistan has to be brought into the stabilisation process. The US will be asking the EU for a financial involvement in the stabilisation of Pakistan.

You can see this much more regional approach in the Afghanistan conference organised in the Hague on 31 March meeting to which Iran, China, Pakistan, India and Russia are invited in order to get the regional countries more involved in the stabilisation. Clear is that the US will be looking to NATO to be part of that effort. For many Europeans that will not be easy. The push will be, firstly, on trying to get the Europeans to contribute on the civilian side and, secondly, on the idea of NATO playing a much more important role in training. Whether that will be endorsed in Strasburg is unclear. One way or the other, Afghanistan will be NATO's major issue in 2009 and maybe 2010.

Europeans should not criticise that the US now consider Afghanistan as the main problem rather than Iraq. They should not forget that the US puts the most money on the civilian as well as the military side. The US are not good at doing things on their own, they do far better with partners. Obama has no interest in turning Afghanistan into his war – the American troops need to stay embedded in ISAF, even though Americans seem to be tired of using NATO.

### **Traditional Values or New Challenges**

The second issue is a debate in the Alliance which has to be resolved between allies: especially the new members states think that the focus of NATO should be on traditional collective defence (article 5) which according to them has somehow been neglected and these countries do not necessarily feel more secure because they now are part of the Alliance: they would like some of the hardware. Those allies - as long as they feel insecure - are not willing to reach out to Russia. This also effects the enlargement debate and whether to engage Georgia and the Ukraine in doing expedition missions in Eastern Europe. We need to see what we can do to reassure them and prevent at the same time that Russia can see it as a provocation.

The third issue is new security challenges. In reality these challenges (terrorism, cyber attacks, climate change) are not really new, but they are new for NATO to take into account. A comprehensive security organisation cannot ignore these challenges, NATO will have to decide what challenges it wants to get involved in, how far and what it will leave to other actors like the EU or UN and how to link up its efforts with that of other agencies.

### **EU-NATO Relations**

The relationship NATO-EU is another crucial topic. There is a sense of urgency that there has to be a closer cooperation. The EU has an increasing need of NATO. The need is to deploy our military assets in a more coordinated way. More and more NATO operations need to be done in partnership with EU, for example. If these issues can be dealt with successfully in Strasburg the way to a new mission statement will be open. For that a debate is necessary on where we need to spend the resources and where to generate more resources in the future. We have to use multilateral military capabilities in a way that they produce political results. In Afghanistan we use more and more force (in the sense of capability) costing us more and more money and achieve smaller results than e.g. in the Balkans. Are we using the right resources

are we plugged in into a civilian context or are we just going around in circles and wasting billions of dollars? If the usefulness of force comes down, NATO comes down.

### **France and NATO**

The national security independence and that of Europe is why De Gaulle left the military command structure of NATO in 1966 and for the same reason Sarkozy wants back in. "The Alliance", Sarkozy quoted de Gaulle, "is about protecting the free peoples of the West." De Gaulle always found the relationship with the US an anchor, but at the time national independence was about not to be dragged into a conflict which people here did not want NATO today is not integrated the way it was in 1966. Europe in the meantime has become a key element: NATO as such does not place Europeans in the situation of responsibility even though one could also argue that they might have too much responsibility compared with the amount of responsibility they actually take. De Gaulle at the time thought that Europeans did not have enough responsibilities, these days they do not take enough responsibilities. Sarkozy put it in the right words on the Munich security conference: does Europe want peace or does it just want to be left in peace?

### **Shift From Alliance Towards Partnership**

The problem for NATO and for the EU is that Europeans do not know what they want. They have failed to react adequately to the fact that the political centre of gravity has already shifted away from NATO. There are many issues today that NATO cannot solve like climate change or the financial crisis or the rise of China. And even with regard to a number of security concerns, a comprehensive approach is required that covers all these things. These debates are no longer happening in NATO neither do they yet sufficiently happen in the EU.

There is a certain divergence between Americans and Europeans since the end of the cold war and ever since the EU created its own ESDP structure there is no longer an outside pressure which makes us look to American leadership. Europeans and Americans hold different world views, but it is not the Americans who have changed, it is the Europeans who have become much more aware of their own world view but do not always act upon it, even though the idea is clear enough idea to put it down in writing.

We need a much more deepened comprehensive partnership between the EU and the US. If we have that stronger partnership, the main actors are the two pillars, the EU and the US, also in terms of security and defence. In the European context, it is, increasingly, in the EU that Europeans take the primary political decision whether to act in a given crisis, certainly if the NATO label will be counter-productive as e.g. in Lebanon. In order to develop a "two-pillar-NATO" Europeans will have to build their forces to the level of the US. Europe really has no choice unless it wants to become to the US what Ancient Greece was to Ancient Rome.