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**HUB OR SPOKE? NATO'S ROLE IN ALLIED PROJECTING
STABILITY EFFORTS ON THE SOUTHERN FLANK**

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INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has certainly played an important role as a tool, hub, and forum for international crisis management and—since 2001—efforts in the joint fight against terrorist organizations operating globally and threatening the well-being of societies within and beyond NATO's borders. With 29 nations under its roof, the alliance oftentimes functions as a well-oiled consensus-seeking machine. But in the past decades, it has also experienced the challenge of rifts and tensions between its members based on diverging threat perceptions and policy preferences. In times of major external challenges to the security of allies, maintaining intergovernmental cohesion and solidarity is key—but security policy neither happens in a vacuum nor behind closed doors, and public support for alliance politics might erode if internal conflicts remain unmanaged. Does NATO's ability to coordinate, manage, and maintain cooperation among member states through structures and institutions provide the alliance with a competitive edge over ad hoc coalitions? With the upcoming NATO Summit in mind, this report aims at both mapping NATO's activities on the so-called Southern Flank—the Middle East and North Africa—and placing these efforts in the larger framework of NATO's 360-degree security approach. What have NATO as an organization and its member states learned in past efforts to project stability, which adjustments are key for the future, and to what extent have differences between member states persisted despite high pressure for convergence?

Crisis management and cooperative security operations on the Southern flank and in the War on Terror have been formative for both Germany's and Turkey's relations with NATO over the past two decades. Both have committed substantial

resources to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) missions and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan, took on leadership roles, and changed—to a certain extent—their attitudes towards the deployment to combat missions, as well. Taking stock after more than 15 years of NATO engagement in Afghanistan, what are both the achievements and the lessons learned we can take away from the missions, both with regard to operational success and intra-alliance cooperation in the past and future?

In contrast to the highly institutionalized engagement in Afghanistan, German and Turkish efforts, especially in the context of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, have recently adopted more flexible and tailor-made approaches to foreign policy making in general and crisis management in particular. Be it efforts to build partners' military capacity outside of formal multilateral training missions or the out-of-area deployment of armed forces, both Germany and Turkey have implemented their commitment to the fight against ISIS in unusually weak, non-institutionalized ways. As NATO has joined the Coalition, and the EU emerges as a potential capacity-builder in the region, will it find its place as a primary hub for allied efforts, again, without facing the risk of duplication?

When allies look south these days, and amid the military defeat of ISIS, reconstruction and stabilization top their list of priorities. Both Turkey and Germany have been engaged in high-profile reconstruction efforts and initiated building partnership capacity projects in the past months, as instability in the area constitutes a major risk for their security. And yet, the transatlantic alliance has not found its *Petersberg Moment* in reaching a consensus among each other and with key local and regional players

about a post-war political end state on either side of the Syria-Iraq border. This has led to major disagreements about whom to engage—and how—on the way to finding a political solution. With the shared goal of sustainable peace and stability in mind, how can NATO—as a whole—move forward?

The following essays address these questions from a wide array of perspectives. The authors draw from their academic and practical experiences and insights to discuss both NATO and the challenges it faces on the Southern flank.

Tacan İldem argues that NATO no longer has the luxury of focusing on one geographical area or even one specific threat at a time. While speedy adjustments and agility are needed for the alliance to successfully adapt to rapid changes in its Southern security environment, NATO's efforts need to be comprehensive and remain driven by common values.

While a 360-degree approach enabled by solidarity among allies is key, **Alper Coşkun** points out difficulties in transforming NATO principles into political realities on the Southern flank, where the sheer complexity and intertwined nature of challenges requires enhanced efforts for cooperation and coordination among allies and partners.

Marc Di Paolo provides an in-depth status report on NATO's efforts to project and maintain stability in Afghanistan and assesses the remaining challenges both for local forces and international partners. Highlighting successes in the transformation of Afghan capabilities and overall governance, he calls on the West to remain patient and resolute.

Metin Gürcan examines the question of if and to what extent the lessons NATO learned from its Afghanistan engagement have helped the alliance to successfully adapt and address similar challenges in the future. In order to foster local capacities, especially in areas of fragile statehood, NATO

should enhance its efforts both to provide security and work towards the effective delivery of justice.

Addressing the question of how NATO has gradually established a distinct role for itself as an effective player in global efforts to combat terrorism and counter violent extremism, **Ömer Faruk Cantenar** points out not only current trends and allies' initiatives but also new opportunities for partnership engagements, particularly in the field of training and education.

Erica Gaston's essay draws from extensive fieldwork in post-ISIS Iraq, examining the remaining risks through local practices of mass mobilization and political as well as societal divisions. She provides valuable recommendations for ongoing and future international stabilization efforts.

Magdalena Kirchner argues that a successful NATO strategy for the Mediterranean should generate an informed consensus among allies about priorities and mediating conflict where necessary. It is suggested that the alliance balance the strong bias in favor of intergovernmental partnership engagements in order to generate sustainable security. Allies should further institutionalize their counterterrorism efforts.

Exploring a true worst-case scenario on NATO's Southern flank, **Rayk Hähnlein, Markus Kaim, and Günter Seufert** raise the question of what would happen if Turkey, one of the alliance's oldest members, decides to part ways from its allies. As this would certainly be a major rupture for the future of transatlantic security, the authors provide recommendations to mitigate possible conflicts and shape alternative forms of engagement.

NATO: AN ENDURING ALLIANCE PROJECTING STABILITY

Tacan İldem

For nearly seventy years, NATO's purpose has remained the same: to preserve peace. We do this by pledging to defend one another. We stand together on the basis of solidarity, shared purpose, and fair burden-sharing. In a world of global challenges, we need global solutions. As an alliance, NATO is successful because we have proven able to adapt to changing security challenges.

A Changed Security Environment

2014 was a watershed year. In response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the rise of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) or *Da'esh*, NATO increased its collective defense capabilities and took action to project its stability. Allies have since implemented the most significant reinforcement of our collective defense since the end of the Cold War. This includes setting up eight multinational headquarters in the Eastern part of the alliance, tripling the size of the NATO Response Force to 40,000 troops, and establishing a joint task force prepared to move within days. NATO has also increased its presence in the Southeast of the alliance, centered on the multinational brigade in Romania; stepped up air policing over the Baltic and Black Sea areas; and deployed four multinational battalions in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. All these actions have been taken to prevent conflict, to deter potential aggression, and to ensure our collective defense. After all, NATO is and has always been a defensive alliance.

NATO's Contributions to the South

NATO's security has been deeply affected by the security situation in the Middle East and North

Africa. Terrorism, particularly as perpetrated by ISIS, has risen to an unprecedented level of activity and reaches across allied territory. At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO leaders agreed to project stability and strengthen security outside its territory, thereby contributing to overall alliance and international security. Allies drew attention to security challenges and threats that originate in the South. They established a "Framework for the South," which aims to improve situational awareness and strategic anticipation and to project stability through partnership and capacity building. The Framework is a cross-cutting element of the alliance's strengthened approach to its deterrence and defense posture and projecting stability. It helps to ensure that the alliance can fulfill all of its three core tasks in the region—collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security.

NATO recognizes that when our neighbors become more secure, we become more secure. Thus, NATO works with more than 40 diverse partners, including Jordan, Georgia, Australia, Afghanistan, and Sweden. Already NATO has also stepped up consultations with partners in the South. Since the Warsaw Summit, the North Atlantic Council has met or conducted consultations with officials from Iraq and the UAE, as well as the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) countries. In addition, a NATO-ICI Regional Centre was recently opened in Kuwait.

As we do this, we draw on the experiences we have gained and lessons we have learned. For example, our past and ongoing missions in Afghanistan taught us that training local forces is one of our best

weapons in the fight against terrorism. Only trained and professional local forces can begin to provide for their own security. Thus, we are adding 3,000 more trainers to our Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and contributing to the financial sustainability of Afghan forces. NATO has also increased support for partners across the Middle East and North Africa, providing a range of training and defense capacity-building programs. The goal is to help partners better face external threats while strengthening their institutions in line with transparency and accountability standards. Cooperation is tailored to their specific security needs and may include defense reform, countering-IEDs (improvised explosive devices), cyber defense, Special Forces training, CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) defenses, etc.

We have been training Iraqi officers with a focus on countering IEDs, improving military medicine, and supporting the maintenance of former Soviet equipment. NATO recently agreed to start planning for a larger-scale training mission in Iraq, which will help the Iraqi forces become increasingly professional through establishing specialized military academies and schools. NATO is also a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, which was established in September 2014. NATO contributes by providing Airborne Warning & Control System (AWACS) aircraft surveillance flights and coordinating activity with the European Union, the United Nations, and individual states.

NATO has strengthened maritime security through its partnership with the EU to address the refugee and migrant crisis. In the Aegean, NATO ships provide critical information on a daily basis, helping Greece, Turkey, and the EU Border Agency Frontex to take more effective action in order to break the business model of human traffickers. We have transitioned Operation Active Endeavour (OAE) in the Mediterranean into a broader maritime security operation and created a new Hub for the South at

our command in Naples. All relevant contingency plans dealing with the South are being reviewed in order to take into account the latest conventional, hybrid, terrorist, and other threats that are part of the broad range of security challenges in and from the South.

Toward the 2018 NATO Summit

By any reasonable measure, NATO has achieved a great deal in adapting the alliance to an ever-evolving security environment, but there is always more to do. When our leaders gather together this summer in Brussels, a number of items are likely to be on the agenda. Terrorism will be front and center, as will how to further strengthen deterrence and defense. A range of related subjects are likely to be discussed, including our approach to Russia, increasing NATO and EU cooperation, burden-sharing, and alliance modernization.

Conclusion

A major part of being a true 21st century alliance is about speed: of awareness, decision-making, action, reinforcement, and adaptation. In other words, the speed of relevance. A more agile, more responsive, more innovative NATO is a stronger and more effective NATO.

NATO will have to apply a 360-degree approach. The alliance no longer has the luxury of focusing on one geographical area or one threat at a time. Threats from the South and Southeast are diverse and diffuse, stemming from state and non-state actors using conventional and non-conventional tools. Even as NATO has adapted over the years, some things must never change. We must continue to treasure and uphold our enduring values—democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law—on the world stage. Our values and security will be upheld in the fight against terrorism as in our fight against all threats to the security and stability of the NATO alliance.

HOW TO PROJECT STABILITY IN THE SOUTH: A VIEW FROM TURKEY

Alper Coşkun

The situation in the south of NATO's borders is distinct. The challenges are dynamic, intertwined, and complex. Moreover, we see a confluence of the whole array of individual challenges confronting NATO allies in other regions, from traditional challenges to others such as terrorism, mass migration, and hybrid activities. A tailored and comprehensive response is required while carefully preserving allied solidarity and NATO's 360-degree approach.

NATO cannot afford internal regional rivalry or seem to be selective when faced with challenges. Any ally's slightest sense of insecurity should, by definition, be a matter of concern for all. And individual actions by any party, anywhere should not contradict the security interests of other allies. These are the main principles that the notion "indivisibility of security" dictates. They are what make alliances matter and what make them resilient. While this may sound obvious, current realities make it necessary to underline these points.

The fog in the South is thick. There are elements of state rivalry and sectarianism. The situation is fluid, and allegiances are short-lived. Interrelated factors such as state failure, power fragmentation or even vacuums, terrorist infiltration, and mass displacements are at play. State and non-state actors function in the same environment. Simultaneous realities on the ground are occasionally contradictory and create an optical illusion, sometimes producing diverging views within the alliance. In the case of Syria, for example, some NATO actors have branded Bashar al-Assad, a mass murderer in every sense of the word, as a legitimate leader. Similarly, various allies have embraced the Democratic Union Party/

People's Protection Units (PYD/YPG) as a tactical and operational partner despite its direct links to the terrorist organization the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Such core discrepancies complicate reaching a common understanding. They undermine the potential of devising an integrated and sustainable way forward. The challenge for NATO is to uphold its coherence, while implementing effective solutions. Allies' individual actions and choices are critical and should support this objective. There are obvious problems here that need to be remedied.

Three points come to the fore when looking to the South:

1) A holistic and realistic approach is crucial: piecemeal and parochial approaches are harming collective interests and unity. This can clearly be seen in the area of counterterrorism. We cannot talk about a unified and unequivocal fight against terrorism while some allies partner with a terrorist group in Syria, namely the PYD/YPG, and even call these elements their "allies." The track record and nature of the PYD/YPG is common knowledge. Circumstantial attempts to deny this reality cannot change obvious and well-documented facts. The PYD/YPG has its own agenda in Syria. This agenda directly challenges the demographic realities and territorial integrity of Syria and poses a real and imminent security threat to Turkey. In simple terms, there can be no acceptable reason to openly contradict the vital security considerations of a longstanding NATO ally in this manner. Such inconsistencies have the potential to create immense and potentially irreparable damage to the spirit of alliance solidarity.

Another flawed approach can be seen in dealing with irregular migration. This humanitarian challenge cannot be dealt with by sealing borders or by trying to hold these people at bay, in Turkey or in other regional countries. This is neither realistic nor a strategy for a sustainable solution. Much more needs to be done.

2) Allies need to set the standard in upholding the rules-based system: Reduced predictability is exacerbating our challenges. The rules-based system needs to be maintained and strengthened. This would contribute to predictability, thus stability. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran is a case in point. The merits and the success of the deal need to be measured according to its agreed objectives. And the relevant watchdog in that regard is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Trashing the deal in an unwarranted manner sends a very wrong message.

3) Partnership activities should be strengthened and demand-driven: training and support to countries in the South is critical. NATO can make significant contributions in this area. Its efforts should be demand-driven and conditional. Properly calibrated efforts can help consolidate positive developments and enhance local capacity for further improvement.

It is quite clear that NATO cannot address all the challenges in the region on its own. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine how these challenges can be addressed at all without NATO's contribution. Looking towards the upcoming Brussels Summit in July, NATO must do some creative thinking and find better ways to do its part. "Projecting Stability" efforts and the "Framework for the South" are steps in the right direction. The regional hub in Naples will enhance NATO's situational awareness and strategic anticipation capability, which will in turn contribute to regional security. Expanding NATO's support in Iraq will also be useful. While NATO

may not be the primary actor in the fight against terrorism, a strong display of political solidarity by allies against the threat of terrorism would send a powerful message, one that is currently much needed. Finally, there should be no doubt that while implementing a 360-degree approach, NATO is able to fulfill its three core tasks—collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management—in every theater.

STATUS REPORT ON NATO PROJECTING STABILITY ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

Marc Di Paolo

There is no shortage of reasons for some to doubt Afghanistan's future and the utility of NATO's enduring commitment to the Resolute Support mission there. The security situation in Afghanistan was manifestly worse in 2017 than it was five years before. Civilian casualties spiked after closure of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, the economy contracted, and even the current commander of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission acknowledged the conflict had stalemated. Reasonable observers note that because the Taliban and other terrorist groups remain a threat in Afghanistan, it seems that nothing has changed despite NATO's long efforts.

However, *much* has changed, especially since the transition from ISAF to Resolute Support. First, the mindset of NATO advisors and leadership in Afghanistan has changed. Before Resolute Support, our commitment to letting Afghans solve their own problems was incomplete. Although we were well intentioned, when important initiatives under Afghan leadership began to lag we were quick to jump in to prevent failure. Our behavior stunted Afghan learning and removed Afghans from the pressure to account for results. Those days are over.

The Afghan mindset itself has also changed. There were many adverse consequences of the too rapid drawdown of the NATO presence in Afghanistan in 2014. One very positive outcome, however, was the creation of an environment in which there was no alternative to Afghan leadership and accountability. It was what sociologist Morris Massey called a Significant Emotional Event—an event so mentally arresting that it becomes a catalyst for changing our

value system. After 2014, the number of Afghans that internalized the requirement to lead had finally reached a critical mass.

Operations in Afghanistan changed after 2014, reflecting these new mindsets. As a result, our mutual assessment of the situation now reflects a greater connection with reality than before the change—that is a precondition for success that had not previously been attained. It may seem counter-intuitive, but the backsliding in many important metrics since 2014 is evidence of progress in that the wishful thinking of the past is being corrected. Whether the metric was related to security, social progress, or the Afghan economy, it had been artificially inflated, and only after 2014 did this metric settle into a new, lower, but truer level. Afghanistan's current GDP growth rate of three percent, for example, seems much closer to reality than when it peaked at 21 percent in 2009. In summary, our decision-making is now more intellectually honest.

So, while it is true that the Taliban remains resilient in Afghanistan, the environment around them is changing. For example, instead of NATO troops doing the fighting, now all six Afghan National Army Corps are simultaneously on offense nationwide. That is without precedent. Second, the Afghans are demonstrating high levels of technical competency with little external assistance. That was most recently highlighted in Kunduz, where the conventional Afghan Army, Afghan Air Force, and Afghan special operations forces combined their effects in joint operations. That complex operation required a level of skill that many Western militaries might have difficulty executing.

Even though the pace of operations is increasing, Afghans are demonstrating a real effort to adhere to values that are essential to a professional force. In 2017, civilian casualties caused by Afghan forces on the ground decreased by 37 percent in comparison with 2016. That reduction is not a statistical blip—it reflects a conscious decision by Afghan commanders to operate differently and to accept more risk to the force in order to reduce risk to civilians. That same year, there was a dreadful 24-percent increase in civilian casualties caused by the Afghan Air Force, but even there we can see the transformation of Afghan capabilities. Although the total number of casualties was higher, the number of casualty-causing incidents was the same as the previous year even though the Afghan Air Force doubled its number of sorties. In other words, Afghans cut the incident rate in half as their proficiency and professionalism increased.

As a result of those and many other factors, the Taliban failed to achieve its stated campaign objectives last year, and their narrative has now shifted from taking provinces to taking poorly defended checkpoints. The new fighting season will surely bring a surge in Taliban operations as they attempt to signal their resilience, but the experience of last year indicates that it will not be sustainable.

So, yes, the Taliban remains. Cynical observers cite that fact as *prima facie* evidence that after years of intervention, the West has not accomplished anything in Afghanistan. A singular focus on the continued existence of the Taliban fails to acknowledge progress in attaining Afghan military self-sufficiency and larger socio-economic progress that is transforming the lives of almost all Afghans.

Before 2001, for instance, Afghanistan had fewer than one million students in school (and zero girls). Now, there are nine million children in school, a total that includes more than three million girls. In 2002, only nine percent of Afghans had access to

basic healthcare while now the rate is 57 percent. We can lament the fact that basic healthcare is not available to 100 percent of the Afghan population, but surely the six-fold increase to date must be acknowledged. There is a cascade of benefits from that one area of progress alone. For example, incidence of tuberculosis has dropped 20 percent, and the percent of children receiving immunizations has almost tripled.

Afghanistan also has a vibrant and free press, with over 75 television channels, 200 radio channels, and twenty internet providers. Across the country, more than 85 percent of Afghans use a mobile phone or have access to the internet. Overall, the population is healthier, better educated, and better connected to the rest of the world. None of that would have been possible without the security assistance the West has provided to Afghanistan.

Unlike five years ago, there is now consensus in Afghanistan that neither side will win the conflict on the battlefield and that reconciliation between the Taliban and the rest of Afghanistan is how the conflict will end. The Afghan government's bold offer of peace negotiations without preconditions put the ball into the Taliban's court. Although mounting military, diplomatic, and social pressure may change their calculus, a breakthrough before the end of 2019 seems unlikely, so Afghanistan and the West must remain patient and resolute. During that period, while the Taliban continues to exist, nothing will change... except for everything.

NATO'S RELEVANCY IN THE SOUTHERN FLANK: MYTH OR REALITY?

Metin Gürcan

My conceptualization of NATO is neither as a hub (NATO as the organization having agency over member states and shaping their strategic preferences) nor a spoke (NATO as a mere enabler/coordinator medium for more synchronization/orchestration of member states' security/defense-related efforts). Further developing the hub-spoke metaphor, NATO rather acts as a *wheel*, emphasizing the alliance's functional entirety and practical relevancy both for member states and NATO partners.

NATO has two guiding principles: functionality, the quality of being suited to serve a purpose, and practicality, relying on experience rather than being stuck in ideas and theories. Through following these two principles, NATO is able to maintain its relevancy in the global security environment in general and in the Southern flank in particular. This allows NATO to enable both member and partner states' safe transfer from point A to point B, creating meaningful impact on the ground.

Despite NATO's ambitious efforts to stay relevant in the Southern flank, the alliance has suffered multiple setbacks in recent years. First, structural changes in the risk environment have caused trouble for NATO on the ground. The prevalence of non-state actors, increased use of proxies to fight armed conflicts, implementation of capacity-building efforts and counter-terror missions simultaneously, localization of armed conflict, and the visibility of rivalry between the United States and Russia in the Southern flank, etc., have been particularly problematic. Second, the diverging (even sometimes conflicting) interests of member states (i.e., Turkey

vs. other members) have negatively affected the alliance's ability to reach consensus. Finally, NATO's image has suffered as Russia has emerged as the new functionally effective and practically relevant wheel (or as the security and stability provider) for some states in the region.

As an analyst from Turkey closely monitoring developments in the Southern flank, I have observed that NATO's inability to create meaningful impact on the ground over the last three years as well as its lack of involvement in the anti-ISIS coalition has crippled the alliance's reputation in the region. Worse, NATO's absence from the post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the post-ISIS setting has severely tarnished its already crippled reputation, and the alliance is becoming more and more irrelevant in the Southern flank.

Thus, it needs to be discovered why NATO's strategic narratives and actions cannot create meaningful impact on the ground anymore, despite all its efforts and billions of dollars spent in the region over the years. Aside from the conflict with ISIS, why is NATO becoming more irrelevant in the Southern flank and MENA? To answer this question, the Afghanistan experience should come to the fore.

I served in Afghanistan for six months in 2005 in order to train Afghan officers. After this deployment I came to conclude that, when considering the global fight against violent Salafi/jihadi networks, "All started in Afghanistan, and all is going to end in Afghanistan." Thirteen years later, I now more strongly believe in this prophecy. I would suggest that there is a reciprocal causality between the

insurgency in Afghanistan and global violent Salafi/jihadi insurgency. These two feed on one another in a sort of reciprocal fashion, thus it is meaningless to try to understand which is the cause and which is the effect. For me, Afghanistan is the kitchen in the house of the global security environment. If you cook a delicious meal in this kitchen, the house smells delicious; if you cook something nasty then the house smells terrible.

From the Afghanistan experience, NATO learned not to bite off more than it can chew. On the one hand, in Afghanistan, NATO attempted to fix the state and build the nation so as to drain the swamp through a population-centric approach. On the other, it simultaneously conducted counter-terror operations to “kill the mosquitoes” in that swamp, which had been an intrinsic part of that ecosystem. The application of both approaches in a simultaneous fashion spoiled the strategic communication environment.

To propel the alliance forward, it is important to learn from the past and understand how NATO, as a political and military alliance, can manage the dilemma in Afghanistan while choosing not to give a counter-terror mandate to ISAF in an environment where terrorism still thrives. Meanwhile, what does this mean for the future of Non-Article 5 Crisis Response Operations (NA5CRO)?

It is important to realize that tactical/military victory on the ground does not necessarily mean a political victory. How can NATO translate its military victories into a sustainable political mechanism holding territory-people-ideas together in fragile/failed states? Certainly, top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches do not work. Starting to fix a country from its capital may not be a good idea. Community-based capacity restoration efforts (not state building) are the key to success.

How can NATO foster these asymmetric, community-based, local capacities within its current structures? Can this be achieved through the provision of security or the effective delivery of justice? Taking lessons from the Afghanistan experience, the latter of these two should be prioritized.

Moving forward, NATO is in desperate need of developing two mechanisms. First, NATO should increase its engagement with the security problems in the Southern flank to fill the gap left by the United States and to deny Russia further influence. The alliance should concentrate on the development of policy-making capabilities so as to create community-based capacity restoration/building models at the substate level. This could create meaningful impact so as to maintain NATO's functional entirety and practical relevancy. Second, Turkey and Germany could be the engines of this new vision. More robust discussion would keep NATO relevant and functionally effective at the Southern flank with these two states at the helm of the region's stabilization. To reach such a level of cooperation, Turkey and Germany should NATO-ify their existing problems and frictions.

NATO'S COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS

Ömer Faruk Cantenar

Terrorism was not on the agenda of NATO during the Cold War. Rather, it was listed as a non-military threat to NATO in its 1999 Strategic Concept. The 9/11 attacks in 2001 was the first time that an act of terrorism had triggered NATO to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In October 2001, NATO initiated Operation Eagle Assist and Operation Active Endeavour. With these two operations, NATO provided surveillance of U.S. airspace and controlled the sea-lanes in the Eastern Mediterranean. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO's operation in Afghanistan, was formed in 2003 and was designed to assist the local government with maintaining security and expanding its authority. While it was not a counterterrorism operation per se, ISAF operated within an environment characterized by terrorist threats, and the force was of high relevance to international counterterrorism efforts. In December 2014, ISAF's mission was transformed into "Operation Resolute Support," and Afghan forces assumed full security responsibility. Those NATO operations were not kinetic operations, and they did not necessitate that participating forces play a combat role.

Since the start of the US-led Global War on Terror and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there has been considerable disagreement in NATO about how to approach the terrorist threat. One contending approach to the "war" strategy has been the "risk-management" or "law enforcement" perspective, which has been dominant among most NATO members and foresees only a limited role for the military. Despite the general perception that NATO is not doing much in countering terrorism, the alliance has been trying to increase its efforts in this

area since 9/11. The bulk of NATO's contributions in the counterterrorism field had occurred in the context of cooperative security and partnership-related activities. With the help of NATO's education and training institutions, newly established Centers of Excellence (COE) and Partnership Training and Education Centers (PTEC), the alliance has provided training and education to allied and partner nation officers and helped the capacity-building efforts of partners in the field of counterterrorism.

Thirty-two PTECs joined NATO's partnership education network in 2017. PTECs conducted 715 different courses for NATO allies and partners and trained 11,636 international personnel in 2017. There are also 23 NATO accredited COEs, and at least seven of them work directly or indirectly in fields related to counterterrorism. However, those training and educational efforts are conducted at the individual level, and there is no established NATO structure to help partners on structural issues and organizational capacity-building efforts. NATO may create its own counterterrorism capacity-building teams in the future to develop capacity-building programs in partner countries. In addition, NATO itself developed expertise on train, advice, and assist missions, which currently are the focus of most of the alliance's overseas interventions or taskings. But in recent years, those train, advice, and *assist* missions are now shifting to train, advice and *accompany* missions, as experience has shown that "combat advisors" fighting alongside local troops are far more effective than trainers in large bases. As a result of this, forces of the Global Coalition against ISIS engage with units in the field

(Iraqi forces and peshmerga units), which were successful against ISIS. In addition, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered U.S. forces to advise the battalion level.

The Coalition against ISIS and NATO's New Counterterrorism Engagements

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO members declared that “a coordinated international approach is required” in the fight against ISIS. However, there was no decision made to task NATO with an active role in this effort, and allies left the main responsibility for the fight to the United States. Washington took the lead in forming and guiding a Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in September 2014 and led its military efforts through Operation Inherent Resolve. The coalition consists of 75 countries worldwide and four international organizations—the European Union, the Arab League, Interpol, and NATO. The coalition's strategy against ISIS is based on several military and non-military measures, including air strikes, training activities for local moderate opposition groups, intelligence cooperation, efforts to curb terrorism financing, humanitarian support, and stabilization as well as the development of religious and political counternarratives to the group's jihadist ideology.


After the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO steadily increased its efforts in countering terrorism. A new NATO Strategic Direction South initiative, “Hub for the South,” was created at the Joint Force Command in Naples. Meanwhile, NATO as an institution became a member in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. A new Assistant Secretary General responsible for intelligence was appointed to head the newly established Joint Intelligence and Security Division. From a kinetic perspective, NATO had allocated more Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft flight-time and more air-to-air refueling support for global coalition efforts. Finally, it was decided in February 2018 that

NATO will give counterterrorism-related training and defense capacity-building support to Iraq. The expanded NATO mission—NATO Training and Capacity Building Activity in Iraq (NTCB-I)—will be headquartered in Baghdad, but some elements are expected to operate in Erbil. Initial estimates say the overall deployment could involve up to 200 troops and would be open to NATO partners. In this context, NATO's contributions will be reforming Iraqi security infrastructure, including the Ministry of Defense and joint chief of staffs, building military schools as well as military academies.

Trends in NATO's Counterterrorism Operations

In recent years, NATO has tried to address the terrorism threats in the Middle East more extensively. By examining NATO's counterterrorism-related efforts, we can comment on the current NATO principles against terrorism. First, with regard to countering terrorism, NATO has a tendency to use NATO-owned assets (such as AWACS, AGS) and is expected to refrain from any combat role (engagement from remote platforms, risk averse strategy), which includes not putting boots on the ground, neither ground forces nor NATO-labeled Special Forces. Second, NATO will provide support to partners and local forces, including training/capacity building and improving counterterrorism education and training. Third, NATO aims at increasing intelligence cooperation and expanding its current range of partners as it already relies much more heavily on them than before. For instance, Australians are serving in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and Japan, South Korea, Jordan, New Zealand, Philippines, and Thailand are major non-NATO contributors. Finally, NATO's role will also include post conflict and stabilization to a larger extent.

For NATO, building *ad hoc coalitions* and *coalitions of the willing* is a new instrument and currently, for some, a preferable option. It offers quicker



decision-making and less national caveats, while NATO's language, standards, and procedures remain the core elements of these operations. Others have criticized such "a la carte" coalitions that could also weaken the EU and NATO when some member states reduce their commitments to NATO operations as a result of this.

There is an old saying about the transatlantic alliance that the Americans do the *cooking* (combat) while the Europeans *wash the dishes* (stabilization). Although it is clear that no state can match the force projection of the United States, it is uncertain how states should share the burden in future conflicts and if European allies will be prepared to do more *cooking*. What is certain, however, is that the alliance will most probably play a significant role in any post-conflict environment in the region.

RECONSTRUCTING LOCAL SPACES: THE MICROPOLITICS OF CONTROL AND STABILIZATION FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Erica Gaston

As greater attention turns to what the Iraqi government must do to rebuild and stabilize recaptured areas in Iraq, and what Turkey, Germany, and other NATO countries might do to assist them, it is important to consider the dynamics in these local areas and to take stock not only of the damage wrought by ISIS but also the effects of the counter-ISIS response. One of the most significant developments in the 2014 to 2017 period was the mass mobilization of forces at the local and national level. As the Iraqi Army regrouped in 2014, tens of thousands of militia forces and civilians mobilized into the Popular Mobilization Force (PMF). The Kurdish Regional Government's (KRG's) Peshmerga forces called in its reserves and mobilized against ISIS. A number of smaller forces drawn from the communities occupied by ISIS also joined the fight.

This mass mobilization helped push back ISIS and hold Iraqi territory; however, this has now left Iraq awash with a range of militias and other substate forces. In the first half of 2017, the Global Public Policy institute (GPPi) examined how the variety of local, regional, and substate forces shaped local and national political dynamics in liberated areas.¹ The research showed an altogether more fragmented and divisive environment. Forces tended to

mobilize around a specific ethno-religious identity, further factionalizing already divisive identity politics. Competition between these different local and substate forces had resulted in waves of tit-for-tat violence and retaliation, destruction of property, and rights violations at the local level, which threatened to sow future conflict. The sheer number of armed groups and the weak command and control over them undermined Iraqi state control and complicated regular law enforcement and the return of regular rule of law. With many of the local forces supported by larger national or regional political stakeholders, even small clashes or acts of violence had the potential to ripple outward to trigger larger political conflicts.

To counter these trends, any future stabilization strategy must try to address the fragmentation of the Iraqi state not only from the top down but also from the bottom up, and pay an equal amount of attention to rebuilding socio-political spaces as to physical infrastructure. An example of this is the northwest city of Tal Afar in Ninewa governorate. With a split Shi'a-Sunni population, Tal Afar has a long history of sectarian rivalry and conflict, which has contributed to the emergence of past radical insurgent movements (including ISIS, with many leaders stemming from Tal Afar) and also made it a flashpoint for regional tensions. Tal Afar sits near the Iraqi border with Syria and Turkey and has a sizeable Turkmen population. As Shi'a-dominated PMF forces surrounded the city in late 2016, some vowed to retaliate against the Sunni population for ISIS abuses. In response, Turkey mobilized troops

¹ The full report findings are available here: <http://www.gppi.net/publications/peace-security/article/iraq-after-isil-sub-state-actors-local-forces-and-the-micro-politics-of-control>.

Background information and geographic case studies, including on Tal Afar, the Ninewa Plains, and other areas mentioned in this article, are available through a microsite for the Iraq project: <http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil>.

at the Turkish-Iraqi border, vowing to protect the Turkmen population. While the immediate stand off was resolved, tensions between Turkey and the Shi'a PMF groups (and behind them, their Iranian backers) persist over Tal Afar, as well as other Turkmen areas. Since its liberation, local Shi'a and Sunni communities and tribes in Tal Afar have been engaged in reconciliation talks, facilitated by local mediating organizations. The talks are aimed at negotiating tribal agreements over past killings and attacks, to prevent revenge killings, and to enable full return and reconstruction. However, arriving at a sustainable resolution in these talks has been difficult because local parties know that any locally brokered agreements will not hold without buy-in from these larger national and regional stakeholders. In Tal Afar, local level compromises and reconciliation are absolutely necessary but are not sufficient without top-level buy-in.

These types of micro-macro splits, with conflict at the local level connected to larger national and regional divides, exist across most of the liberated areas. Our research suggests it will be hard to gain traction on reconstruction, stabilization, and reconciliation in much of Ninewa, from Sinjar to the Ninewa Plains, without some agreed vision of the Disputed Territories between the KRG and Baghdad (though full resolution is unlikely). Uncertainty at the top creates incentives for continued jostling and competition at the local level, which reproduces patterns of instability. As one politician affiliated with Christian forces in Qaraqosh argued, the worst-case scenario for local communities would be that the current stalemate continues, with different stakeholders' sides competing with each other via local actors: "If there will be a decision on these, then I'm optimistic, but if they just let it go as it is, then it will get worse." We saw similar trends in Sunni areas of Salah ad-Din but across different micro-macro issues. Baghdad-PMF tensions created incentives and opportunities for local tribal competition and rivalry, but local conflict was also

driven by neglect of bread-and-butter local governance, rule of law, and reconciliation.

There has so far been a high level of rhetorical emphasis placed on stabilizing local communities, but much more attention, in terms of funding and political bandwidth, has gone to physical infrastructure, private sector investment, and top-level political negotiations. To balance these out, there needs to be a greater emphasis on local rapprochement and reconciliation, incentivized and spurred by inputs into community-based governance, rule of law, and development. In time, this combined bottom-up and top-down strategy may also create openings for demobilizing or regularizing many different forces, although for the moment immediate security challenges and weak Iraqi official control make that challenging. On a positive note, the Iraqi elections in May 2018 could offer a greater degree of certainty and fixity at the top level, which would allow greater space to make progress at a lower level. But to build on this progress demands that all stakeholders engaged in Iraq, including NATO members and Turkey, be equally engaged in both this bottom-up and top-down vision.

NATO IN THE SOUTH: HOW TO WIN OVER PARTNERS AND MAINTAIN PURPOSE

Magdalena Kirchner

The discussion about a joint effort to stabilize the Middle East and North Africa is not new. This has been decisive for the shape and structure of NATO's cooperative security as well as crisis management since the early 1990s, when collectively defending the Turkish border against Soviet aggression was no longer a realistic scenario. On the one hand, fragile statehood and civil wars, armed insurgencies, and terrorism have triggered major NATO deployments and operations in Afghanistan and Libya, as well as Operation Active Endeavour, designed to prevent the movement of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction in the Mediterranean (2001-2016). On the other, partnership projects with other international organizations and regional states allowed NATO to expand its political and military toolkit to preemptively address security risks on the inter- and intrastate levels. Through the Mediterranean Dialogue, for instance, NATO enabled a platform for security dialogue—at times even including joint exercises—between MENA states with a history of rivalry, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, or Algeria and Morocco. At the same time, political and capacity-building formats were designed to help initiate a discussion about good governance—though limited—or at least increased civilian oversight in the security sector.

Recently, however, NATO's current ability to “live up to its full potential” in the South appears to have been challenged by intra-alliance divergence, a changed security environment, including hybrid threats and non-state actors, competition from other organizations, or more flexible and tailor-made ad hoc coalitions. Three issues are worth considering and require further action by allies.

First, increased interstate tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean have highlighted conflicts between NATO member states, such as Greece and Turkey. Throughout 2016/17, bilateral tensions between Ankara and Washington and Berlin either centered on or spilled over into the field of security cooperation. While NATO has never taken sides in conflicts among its members, it remains the only provider of a permanent and structured communication channel for members politically at odds with each other. Whereas inaction might erode alliance coherence also in the eyes of the public and provide a vacuum for external and even rival powers, NATO should actively engage member states to seek mediation in Brussels. One successful example of such a mediation case had been a German-Turkish agreement over the visit of German parliamentarians to the Konya air base in mid-2017 after months of tensions had put the deployment of German AWACS to Turkey, and hence NATO's kinetic counter-ISIS efforts, at risk. Intra-alliance disruptions, such as the failed July 15, 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and subsequent dismissals and transformations in the security sector, the U.S. military cooperation with the PYD/YPG in northern Syria, or the arrest and ongoing detention of Greek soldiers at the Turkish border, require enhanced trust-building efforts between allies. While certain measures, such as improved intelligence sharing, are certainly more realistic in the mid- and long term, expanding political dialogue to the training, education, and operational level can help to restore ideas of trust and solidarity between allies across the entire security sector.

Second, NATO's traditional intergovernmental dialogue approach is key in working successfully with partners valuing the principle of *sovereignty* over the *rule of law*. However, while NATO has an interest in maintaining amicable and effective ties to its Southern neighborhood beyond the immediate future, the Arab Uprisings have shown that this strategy is at risk of failure if rulers themselves pose a threat to sustainable domestic order or if local security sectors undergo rapid transformation. NATO surely can, in most cases, benefit from its position as a sought-after security partner also for new governments and elites in transition, especially if the disruptions in 2011 had only been temporary in nature. However, the alliance needs to take into account political conditions and a joint and comprehensive political vision when crafting security partnerships with local elites in order to generate sustainable security structures and project influence beyond the at times marginal societal power base and limited governance periods of potential partners.

Third, NATO has to find a proper balance between its function as a hub and a spoke in the field of counterterrorism and stabilization efforts in the South. Joining flexible and issue-based cooperative security initiatives with other international organizations and partner states allow NATO members to diversify their approaches to the highly specific security challenges they face. Although NATO did not play an active role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in its initial phase, the alliance's Wales Summit in 2014 provided a public platform for its establishment, and its Brussels headquarters served as the venue of the coalition's first meeting. On the one hand, the risk of a trade-off between involvement and duplication looms large, especially in the current field of capacity building, with allies being engaged through different NATO, EU, coalition, or bilateral formats. Operational learning has to be ensured. On the other, while NATO can certainly not solve all allies' security issues, constant coor-

dination and deliberation need to take place in the North Atlantic Council to maintain sufficiently high levels of alliance cohesion and understanding. A "multi-speed" NATO with a heavy emphasis on EU members of the alliance could exclude, e.g., Turkey—which doesn't have an operational agreement with Europol yet—from intelligence sharing schemes in order to regulate and manage the flow of returning foreign fighters and could have substantial trust-eroding effects. The same goes for unilateral counterterrorism operations without prior consultation or subsequent transparency and coordination with allies, as happened earlier this year in Northern Syria.

Especially with the military campaign against ISIS winding down and substantial transatlantic tensions over the future of the JCPOA deal, the Southern flank is unlikely to dominate the agenda of the upcoming NATO summit in July. Nevertheless, NATO would be—when addressing the need for a new strategic concept—well advised to reflect and seek paths forward in order to maintain alliance cohesion. NATO should identify its purpose as an organization beyond being a mere and increasingly lesser institutionalized hub for coalitions of the willing.

WHAT IF TURKEY LEFT NATO?

Rayk Hähnlein, Markus Kaim, Günter Seufert

The withdrawal of Turkey from NATO, though only conceivable after a fundamental break of U.S.-Turkey ties, would have far-reaching consequences.²

Firstly, Turkey's departure would fundamentally undermine the political cohesion of the alliance. Even if Turkey's withdrawal could ultimately lead to the consolidation of NATO in the long term, the alliance would initially enter a phase of realignment and uncertainty. At a time when the alliance faces its greatest challenges in the course of the last 25 years, NATO would be inward-looking and to some degree even paralyzed. The fact that this would be the first time that a member state leaves NATO—an alliance which has so far only recorded accessions—would strike a heavy blow to the image of the alliance. NATO's cohesion would come under question, and its members' differing threat perceptions would rise to the surface. Turkey is one of the few NATO states whose security considerations equally encompass

the Eastern *and* the Southern flank of the alliance.³ As a partner, Germany, too, looks East and South due to its place and role in Europe as well as its character as one of the main destinations for refugees in the EU. States that display such an encompassing and—in a way—balanced threat perception play a decisive role in harmonizing the diverging threat perceptions of Southern and Eastern European member states.

Secondly, Turkey's withdrawal would severely downgrade NATO's operational capability. Turkey's geostrategic position is invaluable to the alliance. Seen from Europe, Turkey forms a bridge to the Near East and to the Middle East, to the Caucasus and indirectly also to Central Asia: a fact that makes the country an important hub. The Bosphorus acts as a maritime "hinge" to the Black Sea and its neighbors. In addition to the Allied Land Command in Izmir, there are numerous other NATO facilities in Turkey. Allies can station troops with comparatively little administrative, diplomatic, and logistical effort.

A third negative effect would be on nuclear deterrence. Like Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany, Turkey does not own nuclear weapons. However, it has a role in the nuclear defense strategy and serves as a station for U.S. nuclear weapons. Turkey's withdrawal would render obsolete all the unique geostrategic advantages that Turkey provides for NATO. The alliance then would have to renegotiate with Turkey on how to secure these benefits.

² This text summarizes a larger undertaking by the authors, published in German in March 2018 by SWP. To make policy makers aware of unpleasant future developments that seem somewhat unlikely today, SWP, at times, ventures into brainstorming and formulates scenarios in the hope of preventing them from being realized. See: Lars Broszus, ed., "Während wir planen: Unerwartete Entwicklungen in der internationalen Politik: Foresight-Beiträge 2018," translated by Tannas Michel (Berlin: SWP, 2018). For more on the debate around this scenario, see Michael Martens, "Eine Allianz fürs Leben. Die Türkei will die Nato ärgern. Verlassen will sie das Bündnis nicht," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, June 11, 2017; Luisa Seeling, "Der Partner, ein Feind. Ankara fühlt sich nach einem Eklat bei einer Militärübung auch von der Nato bedroht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 21, 2017; and most recently, Metin Gürcan, "Nato als Feind? Eine türkische Perspektive auf das krisenhafte Verhältnis zwischen Türkei und Nato," *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, November 23, 2017, <http://www.ipg-journal.de/rubriken/aussen-und-sicherheitspolitik/artikel/nato-als-feind-2442>.

³ Cf. Sinan Ülgen, *Nato's Southern Strategy at a Cross-roads* (Brussels: Carnegie Europe, December 2017).

Fourthly, Turkey's withdrawal would weaken ongoing NATO operations and its overall defense capability: Turkey was involved in about a dozen NATO missions as part of its membership. As of March 2018, the alliance is involved in three major missions: Resolute Support in Afghanistan, Kfor in Kosovo, and Sea Guardian in the Mediterranean. Turkey, which after the United States has the most military personnel and strongest armed forces in the alliance, contributes with significant contingents to all three operations: Ankara has deployed nearly 700 Turkish soldiers in Afghanistan and just under 400 in Kosovo.⁴ In addition, Turkey has the seventh largest defense budget (12.12 billion USD in 2017), and its defense expenditure accounts for the seventh largest share of gross domestic product (1.48 percent in 2017) among the 29 NATO members.⁵ Although the Turkish Armed Forces are not unique in terms of quality, President Erdoğan is pushing ahead with ambitious technical modernization. This concerns, for example, the air forces' medium-term equipment such as F-35 jets or the national armaments industry, particularly in the realm of drones.⁶ If Turkey leaves, other member states have to compensate for Turkey's contributions.

Fifth, a withdrawal would politically strengthen the anti-Western camp, because Turkey would have to look for new partners and means to compensate for its lost NATO membership. Turkey's move, thus, would strengthen states that reject "Western" ideas

of domestic and foreign political order and actively oppose them. Erdoğan himself, several times, pointed to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as an alternative for Turkey. While it is unlikely that SCO could grant Turkey a similarly influential position as Ankara enjoys in NATO due to the relatively low degree of institutionalized decision-making, it does not seem impossible for Ankara to upgrade its status at the SCO from observer to member.⁷

Recommendations

- 1) NATO should work hard to prevent Turkey from leaving the alliance. This includes recognizing diverging interests and working toward compromise.
- 2) Part of this approach should be to differentiate between Turkey's bilateral quarrels and relations with other member states and its participation in multilateral cooperation. What burdens German-Turkish relations must not affect NATO cooperation.
- 3) Should Turkey actually leave the alliance, NATO as an organization and its member states would have to develop instruments to prevent Turkey's rapprochement with the anti-Western camp. This requires coherent transatlantic and pan-European policy towards Turkey.
- 4) To this end, it will be necessary to realistically clarify what—under changing conditions—NATO expects strategically from Turkey and to what extent NATO can still hope to exert a transformative influence on political developments in Turkey.

4 Turkish Armed Forces, General Staff, "Contribution of the TAF to the Peace Support Operations," last modified June 26, 2018, <http://www.tsk.tr/Sayfalar?viewName=ContributionToTafToPeace>.

5 NATO, "Information on Defence Expenditures," last modified March 15, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_49198.htm.

6 Turkey is not only a major defense market but also a partner of companies from other NATO member states working on defense projects. One of the largest order volumes currently is the cooperation between Lockheed Martin and Turkish Air Industries. The Turkish company manufactures fuselage center sections for the F-35 Lightning II fighter jet.

7 Cf. Stephen Blank, "What Impact Would Turkish Membership Have on the SCO?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst (CACI)*, April 17, 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12705-what-impact-would-turkish-member-ship-have-on-the-sco?>, html.

- 5) The long-term goal would be to find a new frame through which to institutionalize NATO-Turkey relations to prevent future divergence of interests between Turkey and the alliance.
- 6) NATO would be well advised to see Turkey's withdrawal as an opportunity. In this sense, the alliance could use the challenge to strengthen its European pillar and advance its own capabilities more seriously than in the past. The European NATO states in particular would have to make greater efforts to consolidate, integrate, and develop their defense capabilities within the framework of other institutions and approaches, such as the European Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) approach.
- 7) At the same time, NATO should support the circles in Turkey that still have an interest in close relations with the West. These include, for example, export-oriented companies and entrepreneurs. This task is, of course, beyond NATO's capabilities. Thus, the EU should shoulder this through establishing mechanisms such as the modernization of the Customs' Union.