



NATO PARTNERSHIPS 3.0: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATIVE SECURITY

MIROSLAV MIZERA, MARTINA HRVOLOVA AND RADOSLAV KUSENDA

NATO is developing more robust solutions to more complex security problems. It has unique capabilities, a formidable command structure, and it is able to field forces in any environment. But, Alliance leaders are aware that NATO is not able to solve relevant security problems alone. In fact, NATO nowadays has the biggest network of security partnerships in the world, including more than 100 countries (more than 50 of them contributing to security in Afghanistan).

The new NATO Strategic Concept publicly demonstrated that we are now able and willing to reach beyond the usual suspects especially with the ever evolving Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Partners Across the Globe, and many others.

This is a natural process since it is increasingly clear that plenty of security threats emanate from outside the NATO area. Moreover, experience shows that NATO-led operations habitually involve forces from non-NATO nations. On the same principle as “no taxation without representation” the Lisbon Summit issued pledges to such nations that they would gain a structural role in the NATO decision making process for missions in which they are involved.

In Lisbon, we committed ourselves to partnership formats which should be more flexible and should be based on individual approaches to maximizing mutual benefits: what can the Alliance offer a partner country (or organization), and vice-versa?

We believe that before NATO foreign ministers meet in Berlin in mid-April, these questions must be answered in the form of concrete plans. The worst two scenarios would be to continue with purely rhetorical declarations about improving partnership relationships (as has long been the case in terms of NATO's relationship with the EU), or to come out of all this six months after the new Strategic Concept with “laboratory” produced partnership arrangements which we simply offer

our partners on a take it or leave it basis. Nevertheless, division of labor regarding sources has to be a part of the consensus, too.

What we do already have is a specific relationship structure with Afghanistan. We in the Alliance have committed ourselves to foster an enduring partnership with the country, and this partnership may also serve as a successful example of how NATO's partnerships can be developed and maintained. Even no one wish to be in a need of more operations obviously.

By way of contrast, the results of the multi-year partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia do not provide a good illustration of what we want to achieve. They did not extend the zone of stability further eastwards within the Euro-Atlantic area (though they did contribute significantly to the elimination of threats emanating from beyond that area). While fully respecting the decisions of the political elites in Ukraine and Georgia the lessons learned from these partnerships should lead to critical self-reflection throughout NATO. In fact, we all lost the opportunity (once looking bright in Bucharest) to draw either of these neighbors closer to the Alliance even for different reasons.

And then, of course, there is Russia with whom we have just launched a new wave of cooperation as a strategic partner. This involves concrete steps like the Joint Review of the 21st Century Common Security Challenges, the fight against the narcotics trade, and cooperation in Active Endeavour. It also embraces arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and the transit of non-lethal material supplying the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan through Russian territory.

This relationship with Russia may indeed illustrate how it is possible to cooperate with a partner while still having some other major issues unresolved, such as, in this case, for example the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.



Nevertheless, it also shows the need for road maps and clear deadlines. The NATO-Russia Council should be looked at much more closely anyway as this format has not yet exploited its full potential.

At the same time it's worth to say that the partnerships are the two-way process. This has relevance also in respect of NATO's role when we look into the latest developments in our neighborhoods.

The Lisbon Summit also reflected the political will for coordinated planning between NATO and the EU in terms of building and sharing capabilities and avoiding unnecessary duplications. Above all else in terms of relationship building, these two giants of the Euro-Atlantic community need to pull together.

In sum, on partnerships NATO is on the right track, thinking the right thoughts and saying the right things. The task now is to put all of this into practice.

(The Ideas and opinions expressed in this text are those of the authors own and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the institutions with which they are associated).

MIROSLAV MIZERA is an advisor to the State Secretary at the Slovak Ministry of Defense,

MARTINA HRVOLOVÁ is a member of the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO,

RADOSLAV KUSENDA is an official at the Slovak Foreign Minister.

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