

## **NATO's Role in the 21 Century and its Potential Contribution for Peace and Stability in the Asia-Pacific Region**

**by Dr. Klaus Olshausen**

### **Preliminary Remarks**

As the first decade of this century comes to a close many opportunities, chances, but also risks, threats and dangers might influence strategic stability in the coming decade. As many nations, International Organizations and different groupings are to define their primary objectives, so does the North Atlantic Alliance – as it starts into its 7<sup>th</sup> decade.

Before I can turn to the well known acronym NATO I will have to take you back to the foundation of the North Atlantic Alliance as the Washington Treaty of 1949. The understanding of the twelve founding members fixed in the treaty text put them together as

- a political alliance, created
- to protect their freedom, heritage and civilization and
- to strengthen the internal stability, prosperity and welfare.

It was with this broad political purpose that they decided to combine their individual efforts to preserve peace and security and for collective defence. The elimination of conflicts within their respective economic relationships was as clearly an objective as the encouragement of enhanced economic cooperation between them.

At a time when the Alliance, i.e. NATO is often declared as a (purely) military alliance and at the same time the word of the enlarged, comprehensive security is widely spread, it seems quite enlightening, that the founding fathers had recognized the largeness and magnitude of the task within and for Europe then being in dramatic need of reconstruction of states, societies and economies and had committed themselves to common efforts.

This is not the place to trace the whole history of the Alliance. But it is worth mentioning, that between 1949 and 1989 controversial debates on security and defence issues played an important part for the liveliness of the Alliance throughout the decades of the turbulent events during the cold war era. And maybe it was this readiness to consult in open and frank, controversial but fair debates that made the Alliance as attractive after the cold war as it was for its members until 1990 or 1991.

## **The Alliance at 60**

Looking at the Alliance, its member nations and the analyses and comments of the interested public domain in the months before and after the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in April 2009 you can find quite different observations and statements. There are those who say, that the Alliance presents itself as a reasonable entity in those uncertain and unsettled times. She was the only available framework for robust crisis intervention, command & control of multinational forces and – not at least – was involving the U.S. as the remaining world power. Such an organization could almost by definition not become pointless.

On the other side of the spectrum one expects or even requests a fading away of the Alliance. She had lost her “raison d’être” already since 1990-1991 and all revival attempts have been unsuccessful. She could at best function as a reassurance asset for collective defence, since the new era requires a much more diversified set of instruments and a consensual decision for robust military intervention would become more and more difficult.

After the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit and in the middle of the work on the New Strategic Concept one can identify amongst the member nations three groups of different strength:

- The first comprises those who see the Alliance - like the EU – as a global player. That means the will, the readiness and the capability to confront transnational threats, crisis or conflict breeding developments preventively and timely in case vital interests of Alliance members are at stake.
- In the second you find those who identify a direct concern for their national security – not the least reinforced by the Russian war against Georgia in August 2008. They recognize a visible strengthening of the defence capability and defence readiness in the spirit of indivisible and equal security as vital for Alliance cohesion. They need this also in order to be open for any work on a cooperative option with Russia.
- In a third group are allies, who consider the commitment for collective defence as a lynchpin of the Alliance, but they do not see a strong need for additional contingency plans or measures for the defence in Central-Eastern Europe beyond the integrated air defence. They argue with the limited resources and a less critical assessment of Russian intents and capabilities. Beyond that, they are rather cautious in their appraisal whether, when and where the Alliance should engage in crisis prevention, resolution and post conflict stabilization and reconstruction.

If this presents a valid picture, it becomes obvious that the member states face an urgent task to find a meaningful consensus for the New Strategic Concept and future crisis response activities.

## **Challenges in the 7<sup>th</sup> Decade**

In the coming years, the Alliance will have to decide and act in dynamic situations that are at the same time volatile, uncertain, highly complex and ambiguous. In this context, the diversity amongst the allies and their partners is equally essential as the very different kinds of opposing elements, be it states, non-state actors or a mix of both.

In his work “On War”, Carl von Clausewitz offers helpful insights and principles for any continuous assessment, of those complex, complicated and dynamic situations and the decision making processes. The political purpose, the goals for different means and the

available assets and capabilities themselves have to be reflected, clarified, decided and then put into action with determination and resolve.

Wars, conflicts and crises of the 21 century are still moulded by primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, the play of chance and probability and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy. This is accompanied by characteristics and requirements for personalities ('military genius') that tackle dynamic, complex problems; and, of course, some specifics and basic requirements for armed forces that Clausewitz studied extensively.

To create, build and maintain a Europe that is united, free and at peace is and will remain the essential political purpose of the Alliance for the foreseeable future. Following the letter and the spirit of the Washington treaty stability, prosperity, security and effective protection of all members will remain overarching political goals.

Thus, based on the potential international developments in the coming years, the detailed assessments of chances, risks, threats and dangers, the Alliance will define her contribution to accomplish this Europe whole, free and at peace.

Stability and security transfer will remain an important objective that can be pursued with a range of means. Under those auspices and geopolitically reaching beyond NATO territory, the Alliance will decide what kind of responsibility and active contribution she is ready to take on in the area of crisis prevention, crisis management and post conflict stabilisation and reconstruction in already existing conflicts or in potential crisis regions. In those deliberations, the vital interests will have to become the main theme to decide when and where action is advisable, necessary or even imperative – in standing up for our values, our civilization and our culture.

Two political notions from the conceptual work after the 9/11 attacks will fuel and frame the current debate as well:

- The lengthy and controversial debate over “out of area” engagements was overcome with the agreed formula: “as and where required”.
- For the work on a concept for the defence against transnational terrorism the North Atlantic Council (NAC) established an essential guiding principle: “that it is preferable to deter terrorist attacks or to prevent their occurrence rather than deal with their consequences”.

But the three groups mentioned above prove that both notions have not yet led to a consensus on an operationalized, manageable concept for concrete situations. If the Alliance wants to limit or mitigate ever more difficult and cumbersome discussions on each individual situation, it has to work for an agreeable position in the New Strategic Concept. An extended definition of deterrence including the required steps to make it work will be necessary. Even more urgent will be progress for a concept regarding intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance for both police and military action.

Thus, I strongly encourage the members of the Alliance to work with the well established “two side medal” as a key orientation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

1. **Cooperation & dialogue and**
2. **Collective Defense and crisis response operations**

This comprehensive guidance in an unsecure world requires within the Alliance to

- strengthen solidarity and for that aim
- Consult early and broadly and cooperate intensively and
- Decide in common and act with resolve, determination and steadfastness.

### **Cooperation with others**

The dynamic, complex, complicated and very unpredictable situations in broad security terms have made it already a common place that the North Atlantic Alliance cannot and will not act in an isolated manner. Any New Strategic Concept that wants to accomplish the political purpose will require a multitude of non-military and military measures, assets and capabilities. Most are delivered by states or international organizations but also by nongovernmental organizations tasked by those actors or independently.

Since I do not expect that consensus will be reached that nations make there non-military means available through NATO it becomes obvious, that - with 21 nations being member of the Alliance and the EU – the often declared complementarity has to be put to work now.

### **A Western Compact for comprehensive security: EU – U.S./North America – NATO**

Today, a “Western compact for comprehensive security” requires a close coordination and cooperation between the European Union, the Alliance and North America, i.e. U.S. – and Canada. This is needed, but not an end in itself.

EU - NATO - U.S. can build a security formation that is not uniform but understands that combining their different strengths and main efforts in the widely broadened field of security can create synergies for effects but also economy of efforts.

Based on the documents for NATO - EU cooperation from March 2003 and esp. the EU – U.S. summit declarations of 2006, there exist many opportunities to start with

- Evaluation of the strategy documents regarding political purpose and objectives to identify commonalities and – differences; the goal remains a “Long-term Vision” for the “Western Compact on security”;
- Effort to commonly describe, analyse and assess the risks, threats and dangers that are to be faced, including close connectivity regarding early warning mechanisms;
- Describe and assess different courses of action to tackle them and identify how each organization or nation/state can contribute most efficiently and effectively;
- Development of military and civil capabilities and capacities through scenario driven planning processes, if not in one single process than with greater transparency amongst the organizations;
- Early consultation to assess potential crisis situations and develop coordinated actions;
- Develop compatible, interoperable military and civil command structures at the strategic and operational level;
- Identify functional and regional areas (i.e. defence against transnational terrorism, internet security, piracy or the Balkans, Afghanistan etc.) where closer coordination and cooperation is advisable and necessary, today.

Unfortunately, the unresolved Cyprus issue hampers, even prevents visible progress. Thus, all EU member states as well as Allies are urged to actively work for a resolution instead leaving it only to the U.N and the parties on the ground.

## **U.N., OSCE, AU**

Of course, consultation and specific cooperation with the U.N. in general as well as the OSCE and other regional organizations, like the African Union in particular have to be enhanced and strengthened in concrete crisis situations or functional areas. The declaration between the Alliance and the U.N. which needed more than two years consideration at the U.N. can only be a starting point. The rather limited support of the AU in crisis response missions or training activities for peace support operations shows the reserve and restraint that still exists. In this area, a closer cooperation between EU and NATO could create added value for all.

## **Relationship with Russia**

Based on a strong internal strategic consensus, a self-confident Alliance can build and shape a reasonable relationship with Russia where Russian interests are considered but cannot – esp. due to internal Alliance disunity - play a dominant role.

Until August 2008, war seemed to be no option for a Great Power to enforce its own interests. The return of this approach by the Russian military engagement and the direct and indirect consequences in the South Caucasus and beyond will most likely have repercussions on the future NATO Russia relationship.

The resumption of the NATO-Russia-Council meeting can hardly mean that the Russian actions – directed against the security in Europe – are put up with as “fait accompli” and followed by business as usual. Russia – as a strategic partner – cannot and must not be understood in a way that it can – step by step - force back strong principles and important interests of the “West” by the policy of “divide et impera”. This would endanger the security fabric of Europe as a whole. The focus cannot just be what suits Russia but what ensures the independence and enables the free development of those states that gained their freedom in 1991.

None of them poses a risk, not to speak a danger to Russia – nor does the North Atlantic Alliance. Russia’s cooperation in important issues, whether Iran, North Korea, terrorism or non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament is appreciated and required but not at all costs.

## **Partner on a Global Scale**

The debate whether the Alliance could or should become global has led to the common understanding, that in a world of increasingly globalized issues of security the Alliance is well advised to build partnerships beyond its peripheries.

The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC, NCC back in 1991), Mediterranean Dialogue (MD, already since 1995) and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI, started at the Istanbul summit 2004) are all based on the conviction to build relations, coordination and cooperation in order to forge coalitions for the “non-cooperative situations” of tomorrow. Under those auspices, the Alliance is well advised to work for regional and functional cooperation with Japan, a strong ally of the leading power in NATO.

In addition, closer political and military contacts with China as a growing economic and political player on a global scale should be on the work plan of the Alliance. Similar points hold true for India. This is all the more urgent as the Alliance is heavily engaged in Afghanistan, i.e. in the heart of Central Asia, for over six years.

There are several other countries in Latin America, Asia and Australia seeking contact with the Alliance. Many of them contribute to NATO led crisis response missions in the Balkans or in Afghanistan. This is prove of the attractive force of an Alliance that owns a structure that can lead armed forces of many nations in a united effort to reach a common objective and thus, contribute to the mandated political purpose. The spectrum of the potential engagements in very different crisis response operations extends from peace support and stability operations to high intensity conflicts. The means and capabilities of those partners can help spread the burden of operations on more shoulders – an effect that cannot be disregarded at times of limited resources everywhere.

An Alliance that has gained added strength through a newly built consensus on its “raison d’être” would be well advised not to turn down the contribution of those partners but rather look for ways to increase the consultation, training and employment opportunities with them. That serves not only an improved understanding and necessary interoperability but is building the coalitions of tomorrow, today.

All those regional a functional fields of cooperation and dialogue underline once again how urgently the consultation, coordination and cooperation of the Alliance with the EU and North America requires practical progress. The comprehensive approach in crisis management does not begin only after a UNSCR has been agreed or an Alliance decision mandating a specific mission has been taken.

### **The Alliance’s Level of Ambition**

Those reflections of the cooperation with the EU and other institutions and states form an essential element in order to frame and decide a realistic level of ambition of the Alliance that fits her political purpose.

Of course, a solid and detailed analysis and assessment of risks, dangers and threats is another critical parameter in this process. Besides the well known threats, it becomes more visible that the climate change carries also important security risks. The competition regarding available energy resources may not be limited to economic measures only. This clearly underlines that limiting our own security precautions against asymmetric threats and actions is not valid enough to prepare for “possible futures”. In such a complex and dynamic framework, the defence ministers will have to reassess and review the level of ambition they stated in June 2006.

As important will become the identification of all non-military requirements in the capability planning process. This is indispensable, even if - due to a missing consensus – their deployment and employment in crisis regions will not be accomplished through NATO. Thus, the Alliance will have to further reflect and widen its “comprehensive approach”. A new version or at least a critical adaptation of the “Comprehensive Political Guidance” will become necessary. The Ministerial Guidance, the Basic Document of the Defence Planning Committee, will then have to be reconsidered, too.

## **Structures, Procedures, Capabilities**

Besides a strong consensus of the overall political purpose and the objectives in concrete situations, a mighty and pro-active Alliance needs

- first the political will to decide and the resolve to see it through and
- second the required means, assets and capabilities, an efficient and effective multinational structure and well established and trained procedures from the strategic to the tactical level of command.

Since the nineties, the Alliance has identified a number of critical capability gaps. But all the initiatives, like the 1999 “Defence Capability Initiative” (DCI), the 2002 “Prague Capability Commitment” (PCC) have not resulted in closing those gaps in the structures of the European allies. Budget constraints and insufficient cooperation in research and development and armament acquisition processes are two important obstacles. Strategic air and sea transport, compatible capabilities for command and control and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and improved tactical and theatre missile defence are just a few areas where both in NATO and the EU the gaps remain essentially the same.

A look at the NATO Command Structure (NCS) does not present a satisfying picture either. Since the 1990ies, each reform of the NCS was overtaken by the next before it had been properly implemented. This gave reason for the impression that many nations called for reform because they could neither assign the adequate number and quality of personnel nor provide sufficient funding for modern and effective equipment. The distance from an effective and efficient structure grew and grows even further since all states want to find an element of the remaining headquarters or elements on their territory and those who own them don’t want to give up one easily. The return of France to the NCS with about 400 – 500 personnel will not dramatically change these existing difficulties.

In addition, the 2006 level of ambition stated the readiness for 5 – 6 “smaller operations”. This requires multinational division and brigade headquarters as part of the NATO Force Structure (NFS), manned and equipped by respective nations. Since the available personnel for multinational structures is a finite number in all nations, there will be again repercussions on the NCS. The nations will have to come to grip with the Gordian knot of mutually exclusive requirements, if they are not to permanently administer the shortage and will finally put the lives of employed soldiers at risk through suboptimal command structures.

An Alliance of 28 nations represents a great diversity, also in “military cultures” This impacts in many ways also on planning and employment procedures. Despite decades of standardization efforts and the many activities to bring doctrines and procedures in line with each other, it remains a permanent challenge in today’s complex missions to build and ensure as best as possible the integrated leadership and acting of the national armed forces and services in an indispensable multinational framework.

## ***Concluding Remarks***

1. Under the circumstances described and in view of its political purpose, the political North-Atlantic Alliance cannot restrict herself to the territory of the member states in a traditional sense. Comparable to the EU it has to become a global player without playing a part everywhere.

2. Her political purpose will be best served,
  - If she uses co-operation and dialogue effectively – forging tomorrows coalitions today and
  - Maintains and improves adequate military – and in co-operation – non-military capabilities for crisis response operations (CRO) and collective defence.
3. She has to foster the internal consensus as critical basis for her political clout through determination and steadfastness under critical circumstances.
4. Since – in today's conflicts and crises - the passions between two nations have increased to many and the number of critical actors, be it governments, IOs or non state actors (friendly or opposing) have exponentially grown, the Alliance will have to reflect and decide in an unambiguous manner what her particular and peculiar contribution to a crisis management action will be before her consensual decision is taken.
5. It is hardly to argue that crisis prevention, crisis management and post conflict stabilisation and reconstruction can – from a Western perspective – most likely be tackled with a perspective of success, if the North Atlantic Alliance, and the EU as well as the EU and the U.S. can decide on a concerted approach. But today, for the most security policy challenges within the Alliance as well as within the EU “strategic unity” does not yet exist, i.e. relationship with Russia, Opening of NATO and the EU, strategic missile defence, the regional concept for Afghanistan not to mention the wider Middle East or Africa.
6. A lot of efforts have to be taken. The Alliance should - like the EU – have the resolve to become “more capable, more coherent and more active”. In addition it should master the upcoming challenges determined in close cooperation and indivisible solidarity.
7. The Alliance and the EU will have to overcome her smaller or larger disputes on broader security issues. Only if and as far they are achieving this and a reasonable EU – U.S. cooperation including security issues develops, the “West” can reach, maintain and might strengthen a geostrategic and geopolitical role in shaping the future world order for greater stability and peace. This will create a basis from which to reach out intensively to our Asian partners whom we need and who need us.

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#### *Remarks:*

*Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author. This paper has been presented at the International Conference on Comprehensive Security in the Asia-Pacific Region, organised by Asian Political & International Studies Association (APISA) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in collaboration with the Keio University, 30 Nov - 1 Dec 2009, Tokyo, Japan*



*Lieutenant General (ret.) Dr. Klaus Olshausen is President of the Clausewitz Association. In his last position he served as German Military Representative to the two Military Committees of NATO and EU, Brussels.*