NATO'S CHICAGO SUMMIT: ALLIANCE COHESION ABOVE ALL ELSE?

The NATO Summit in Chicago was mainly about the alliance's collective defence capabilities and the end of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The concept of Smart Defence is a compelling idea given the economic climate, but implementation challenges remain. NATO allies demonstrated a unified front on nuclear capabilities and missile defence, though political controversies are bound to resurface. What the Chicago Summit highlighted was the extent to which NATO has come to be defined by the missions it undertakes and the coalition of states that choose to participate.

Leaders gather at the NATO Summit in Chicago, 20 May 2012.   *Reuters / Chris Wattie*

The 2012 NATO Summit, held in Chicago on May 20 and 21, was intended to provide strategic direction to the alliance, while providing an updated assessment of the security environment for and by its members. Debating issues ranging from cyber security to the nuclear crisis in Iran, a whole set of security challenges was addressed in tandem with the identification of the appropriate defence capabilities to tackle them. Throughout these deliberations, a key concern was the preservation of an apparent consensus among the alliance's 28 member states. Achieving consensus can prove elusive as there is wide variation when comparing different allies' views on topics such as NATO's defence capabilities, its nuclear weapons, the nature of its relationship with Russia, or further expansion of its membership. Nevertheless, the Chicago Summit did come up

with a series of important decisions, advancing above all implementation of commitments made during the previous summit in Lisbon.

With the economic climate in mind, NATO is also implementing a number of reforms to the alliance's command structure, its headquarters, and agencies. This rationalisation process is meant to improve efficiency on leaner budgets. This approach is also applied to the development of NATO's defence capabilities, with the concept of *Smart Defence*. Smart Defence implies the prioritisation of alliance capabilities under conditions of fiscal austerity, without undermining NATO's ability to respond to threats. It entails multinational coordination, as allies will be asked to do more with less. The Summit Declaration on Defense Capabilities encourages allies to "take

forward specific multinational projects, including for better protection of [our] forces, better surveillance and better training. These projects will deliver improved operational effectiveness, economies of scale, and closer connections between [our] forces". Finally, the Chicago Summit was also heavily focused on the transition of NATO's military intervention in Afghanistan, given the end of the combat mission in 2014. Here too, alliance coordination is considered key, as nations articulate their exit strategies. Whether in Afghanistan or in other priority areas, the challenge that NATO faces is to consolidate what it has achieved thus far, despite an increasingly complex security environment and a difficult economic context.

Focus on capabilities

NATO summits present member states with an opportunity to discuss both short-term and long-term strategic concerns for the alliance. In practice, however, summit agendas tend to be dominated by ad hoc disagreement management, focused around the issues of the day. The official declarations that emerge from these summits are typically characterised by lowest-common denominator statements that reflect the alliance's consensus rule in decision-making. Yet, every NATO summit generally has a specific emphasis. In 2008, debates were centered on NATO expansion, in 2009, on NATO-EU relations, in 2010, on NATO's new Strategic Concept. An issue that had constantly been pushed off the agenda was the issue of the alliance's defence capabilities, including a comprehensive review of NATO's reliance

US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, 2011

Country	Airbase	Dual capable aircraft	Number of B-61s
Belgium	Kleine Brogel	Belgian F-16	10 – 20
Germany	Büchel	German Tornado	10 – 20
Italy	Aviano	US F-16	50
	Ghedi Torre	US F-16	10 – 20
Netherlands	Volkel	Dutch F-16	10 – 20
Turkey	Incirlik	US fighter aircraft (rotating)	60 – 70
Total			**150 – 200**

Source: Norris/Kristensen 2011

on nuclear weapons. While prior debates were dedicated to the expansion in the alliance's scope and membership, the question of capabilities remained in the background.

The Chicago Summit put an end to this habit of procrastination by unveiling the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR), a declaration that outlines the appropriate mix of defence capabilities for NATO, which includes the alliance's nuclear and conventional forces, as well as its missile defence system. The nuclear component is arguably the most controversial, as certain NATO states have expressed their growing dissatisfaction with current nuclear sharing arrangements. Expectedly, alliance cohesion is compromised by different priorities and threat perceptions held by individual member states. Extended nuclear deterrence within NATO relies on the strategic arsenals of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France (implicitly). There are also an estimated 150–200 American non-strategic nuclear weapons (B-61) on European soil managed by the alliance's nuclear-sharing arrangements (the B-61s are fitted for NATO dual-capable aircraft).

The DDPR does not mark a significant departure from the statement made by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during the 2010 Tallinn meeting, where she outlined five guiding principles for NATO, as a nuclear alliance. If anything, the DDPR echoes the American Nuclear Posture Review, suggesting that NATO allies would not threaten or use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states that are in compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Although the document hints at the possibility of a reduction in the role and number of non-strategic nuclear weapons assigned to NATO, it is implied that any such deliberations would happen in the context of arms control negotiations with Russia. The importance of nuclear sharing arrangements is reaffirmed, whether or not non-strategic nuclear weapons stay in Eu-

rope. The DDPR also confirms its commitments to international disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation initiatives.

The US is the only state that has nuclear weapons stationed outside of its own territory. Any decision on the removal of these non-strategic nuclear weapons would be more desirable as part of an arms control package with Russia. While Russia objects to the US hosting nuclear weapons in Europe, it does benefit from an asymmetry in numbers. Compared to the estimated 500 tactical nuclear weapons possessed by the United States (including those on its own territory), Russia's stockpile is believed to be in the thousands. But the DDPR goes above and beyond the thorny issue of NATO's nuclear weapons.

Smart and missile defence

Drafting the Review was a task that the alliance members set out to do at the 2010 Lisbon Summit. Beyond the issue of nuclear weapons, the document describes the security environment as unpredictable and adds that an additional challenge can be found in the difficult economic context alliance members are facing, with obvious implications for defence spending commitments. The DDPR reaffirms the key purposes espoused by the alliance: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, all the while stating clearly that "the alliance does not consider any country to be its adversary".
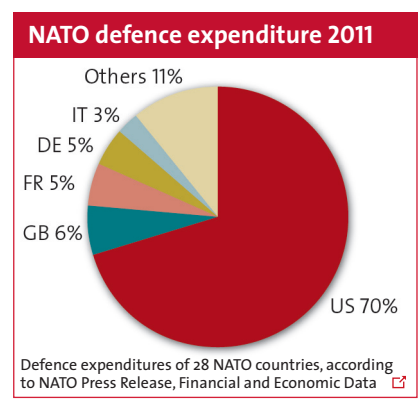
With very little change with respect to NATO's nuclear forces, the DDPR also includes important information about conventional capabilities as well as missile defence plans. In the context of economic austerity, the goals of interoperability and close allied coordination are emphasised. There is an acknowledged need for a new conceptual approach to move towards greater interoperability and the inevitability of specialisation. In a nutshell, alliance members will have to find ways to both maximise cost effectiveness and avoid du-

plication with the European Union's Pooling and Sharing Initiative. Implementing these new defence concepts, however, will be pitted against entrenched bureaucratic interests and resistance from national defence industries.

As for NATO missile defence, the alliance members declared at Chicago that their system had reached the Interim Operational Capability stage, which is a significant milestone on the way to making it fully operational by the end of this decade. Missile defence is described as an addition to NATO's current capabilities, to protect its members against ballistic missile threats and provide the alliance with an extra layer of security to uphold the principle of collective defence over the Atlantic territory. It is meant as a complementary capability, not one that would replace or supersede the alliance's nuclear weapons or conventional forces.

At the same time, there is an attempt to reassure Russia that "NATO missile defense is not oriented against Russia nor does it have the capability to undermine Russia's strategic deterrent". The hope is that the missile defence impasse will not undermine future arms control talks between Russia and the United States. The fact is, however, that the issue of missile defence continues to be an irritant in Russia-NATO and Russia-US relations. Tensions may increase further if NATO, incapable of coming to an agreement with Russia on the conditions of missile defence deployment, implements its shield as scheduled.

Another irritant with Russia is the possibility of NATO's further enlargement to the East, with states like Ukraine and Georgia. Little progress on this can be expected beyond the usual statements of good intentions, as these countries must still undergo significant reforms before membership becomes accessible – and as many

NATO defence expenditure 2011

Defence expenditures of 28 NATO countries, according to NATO Press Release, Financial and Economic Data

NATO members are eager to avoid another row with Moscow. Nevertheless, NATO will pursue its air policing mission in the Baltic states and is exploring ways it can enhance its commitments to states on its Eastern border in a visible way, with implications for its defence capabilities.

On Afghanistan and Libya

The year 2014 will mark the end of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. The goal, looking beyond 2014, will be to preserve the progress sustained by NATO involvement and to foster a long-term partnership to ensure the stability of Afghanistan, a theme that was reiterated throughout the Chicago Summit. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will take over, running on an annual budget of US$ 4.1 billion for a force sized at 228,500, a downsized objective given the economic constraints. Even with a leaner ANSF, Afghanistan will be dependent on NATO for financial contributions that will sustain these force levels for the foreseeable future. While there will be a post-ISAF NATO military presence beyond 2014 focusing on tasks related to training the ANSF, the end of the combat mission remains a significant milestone, the operation in Afghanistan being the longest war in American history.

NATO's operation in Afghanistan has underscored the extent to which there are few alternatives to the Atlantic Alliance when it comes to undertaking major military campaigns in the name of regional and international security. The intervention in Libya is another case in point. While it showed that American leadership is not essential throughout, the US military provided the bulk of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to the coalition of participating NATO states and partners. Through the Libya mission, NATO has in a sense demonstrated its continued relevance. Operations like Operation Unified Protector (OUP) could not have been carried out otherwise, unless as a US-led coalition of the willing. This casts further doubt on the EU ever being able to assert itself as an independent military actor, an assessment based on European states' continued reliance on American assets during OUP.

On the other hand, the Libya mission also exposed some divisions within the alliance, as many NATO states chose to sit on the sidelines. Even more telling was Germany's abstention at the United Nations

NATO partners: Military contributions to ISAF, KFOR, and Libya

(Troops ISAF / troops KFOR); <u>contributed air assets to Libya campaign</u>

Partnership for Peace: <u>Sweden (500/59)</u>; Georgia (800/0); Austria (3/625); Finland (176/19); Macedonia (177/0); Ukraine (23/151); Switzerland (0/151); Armenia (126/0); Azerbaijan (94/0); Bosnia and Herzegovina (59/0); Montenegro (39/0); Ireland (7/12); Belarus (0/0); Kazakhstan (0/0); Kyrgyzstan (0/0); Malta (0/0); Moldova (0/0); Russia (0/0); Serbia (0/0); Tajikistan (0/0); Turkmenistan (0/0); Uzbekistan (0/0).

Mediterranean Dialogue: <u>Jordan (0/0)</u>; Morocco (0/101); Algeria (0/0); Egypt (0/0); Israel (0/0); Mauritania (0/0); Tunisia (0/0).

Istanbul Cooperation Initiative: <u>Bahrain (95/0)</u>; <u>United Arab Emirates (35/0)</u>; Qatar (0/0); Kuwait (0/0).

Global Partners: Australia (1550/0); Republic of Korea (350/0); New Zealand (153/0); Mongolia (113/0); Iraq (0/0); Japan (0/0); Pakistan (0/0).   May 2012

Security Council, when Resolution 1973, which provided a UN mandate for OUP, was passed. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of NATO, this very public decision created some discomfort within the alliance. This incident raises a broader issue for allies regarding the regional scope of military interventions to be carried out by NATO, but mostly points to palpable evidence of operational fatigue. There is no appetite for NATO to lead new military interventions and this was made obvious by the nature of discussions in Chicago, which made little mention of Syria.

A trend that has become apparent with the operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya concerns the growing reliance of the alliance on military and non-military contributions from non-NATO countries. To reflect this, and to further engage states belonging to the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and global partners, NATO is multiplying partnership activities and making these more inclusive. Participation will be based more on each state's ability and willingness to contribute to NATO operations, rather than on political or geographical criteria, as was done in the past.

Chicago and beyond

Despite the continued focus on the Afghanistan War as the combat mission winds down, the 2012 Chicago Summit was mostly about updating the alliance's defence capabilities in a principled and coordinated fashion. The economic climate is the main driver of those changes and has motivated the adoption of Smart Defence as a guiding concept for the future of NATO's defence capabilities, a principle that gained more traction at the Chicago Summit. This approach is meant to deliver more equitable burden-sharing, as the US

turns to its European partners to do more. The US has not been exempt from these economic pressures, with some changes affecting NATO states. For instance, US Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta announced the withdrawal of two brigade combat teams from Germany earlier this year, with implications for NATO's extended deterrence arrangements. Therefore, states are increasingly turning to capability sharing and specialisation as ways to fulfill their commitments and responsibilities under tougher economic conditions.

As it moves away from Afghanistan and towards the future, NATO is reaffirming its goal of global engagement and looking outward. More than 30 non-NATO countries were represented at the Chicago Summit, which indicates that the alliance is keen to find ways to engage more closely with non-NATO states that can contribute in a meaningful sense to its mandate. The military interventions in Afghanistan and Libya have been instructive in the sense that they have highlighted the increased participation of non-NATO states and the need to better integrate these valuable contributions from other allies. NATO then, might be best understood today as a coalition leader, rather than as a military alliance in any traditional sense. These and other changes will continue to test the fragility of alliance cohesion that is reinvented with every NATO Summit.

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