

Forward Resilience: Protecting Society in an Interconnected World Working Paper Series

How NATO and the EU can Cooperate to Increase Partner Resilience

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Introduction

At the Wales summit in 2014, the Enhanced Opportunities Program (EOP) was introduced for a disparate group of Partner nations, which had received a “gold level” of interoperability and collaboration with the Alliance: Sweden, Finland, Jordan, Georgia and Australia. The initiative has enabled Sweden to efficiently work together with NATO and Finland on Baltic Sea security in a 28+2 format.

At the Warsaw summit in July 2016, the need to increase EU-NATO cooperation to counter hybrid threats and build resilience among members and beyond was highlighted.

The fact that both Sweden and Finland are EU members is an asset that should be explored in the 28+2 format to strengthen resilience. This can be developed in the context of the Baltic Sea region to prepare for hybrid threats, but also in joint efforts by NATO, Sweden and Finland to address fragility in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood.

The Growing Focus on Resilience

Until recently, resilience was mainly used in reference to developing states to assist them in state-building capacity. Both the EU and NATO have worked with resilience projects in candidate and partner states to the East and to the South. These projects aim at strengthening institutions in society dealing, for instance, with elections, anti-corruption, the juridical system, mass media, education and training, democratic control of the armed forces, civil-military planning, gender equality, etc.

Due to a perceived ambition of Russia and ISIS/Da'esh to undermine the unity and the value base of the West, there is an increased focus on resilience also in mature, well-functioning democracies, such as NATO allies and EU member states. Resilience in this regard is viewed as important in order to resist propaganda and information campaigns, attempts to influence business, societies and economic flows, and attacks on information technology (IT) and cyber-related infrastructure. Resilience in other words, is a way to respond to the hybrid threats that were highlighted as a result of the Russian warfare in Ukraine in 2014. Ultimately, it is about safeguarding the value-based foundation upon which the EU and NATO rest.

Consequently, strengthening resilience can be viewed as a preventive action aimed at solidifying societies and avoiding escalation of crises both within and outside of the EU and NATO.

EU-NATO Cooperation Historically Marked by Difficulties

For three main reasons, EU-NATO cooperation has historically been marked by difficulties to agree at the political level. First, Turkey being an allied but a non-EU member pose certain requirements; second, up until 2008 France was not a member of the Integrated Military Command in NATO, and third, the accession of Cyprus into the Union in 2004 was pursued even though the Greek-Turkish divergence on the status of the island remained -- and continues to remain -- unsolved.¹

For many years, the focus of institutional cooperation has been on crisis management and the so called Berlin-Plus arrangements from March 2003, which allow for the EU to use NATO planning and capabilities in crisis management operations. Though Berlin-Plus yielded an immediate success for operations in Macedonia (2003) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004), it has not been used since.² Collaboration in crisis management has overall been limited. Currently, NATO-EU partnership covers some concrete cooperation in the Western Balkans, in Afghanistan, and off the coast of Somalia.³

In the aftermath of the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine, a new sense of urgency emerged regarding the need to develop cooperation between the EU and NATO in order to successfully counter hybrid threats. As a NATO diplomat put it: “EU-NATO cooperation has moved from ‘nice’ to ‘need’.”

The United States has been a driving force behind the reset. The underlying motive has been the need to strengthen the European contribution to the transatlantic relationship. The complementarity, rather than rivalry, that has developed between the organisations in past years has been reassuring from an American perspective. The UK has played a central role in balancing European and transatlantic forces, but due to Brexit, uncertainty has re-emerged on how the pendulum will swing, and once again increased the risk that overlapping systems could be created that do not deliver capabilities but costs.

Hybrid Strategies and Resilience

Since 2014, both staff to staff level contacts, and contacts at the political level, have increased substantially. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has met several times with High Representative Federica Mogherini as well as the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and they have attended each other’s ministerial meetings on a frequent basis.

¹ See for instance Missiroli, A (2002): EU-NATO Cooperation in Crisis Management: No Turkish Delight for ESDP, *Security Dialogue* 2002; 33; 9; Duke, S. The Future of EU–NATO Relations: a Case of Mutual Irrelevance Through Competition? *European Integration*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 27–43, March 2008

² Wessel, R. And Blockmans, S. (editors) (2013): *Between Autonomy and Dependence: the EU Legal Order Under the Influence of International Organizations*, Asser Press, The Hague, p. 259.

³ Press statements by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Dec 1-2 2015, online at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_125361.htm.

Initially, there was an ambition to work side by side to develop strategies on how to deal with hybrid threats, and to some extent this was possible at staff level. However, in the end, NATO moved faster than the EU and approved a strategy on December 1, 2015 and an implementation plan on February 11, 2016, while the EU framework on countering hybrid threats did not land at the table of the Defence Ministerial Meeting until April 19, 2016.

In the summer of 2016 at the NATO summit in Warsaw, NATO and the EU, the latter represented by both the President of the EU Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk, issued a joint declaration as a landmark for establishing even closer cooperation. In the declaration, the organisations committed to:

Boost our ability to counter hybrid threats, including by bolstering resilience, working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, through timely information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing between staffs; and cooperating on strategic communication and response. The development of coordinated procedures through our respective playbooks will substantially contribute to implementing our efforts.⁴

In addition, parallel and coordinated exercises on hybrid are to be planned for 2017 and 2018, and resilience of partners in the east and south are to be addressed “in a complementary way through specific projects in a variety of areas for individual recipient countries, including by strengthening maritime capacity.”

NATO Strategy on Hybrid Threats

How do the hybrid strategies of NATO and the EU compare?

The NATO strategy on countering hybrid threats is structured along the lines to *prepare – deter – defend*. Enhanced intelligence and surveillance is a key part of NATO’s response to hybrid threats, while it also constitutes a challenge when it comes to indications for early warning, since these are likely to be found in civil society rather than on the military side when it comes to hybrid threats. Cooperation with the EU, who looks at civil society much more closely than NATO, could therefore increase the ability to capture early signs substantially.

The implementation plan focuses on “prepare”, for instance how to organize NATO Headquarters and coordinate with member states and the EU in order to improve the ability to identify, recognise and attribute hybrid actions and to respond quickly.⁵ In the strategy it is recognized that in order to be more effective in countering hybrid threats, NATO is committed to working even more closely with the EU.⁶

One important finding, and challenge, in the process of addressing hybrid threats within NATO has been that a lot of actions do not fall within the responsibility of the Alliance, but on the

⁴ “Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”, July 8, 2016.

⁵ Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers, 11 Feb 2016 online at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_127972.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁶ Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers, 11 Feb 2016 online at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_127972.htm?selectedLocale=en

member states themselves.⁷ This in turn has led to the question of resilience, which has become an integrated part of the hybrid strategy.

NATO has set seven *baseline requirements* to be assessed:

- 1) assured continuity of government and critical government services;
- 2) resilient energy supplies;
- 3) ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people;
- 4) resilient food and water resources;
- 5) ability to deal with mass casualties;
- 6) resilient communications systems; and finally
- 7) resilient transportation systems.⁸

In order to assist allies in meeting those requirements, NATO has agreed to create *resilience advisory support teams*, as recommended by Hans Binnendijk, Daniel Hamilton and Frank Kramer, to offer expertise, a form of ‘internal consulting’, on areas such as cyber attack response, civil-military planning and coordination, protection of critical infrastructure, etc.⁹

A *NATO hybrid cell* is expected to cooperate with the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell through direct liaison, as well as regular sharing of analyses and lessons identified.¹⁰

Closely linked to countering hybrid threats are NATO’s *Centres of Excellence (COEs)* on a range of topics, for instance Energy Security in Vilnius, Strategic Communication in Riga, and Cyber Defence in Tallinn. The COEs assist in doctrine development, identify lessons learned, improve interoperability and capabilities, and test and validate concepts through experimentation.¹¹

EU Framework on Hybrid Threats

The EU framework on countering hybrid threats is similar to that of NATO with regard to recognising the primary responsibility of Member states, and the need for further coordination and cooperation with NATO.

The framework suggests actions, which member states can conduct, such as *hybrid risk surveys* to identify key vulnerabilities, and develop capacities for proactive strategic communication.

It also identifies areas for the Commission to intensify work in:

- critical infrastructure protection, including energy networks and safety, transport and supply chain security, and space.

⁷ Interviews with NATO officials in Brussels Dec 2015 and Stockholm January 2016.

⁸ ‘Resilience: a core element of collective defence,’ *NATO Review*, <http://www.nato.int/docu/Review/2016/Also-in-2016/nato-defence-cyber-resilience/EN/index.htm>; Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers, 11 Feb 2016 online at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_127972.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁹ Interviews with NATO officials in Washington, October 2016, Brussels Dec 2015 and Stockholm January 2016. See Franklin D. Kramer, Hans Binnendijk, and Daniel Hamilton, *NATO’s New Strategy: Stability Generation* (Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations/Atlantic Council, 2015), https://issuu.com/atlanticcouncil/docs/natos_new_strategy_web.

¹⁰ Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats, p. 17.

¹¹ According to the NATO website, “Centres of Excellence (COEs) are international military organisations that train and educate leaders and specialists from NATO member and partner countries. They assist in doctrine development, identify lessons learned, improve interoperability and capabilities, and test and validate concepts through experimentation. They offer recognised expertise and experience that is of benefit to the Alliance, and support the transformation of NATO, while avoiding the duplication of assets, resources and capabilities already present within the Alliance.”

- public health protection and food security
- cybersecurity
- targeting hybrid threat financing
- building resilience against radicalisation and violent extremism
- increasing cooperation with third countries.

While the EEAS is tasked to set up a *EU Hybrid Fusion Cell* to “receive, analyse and share” information related to hybrid threats, the suggestion to establish a *Centre of Excellence* for countering hybrid threats will be established in Finland.

Resilience is highlighted as an integrated component in countering hybrid threats, both when it comes to members and partners.¹²

EU-NATO Coordination and Cooperation on Hybrid Threats

A range of areas have officially been identified for enhanced coordination and cooperation between NATO and the EU, including:

- situational awareness
- information sharing
- strategic communications
- cybersecurity/cyber defence
- crisis prevention and response,
- civil-military planning.¹³

A *playbook* for NATO-EU cooperation, dealing with a range of hybrid-warfare scenarios, has been developed for the areas of cyber defence, strategic communications, situational awareness and crisis management. The aim is to speed up decision-making and to answer in advance questions about who does what.¹⁴

Partners not yet Targeted for Deepened Cooperation

While both Jens Stoltenberg and Federica Mogherini have acknowledged that there is greater potential for more cooperation in helping partners to become more capable of securing themselves in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, this has not yet been addressed in a systematic manner.¹⁵

However, in order to truly build resilience, enhanced cooperation NATO-EU should not be limited to member states. NATO and EU could combine resources and complement each other to deal with fragile and failed states. A major challenge ahead would then be to efficiently coordinate defence building capacity support with development aid and economic support. This

¹² European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy(2016). Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats, a European Union Response. Brussels 6.4.2016 JOIN82016) 18 final.

¹³ EU Framework p. 17, Shea, J. (2016). "Resilience: a core element of collective defence", NATO Review Magazine, online at <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2016/Also-in-2016/nato-defence-cyber-resilience/EN/index.htm>.

¹⁴ Interview with NATO official in Brussels, May 9 2016, "New threats are forcing NATO and the EU to work together", The Economist, May 7 2016.

¹⁵ Press statements by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Dec 1-2 2015, online at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_125361.htm.

should be developed to include partner cooperation, to the east and the south. Both Finland and Sweden are active contributors to support development in these regions through a broad range of policy areas, from development to the military. Sweden, together with Poland, took the initiative to start the Eastern Partnership (EP) within the EU in 2009.

The EU remains a much bigger player in terms of resources, both in terms of funding and personnel, for partner cooperation. Nevertheless, the assessment of the EU Neighbourhood policy conducted during 2015 sets the ground for a rapprochement between the institutions in two major ways. First, the EU is shifting its regional approach towards a more individualized efforts towards countries, which is more in line with how NATO works. Secondly, the EU for the first time includes security as an area of cooperation, thereby coming closer to the NATO agenda. In the latter, there is also a challenge when it comes to duplication, but a rough division of labour should work, based on NATO dealing mainly with the military aspects and the EU with the civilian.

Areas of NATO focus include military training, democratic control of the armed forces, civil-military planning, counter-terrorism, and countering improvised explosive devises. These programs are in place for Jordan and Iraq, and could possibly be introduced also in Tunisia, Libya and Morocco.¹⁶

The EU highlights civilian security sector reform, civil protection and disaster management, tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation, disrupting organised crime, fighting cybercrime, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk mitigation.¹⁷

Consequently, the risk of overlaps mainly exists in the areas of security and defence dialogues, in counter-terrorism and cybersecurity, but in all, to a large extent, the support is complementary. The greater problem has to do with lack of coordination, information sharing, and exchange of assessments that would enable efficient resource pooling and a comprehensive approach to tackle fragility and vulnerabilities in a partner country.

Hybrid Threats in the Baltic Sea Region

The hybrid threat is central when it comes to cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, something that also has been reflected in the political and military assessments pursued by NATO regarding the area, with Sweden and Finland invited to join in the process. The need to deepen cooperation on situational awareness, intelligence sharing, cyber security and strategic communication, has been acknowledged by all parts.

Due to the high degree of security interdependence in the region, a crisis in the region would affect all countries regardless of EU or NATO membership. That makes the call for concrete improvements in resilience and crisis management capabilities realistic and recognized by most actors.

During spring 2016, this has been highlighted trough a range of exercises. NATO has conducted a CMX focused on hybrid threats in the Baltic Sea region. Sweden and Finland were invited to

¹⁶ "NATO training for Iraqi officers starts in Jordan", April 2, 2016, NATO News, Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow at the Lennart Meri Conference, May 14, 2016.

¹⁷ "Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy", Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, SWD(2015)500 final, Brussels Nov 18, 2015; Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Riga, 21-22 May 2015).

participate, which gave useful insights to current systems and procedures in and between NATO and partners, their strengths and weaknesses.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) has conducted a hybrid threats table-top exercise that involved some 80 experts from EU member States, EU institutions and NATO, with similar lessons learned on the importance of situational awareness and information sharing, civil-military cooperation and fast decision-making processes.¹⁸

In addition, the American think-tank CNAS (Center for a New American Security) organized a table-top exercise in Washington DC, featuring nearly 50 high-level participants from Europe and the United States, to test possible challenges to Baltic security, including hybrid warfare elements. The TTX has resulted in an open report, “Assured Resolve: Testing Possible Challenges to Baltic Security”, which includes conclusions of interest for deepened EU-NATO cooperation, such as:

- The lack of integration of intelligence due to “significant institutional stovepipes” between the EU and NATO,
- The EU can prove useful in serving as a “convening authority” for non-NATO nations such as Finland and Sweden, and critical assistance could be provided through the EU’s Solidarity Clause and Mutual Assistance Clause.
- The lack of an adequate mechanism for all the crucial players to confront hybrid threats hampered the West in creating a unified response.
- Confronted with an aggressive Russian disinformation campaign, neither institutions such as NATO and the EU nor national governments could successfully deal with it. There was significant confusion both vertically and horizontally.

Developing the EOP to Strengthen Resilience

The fact that both Sweden and Finland are EU members, and as such could help promote further EU-NATO cooperation, has been highlighted but not yet fully explored in the EOP.

Sweden and Finland provide strong voices in the EU as net contributors to crisis management and have a long tradition of involvement in neighbourhood issues, not least to the East. Thus, they can with credibility and competence assume leading roles in pursuing questions and issues of common interest.

The EOP could be used to address the need to strengthen resilience in NATO and EU member states, as well as to the east and in the south.

While there are good reasons to continue to keep a strong focus on Baltic Sea region security in the format of NATO, Sweden and Finland, there are also arguments for broadening the agenda on resilience and make full use of the EU membership of the two partners.

Another important aspect of opening up the EOP agenda is to avoid a perception of “competition” between sub-regions, such as the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea regions, for instance, by bridging understanding of challenges and measures that need to be taken to strengthen the security for the whole security community.

¹⁸ ”EDA presents hybrid threat exercise findings to Defence Ministers”, Luxembourg 19 April, 2016 online at <https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/press-centre/latest-news/2016/04/19/eda-presents-hybrid-threat-exercise-findings-to-defence-ministers>

Strengthened stability to the east and in the south promotes security for all, also in the north.

NATO, the EU and partners could undertake additional actions to strengthen resilience within and beyond their borders:

EU-NATO Cooperation

- As suggested in the review of EU's neighbourhood policy, Member States could take the role of lead partner for certain initiatives or to accompany certain reform efforts. The role of lead partner could be used to promote NATO-EU cooperation in specific projects for countries that are devoted to bridging the two organisations closer together. Sweden and Finland should put those words to action.
- By forming task groups open for other members, Sweden and Finland can assume the role as lead partners to strengthen EU-NATO cooperation on Baltic Sea security and resilience to the East and in the South.
- The task groups could more specifically address the following issues:

Baltic Sea region security

1. For the Baltic Sea region, a comprehensive maritime framework can be created. It would endorse the full spectrum of hybrid threats and how to address them, e.g. civil and military measures and responsibilities to secure trade and energy flows, as well as borders and state institutions. Such a framework could build on existing EU-related frameworks such as the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region, and the 28+2 work in NATO on Baltic Sea security.
2. The StratCom Centre of Excellence in Riga could be used to plan how the EU, NATO and partners could connect in order to ensure efficient strategic communication to counter hybrid threats. This would include suggestions for both vertical and horizontal organisation and points of contact in individual countries, as well as NATO and the EU. Furthermore, the whole spectrum from pro-active to crisis management should be covered.
3. A roadmap for creating combined NATO-EU resilience teams, to be used in early phases of suspected hybrid crisis, could be developed. Meanwhile, Sweden and Finland should be able to provide expertise to NATO resilience teams, and to draw upon the expertise of the teams if needed.

Strengthening resilience to the East and in the South

1. In countries where both NATO and the EU are active in strengthening resilience, such as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Iraq and Jordan, the organisations should develop closely coordinated country based, comprehensive frameworks to tackle state fragility and vulnerabilities. Within each framework, the roles, projects, goals and resources for each organisation would be declared.

2. In each program country, regular meetings at staff level between NATO and the EU should be conducted in order to ensure information sharing and coordination as the projects proceed.
3. In areas where there is a risk for overlaps, such as security and defence dialogues, counter-terrorism and cybersecurity, NATO and the EU should strive to develop closely coordinated, generic frameworks in order to ensure a common view on the challenges and how to deal with them, as well as roles and responsibilities.
4. Procedures for the exchange of assessments of projects on resilience, including lessons learned sessions, should be established.