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NATO – What Future for this 60-Year-Old?

Statement of Pax Christi International on 60th Anniversary of NATO Analysis and Position of Pax Christi International

Introduction

1. In 2009, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) will celebrate its sixtieth birthday. At the time of its creation in 1949, the purpose of the alliance of European and North America's countries was beyond doubt: *to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.*¹
2. The conclusion of the Cold War left NATO no other option than to engage in a thorough process of transformation. The disintegration of the USSR signalled the disappearance of the old "enemy" against which the members of the Alliance had to be protected. However, soon became clear that the end of the Cold war did not mean the end of all threats. Therefore, NATO started to identify and determine these new threats which could be addressed by what is essentially a military alliance.
3. The primary focus was no longer to defend its territory, but to pro-actively protect its strategic interests and those of its members against emerging threats primarily originating from beyond its own territory. In this context, NATO refers to the potential negative impact resulting from violent conflict, political instability or state failure, not only in regions bordering the territory of the alliance but also in more distant areas where for example terrorist organisations run training camps and prepare future terrorist activities. NATO further identifies the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a major threat, though primarily because of the risk of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorist organisations. Other threats that are often mentioned relate to cyber-crime as well as energy-security.
4. It is important to specify that such a transformation does not necessarily constitute a violation of the Washington Treaty. In fact, the Alliance has continued to change throughout its existence. Based on Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, Parties "*will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened*", which allows for new threats to be identified, as well as new ways of confronting such threats and challenges. Nevertheless, given the way NATO has been implementing this new agenda we can only conclude that major difficulties remain.
5. A crucial question for the future of NATO is whether the way NATO confronts the newly identified issues and challenges - such as the fight against international terrorism and the promotion of stability in strategically important regions (Afghanistan), the proliferation of

¹ The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C. – 4 April 1949.

weapons of mass destruction (NATO's nuclear strategy) and energy security - contributes to its principal objective - *to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area* –, or that adjustments are needed to reach that goal.

Afghanistan

6. The hegemonic behaviour of the Bush administration during its first term almost led to the end of the transatlantic partnership. Later, the USA not only realised the need for allies but also the importance of NATO, particularly in securing Afghanistan. The former US administration needed NATO as a source of involvement in international security issues. NATO has been present in Afghanistan through the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to prevent Afghanistan's regression into a failed state providing terrorist organisations with a safe haven and base for planning and launching terrorist attacks against NATO members.
7. Afghanistan needs to become a stable country with a democratically elected government capable of controlling violence and of delivering basic services to its population. However, NATO's task in Afghanistan is principally limited to the mere removal of the immediate threat (that is: military action against the violent and destructive attacks by Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters) and to create a context of security for other actors (NGO's, diplomats, politicians) to engage in rebuilding and stabilization of the country (that is: the long term civil-political process). NATO's operation in Afghanistan thus can be seen as a test-case for the relevance of a strategy of "forward defence" in the Hindukush."²
8. Afghanistan has always been a rather unstable and insecure region since, in late nineteenth century, it was turned in merely a buffer state between Tsarist Russia and India, a British Indian creation. Since the international military intervention as 'reply' to the 9/11 drama, anti-western (and especially anti-USA) sentiment is swelling. The combat operation in Afghanistan is often legitimized as a means to prevent terrorism against NATO member-states, which is however a logic that is difficult to sustain. As we have seen with the attacks in Madrid and London, terrorists are often "home-grown" and their decision to act relates primarily to their belief that Islam is being offended by the West in places like Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. It is important to assess if one can say that the way NATO is currently operating in Afghanistan runs opposite to the intended results and to the principal objective of the Alliance. Aims, objectives and strategies of the NATO operation in Afghanistan are not clearly defined and often confusingly intertwined with, if not frustrating, humanitarian and diplomatic operations by others on the scene (NGO's, diplomats, politicians).

Nuclear Strategy

9. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is rightfully labelled as one of the most credible threats for NATO's attention. International organised crime and terrorism may well seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and the black market in nuclear weapons technology will become ever more difficult to control. The only real protection against this

²2. The Hindu Kush is a mountain range located in eastern and central Afghanistan, north-western Pakistan and northeastern India.

threat is to dismantle and destroy all nuclear weapons. If NATO is serious about protecting its members against the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, it should fully and unambiguously promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It should use the Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl early in April to decide to denuclearise its strategic concept. That would be the most powerful signal possible to make real progress in the defining of a new agenda favouring nuclear disarmament. Consequently, the US tactical nuclear weapons still deployed in Europe (Turkey, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands) should be dismantled and destroyed.

10. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been developed to facilitate and promote nuclear disarmament, but this centrepiece of the non proliferation regime is in danger and urgently needs to be strengthened. The NPT Review Conference that will take place in May 2010 will serve as a litmus test. After a few failures (in particular in 2000 and 2005), we cannot risk another unsuccessful NPT Review Conference. Denuclearising NATO's strategic concept is a first and important step for which the time is ripe.
11. However, the NATO **nuclear strategy** itself is in violation of the NPT. Under Article IV of the NPT, nuclear states commit to eliminating their existing arsenals, while non-nuclear states agreed to refrain from developing nuclear weapons. If nuclear states continue to insist on the prerogative of maintaining nuclear arsenals and decide to modernize their nuclear weapon systems rather than to dismantle them, why then should the non-nuclear states be expected to respect their side of the NPT bargain? NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are another violation of the NPT, under which nuclear weapon states have agreed not to *transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly*. The deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe can also be seen as a security hazard for the European NATO-members, since that type of weapon poses the highest danger of potential theft by terrorists.
12. Can we conclude that current NATO nuclear policy does not contribute to the security of its members but instead harms the security it claims to defend? This will be even more true if the Alliance decides to embrace the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons as part of the official strategy, as called for by five senior NATO military officers in their 2008 report "Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World". The mere fact that such a provocative proposal has not been immediately rebuked is enough to confirm aspiring states in their efforts to develop or obtain nuclear weapons themselves, let alone the dramatic lowering of the threshold for using nuclear weapons if such a policy were to be accepted.

NATO, Europe and Enlargement

13. NATO's expansion in Eastern Europe is likely to exacerbate the already tense relations between NATO and the Russian Federation. On the occasion of the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Vladimir Putin, then Russian President, labelled the further expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders a direct threat to the security of his country.
14. If NATO wants to uphold its *principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law*, it is crucial that NATO sticks to an accession policy based on transparent criteria, (proven) shared values and shared (moral) standards. Each nation has its sovereign right

to pursue its own foreign policy and to apply for membership in NATO or any other alliance, and no external actor should be allowed to veto accession when the criteria are met, or to lobby for accession when the criteria are not met.

15. The recent gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine, which left millions of Europeans without heat and forced factories to close, is a stark reminder of the dependence of European NATO members on Russian energy. Considering the fact that this dependence will be a reality well into the future, NATO can best guarantee the energy security of its European members by working with Russia. Co-operation between Russia, Ukraine and Georgia and both NATO and the EU should be intensified and extended.
16. Therefore, mechanisms should be found to make sure that possible NATO enlargement does not lead to new division and tensions. NATO, together with the Council of Europe and the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe), should help to create mechanisms to monitor and control the rights of minorities, respect for human rights, the effective functioning of democracy in all member states, and the extension of these mechanisms to other European members of OSCE and the Council of Europe, including Russia, Georgia and Ukraine. This might create a positive impact on European energy security as well.
17. It is hoped that in Europe a system of security will be developed which guarantees a stable and lasting peace for all people and states in Europe, which strengthens the functioning of the UN as a global common security organisation and promotes peace and security in the rest of the world. In the policies towards the non-European world principles of collective security should be used by contributing to the strengthening of international law and to global and regional collective security arrangements. Programmes aimed at civil integration with a firm prospect on a stable and collective security system in Europe and the rest of the world may not be missed.

New Emerging Threats

18. It appears that, some twenty years after the transformation process was launched, NATO either did not manage to find the appropriate answer to the newly emerging threats; or does simply not possess the appropriate tools, instruments and capabilities required to face these threats in an effective manner.
19. In comparison to the Cold War period, the way to respond to the current threats is far less obvious and straightforward, and thus more prone to diverging views and opinions among member states about what the genuine security interests at stake are and how NATO should respond. The current threats are no longer strictly territorial, nor are they purely military in nature, making it far less evident for a military alliance to find the appropriate answer to them. As a result, strategic solidarity and cohesion, the long-time centrepiece of NATO, can no longer be taken for granted, especially in relation to operations that imply the use of force.

20. The sixtieth anniversary summit in April 2009 provides the members of the Alliance with the perfect opportunity to tackle these issues and to review NATO's recent performance. This exercise should result in the development and approval of a new Strategic Concept for NATO.

Pax Christi International Stresses the Following Essential Elements:

21. **Modesty** is needed with regards to the tasks the Alliance undertakes. Some observers have compared the current NATO with a Swiss army knife with all its tools exposed. Unfolded pocket-knives are unwieldy affairs, and whilst prepared to do everything, are actually good at nothing.³ The possibilities are limited for a military alliance in promoting democracy and tackling political instability in an effective and sustainable manner. These types of activities are better pursued in cooperation with other (civilian) organisations, whereby each actor limits its involvement to those areas in which it has a comparative advantage.
22. At the end of the day NATO's best option is to limit itself to key tasks such as collective defence, humanitarian operations, non proliferation and peacekeeping. NATO shall never be credible as a global police officer because its principal objective is the protection of its own strategic interests and those of its members – not necessarily those of the countries in which NATO operations would take place.
23. More transparency and clarification is needed with regards to the way NATO sees itself responding to the newly emerging challenges and threats. When does a situation of instability elsewhere around the world become a threat to the security and stability of the NATO members? Based on which criteria? How should it respond to these threats? Should the Alliance respond to non-conventional attacks against one of its members such as cyber-attacks (cfr. Lithuania) or the interruption of energy supply (cfr. Poland) through the application of the Article 5 mutual defence clause, under which such an attack would be considered as an attack against the whole Alliance and which obliges members to provide support to members in need of assistance? All these questions need to be answered in a new Strategic Concept.
24. Only the UN Security Council is mandated to decide on the use of force in order to restore or maintain international peace and security. This implies that only the UN-Security Council can determine whether NATO has the right to respond militarily to so-called non-article 5 operations: situations that are deemed a threat to the strategic interests of the Alliance, but that cannot be considered as an armed attack on the territory of the Allies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

25. Political instability in Afghanistan cannot be remedied with a military operation only. An overall change of strategy is required. To create sustainable stability and security, community-building, human security, state-building, good governance and economic self-sustenance are necessary ingredients. These are complex, multi-dimensional and long-term goals that will result from a coordinated civilian, diplomatic and political enterprise. Considering the current instability in the country, a military presence is indispensable but rightly and principally limited

³ Peter Van Ham, NATO and the Madonna Curve: Why a New Strategic Concept is Vital. NATO Review, March 2008. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2008/03/EN/index.htm>

to supporting the civilian processes by protecting the civilian actors that are implementing the activities.

26. The NATO mission in Afghanistan needs adjustment on two aspects. It is not the task of a military alliance to implement essentially civilian activities such as reconstruction and rehabilitation. However, providing security for the civilian actors on the ground is only a military task as long as other security bodies (as e.g. police) are not yet capable of fulfilling this duty. Therefore, troop expansion is a disputed strategy. It is of urgent importance to come to a concrete definition of a regional approach for stabilising the region, part of which must be a dialogue with all neighbours of (or we might even say: stakeholders on) Afghanistan, including Russia, Pakistan, India, China and Iran. Seeking dialogue with moderate representatives of Taliban, must be discussed but can only be a way forward if it is done out of wisdom in stead of despair. Otherwise it only serves the extremist Taliban ultimately.
27. In relation to nuclear security, NATO should fully and unambiguously promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Clearly, the biggest contribution NATO can give to nuclear disarmament is to denuclearise its own Strategic Concept – which would among others imply the withdrawal and destruction of the US tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. NATO has a responsibility to strengthen the NPT. This implies an urgent and radical change of direction of its nuclear strategy. Therefore, NATO needs to a) end nuclear sharing and withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, b) exclude firmly the option of pre-emptive nuclear strikes in its strategy, and c) to adopt a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons. With regards to the issue of a ballistic missile defence system, the change in US American leadership provides an opportunity to reconsider the necessity of such a system.
28. Finally, expansion of NATO should be dealt with great care. Upholding strict membership criteria is crucial for the future credibility of NATO. We support the recent decision of NATO to resume high-level contacts with Russia. Good relations with Russia are crucial for working together on world problems and especially for the energy security and stability of the European NATO-allies. Russia should not begin a comprehensive large-scale military rearmament from 2011 and not upgrade its nuclear force as we urge the USA to commit themselves to genuine nuclear disarmament. Confidence building measures with Russia and other nations are the required course of action. NATO should seek more collaboration with bodies such as the European Union, the OSCE and the Council of Europe in order to guarantee the process of democratisation and the human security needs in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine.

Executive Committee
Pax Christi International
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