Australian Journal of International Affairs

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/caji20>

More flexible, less coherent: NATO after Lisbon

Timo Noetzel & Benjamin Schreer

Version of record first published: 19 Jan 2012.

To cite this article: Timo Noetzel & Benjamin Schreer (2012): More flexible, less coherent: NATO after Lisbon, Australian Journal of International Affairs, 66:1, 20-33

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2011.637451>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

More flexible, less coherent: NATO after Lisbon

TIMO NOETZEL* AND BENJAMIN SCHREER

At its 2010 Lisbon summit, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took significant steps towards becoming a modern alliance. In the face of a changing security environment and divergent strategic interests among 28 members, NATO adapted its strategic concept and reformed its way of formulating strategy. The new strategic concept advances conflict management as a core task for the alliance. In combination with a greater emphasis on developing partnerships, NATO conceptually strengthened its profile as a global security actor. The summit also reflected a new approach to formulating NATO strategy by providing the Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen with a strong role in setting the strategic agenda. Indeed, he assumed a more supranational function rather than acting as a representative of all allies. But as the Libya operation demonstrates, NATO will struggle to maintain cohesion in an increasingly 'polycentric' alliance. While the focus on conflict management will make the alliance more flexible, it will also become a less coherent global security actor.

Keywords: global security actor; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; strategic concept

The summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Lisbon in November 2010 displayed a degree of strategic consensus that had become rather rare at such high-level meetings. Without much controversy, NATO leaders recommitted themselves to the war effort in Afghanistan. They also agreed on a new strategic concept titled 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence' (NATO 2010a), which is to guide NATO's future goals, ends and means. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen was widely praised for his ability to orchestrate and drive a unique process of drafting the new strategic guidelines, which strike an ambitious strategic consensus between member states' divergent interests.

To what degree has the alliance been transformed in Lisbon? This article argues that the summit did initiate two significant shifts in the way NATO aims

*Timo Noetzel is a member of the management board of stiftung neue verantwortung, a Berlin-based cross-sector think tank for applied public policy research. He is also Senior Policy Advisor to the Chairman of the Munich Security Conference. <tn@stiftung-nv-de >

Benjamin Schreer is Deputy Head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University. He is also Managing Editor of *Security Challenges*. <benjamin.schreer@anu.edu.au >

to do business in the future. Firstly, the Lisbon summit confirmed the evolution of the organisation into a twenty-first-century 'crisis manager'. In fact, the meeting can be regarded as a turning point in NATO's history in that the alliance quietly abandoned its regional focus on the Euro-Atlantic area. No longer able to agree on a common threat perception and purpose as a permanent 'kit', NATO has become even more flexible with regard to its mission spectrum. Secondly, the allies successfully reinvented the process of agreeing on their premier strategy document. In order to address a rather cumbersome process of reaching decisions by consensus in a NATO of 28 member states, the allies provided Secretary General Rasmussen with a significant role in shaping NATO's strategic agenda-setting. In some respects, the centre of NATO's strategy-making process has shifted from the exclusive domain of member states to the level of the office of the Secretary General.

Yet, greater institutional flexibility will come at a cost. Crisis management operations will exacerbate the trend among allies to participate, abstain or even oppose common operations. In such cases, the influence of the Secretary General to generate strategic consensus will remain very limited, as NATO's Libya operation demonstrated. Allies were divided on whether to intervene and participate, showing that the Lisbon summit had only partially been successful in addressing the challenge of an alliance fragmented into fractions of divergent strategic interests.

This article proceeds in four main steps. The first part identifies the structural challenges for NATO posed by shifts in the international strategic environment. These changes provided the framework for debate on the new strategic concept. The second part examines the new strategic concept and the conceptual shift towards a stronger emphasis on crisis management operations. The third part analyses the drafting process of the 2010 strategic concept and the particular role played by Secretary General Rasmussen. Fourth, and finally, the article concludes by identifying some ramifications for NATO's future role in the international security order and its ability to serve the interests of its member states.

The context of Lisbon

Unlike previous summits, NATO's meeting in Lisbon was accompanied by widespread expectations in the public, media and academia that the alliance dearly needed reform, and that the gathering had to be successful. Four factors mainly contributed to this anticipation.

Firstly, it was clear that NATO had to further adjust strategy to the characteristics of a new strategic environment. The previous strategic concept adopted in 1999 was no longer adequate in providing strategic guidance (Kamp 2009: 21). Since then, core strategic trends emerging after the cold war had only intensified. From NATO's perspective, these included the absence of an

existential threat and common threat perception; a shift of the centre of gravity away from Europe to other parts of the world, particularly Asia; and the emergence of new security risks such as terrorism, cyber-attacks and disruptions of energy supplies. As demonstrated in Afghanistan and a whole range of other missions, the security of NATO allies depended increasingly on developments outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Crisis management rather than classical tasks of collective defence dominated NATO's operational reality. In sum, the changes in the international security environment required allies to reach a new consensus on NATO's core purpose and strategy.

But, secondly, finding a new agreement was easier said than done. On the contrary, allies had hardly been able to agree on key strategic issues (Smith and Williams 2008). Bitter disputes erupted over the mission in Afghanistan and threatened to undermine key principles of alliance solidarity. Furthermore, allies were at odds over the future hierarchy in NATO's core purpose. The question was how to strike the right balance between a focus on Euro-Atlantic security and collective defence (Article 5 of the NATO treaty), on the one hand, and a greater role in global crisis management (Article 4) operations, on the other (Yost 2010). One 'tier' of allies grouped around the United States and United Kingdom argued that NATO had to adapt both functionally and institutionally to play a greater role in international security. In their view, NATO had to become the frontrunner in an emerging 'global security web' by expanding its partnerships with other international institutions and 'countries across the globe', and by engaging in crisis management operations (Brzezinski 2009; Ringsmose and Rynning 2009). The British House of Commons Defence Committee succinctly summarised this perspective on a 'global NATO':

[W]e believe there is no alternative to the Alliance fulfilling a global role. Its willingness and ability to act on a global basis to tackle threats where they arise is fundamental to NATO's continued relevance. If NATO limits itself to a regional role in defence of the territory of the North Atlantic area alone, its value will be diminished, particularly to the United States, and its future will be in doubt. (House of Commons Defence Committee 2008: 17)

Conversely, a group of allies led by Germany and France opposed the evolution of NATO into a more mature global security actor. Given the problems of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan, they called for a much less ambitious agenda. In the words of one advocate of this position, the alliance needed to 'return home, to recognise that its sole *raison d'être* is European security. It is ill-suited to fighting a war thousands of miles from home' (Coker 2008: 11). Over time, however, their opposition to a more globally oriented NATO decreased somewhat, since they recognised the emerging contours of globalised security challenges. The question now was no longer if the alliance should increase its network with global partners.

Rather, the issue was one of degree and concerned the extent to which the alliance should globalise its operational spectrum of tasks and missions (functional globalisation), and whether this development should be accompanied by an institutional globalisation, meaning establishing supporting institutions at the political level (Bunde and Noetzel 2010).

Thirdly, allies were forced to find new ways to manage NATO's ongoing structural disintegration into a 'multi-tier alliance' (Noetzel and Schreer 2009) or 'heterogeneous clubs' (Ivanov 2010). That is, the dispute over NATO's core purpose reflects the much deeper trend that, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the alliance has been increasingly shaped by 'centrifugal dynamics' (Canuel 2009: 85). When the old existential threat disappeared, NATO allies individually reassessed their core strategic interests. More often than not, these interests differed quite substantially, and NATO's roles and purpose became subject to interpretation. Common concerns that prevailed during the cold war (such as national independence and territorial integrity) no longer sufficed to define a common strategic interest (Canuel 2009: 84). Instead, NATO gradually turned into a 'multipurpose' security and defence organisation (Forster and Wallace 2001: 111).

As a result, Article 5 of the NATO treaty (collective defence) lost some of its traditional glue in keeping the alliance together. NATO allies confronted two cross-cutting trends. On the one hand, NATO was shaped by political rifts amongst its allies about the future strategic direction; on the other, allies recognised the strategic priority to address emerging threats and risks such as cyber- and energy security. However, from the perspective of most members, these 'emerging security challenges' did not constitute a classical Article 5 task, given their often amorphous and not necessarily military nature (Ucko 2010). Thus, many strategic analysts agreed that NATO required a new 'vision' which could harmonise these conflicting strategic views (Aybet and Moore 2010).

Finally, a unique drafting process of the new strategic concept had also raised expectations about significant reform in Lisbon. At their Kehl and Strasbourg summit in April 2009, allies had tasked Secretary General Rasmussen to provide a draft concept for the Lisbon meeting. Unprecedentedly, they also decided to initiate a substantial process of public consultation by setting up an eminent persons group, chaired by former US Defense Secretary Madeline Albright, which was to make recommendations for the new strategic concept. Never before had the alliance agreed on such lengthy and transparent public consultations on its key strategic document. Awareness was high that the final document also had to be rather short and had to avoid micromanagement deliberations on critical issues in order to address public perceptions that NATO was unable to redefine itself (Yost 2010: 518). Taken together, these four factors created immense pressure on the alliance to turn the Lisbon summit into a success.

Drafting the new strategic concept

In this context, the period between the Kehl and Strasbourg summit in April 2009 and the Lisbon meeting in November 2010 provided allies with a good opportunity to test a new model of strategy-making. Arguably, the alliance met this test. When allies tasked Secretary General Rasmussen in April 2009 to deliver a draft concept before the Lisbon meeting, they were confident in their ability to agree on a new strategic concept on that occasion.

The Secretary General built on the momentum developed in Kehl and Strasbourg. Firstly, there was an understanding that global crisis management would remain important for NATO. Secondly, the idea of a more 'global NATO' became influential, not least because there was a need for European members to keep the alliance relevant for their US ally. Rasmussen, therefore, promoted the key conceptual premises of such thinking. For example, during a speech in November 2009, he declared that a "eurocentric" conception of security was hopelessly outdated' and that a 'territorial notion of security no longer explains the challenges' that NATO faced (Rasmussen 2009). On a different occasion, he also stated that the alliance had to transform into a 'hub of a network of security partnerships and a centre for consultation on international security issues' (Rasmussen 2010a). Arguably, the Secretary General had realised that sceptical allies had reduced their objections towards the long-term trend of a more globalised NATO (Bunde and Noetzel 2010).

Between late 2009 and early 2010, the work of the 'Albright Group' dominated the public debate. During the 'reflection phase' (September 2009 to March 2010), the experts engaged in intensive discussions on the new strategic concept with officials, scholars and the media in Europe, Russia and the United States. They then debated their preliminary findings with strategic decision makers in allied capitals during the 'consultation phase'. While their final report of May 2010 (NATO 2010b) did not equate to the actual strategic concept, public debate surrounding this process made it difficult for NATO allies to distance themselves too much from the report (Shea 2010: 48). Thus, Rasmussen's first draft in September 2010 partially reflected the recommendations made by the group of experts.

By that time, it also seemed obvious that the 'drafting and final negotiation phase' would not be very cumbersome. Rather, the unique drafting process had predetermined the final outcome in Lisbon. Six weeks before the summit, the Secretary General already publicly announced the fundamental pillars of the new strategic concept (Rasmussen 2010b). This demonstrated his critical role and showed that the allies partially had 'outsourced' the strategy formulation process. Consequently, member states adopted the new strategic concept in Lisbon without major deliberations or disagreements.

The new strategic concept

It is beyond the scope of this article to analyse the 2010 strategic concept in every detail. Rather, the focus here is on some of the core aspects of the new strategic guidance. But, first, a word of caution is in order. NATO's strategic concept is neither a panacea for any challenge to the alliance, nor does it deliver a detailed blueprint for action in specific circumstances. In times of serious crises, allies engage in a multilevel political-bargaining process to decide on the details. Moreover, the strategic concept is an expression of the specific context in which NATO operates at the time. During the cold war, most strategic concepts were classified, given that they dealt with military operational issues of how best to deter the Soviet Union. The exception was the famous Harmel Report of 1967, which has retained its reputation for being a forward-looking political document. The concepts of 1991 and 1999 displayed a NATO carefully calibrating its course in the early post-cold war period. Thus, the drafting and final negotiating process of these documents involved much political wrestling among member states, which often argued over single words. Both documents are also regarded as being descriptive rather than forward-looking (Shea 2010).

That said, agreeing on a new strategic concept is far from being a futile exercise. There is much value in providing a general strategic consensus among allies on the core tasks, missions and capabilities. In fact, the 2010 strategic concept was successful in establishing this very 'general strategic consensus', which serves as the foundation of NATO and which had become so difficult in preceding years. It focuses very much on political aspects of how NATO can address the complex challenges in order to 'safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means' (NATO 2010a: para. 1). It is written in a very clear, accessible style and avoids military-technical details. Unlike previous strategic concepts, the new document is also rather short. At only 11 pages, it is half the size of the 1999 strategic concept.

NATO recognises that the most likely security threats to its members come from rather diffuse and non-traditional challenges such as terrorism, cyber-attacks and the disruption of energy supply lines. In this context, the strategic concept emphasises that 'instability or conflict beyond NATO borders can directly threaten Alliance security' (NATO 2010a: para. 11). Thus, globalised security challenges require NATO to continue its engagement in international crisis management. Conversely, the strategic concept notes that the 'threat of conventional attack against NATO territory is low' (NATO 2010a: para. 7). Yet, the document also identifies a 'real and growing threat to the Euro-Atlantic area' from the proliferation of ballistic missiles (NATO 2010a: para. 8). This is an indirect recognition that the threat from Iran's ballistic missile capabilities and its nuclear program is of growing concern to NATO allies. In fact, the group of experts' report had explicitly stressed the likelihood of Iran becoming a conventional opponent for the alliance (NATO 2010b: 16). While Turkish

objection prevented the 2010 strategic concept from directly identifying Iran as a source of major concern (AFP 2010), Tehran's policies and weapons programs have now led allies to finally agree on developing a strategic ballistic missile defence capability to defend NATO territory.

As a result of this assessment of NATO's security environment, the new strategic concept identifies three 'core tasks': 'collective defence', 'crisis management' and 'cooperative security'. This is a noticeable difference from the 1999 strategic concept, which had listed five 'fundamental tasks'. These were categorised in a 'three plus two' formula. The first three tasks included 'security', 'consultations', and 'deterrence and defence'. To these core security tasks, 'crisis management' and 'partnerships' were added as complementary (NATO 1999). While the first three represented 'continuity with the purposes articulated by and for the alliance during the Cold War ... [t]he "crisis management" purpose ... constituted a significant departure from Cold War assumptions as to NATO's role' (Yost 2010: 491). Yet, 'partnerships' only focused on cooperation and dialogue with other countries in the 'Euro-Atlantic area'. Further, with the massive expansion of NATO's involvement in global crisis management after 2001, the 'three plus two formula' of the 1999 strategic concept begged one central question: 'How high up should crisis response operations be in the order of priorities?' (Shea 2010: 53).

The new strategic concept elevates global crisis management and cooperative security as the core NATO tasks alongside 'collective defence'. At the same time, the new strategic concept reassures those allies still concerned about the possibility of a resurgent Russia by stressing the carrying out of contingency planning against the 'full range of conventional and emerging security challenges' (NATO 2010a: para. 19). Moreover, deterrence based on a mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities remains 'a core element' of NATO strategy (NATO 2010a: para. 17). But, like preceding documents, the new concept is restrictive in defining a case of collective defence. Importantly, emerging security challenges such as cyber-threats and energy security will not trigger a collective response under Article 5 of the NATO treaty. As a result, consultations under Article 4 will be the primary mechanisms for dealing with the most likely security challenges identified by the allies. In short, the alliance will operate a motto of 'we know it when we see it' when it comes to non-traditional security threats.

The strategic concept is much clearer when it comes to the other two pillars of what Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has called 'NATO 3.0': crisis management and cooperative security. The document strengthens the focus on crisis prevention and post-conflict stabilisation, drawing on lessons from the operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. NATO announces a willingness to engage 'where possible and when necessary, to prevent crises, manage crises, stabilize post-conflict situations and support reconstruction' (NATO 2010a: para. 20). In this context, the new strategic concept notes NATO's 'unique conflict management capabilities' and highlights the 'indispensable contribution

the Alliance can make to international conflict management efforts' (NATO 2010a: para. 23).

Moreover, allies agree on concrete steps to improve NATO's capabilities in this area. The concept stresses the intention to 'further develop doctrine and military capabilities for expeditionary operations, including counterinsurgency, stabilization and reconstruction operations', and to 'develop the capability to train and develop local forces in crisis zones' (NATO 2010a: para. 25). Civil-military planning for international crisis management operations will be enhanced, and NATO will even develop 'an appropriate but modest civilian crisis management capability' (ibid.). This reflects a lesson learned from the Afghanistan operation, where civilian actors were often not forthcoming. In general, the alliance aims to better prepare for crisis management operations.

The section on cooperative security, the third core task for NATO, is dedicated to 'promoting international security'. Firstly, the alliance aims at contributing to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This goal had been subject to intense debate within the alliance. The German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, in particular, linked US President Barrack Obama's initiative for a world free of nuclear weapons to possible changes in NATO's deterrent posture. He called for the withdrawal of US tactical weapons from Germany, which constitute a crucial component of NATO's concept of 'nuclear sharing' (Chalmers and Lunn 2010). The French government, in particular (quietly backed by a number of other allies), resisted such a development, fearing a debate on its own nuclear capability. In the end, the new strategic concept found a compromise. Reflecting the 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review (United States Department of Defense 2010), allies pledge 'to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons', while reaffirming NATO's status as a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist (NATO 2010a: para. 26). Yet, some allies will use the concept's new linkage between arms control and NATO's nuclear strategy to press for changes in the alliance's nuclear posture—as demonstrated by the Non-Paper on NATO's tactical nuclear weapons delivered by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands in April 2011, and supported by Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Luxembourg and Slovenia (NATO 2011a).

Secondly, under the same rubric of cooperative security, the 2010 strategic concept also paves the way for enhanced cooperation with pertinent global and regional institutions. NATO opens up to developing political dialogue and practical cooperation with 'any nations and relevant organisations across the globe' (NATO 2010a: para. 30). This is an inclusive, pragmatic approach to building up NATO's nodes in an emerging global security network, potentially comprising a wide array of cooperation partners in emerging major powers such as China, India or Brazil. It is markedly different from previous attempts to perceive the alliance as an exclusive club of like-minded global democracies (Daalder and Goldgeir 2006). This approach also provides the template for improving NATO's relationship with regional security organisations such as the

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Collective Security Treaty Organization or even the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The new strategic concept thus demonstrates NATO's willingness to play a vital role in twenty-first-century global crisis management by engaging other major players in the international system. It displays 'a collective intention to push NATO further in the direction of global engagement: NATO is becoming more global and concomitantly it is becoming less confined by regional and military considerations' (Ringsmose and Rynning 2011: 7). Finally, the alliance reflects yet another lesson learned from Afghanistan by offering its operational partners a 'structural role in shaping strategy and decisions on NATO-led missions to which they contribute' (NATO 2010a: para. 30). This step has long been a goal of partners such as Australia and, post-Lisbon, has been codified in a new political military framework document (NATO 2011b). Member states have thus distinctly defined NATO as a global security provider and have proclaimed their intention to enhance capabilities for this purpose.

Making NATO strategy: a new role for the Secretary General?

In Lisbon, NATO allies put a new way of making strategy to the test as a means of coming to terms with their diverging strategic interests. A key for this has been their willingness to strengthen the role of the Secretary General in the formulation of the strategic concept. This process displayed contours of an informal 'supranational' style of NATO's strategy formulation.

Many commentators rightly singled out the influence of Secretary General Rasmussen in setting the agenda for the 2010 strategic concept. The former Danish prime minister played a key role in shaping the key tenets of the new strategic guidance document. This is not to downplay the sometimes influential roles played by some of his predecessors, such as Manfred Wörner (1988–94) and Lord Robertson (1999–2004), in shaping NATO's strategic direction. Yet, Rasmussen assumed a very strong 'entrepreneurial' leadership style and abandoned the traditional role of previous secretaries general of concentrating on quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy and consensus-building. In addition, Rasmussen's predecessors after 2001 largely could not fully exercise a strong leadership role because NATO entered into a prolonged period of serious disagreements among its members about its future direction (Hendrickson 2010).

A key explanation for his major impact on NATO's strategy formulation has been his strong personality, in combination with his previous position and experiences as prime minister of Denmark. This enabled him to bypass many of the traditional processes in building internal consensus within the alliance and, instead, to communicate directly with allied governments (*ibid.*). Undoubtedly, this is part of the puzzle. However, it seems reasonable to look beyond Rasmussen's strong leadership attributes and to consider additional factors that

led to the Secretary General playing an instrumental role in the formulation of NATO's new strategic concept. The argument here is that the changing character of the Atlantic alliance requires a new form of leadership that upgrades the status of the Secretary General. In order to manage a military organisation of 28 member states, a more independent Secretary General is needed, who acts less like a representative of allies and takes on a more 'supranational' function in terms of strategic agenda-setting. Otherwise, a complex alliance comprising a diverse mix of countries with very different strategic outlooks becomes rather unmanageable.

The term 'supranational' is predominantly used in connection with the European Union and the role of the president of the European Commission. It generally involves 'the delegation of decision making power to institutions that are organisationally and politically independent from the founding states' (Tallberg 2002: 23). Of course, NATO allies have not formally delegated decision-making power to the Secretary General, and probably never will. However, allies provided Rasmussen with a strong mandate that *informally* entailed a much greater degree of autonomy in running the strategy formulation process within a defined set of parameters and the day-to-day business of the organisation. This process, which could be labelled a kind of 'informal supranationalism', makes perfect sense from the member states' perspective. Particularly with regard to strategic agenda-setting, this procedure is likely to be more efficient and cost-effective than the previous model of micromanaging and increasingly dysfunctional consensus-building in a 'multi-tier' NATO. During the cold war, often very specific technical-military issues preceded the political debate. In turn, this demanded a significant involvement of NATO's bureaucratic experts in deliberations of the strategy formulation process. Given the high stakes involved—i.e. NATO facing the risk of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union—the predominantly military character of the alliance led to a tight control over strategy and to the Secretary General being a 'secretary' rather than a 'general'. As the alliance became more involved in crisis management operations, the NATO Secretary General turned more into a 'political manager', acting as a new political centre within the alliance to absorb the resulting tensions among allies (Hendrickson 2006).

Because NATO's agenda is increasingly dominated by Article 4 operations (crisis management), states are even more inclined to assign the Secretary General with greater responsibility in the formulation of strategy, at least on the level of strategic documents. Unlike in the case of collective defence, the Article 4 mission spectrum provides allies with much greater flexibility in terms of decision-making and commitment. Moreover, assigning the Secretary General with more autonomy in reorganising the alliance in areas such as streamlining the political and military bureaucracy (another major decision taken at the Lisbon summit) also reduces the workload for individual member states. This evolutionary role of the Secretary General is essential for NATO to remain

capable of making strategy, given that today's core strategic issues are primarily of a political nature.

However, it must be noted that the new role of the Secretary General in the making of NATO strategy faces limits and is also not without risks. Very likely, his influence will be restricted to strategic agenda-setting and to shaping strategy documents such as the new strategic concept. Moreover, he will probably enjoy relative freedom in enforcing the reform of the political and military bureaucracy. That said, allies still retain control over the core tenets of NATO strategy. The Secretary General was well aware of the corridor provided to him by member states, which defined his 'manoeuvring space' on strategic issues. Moreover, as soon as it comes to decisions about actual military deployments, his role will be limited to working towards a consensus among allies. Operation Unified Protector in Libya, which commenced in March 2011, demonstrated Rasmussen's difficulties and inability to reach a strategic consensus among those allies who supported the operation, such as France and the United Kingdom, and those who opposed the mission, such as Turkey and Germany (Applebaum 2011; *Der Spiegel* 2011).

Furthermore, the argument here is not that Rasmussen has had an unrestricted hand to steer NATO in certain directions and has never met opposition to his initiatives. Moreover, he will only be able to play such a prominent role if the United States, as the most powerful player, continues to support his position. Rather, the point is that since allies have found internal consensus on the need to harmonise the way of strategy formulation, they were willing to assign the Secretary General with a stronger leadership role in specific areas of strategy formulation.

Conclusion: towards a more flexible, yet less coherent, global security actor

The Lisbon summit confirmed the trend of NATO becoming a more flexible institution when it comes to formulating strategy. This has been evident in the role played by the Secretary General in drafting and shaping the new strategic concept. The new strategic concept itself contributes to a greater institutional flexibility by promoting greater emphasis on crisis management operations and developing partnerships with countries 'across the globe'. Such greater institutional flexibility is a reflection of NATO's evolution into a polycentric, multi-tier alliance. It seems that such processes are required to maintain some form of cohesion in 'NATO 3.0'.

This development, however, is not without its problems. While the alliance will become more flexible in its response to global security challenges, it will also become a much less coherent actor. Despite the benefits in granting the Secretary General an (informal) supranational-like role in shaping NATO's strategic concept, there is also a significant risk involved in allies 'outsourcing' the strategy-making process. When it comes to implementing the key pillars of

the strategic concept, allies might well disassociate themselves from their commitments. In other words, decoupling NATO's strategy-making from the member states carries the danger of actually increasing the rift among allies in times of crisis, particularly when it comes to global crisis management operations.

Nowhere is this risk more visible than in the NATO-led operation in Libya. This operation displayed the considerable cleavages among the allies about how to fulfil NATO's role as a global security provider. Despite Libya being situated on Europe's doorstep, and despite United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 authorising the use of force to prevent the Libyan government's atrocities against the civilian population, as of April 2011, only eight allies had contributed to the air campaign (the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Norway, Canada, Denmark and Italy). Secretary General Rasmussen's repeated plea for more contribution fell on the deaf ears of the other allies (Bittner 2011). What was more, Germany and Poland flatly opposed their participation in the operation. While the Libya mission certainly will not mean the end of the alliance, it raises serious questions as to the ability of NATO to maintain cohesion as a global security actor. If anything, Libya has demonstrated the drawbacks of an alliance fragmenting into 'coalitions of the willing and unwilling' when it comes to crisis management operations.

Greater flexibility, therefore, comes at a cost for NATO. The Lisbon summit did not so much transform the Atlantic alliance, but was rather the result of the structural challenge to manage a diverse NATO of 28 member states. The new strategic concept is, indeed, a forward-looking document in that it identifies some ways to operate such a 'modern' alliance. It is probably the most honest confession at the level of a strategic document that NATO today is a military organisation which will increasingly have to rely on informal operative arrangements when it comes to actual deployments—even at the price of decreased cohesion and agility.

References

- AFP (Associated Free Press), 2010. 'US not pressing Turkey over missile shield: Gates', 18 October, <www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ii5cvxW-mMQpO02yqxDRsY3fkDEg?docId=CNG.19150b1b67c62c47b0bb0979b034af6b.6e1>.
- Applebaum, Anne, 2011. 'NATO's last mission?', *Washington Post*, 12 April.
- Aybet, Gülnur and Rebecca R. Moore (eds), 2010. *NATO in search of a vision* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press).
- Bittner, Jochen, 2011. 'Am Ende der Kräfte', *Die Zeit*, 20 April.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 2009. 'An agenda for NATO: toward a global security web', *Foreign Affairs*, 88(5): 2–15.
- Bunde, Tobias and Timo Noetzel, 2010. 'Unavoidable tensions: the liberal path to global NATO', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 31(2): 295–318.
- Canuel, Hugues, 2009. 'Of ambiguous symbolism and variable geometry: NATO's relevance to national security in the twenty-first century', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 7(1): 73–91.

- Chalmers, Malcolm and Simon Lunn, 2010. *NATO's tactical nuclear dilemma*, Occasional Paper (London: Royal United Services Institute).
- Coker, Christopher, 2008. 'Why NATO should return home: the case for a twenty-first century alliance', *RUSI Journal*, 153(4): 6–11.
- Daalder, Ivo and James Goldgeir, 2006. 'Global NATO', *Foreign Affairs*, 85(5): 105–13.
- Der Spiegel*, 2011. 'There is no military solution to the Libya conflict', 13 April, <www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,756575-2,00.html>.
- Forster, Anthony and William Wallace, 2001. 'What is NATO for?', *Survival*, 43(4): 107–22.
- Hendrickson, Ryan C., 2006. *Diplomacy and war at NATO: the secretary general and military action after the cold war* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press).
- Hendrickson, Ryan C., 2010. 'NATO's first prime minister: Rasmussen's leadership surge', *RUSI Journal*, 155(5): 24–30.
- House of Commons Defence Committee (ed.), 2008. *The future of NATO and European defence: ninth report of session 2007–08* (London: The Stationery Office).
- Ivanov, Ivan Dimov, 2010. 'The relevance of heterogeneous clubs in explaining contemporary NATO politics', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 8(4): 337–61.
- Kamp, Karl-Heinz, 2009. 'Towards a new strategy for NATO', *Survival*, 51(4): 21–7.
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 1999. 'The Alliance's strategic concept', 24 April, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm?selectedLocale=en>.
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 2010a. 'Active engagement, modern defence: strategic concept for the defence and security of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation adopted by heads of state and government in Lisbon', Lisbon, 19 November, <www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm>.
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 2010b. *NATO 2020: assured security; dynamic engagement. Analysis and recommendations of the group of experts on a new strategic concept for NATO*, Brussels, 17 May, <www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf>.
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 2011a. 'Non-paper on increasing confidence and transparency with regard to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe', delivered at meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, Berlin, 15 April.
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), 2011b. 'Political military framework for partner involvement in NATO-led operations', <www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110415_110415-PMF.pdf>.
- Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 2010. 'Die NATO wappnet sich für das 21. Jahrhundert', 20 November.
- Noetzel, Timo and Benjamin Schreer, 2009. 'Does a multi-tier NATO matter? The Atlantic alliance and the process of strategic change', *International Affairs*, 85(2): 211–26.
- Rasmussen, Anders Fogh, 2009. 'NATO as a guarantor of territorial defence and a provider of global security', Speech at Conference on NATO Talk around the Brandenburger Tor, Berlin, 26 November, <www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_59491.htm> (accessed 18 February 2010).
- Rasmussen, Anders Fogh, 2010a. 'NATO in the 21st century: towards global connectivity', Speech at Munich Security Conference, Munich, 7 February, <www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-2632B94E-FC8CEE33/natolive/opinions_61395.htm> (accessed 18 February 2011).
- Rasmussen, Anders Fogh, 2010b. 'The new strategic concept: active engagement, modern defence', Speech at German Marshall Fund of the United States, Brussels, 8 October.
- Ringsmose, Jens and Sten Rynning, 2009. *Come home, NATO? The Atlantic alliance's new strategic concept*, DIIS Report 04 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies).
- Ringsmose, Jens and Sten Rynning, 2011. 'Introduction: taking stock of NATO's new strategic concept', in Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning (eds), *NATO's new strategic concept: a comprehensive assessment*, DIIS Report 02 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies), pp. 7–22.

- Shea, Jamie, 2010. 'What will be in NATO's new strategic concept?', *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9(1): 47–59.
- Smith, Julianne and Michael Williams, 2008. 'Threats from within: four challenges inside the NATO alliance', *International Spectator*, 43(3): 21–6.
- Tallberg, Jonas, 2002. 'Delegation to supranational institutions: why, how, and with what consequences?', *West European Politics*, 25(1): 23–46.
- Ucko, David H., 2010. 'Resetting Article 5: toward a new understanding of NATO's security guarantees', *World Politics Review*, 26 October, <www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/6838/resetting-article-5-toward-a-new-understanding-of-natos-security-guarantees>.
- United States Department of Defense, 2010. *Nuclear posture review report* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense).
- Yost, David S., 2010. 'NATO's evolving purposes and the next strategic concept', *International Affairs*, 86(2): 489–522.