NATO and the New Threats

During the cold war Turkey played a vital role, as part of the NATO Alliance, in defending southern Europe. Cold war days are happily over, but not the challenges to the security. Terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction are the major new threats. Over time terrorists have gone global, have become more radical and their acts are becoming increasingly leathal. NATO is getting increasingly ready to play a role in combatting terrorism. The strategic significance of this move can not be underestimated. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons is the other major threat. At its Prague Summit the Alliance took a number of decisions to cope with this threat. Throughout NATO's history Turkey has not been a country consuming security, but has been one that produce security. As always, Turkey is at the epicenter of changes and shaping the changes for the better.

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Introduction: Moving from Flank to Centre

During the Cold War, Turkey's place in the Alliance was sometimes codenamed "the southern flank". This was in no way a dismissive term. Turkey played a vital role, as part of the Alliance, in defending southern Europe. The term "Southern flank" was used because the main focus of battle was always going to be elsewhere across the central plains of Germany. But there is no doubt that throughout the Cold War, Turkey was at the heart of NATO's defence, just as NATO's Article 5 guarantee was at the heart of Turkey's security.

Of course, those days are long over. And happily so. But when the Berlin Wall came down, some academics predicted the end of history – an end to conflict, and the steady spread of peace and democracy. The truth, predictably, has been very different. The past decade has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that our security must still be defended. Because while the Cold War may be behind us, the threats and challenges of the 21st century are no less deadly.

Terrorism and the spread of mass destruction are the major new threats we face today. And in facing these new threats, Turkey is not on the Southern Flank – it is on the front line. This country is surrounded on many sides by instability, insecurity, weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. The Gulf War brought a flood of refugees and economic hardship to the entire region. The Balkans exploded into violence unseen in Europe since the days of Hitler. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict has gone from bad to worse, with only a few brief pauses for hope. The Caucasus have suffered terribly from low-level conflicts, organised crime and instability. Afghanistan became the unfortunate and unwilling host of both the world's most repressive regime and the world's most deadly terrorist organisation. And dangerous states such as Iraq have been seeking to acquire chemical, biological, radiological and even nuclear weapons.

In simple terms, Turkey is in a rough neighbourhood, but Turkey is not alone. On the contrary. NATO's solidarity, its unity, and its commitment to mutual defence are as strong today as ever. Yes, Turkey is on the front line in facing new threats – but Turkey's Allies in NATO are there too. And we will act together, as we have done throughout NATO's history, to defeat them.

NATO's Role in Combating Terrorism

The fact that terrorism can have strategic consequences is certainly nothing new. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo led to a chain reaction that ultimately resulted in World War One. Even today, almost a century later, one could argue that NATO and its Partners, through their common engagement in the Balkans, are helping that region to finally overcome the legacy of that fateful terrorist attack in 1914.

But a chain reaction like that in 1914 was the exception rather than the rule. Until recently, terrorism was widely seen as a regional phenomenon. Terrorists may have been driven by very different motives, but they used limited means to achieve what were – in essence – limited ends. The acts of violence they committed were highly selective and discriminate, focusing on symbolic targets, not on civilians per se. They

were organised in small, hierarchical groups. And their motivation was political, not defined by religious extremism.

All this has changed in recent years. Three trends, in particular, stand out:

First, terrorists have gone global. They are increasingly organised in networks operating from various parts of the globe. This means that they have become even more difficult to fight: we may destroy one part of the network, but not the entire fabric.

Second, terrorists have become more fanatical. The highly political motivation of the "traditional" terrorists has given way to a religiously motivated variant. Rather than focusing on a symbolic act, such as the assassination of a political leader, the new terrorism is indiscriminate. Al-Qaida is a case in point. It doesn't ask for political concessions. It wants to annihilate all "non-believers" – the more, the better. Indeed, an increasing number of terrorists appear to be fascinated by the sheer number of casualties they can inflict.

This leads us directly to the third disturbing trend: terrorist acts are becoming increasingly lethal. Pan Am flight 103 which exploded over Scotland in 1988, or the bombing of the US Embassy in Kenya in 1997 were earlier examples of this tendency. And let us not forget: had the first attack on the World Trade Center, in 1993, proceeded as planned, the number of casualties would probably have exceeded even those of September 11, 2001.

This increasing lethal nature of terrorist attacks is likely to increase especially since the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups can no longer be ruled out. The Japanese "Aum" cult, which used self-made chemical weapons in the Tokyo subway, reportedly possessed enough nerve gas to kill four million people. That cult also spent millions of dollars trying to purchase a nuclear device. Bin Laden, too, is said to have tried to obtain nuclear weapons.

But the increasing lethal nature of modern terrorism is not just a result of new technologies. It is also a result of the support being granted to terrorists by certain states and governments. Without the infrastructure of host states, the striking power of some terrorist groups would be far less impressive.

The conclusions that can be drawn from these trends are obvious. First, terrorism is going to remain a major security challenge in the 21st century, possibly a growing challenge. Second, as terrorism becomes an increasingly global phenomenon, so too must the response. Third, it may be impossible to deter suicide terrorists, but it may be possible to deter their apprentices, and in particular the countries that host terrorists.

The question is clear: Can NATO play a role in combating this new, extremely lethal kind of terrorism? In answering that important question, it is important not to raise unrealistic expectations. NATO is not going to turn into the world's premier terrorist-hunter. The challenges we need to deal with are global in nature. Nor are they exclusively military. Hence, we need a much broader approach. Indeed, no one brought this point home more forcefully than US Defence, Secretary Rumsfeld, when

he said “the uniforms of this conflict will be bankers’ pinstripes and programmers’ grunge just as assuredly as desert camouflage [...] ‘Battles’ will be fought by customs officers stopping suspicious persons at our borders, and diplomats securing cooperation against money laundering.” In short, NATO will be only one element in a much broader strategy. But it will be an important element nevertheless because military might is essential in this struggle. And NATO has a long track record of organising the collective military capabilities of Europe and North America.

Indeed, even before our historic Prague summit last November, much had already been achieved. The invocation of Article 5 on September 12, 2001, in response to a terrorist attack by a non-state actor, turned combating terrorism into an enduring new mission for this Alliance. The engagement of many NATO nations in Afghanistan *de facto* ended the Alliance’s long-standing “out-of-area” debate. And we were able to achieve a breakthrough in the NATO-Russia relationship, epitomised by the new NATO-Russia Council that we set up in May 2002, which will create a powerful new partnership in combating the new threats and challenges.

At our Prague summit in November 2002, we took another major step forward. NATO unveiled a whole package of measures designed to combat terrorism in a long-term struggle. We have put in place a military concept of defence against terrorism, which will provide guidance to NATO’s military planners. Intelligence sharing is being beefed up. We are looking at developing critical capabilities required for deterring terrorist activities and potential attacks, and for countering them if they occur. And we have agreed upon a Partnership Action Plan against terrorism, which will draw NATO Allies and Partner countries closer together in this struggle.

The individual parts of this package may not look spectacular. But the strategic significance of this move can hardly be underestimated. It confirms that tackling terrorism is a permanent new mission for NATO, not a one-off after September 11. It confirms that NATO is becoming a focal point for coordinating and planning the multinational military contribution to our defence against terrorism and other asymmetric threats. And as confirmation of this new role, the Alliance will provide planning and support when Germany and the Netherlands take the lead of ISAF in Kabul, which until now has been under the excellent command and control of Turkey.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Let me now turn to the second major new threat of our era: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In the early 1960s, John F. Kennedy predicted that within a decade, more than 20 countries could have nuclear weapons. Fortunately, his prediction did not come true. The number of nuclear nations, declared and undeclared, has remained below ten, even if many countries around the world possess the technical means to build such weapons. Indeed, we even know of many cases where nuclear programmes were aborted, once the countries arrived at the judgement that the political costs outweighed the military gains.

Unfortunately, however, not all nations share this cost-benefit calculus. Some stayed out of the non-proliferation regime altogether. Others signed up to the non-

Proliferation Treaty – and violated its provisions even before the ink was dry. We can only guess about the motives that make countries do this. Often, of course, it is regional security concerns that drive them. But irrespective of their motives, the fact remains that the nuclear genie is out of the bottle and it is hard to see how it could be put back.

The second problem is that the proliferation challenge is not confined to nuclear weapons. Chemical and biological weapons also proliferate. They are both easier to make and easier to hide – and as a result, they have become "the poor man's atomic bomb".

The third problem is the "dual-use" nature of many modern technologies. The lines between civilian and military applications of a given technology are becoming increasingly blurred. A pharmaceutical plant may be converted into a production site for biological weapons. Arms control treaties with intrusive inspection schemes may take care of much of the problem, but a residual grey area remains.

Indeed, some analysts have argued that the way North Korea developed its nuclear weapons and missile programme provides a "template for 21st century proliferation". The technical hurdles that a purely domestic programme would have encountered were systematically overcome – by imports, by choosing different suppliers for different parts, by "reverse engineering" foreign technology, by using weapons sales to finance these activities, and by using a vocal commitment to arms control as a cover to deflect international attention.

The break-up of the Soviet Union a decade ago has added even more dimensions to the proliferation problem: "loose nukes" without political control or sufficient safeguards, and the "brain drain" of nuclear expertise to other states. And, finally, today we have yet to add another scenario to our list: the scenario of a nuclear-armed "failed state" – a scenario where terrorists do not steal the weapons from the state, but where fanatics take over control of the state itself.

It is moot to speculate whether such nightmare scenarios will ever come true. All that matters is that such scenarios have now moved into the range of plausibility – and that we must act now to be prepared.

Can NATO make a sensible contribution to countering the challenge of weapons of mass destruction? Again, the answer is a clear "yes".

At Prague, NATO's Heads of State and Government took a number of decisions to broaden our range of tools to cope with this threat. Our soldiers will be better equipped and trained to deal with attacks made using weapons of mass destruction when they deploy on missions. They will also be better able to support civilian authorities if such attacks were ever to take place on home soil. NATO will develop collective capacities, including mobile detection teams, mobile expert response teams, and vaccine stockpiles.

We will also step up our defence against ballistic missiles. NATO has initiated a new NATO Missile Defence feasibility study to examine options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and populations against the full range of missile threats.

Again, developing vaccine stockpiles or mobile detection labs is not the stuff of the evening news. But the strategic importance of these developments is beyond doubt. They signal that the Allies are fostering a common transatlantic approach to deal with this challenge, there will be no divergence among NATO members. When it comes to coping with weapons of mass destruction, there will be just one approach – a transatlantic approach. This message is as important as any decision on new capabilities.

Conclusion

Kemal Atatürk once said that Turkey should not be a consumer, but a producer of security. Throughout NATO's history, this country has done just that – not consuming security, but producing it. And today, Turkey's role is as important as ever. At a time when the Alliance has started to reach out to the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, Turkey has acted as a bridge and a facilitator. When NATO started to contribute to the campaign against terrorism, Turkey took leadership in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Turkey continues to make an important contribution to NATO's ongoing operations in the Balkans – missions which will ensure that the region never descends into the kind of chaos we saw in the past decade. And of course, as a Muslim country with a vibrant secular democracy, and as a staunch NATO Ally, this country is an example to the region and to the international community.

As always, Turkey is at the epicentre of change – change within NATO, change in this region, and change to international security. It is no surprise that Turkey is shaping that change – and shaping it for the better.

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