



Atlantic Treaty Association - Association du Traité Atlantique

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## REPORT OF NATO MINISTERIAL DEBRIEFING

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By Oliver Jones

### ATA Ministerial Debriefing, Tuesday October 11<sup>th</sup>, Brussels

On Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> October, the ATA Secretariat held its second NATO Ministerial Debriefing. The Event was attended by a number of professionals, academics, and researchers and consisted of a panel of representatives from NATO and NATO member state delegations that were tasked with discussing the policy outcomes of the recent Meeting NATO's Ministers of Defence. The panel consisted of: Mr. **Nicholas Williams**, Head of Afghanistan Team at the International Staff; Mr. **Chris Morffew**, Defence and Policy Planning; Dr. **Jasper Wieck**, Head of Political Section, of the German Delegation to NATO; Mr **Oguzhan Ertugrul**, Head of Defence Section, of the Turkish Delegation to NATO; and Mr. **Marcin Kawalowski**, First Secretary, of the Polish Delegation to NATO; and ATA Secretary General Mr. **Troels Frøling** took part as the event's moderator.

The panel made individual presentations which covered a number of issues, these included future NATO policy in Afghanistan, the outcomes of Operations in Libya, the situation in Kosovo, and "Smart Defence". Each presentation was followed by a brief question and answer session.

#### Afghanistan

The discussion of NATO Afghanistan policy was significantly weighted towards understanding NATO's role and policy in post 2014 Afghanistan. With ISAF set to end in 2014, and significant force reductions expected to take place across all international bodies. Force reduction is not driven by the peace process,



NATO's post-2014 Afghanistan role was defined as being far more limited in scope and based around the idea of the provision of security assistance and some form of security aid budget. This mission was defined as entailing training assistance and institution building, a task that was highlighted as being one of NATO's most important capabilities. It was stated that it would be unlikely for an 'ISAF II' operation to be established by NATO to coordinate the security support effort. Later discussion did reveal however that NATO would still play a significant, necessary, and enduring role in the provision of assistance to Afghanistan. This may indicate that the exact roles of NATO and member states in Afghanistan post-2014 have yet to be fully resolved, but that the topic is certainly under consideration.

## Kosovo

NATO's role in recent tensions concerning Kosovo was also briefly highlighted. It was confirmed that Kosovo had made the agenda for the Ministerial meeting due to the recent escalation. Despite this increase in tensions it was highlighted that NATO had played a hugely important and positive role in the de-escalation of the situation. The recent events were said to likely give pause to any further NATO force reductions for the immediate future, but demonstrated clearly the effectiveness of NATO's deployment and the importance of its continued existence.

## Libya

The discussions surrounding Libya were mainly used to demonstrate the continuing importance of the Atlantic Alliance, and its significant relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The panel focused upon the nature of NATO's Libyan operations as being European led, despite some significant reliance on US assets. Libya was highlighted as an example of the need for greater specialisation and "smart defence" to provide capabilities.



There was also some further debate over post Libyan operations providing "lessons learned". Within the panel a desire was expressed for a greater need to apply these lessons. It was indicated that in the past this had not been the case. For example although numerous lessons had been *identified* "for learning" after the first Gulf War, these lessons had not been learnt, and many were still being identified as lessons *to learn* from the Libyan campaign.

## Smart Defence

It was stressed that "Smart Defence" remained a relatively vague concept still, despite NATO's acceptance of the term and enthusiastic support for the notion. The actual specifics of what Smart Defence would entail were not clearly defined. Broadly speaking the panel agreed that smart defence would entail more pooling and sharing of resources (buying similar equipment), rather than greater specialisation, in the provision of certain defence capabilities within the Alliance. The concept of Smart Defence as being elaborated within NATO was also highlighted, as providing defensive capabilities that are complimentary to those assigned under EU command and organisations. It was stressed that NATO and the EU must avoid a duplication of effort in developing capabilities and assigning budgets which are increasingly squeezed by international austerity.



Specialisation in capabilities was highlighted as the essential feature of Smart Defence; this led to some debate over what specialisation would mean and the potential problems of this activity. It was stated that although there is no consensus on exactly what "specialisation" would entail, there was a consensus on what it would not. Namely individual states becoming (solely) responsible for certain capabilities as this would impede NATO's ability to operate where not all members agreed. *Reverse specialization* allows countries not to focus on

expensive defence procurement segments for which the Alliance and some Allies can provide coverage and support, this is already the case with the protection of Baltic state's airspaces. It was also determined that NATO and NATO member states would have to come to a consensus on the definition of specialisation and smart defence in order to produce a clear picture of objectives for the Chicago Summit in 2012.

There was also some significant further debate on the issue of multi-partner specialisation. This included a question to the panel as to the specific workings of such a policy. Should states maintain a common pool of resources and equipment (as well as expertise) questions remain over: how it may be decided how this equipment is used, and also how this pooled defence may still be affected by the reluctance of a single member to take part in certain operations. In response to this query the panel outlined several potential solutions, one of which was the potential for several partnerships, operating simultaneously, to provide specialised capabilities. This would allow states to enter partnerships with others who maintain similar foreign policy commitments and views, and are therefore unlikely to abstain from joint operations.

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