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**PERSPECTIVES OF NATO'S PARTNERSHIP POLICY**

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**ABSTRACT**

Since its foundation in 1949, the Alliance continually is evolving politics of partnership and cooperation with all non-NATO countries. This policy has a special place in the overall policy of the Alliance. Dating back to the last decade of XX century, the Alliance has tried to establish closer formal partnerships relations with states and regional organizations around the world. The purpose of this cooperation has emphasized the importance of closer cooperation with regional actors and international organizations to face with traditional and new coming challenges and treats in the changing world. NATO is strongly convinced that "the promotion of Euro-Atlantic security is best assured through a wide network of partnerships with countries and organizations across the globe that share NATO's interest in a peaceful world." Now, NATO faced with rapidly changing world and should be able to strengthen its partnerships with non-NATO partners and other international organizations around the world.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Over the past two decades, the Alliance has developed a network of structured partnerships with countries from the Euro-Atlantic area, the Mediterranean and the Gulf region, as well as individual relationships with other partners across the globe.

Today, "NATO pursues dialogue and practical cooperation with 41 partner countries and engages actively with other international actors and organisations on a wide range of political and security-related issues" (NATO, 2014a).

NATO develops and builds its Partnerships with partner countries on bilateral, regional and global level through shared and common values, reciprocity and mutual benefit and mutual trusts. The partnership policy can be seen as a 'tool' and 'mechanism' for promoting and supporting Alliances strategic objectives, including American foreign policy issues.

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In the Euro-Atlantic Area, NATO engage in relations with 22 partner countries through Euro –Atlantic Partnership Council\* established in 1997 and the Partnership for Peace created in 1994. Also, NATO has developed special structures for its relations and cooperation with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia (NATO, 2014a). All this partnerships have contributed in building confidence measures, the development of good neighborly relations, enabled enlargement of NATO to East and Central Europe countries, and wilder.

However, the last few decades NATO is developing its partnership policy based on *geographical locations* with the countries of the North Africa through the 'Mediterranean Dialogue'(1994) as well as with the Gulf region via the 'Istanbul Cooperation Initiative' (2004). The Alliance also has deep cooperation with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This Partnership so called 'Partners across the globe' includes traditional non-European NATO allies and contact countries. All this partnerships can make a concrete contribution to enhance international security, to defend the values which the Alliance is based on, to NATO's operations,

\*This Euro –Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997 succeed the former North Atlantic Cooperation Council.

and to prepare interested nations for membership. "Partnership is not a choice between staying at home or going global. It is not peripheral to our business – it is part of NATO's core business" (Rasmussen, 2012a). Moreover, "global security challenges and treats, crisis management needs; including disaster relief operations in the outside of the Euro – Atlantic area in the past 20 years have demonstrated that NATO needs its partners more than ever to ensure global peace, security and stability" (Marônková, 2012). This is an example for the largest operational coalition in the recent history that gives NATO opportunity to be ready to act all beyond its borders where is necessary. According to Jamie Shea, a critical challenge for NATO will be to preserve the existing partnerships beyond the current common interests, and to offer a benefit for new partners to join NATO in its network as a global security hub (Shea, 2012). However, in the last years, we can see crises in the NATO's partnership policy. This crisis can best be seen through stagnation in the enlargement of NATO with the new countries in Europe and deteriorated relations with Russia after the Ukrainian crisis.

### The new Alliance's Partnership Policy

According to the last Strategic Concept adopted in Lisbon 2010, the third core task of NATO was 'cooperative security'. Cooperative security means that the Alliance will engage actively to enhance international security. This core task could be achieved only through a wide network of partner relationship with countries and organizations on a truly global scale (NATO, 2010). In addition, Rasmussen believes that NATO has to invest more in strong partnerships, in modern military hardware, and flexible forces ... "NATO's partnerships start at home, in the Trans-Atlantic area, and in our close neighborhood" (Rasmussen, 2012a). NATO's new partnership policy aims to prepare the Alliance for a rapidly changing world where security challenges may come from far a way, and where solutions may require extensive cooperation with other states and organizations that NATO has not traditionally engaged. This NATO "vast network of security partnerships is truly unique... And by working together with our partners, we enhance our own security. We enhance the security of their regions. And we enhance the security of the world we live in" (Rasmussen, 2012b). Regarding this, the Alliance will "have to redefine its partnership policy in a way that will include the smaller and less powerful states in order to guarantee their security and stability" (Doninowska, 2013).

Alliance, through the mechanisms of partnerships, continually enhances international peace and security, promotes democratic reforms, provides assistance in building democratic institutions, and prepares the countries of the Euro-Atlantic region for membership. All NATO partnerships are developing under the new partnership policy and the strategic and fundamental objectives: 'Enhance Euro-Atlantic and international security, peace and stability; Promote regional security and cooperation; Facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation on issues of common interest, including international efforts to meet emerging security challenges; Prepare interested eligible nations for NATO membership; Promote democratic values and reforms; Enhance support for NATO-led operations and missions; Enhance awareness of security developments including through early warning, with a

view to preventing crises; Build confidence and achieve better mutual understanding, including about NATO's role and activities, in particular though enhanced public diplomacy.' (NATO, 2014a). The Alliances has created a numbers of tools and mechanisms to support cooperation with partners such as Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programs, Planning and Review Process, Operational Capabilities Concept, Political-Military Framework, Defence Education Enhancement Programmes, Military Training and Exercise Programme, North Atlantic Council-level crisis-management exercises, Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism, and other supporting transformations and wider cooperation tools. At the Lisbon Summit 2010, NATO made a decision and gave guidance to reform its partnership policy. This reforms efforts were focused to make dialogue and cooperation more inclusive, flexible, meaningful and strategically oriented. The More Efficient and Flexible Partnership Policy have been endorsed at the Berlin Ministerial Meeting in April 2011. This new policy concerns not only partnerships with non-member countries but also NATO's cooperation with other international actors and organizations.

In addition, the Ministers "gave a new impetus to the partnership policy and enable the development of new partnership tools, better engagement with partners across the globe, and developed new 28+N flexible meeting formats and introduced individual cooperation menus with all partners". (Marônková, 2012). However, with these new mechanisms, NATO opens the way to involve partners in political consultation and giving partners the same formal not real decision-making authority as member countries for operations and missions to which they contribute. In line with the new Strategic Concept 2010, NATO is offering its partners "more political engagement with the Alliance, and a substantial role in shaping strategy and decisions on NATO-led operations to which they contribute" (NATO, 2010b).

### Partnership for Peace

The 'Partnership for Peace' initiative was created and launched in October 1993 by US Deputy - Secretary of Defense, Strout Talbot. Partnership for Peace (PfP) has emerged as a necessary response to the realized and present changes in all areas of society, primarily in Eastern Europe, where NATO was found in a dilemma whether to exist and in which direction to be transformed. The PfP was a pragmatic solution to the arising problems that led the Central and East European countries to press for full membership. In the past, PfP contributed to strengthening cooperation between countries, to raise mutual trust, in the development of good neighborly relations, in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Primary mission of PfP was to contribute in consolidation of Europe after the end of Cold War. Through the years, PfP was and is an excellent and powerful political fora for cooperation and for enlargement. Since 1994, the PfP grown to 34 countries (currently 22), of which 12 became a members of NATO over the three enlargement cycles. In 1999 the Membership Action Plan was lunched as a new 'tool' for other PfP countries which aspirate to become a members of Alliance.\* The Republic of

\* Currently in MAP are four countries, The Republic of

Macedonia joined the Partnership for Peace in 1995 and since then the cooperation with NATO and Partners is constantly growing. All gained experience and knowledge through years in PfP, the Republic of Macedonia shares with new partners whenever they requested. In the past, the experts help and knowledge was provided by Macedonia to Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro in the area of defense reforms. At the beginning, the PfP for Macedonia was a source of knowledge, education, and learning how to implement defense reforms, as well as to establish a civilian and democratic control over the armed forces. The country learned how to prepare its units for participation in international operations and thanks to that the country has become a significant contributor to international operations wherever is necessary. For Macedonia the Partnership with NATO was very helpful tool, as well as “obligation” to continue with the reforms and to become a developed democracy in which all respect rule of law, market economy, human rights and freedoms. Above all the country has become a safe and stable, credible and valued partner in the promotion of regional and Euro-Atlantic stability and security.

The cooperation with partners and NATO within the Partnership for Peace has showed and helped Macedonia in the preparation and achievement of the necessary criteria for Alliance membership. Thanks to participation and cooperation within the PfP, Macedonia, in 2008 met all the criteria for fulfill NATO membership. Today, the Republic of Macedonia acts as a de facto NATO member. Macedonia will continue to contribute in international operations, as a reliable partner of NATO, to strengthening peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Army of the Republic of Macedonia actively participates in three international operations (RESOLUTE SUPPORT, ALTHEA and UNIFIL), and provides support to KFOR. Since 2002 until today, “about 50% of the military personnel of the Army have deployed in the international operations” (Xhaferi, 2014). Also, the Republic of Macedonia participated in the European Union Battle Group in the second half of 2014 together with the Kingdom of Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Luxembourg.

### Mediterranean Dialogue

Back in 1994, NATO launched the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD). It currently involves seven non-NATO countries of the Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The successful launch of the MD and its subsequent development has been based upon a number of principles: non-discrimination; self-differentiation; inclusiveness; non-imposition; complementarity's and mutual reinforcement; diversity. The Mediterranean Dialogue is the Alliance's view that security in Europe is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean and Gulf region. However, “it is not clear what goal the MD is supposed to fulfill, there seems to be three main purposes of the partnership program: contribute to regional security and stability, achieve better mutual understanding, and dispel any misconceptions about NATO

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Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia.

among Dialogue countries” (NATO, 2014b). The MD is based upon the twin pillars of political dialogue and practical cooperation with NATO. They strive for enhanced cooperation in the fields of fight against terrorism, crisis management, interoperability, public diplomacy, science, etc. The MD is primarily bilateral in structure (NATO+1). Despite the predominantly bilateral character, the MD allows for multilateral meetings on a regular basis (NATO+7). Meetings in the NATO+7 format, including NAC+7 meetings, are also held on a regular basis, in particular following the NATO Summit and Ministerial meetings, Chiefs-of-Defence meetings, and other major NATO events. These meetings represent an opportunity for two-way political consultations between NATO and MD partners (NATO, 2014b).

Through the years, “it has become a unique forum, where NATO Allies and Mediterranean partners hold regular consultations on shared security issues. But it has also become an important tool for concrete military-to-military and other practical cooperation” (Brenngelmann, 2013). At June 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO's Heads of State and Government elevated the MD to a genuine partnership through the establishment of a more ambitious and expanded framework, which considerably enhanced both the MD's political and practical cooperation dimensions. “Despite the attempts of fostering the MD multilateral dimension through conferences and other initiatives, no actual cooperation on security and defense issues has taken place to date among NATO's seven MD partners” (Stornelli, 2012). The Strategic Concept (2010) in paragraph 35 refers specifically to the MD, stating that: “We are firmly committed to the development of friendly and cooperative relations with all countries of the Mediterranean, and we intend to further develop the Mediterranean Dialogue in the coming years. We will aim to deepen the cooperation with current members of the Mediterranean Dialogue and be open to the inclusion in the Mediterranean Dialogue of other countries of the region.” Although in its early stages, the cooperation in operations between NATO and MD partners has already proved to be successful and can be further strengthened by the more inclusive arrangements foreseen in the new Partnership Policy (Stornelli, 2012).

### Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) based on the similar principles as MD was established at the 2004 NATO Istanbul Summit to commence cooperation with the interested countries of the wider Middle East. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative focuses on practical cooperation in areas where NATO can add value, notably in the security field. To date, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have joined. Saudi Arabia and Oman have also shown an interest in the Initiative (NATO, 2010a). The aims of ICI are similar to those of MD: “enhance security and regional stability through a new transatlantic engagement with the region” (NATO, 2004). In this Initiative, a bilateral political dialogue, is open to countries that up to now have been absent from the NATO agenda. Since the ICI does not have a clearly defined geographical area, it does not rule out, in principle, participation by current MD members. In its strictly bilateral, non-mandatory approach, the ICI is very like the MD when it was first created (Borgomano-Loup, 2005). NATO gives

great importance to ICI in the new Strategic Concept (2010), and in paragraph 35 states: *"We attach great importance to peace and stability in the Gulf region, and we intend to strengthen our cooperation in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. We will aim to develop a deeper security partnership with our Gulf partners and remain ready to welcome new partners in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative."* At the presentation of Annual Report 2013 on January 2014 in Brussels, Rasmussen following the partnership policy said, *"We are working with our partners in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative which is the Gulf States partners as well as our Mediterranean Dialogue Partners. We are consulting with them and I hope we will be able to launch initiatives which will enhance our partnerships at the summit (in Britain in September). It is our intention not only maintain but further to develop our ability to work with our partners."* (Rasmussen, 2014a). According to this statement, NATO gives more and more importance to straightening of cooperation and partnership with those countries.

### Partners Across the Globe

NATO has maintained a dialogue and cooperation on an individual basis with countries that are not part of its partnership frameworks, on an ad-hoc basis, since the 1990s. *"Such cooperation was formalized in 1998 with the adoption of a set of general guidelines that detailed avenues for cooperation with so-called 'contact countries'"* (Hribernik, 2013, p. 3). Significant steps were taken at the 2006 Riga Summit to increase the operational relevance of NATO's cooperation with other countries around the world. These steps, reinforced by decisions at the 2008 Bucharest Summit, *'defined a set of objectives for these relationships and created avenues for enhanced political dialogue, including meetings of the North Atlantic Council with ministers of the countries concerned, high-level talks, and meetings with ambassadors'*. However, NATO's involvement in areas outside of its immediate region has increased the need and opportunities for enhanced global interaction. These countries referred to as *'Partners across the globe'* or simply *'global partners'* currently are Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Korea. These countries develop cooperation with NATO in areas of mutual interest, including emerging security challenges, and some contribute actively to NATO operations either militarily or in some other way. Individual global partners choose the areas where they wish to engage in and cooperate with NATO in a spirit of mutual benefit and reciprocity (NATO, 2014c).

The importance of reaching out to countries and organisations across the globe was underlined in the Strategic Concept adopted at the November 2010 Lisbon Summit. As Anders Fogh Rasmussen said, *"NATO must adopt a global perspective. This does not mean expanding our footprint into other parts of the world, nor does it involve NATO assuming global responsibilities. A global perspective means that we are constantly aware how global challenges affect our security at home and always prepared to cooperate with partners across the globe to protect our*

*populations and ensure peace and stability"* (Rasmussen 2012c). Over recent years, NATO has developed bilateral relations with each of these countries. Global partners now have the same access to partnership activities as those in formal partnership frameworks. In line with the new policy, all partners will be treated in the same way, offering them the same basis of cooperation and dialogue. Moreover, there are now more opportunities for meetings in flexible formats, bringing together NATO members and partners with other countries, which NATO may have no bilateral programme of cooperation (NATO, 2012a).

*"Malaysia, Singapore and Tonga are likely the next candidates for the new global partnership, from the Asia. In the past few years, there has been discussion about NATO establishing a collective partnership arrangement, which could include individual partnerships as well, with the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which are, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. Also, some Latin American countries like El Salvador and Colombia are interested to become a NATO partners across the globe. The inclusion of these countries will mark the expansion of NATO, through memberships and partnerships, to all six inhabited continents"* (Rozoff, 2012). This step will make a NATO into an alliance with global membership.

### The Benefits of Alliance's Partnership Policy

The Alliance benefits of Partnerships are best reflected by sharing the burden for the maintaining of global peace and security, in the spread of the zone of democratic development, economic prosperity, security, stability and peace not only regionally but also globally. *"International peace, security and stability are not only the obligation and responsibility of NATO and Partners, but it is incumbent on all of us, to all countries from all continents. NATO should re-invest more in its partners and facilitate consultation, information sharing and interoperability, because of many of NATO's formal partners as well as other non-member countries offer substantial capabilities and political support for Alliance missions"* (NATO, 2014a).

The NATO Summit in Chicago 2012 was the first major event based on the new partnership policy and its more flexible format meetings including Central Asian republics, Russia and Pakistan. In addition, Alliance organized a meeting with thirteen partners who have recently made its contribution to NATO led operations (NATO, 2012d, Chicago Summit Declaration). Referring to NATO operations NATO Rasmussen (2014a) said *"we have learnt how important it is to have partners."* Meanwhile, the annual NATO report says that *"throughout 2013, the Alliance's engagement in the Middle East and North Africa continued to develop through and beyond the established frameworks of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative."* (Rasmussen 2014b, Secretary General's Annual Report, p.9). Despite the political and security benefits, NATO has great support from the partner countries to worldwide contribution to international operations.

## Way Ahead for NATO's Partnership Policy

To achieve this, NATO as soon as possible should overcome the partnership policy crisis with enlargement. Also, NATO should revise and change its overall decision making policy and do it more flexible in all areas. All partnerships frameworks, NATO have to set on a higher level. Partners need to get even more real competence in the decision making process. Partner's contribution to international operations is very important pillar for NATO today and it will be in the future. Those will require more building confidence and mutual trust between NATO and Partner countries around the world. The bilateral cooperation between all partner countries and NATO will be deeper and straighten in the all area of common interests. In the past twenty years, Russia consolidates and straightens its political, economic and military power, and Syria's crisis is the first serious demonstration of Russia's power and win of the foreign politics. The Ukrainian crisis and annexation of Crimea by Russia, is the second and more serious demonstration of power to protect its wide interests. These two crises are new learned lesson for Western Alias and partners because of the global era of NATO and US domination ends. Growing power of Russia should be serious signal for NATO enlargement policy.

The Alliance as soon as possible should think about its enlargement with other partner and aspirant countries in Europe, as Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia. On the NATO Summit in the United Kingdom of Great Britain 2014 were excellent opportunity NATO leaders to put high on the Agenda enlargement of Alliance. But it did not happen. That was chance to straighten Alliance, peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic Area. In near future, NATO will continuous develop its partnerships with non-European partner countries. It is possible the partnership network to grow up with countries from: Latin America, Africa and Asia. This expansion of partnerships network will promote NATO into "an alliance with global membership". With this flexible partnerships network, NATO can effectively response to challenges and treats in the changing international environment. This policy suppose to include all countries that face with security challenges and treats as the fight against global terrorism, fragile states, asymmetric treats as well as other challenges and treats that partners and NATO expect to face in the fast changing world. If NATO figured out these challenges as soon as possible, it will promote NATO not only as Alliance for today but as the Alliance of future.

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