



# BRITISH-GERMAN DIALOGUE ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICIES: TAKING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH A RUSI-FES Report

On 13 March 2009, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) co-hosted the third British-German dialogue on defence and security policies at RUSI in London. Parliamentarians from Germany, the UK and Canada, met alongside representatives from Afghanistan, Denmark and the Netherlands, as well as think tanks, the UK defence ministry and NATO, in order to discuss security issues in relation to the Comprehensive Approach.

Parliamentarians from the German Delegation included three members of the Bundestag, Hans-Peter Bartels MdB, Johannes Kahrs MdB, and Ursula Mogg MdB, while the British delegation included Lord Anderson of Swansea (former Chairman, House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee), Ian Davidson MP, the Rt Hon Lord John Roper PC (Chairman of the European Union Committee) and also included Paul Dewar, Canadian MP for Ottawa Centre.

Experts from RUSI, FES, a number of London Embassies, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr (Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences) and the London School of Economics (LSE) were also present. The agenda focused on three main issues: shared responsibilities in Afghanistan, the future of NATO/EU relations, as well as the role of national armed forces in terms of counter terrorism.

The NATO-led mission in Afghanistan having already been an item on the agenda of the two previous dialogues accordingly provided a useful starting point for the third with General Egon Ramms,

Commander of Allied Joint Force Command in Brunssum, Netherlands and Operational Commander for NATO's ISAF Mission in Afghanistan invited to provide the participants with his own valuable insight.

## **Keynote Presentation by General Egon Ramms, Commander of Allied Joint Force Command and Operational Commander for NATO's ISAF Mission**

General Egon Ramms began his presentation by reaffirming that the purpose of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission was to support the Afghan population and the Afghan Government, and that NATO allies were not in Afghanistan in order to fight their own war.

Instead, he stated that NATO's military commanders' clear responsibility – based on a strategy known as 'Shape, Clear, Hold and Build' – was the provision of security in order to stabilise an area for aid agencies, non-governmental organisations and development agencies to operate. Pointing out that the military had for too long been filling the void left by absent partners in the stabilisation process, General Ramms suggested that the military were able to contribute only 20% of the effort required to stabilise the country, while 80% of the key instruments for a sustained resolution of Afghanistan's multiple and complex problems were of a civilian and political nature. Only a more synchronised effort requiring the effective coordination of all actors of the international community, referred to by NATO

officials as the Comprehensive Approach, would therefore succeed in stabilising Afghanistan.

Participants then determined that it was not a lack of strategy which had so far constrained operations in Afghanistan, but rather a plethora of strategies often implemented very differently or not implemented at all. Participants therefore did not call for a 'reset', nor for yet another strategy for Afghanistan, but rather for a more coordinated and decisive implementation of existing strategies. In this respect, the Afghan Development Strategy timetable that was endorsed during the June 2008 Paris conference, and then approved by the Afghans themselves within provincial and district level discussions was already a strategy supported by the Afghan population.

Regarding the renewed US-led initiative in Afghanistan, General Ramms stated that the envisaged US military surge of 17,000 more troops and the sending of more European forces to help monitor the Afghan elections in August 2009, would help reinforce the existing strategy of sustaining control over regions until the Afghan National Army (ANA) could secure the task themselves.

Whilst the provision of 17,000 more US troops was in line with the combined joint statement of requirement to the United States put forward by the NATO Joint Force Command, General Ramms cautioned participants against the belief that sending more foreign troops alone could secure the task at hand. Furthermore, Europeans needed to help complement the US military surge and the accompanying civilian effort. For Britain, Germany and other NATO allies, the challenge ahead was clear in that they needed to fill the gaps where the Afghan and ISAF effort was today insufficient. General Ramms suggested that this effort could perhaps be felt most effectively in providing more trainers for the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA), as well as more Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT).

Ultimately participants felt that efforts would always be insufficient as long as the Alliance, the wider international community, and the Afghan Government itself failed to address the basic human needs of the population – such as food, employment, security and proper infrastructure – in a more reliable and sustainable manner. As current strains on the mission were likely to get heavier in the context of the global financial crisis, European populations needed to be persuaded by their political representatives that what happens in Afghanistan matters to their own well being at home. As nations contemplate doing more or less, public opinions and political

decisions will be influenced by how far achievements – through a well implemented strategy – are demonstrated to have been made.

### **Cooperating in Afghanistan: Strengthening the Multinational Approach**

Having identified during the first session the need for a better combination of military and civilian instruments to improve cooperation in Afghanistan, the second session began by highlighting problems in finding a harmonised definition of the 'comprehensive approach'. Drawing a distinction between the individual, national and multilateral dimensions given to the comprehensive approach, Ursula Mogg underlined the fact that commentators often talked about the concept in order to describe different things. Indeed a single definition was not agreed on by all whether this was referred to as the coordination of all relevant actors, both state and non-state; a structured coordination at the national and institutional level; or finally an overarching international strategy benefitting a necessary local ownership.

In Germany for instance the concept was said to relate to the four pillars of German policy whereby a unity of effort was sought between the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation. German policy thus aspired to be a comprehensive approach in itself, which in turn was similar to the Canadian approach, originally known as the 3Ds (Defence, Development and Diplomacy) and which was now recognised as the 'Whole Government Approach'.

This lack of a common definition was seen as resulting in very different implementation strategies on the ground, with international efforts consistently failing to adopt a joint approach. Participants thus lamented the fact that although ISAF and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) were mandated by the United Nations Security Council to work together, there was a lack of effective coordination between the two missions – a lacuna also replicated between ISAF and the European Union's Policing mission (EUPOL).

Participants then discussed the requirement for a coordinator position, as there was also a problem of continuity and coherence, which was especially felt when international personnel and/or national contingents rotated on a regular basis. This lack of consistency was also found at the national level, where institutional divisions prevented a truly integrated or

cross governmental approach, whilst at the international level, the number of coordinators and envoys generally created confusion.

Referring to these challenges and missed opportunities, Ursula Mogg maintained that too many players and no proper lines of responsibility were the major issues when it came to coordinating the comprehensive approach.

Against this background, Paul Dewar suggested that the gap in resources was coming most prominently from the diplomatic side, believing the militaries to have substantially filled the void to date because politicians and diplomats had failed to provide the necessary leadership. As a result of this, a more intense diplomatic coordination was now needed, and the Canadian MP outlined what he believed the Canadian effort should be as the country shifts the emphasis of its contribution from a military to a more diplomatic one post-2011.

Paul Dewar felt that the growing international will to turn the page and adopt a real strategy in Afghanistan should be accompanied by renewed calls for a peace process. Paul Dewar argued that the Canadian government should seek to establish a group of eminent persons composed of influential international figures, which could heed the complex tribal, as well as regional dimensions of the conflict, especially regarding the border region with Pakistan. Such a strategy would signal a new approach and play a part in the 'Political Surge' being called for by Kai Eide, the United Nation's Senior Envoy to Afghanistan.

Discussion amongst participants raised the outstanding question as to what military approach would be required in order to complement such diplomatic overtures, with the suggestion put forward that a reduced US and Allied military activity could be employed as leverage in any political negotiations and thus be refocused on a purely defensive role. Arguing that preparations for a military reorientation should be engaged at the same time as a debate over a new political approach, Paul Dewar called for more diplomatic creativity in the international community's approach.

Often viewed as the outpost of an individual nation's efforts, speakers suggested that the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) could be coordinated more effectively by having them work more often with the Afghan-led Provincial Development Strategies. Participants agreed that whilst PRTs were a suitable vehicle to focus on provincial problems, they did not all seem to be coordinated in an effective way, or even coordinated with

each other, as they did not fall under anyone's command. These could become the focus of new proposals, such as them being coordinated under a single political guidance.

Responding to a question regarding the military organisation of the ISAF mission, General Ramms pointed out that the various regions of Afghanistan were quite different and that NATO commanders thus needed to have the right forces and command structures based on the individual circumstances of the region. This being said, General Ramms mentioned the need for NATO to reinforce its presence across the country and develop a greater capacity to use the relevant forces where ever they were needed.

Ursula Mogg summed up the session by welcoming the number of ideas and thoughts put forward by participants on Afghanistan, suggesting there was hope for a lasting solution to be found in Afghanistan. From a German perspective, Ursula Mogg confirmed that Germany knew that the mission would be long-lasting and would benefit from a sustainable military contribution from Germany.

## **Fostering better EU / NATO Relations**

The third session discussed the principles and practicalities of fostering better relations between NATO and the European Union. Highlighting some of the recommendations of the January 2009 report prepared by the Finnish MEP Mr Ari Vatanen for the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, on 'The Role of NATO in the Security Architecture of the European Union', Karl-Heinz Spiegel reminded participants that 94% of the EU population lived within NATO member states, and that both institutions had 21 states in common. The membership issue of Turkey and Cyprus – being either member of NATO or the EU, but not of both – was also presented as a well known obstacle hindering better institutional relations.

Against this background, Lord John Roper made his opening comments by underlining the new strategic mood affecting the relationship between the EU and NATO, following France's reintegration in the military command structure. He then also referred to the assumptions of the European Parliament report which saw cooperation and synergy between EU/NATO as essential to pursuing the common goal of peace and stability in the international area. Saying that there was much room for cooperation between the EU and NATO, Lord Roper

however bemoaned the fact that this cooperation was often undermined by political and technical obstacles.

Addressing these obstacles, Lord Roper endorsed a number of practical proposals adopted in the report and voted upon by the European Parliament in February 2009, namely that those NATO allies who are candidate countries for EU accession should work closer with ESDP and in particular in the European Defence Agency; and deploring the Cyprus/Turkish dispute, encouraged Cyprus to join the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, while calling upon NATO member states to avoid using their veto on EU members wishing to join NATO.

Dr Hans-Peter Bartels referred to the fact that when one talks about NATO and the European Union, it is often forgotten that there is always a third party to the relationship in the form of the United States. He contended that Americans were more readily in favour of pursuing a military strategy from the beginning of an emerging crisis scenario, which was different from the European approach in that a military solution was not always considered the first or indeed the best step. Nevertheless, Bartels argued, Europeans must do better to fill their current capability gaps.

Talking of the achievements of the EU thus far, Hans-Peter Bartels pointed out that NATO has been established for 60 years whereas the European Union was only in the early stages of developing its stake in a common foreign and security policy. Also, the EU's very existence has been in itself a guarantor of security and stability on the continent and according to Bartels commentators should not talk down the success of this institution in bringing a large number of countries on the European continent together in peace and prosperity.

Referring to the existing framework agreement between the EU and NATO – the Berlin Plus agreement – participants noted that it had worked well in Macedonia and Bosnia with NATO and the EU sharing the transition of responsibilities. Similarly, the alternating NATO and EU missions in the context of anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia offered a useful example as to how the two institutions could be complementary. Speakers then pointed to a certain redundancy in the debate over unnecessary duplication of capabilities, with NATO and ESDP having developed capacities in areas which were very similar, albeit as yet unfulfilled.

Pinpointing the discrepancies in the two institutions' respective approach to capability building,

speakers argued that the NATO Response Force and EU Battlegroups were indeed heavily predetermined force structures in search of an effectual application. Discussants felt that the Battlegroups needed to be more flexible, and should perhaps be put together in relation to a specific request as the pre-identified forces structures on rotation had so far been ill-fitting to real world scenarios. Participants agreed ultimately that the European Battlegroups concept had to demonstrate it could work, as they were intended to be much more than just training structures or instruments of military transformation.

The discussions then moved beyond EU/NATO relations, with Hans-Peter Bartels putting forward the case for a European Army in which national army contingents would gradually transfer sovereignty to a unified structure. Arguing that a certain amount of national sovereignty had also been given-up for the EU's single currency, Hans-Peter Bartels pointed out that such a structure would lead to more efficiency.

Although closer cooperation amongst European militaries met with wide consensus from the rest of the participants, Lord John Roper argued that the British government in particular would find it difficult to endorse the principle of a European Army considering the loss of national sovereignty and the existing political caveats across European member states. Furthermore, a common military and strategic culture would also be a prerequisite for a common political culture, which for now had failed to materialise within the European Union.

Speakers finally pointed out that were the Lisbon Treaty to be ratified, the provision for a Permanent Structured Cooperation could lead to some of the same capability enhancements and integration that a European Army would aim to achieve, but without controversially referring to it as European Army.

## **The Role of National Military Forces in Counter Terrorism**

The final panel of the day debated the use of military forces in counter terrorism operations on the basis that interventions abroad against irregular combatants, such as insurgents or terrorist groups, provided a valuable experience base in terms of counter terrorism back home. For a number of countries, the growing role of militaries in counter terrorism during external operations was indeed increasingly reflected in their proactive role (where military per-

sonnel are used to remove the source of terrorism in a harbouring country) and in their reactive response to terrorism (when military forces are subject to terrorist-type attacks during operations).

Mindful of the link between operations abroad generating support for radicalisation and terrorism at home, a trend is also developing in several EU member states reconsidering the role of the defence establishment in national security strategies. This redefinition of roles, however, may not necessarily go beyond the strengthening of cooperation between government agencies with distinctive responsibilities for external defence devolved to military forces and internal security to the police and judiciary.

Against this background, Major Anders, Danish Liaison Officer to the UK Permanent Joint Headquarters, discussed the deployment of Danish Armed Forces in counter terrorism operations. Identifying the main terrorist threat to Denmark as directly related to what happened in Afghanistan, Major Anders explained that the purpose of the Danish military presence there was to deny the possibility of terrorists establishing a safe haven, as much as displacing the fight against terrorism outside Danish national borders.

Having to face in Afghanistan a new type of conflict, Anders said that the Danish armed forces had had to adapt their strategy to fight insurgents, while at the same time facing new tasks when it came to contributing towards the civilian effort. As a result the Danish armed forces were undergoing a significant transformation process: being far more expeditionary in their approach, and with far greater attention to the cultural understanding of the conflict and the region, the armed forces had refocused their training in order to meet changing operational requirements. Major Anders argued that transforming the armed forces ultimately strengthened the state's ability to counter security challenges both domestically and abroad, and that the use of armed forces to combat terrorism required a constant review of the forces.

In response, Johannes Kahrs explained that the strict separation between internal and external forces in Germany precluded the use of the German military inside the country. Instead, the police should remain in charge of internal and border security. What was needed to meet emerging threats were properly trained police forces and trained armed forces to each perform their respective tasks.

While conceding that there was a general acceptance in Germany that the military could support police efforts in the case of natural disasters and

emergencies, or to provide security around major public events, Johannes Kahrs argued that the question emerged mostly as a result of a lack of appropriate resources. With this in mind, Kahrs suggested that the purpose of using armed forces within a domestic environment should only be to stiffen the resolve and capability of the civilian police on a short term basis, rather than try to find a new role for the military. Whilst perhaps relevant in terms of providing limited capabilities – such as air and coastal security – Mr Kahrs believed that soldiers were trained for distinctive tasks and that more police forces should be made available to perform those duties instead.

Responding to a question by HE Rahim Sherzoy, Afghanistan's Ambassador to the UK, regarding the provision of police training in post-conflict situations and the delays encountered in training the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, Johannes Kahrs explained that differences over how police training should be carried out had originally stalled the process.

Germany having taken responsibility in 2002 as Lead Nation for the training of police forces in Afghanistan, he suggested that the top-down approach taken by Germany, whereby training was provided on a rigorous basis to the upper echelon, had resulted in too lengthy a process requiring 2-3 year courses. Once the US had identified the requirement for more boots on the ground however, the strategy adopted a far more rapid approach in order to rapidly deliver sufficient numbers, raising potential issues over the accountability and responsibility of the force.

Contributions from other participants finally reflected the fact that there were ongoing problems with foreign police training missions, with the international community having yet to find a successful model or committed the resources necessary to the task. It was thus argued that finding sufficient numbers of trainers had been the biggest difficulty in providing for the under-resourced EU police mission, with one first needing the agreement of the individual, then the police force itself, and then the local authority, which all contributed to delays. Secondly there was an ongoing debate over whether this was a military or policing task, with participants saying that there was no need so far for traditional type policing in Afghanistan, but more of a requirement for paramilitary forces, thus raising further questions over the use of Gendarmerie or Carabinieri type police forces to undertake these kind of operations.

## Conclusion

In both scope and peril, military operations in Afghanistan are amongst the most challenging that European states have participated in since the end of the Second World War. From the beginning of the operations, the United Kingdom and Germany have played a leading part in setting up the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) and are today respectively the second and third largest troop contributors. However, with the refocusing of US policy on Afghanistan under the new Obama administration, European countries are facing increasing pressure to step up their commitment in terms of the delivering the civilian and political instruments intrinsic to the Comprehensive Approach.

At this critical stage of the political process accompanying national deployments to ISAF, participants in the third British-German Dialogue on Defence and Security Policies agreed that the challenges were numerous and that renewed political will on behalf of Britain and Germany was needed to address them. Committed to such a course, contributors to the panels felt that the forum offered an opportune exchange for a frank and open discussion between parliamentarians and subject experts working on these difficult issues.

[www.rusi.org](http://www.rusi.org)

The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies' purpose is to study, promote debate, report and provide options on all matters relating to national and international defence and security.

[www.feslondon.org.uk](http://www.feslondon.org.uk)

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a German think tank with a wide reaching network of offices world wide. The London office concentrates on organising a British-German dialogue on bilateral, European and global policy issues, including defence and security issues. Opinions and conclusions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the FES. Comments pertaining to this paper are welcomed and should be forwarded to [info@feslondon.net](mailto:info@feslondon.net).