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Restructuring for the Future

Partnership For Peace

by Vernon Penner

Conclusions

Partnership for Peace (PFP) has gotten off to a highly successful start over the past two years with an accelerated growth in membership encompassing the Euro-Atlantic community, the rapid development of its own military structure, an ambitious program of exercises and education, and the early contribution of Partner states to NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia.

To sustain this success and carry PFP beyond NATO enlargement, the Partnership process should be significantly enhanced with an emphasis on quality and not quantity and a better balance between military and civilian components of PFP.

An enhanced Partnership should strengthen the political side of PFP, give Partner states a greater role in planning and decision-making and increase the presence of Partner nations at NATO headquarters, in NATO committees, and at lower-level NATO commands.

Partner states should be expected to self-fund many of these enhancements, improve their own interagency coordination and civilian control mechanisms, and be prepared to meet new force requirements which reflect real world situations.

A Propitious Beginning

Partnership for Peace has become in two short years an active cooperative effort linking 42 countries, as well as a permanent cornerstone in NATO's security architecture. Its success surpasses all expectations present at the time of its formal adoption at the January 1994 NATO Summit in Brussels. Skeptics then derided PFP as a stalling tactic to defer NATO enlargement. Supporters were hopeful the program might attract at best a dozen adherents. Both judgments were off the mark in terms of PFP's accelerated growth in membership and military structure, its rapid development of a far-reaching program of training and exercise activities, and the early contribution of Partners to real military operations like NATO's IFOR in Bosnia.

From the start, the response to PFP from former Warsaw Pact adversaries, several of the so-called European neutral states and from virtually all the independent nations of the former Soviet Union has been extremely positive. Romania, the first to sign the Partnership Framework Document on January

28, 1994, was joined within a year's time by 23 other countries. The Framework Document commits Partners to adhere to core NATO values of fundamental freedoms and human rights and of safeguarding peace through democracy. It confers the intent for Partner states to cooperate with NATO in insuring democratic control of defense forces, transparency in defense planning, and the development of compatible military forces able to undertake NATO missions in search and rescue, peacekeeping and humanitarian activities, or to operate under UN or OSCE authority.

Russia signed the Framework Document on June 22, 1994 shortly after Sweden and Finland both adhered with the caveat that their membership in PFP did not connote membership in NATO. By the latest count, there are 26 Partnership members which, together with NATO states, link every Euro-Atlantic country from Vancouver to Vladivostok except Ireland and Switzerland. Indications are that the Swiss will join shortly. This growth in Partner members has been accompanied by the rapid establishment of an organizational structure to coordinate an ambitious program of military training activities. The Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC) opened its doors in June, 1994, in a building adjacent to SHAPE, the NATO Major Command in Mons, Belgium. Within two months the PCC had to move to bigger quarters.

In less than two years, the PCC has become the largest multinational military headquarters in NATO-bringing together 36 nationalities under one roof. The PCC command group is headed by a Danish General directing a permanent staff element of NATO officers. Twenty-one partner states have assigned liaison officers to the PCC and individual NATO countries are also represented by liaison teams. This opens up the possibility of an extensive range of direct consultation and communication between the Defense ministries and general staff of the Partner countries with NATO commands and separate NATO nations. Bilateral and multilateral programs can be coordinated to minimize duplication and maximize their contribution to each Partner's own security objectives. To successfully utilize the opportunities for coordination afforded by the PCC, Partner states often had to undertake major changes in their own interagency process which, especially in the former communist countries, was rudimentary at best.

A Working Partnership

With the support of the major NATO commands, the PCC started its work immediately. Three PFP military exercises took place in 1994 and focused on basic peacekeeping skills. They were held in Poland, Norwegian waters and the Netherlands. Eight exercises were organized in 1995, four in Partner nations and four in NATO states with greater national participation and a broader scope of activities to include search and rescue missions and humanitarian aid. Fourteen exercises were held in 1996 which were further enlarged in size and complexity. Twenty-four are scheduled in 1997. In addition to these NATO/PFP exercises, there have been numerous workshops and training activities plus bilateral "in-the-spirit-of" Partnership exercises between a Partner state and a NATO member (28 in 1995 alone). The NATO School in Oberammergau, the Marshall Center in Garmisch, the North Atlantic Assembly, and the Atlantic Treaty Association also ran special educational courses, conferences and seminars based on Partnership issues and themes.

The exercises and education, together with the development of the PCC structure facilitated the coordination and participation of Partner contributions to NATO's IFOR. When the IFOR deployed in December 1995, most Partner liaison teams had already been in place in the PCC for some months with established channels of communication and operational familiarity. Overnight, Partnership liaison officers assumed additional duties as IFOR liaison officers. Thirteen Partner nations contributed nearly 5,200 personnel to the total IFOR contingent of 51,300 troops. Moreover, the PCC accommodated

representatives of the non-PFP states of Jordan, Malaysia, and Morocco who also participate in IFOR. The smooth transition in the PCC-from coordination and training to planning and operation-has been a singular achievement but has gone almost totally unnoticed.

Partnership at a Crossroads

Against this background of success, the PFP program is now at a crossroads in its development. There is universal agreement among Partners and most NATO nations that PFP must be significantly enhanced to both sustain its initial success and to meet several circumstances not evident at the time of its creation. One major factor is the rapid growth of the Partnership in membership and in military structure and activities. The substantial participation in IFOR by 13 Partners is also forcing on PFP the requirement for change. Above all, NATO enlargement necessitates a restructured Partnership.

It is likely that decisions naming several prospective new members of NATO will be announced at a Summit in mid-1997. This will in a few years end the Partnership status of several of the most active Partner members who have been driving the pace of a number of PFP military activities leaving behind two distinct classes in the Partnership. One group, which continues to seek full NATO membership, will be disappointed at not being included in the initial tranche of new adherents. They will be frustrated that their Partnership activities to date have been insufficient to secure their goal. The other group, not desiring full membership, will be apprehensive that Partnership was really established and maintained only to serve potential new NATO members. And, of course, Russia is a category in itself. For a number of states remaining in the Partnership, it will be hard to avoid the feeling of being "second class." For them, the costs of PFP whether material or political may become harder to justify. What is needed, therefore, is an enhanced PFP, the changes for which should be announced in the same ministerial communique which describes the next steps for an enlarged NATO.

The changes should focus on the now evident imbalance between the well-developed military side of the Partnership demonstrated by the PCC, IFOR participation and extensive education and exercise programs and the underdeveloped political/civilian component of PFP. The military PCC in Mons has no political counterpart at NATO Brussels. The office space occupied by the individual Partner nations in the new "Manfred Woerner" building adjoining NATO facilities in Brussels provides no headquarters element. Moreover, IFOR participation has significantly heightened the military maturity and sophistication of some Partner states whose troops are daily demonstrating the capability of operating successfully with NATO forces. But the Partners have played little role in the political side of Bosnia operations including the discussions which set the terms of reference for the IFOR. The training and education offered under Partnership has primarily benefited military personnel despite efforts to target certain civilian categories.

A Restructured Partnership

Partner states are becoming increasingly outspoken in their recommendations for change in the Partnership process. Their suggestions affect PFP implementing documents, as well as basic Partnership concepts, structures and procedures. Key suggestions made at the workshop include the following:

1. Strengthen the political component of the Partnership. There can be no continued evolution of the Partnership process without addressing the imbalance between the well-developed military aspects of Partnership and the undeveloped political component of PFP. This is the most significant area of change about which there is a unanimity of views among all Partner states. A major start would be to establish a permanent Partnership staff element at NATO headquarters in Brussels as a political counterpart to the

military PCC at SHAPE. The International Partnership Staff would be the equivalent to the NATO International Staff (which reports to the NAC) or the International Military Staff (which serves the Military Committee). The idea is not to create another bureaucracy but to give necessary political balance and focus to Partnership activities. The element could be staffed and funded to the maximum extent by the Partner states themselves and report through its own senior-level civilian command with terms of reference matching the PCC military command at SHAPE. The head of the Partnership Staff might be given an appropriate title of Deputy or Assistant Secretary General for PFP.

A primary task of the Partnership element would be to support an expanded Partnership political forum in Brussels by combining PFP with the almost moribund North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). This might form part of the State Department's proposal now being developed to establish an Atlantic Partnership Council. But the Partnership Staff should also be tasked with promoting and supporting a greater (and self-funded) role in the numerous NATO committees. The goal of the Partnership element would be to gain more influence for Partner states in all aspects of political planning and decision-making which affect the PFP process.

2. Redraft the implementing Partnership documents. Partner states are already discussing the need to amend the Partnership Framework Document. It should more broadly define PFP objectives and provide more political substance. At a minimum, "peace enforcement" should be added to the list of specifiable Partnership activities. For those countries who desire full NATO membership, the Partnership process should be clearly spelled out as part of the necessary preparation. The document could be reworked as part of the charter to the Atlantic Partnership Council.

3. Deepen Partnership Integration and Refocus Training. To further involve Partner states at the lower working levels of NATO, Partners should be invited to staff their own PFP liaison elements at NATO regional and subregional commands. These elements could be attached to sections dealing with resources, exercises, and planning and policy. The overall PFP training program should be re-examined emphasizing quality-not quantity-and as much Partner participation as possible in the planning process. In the short term, training should place greatest priority, in the broadest context, on the Partner's civilian security community to include Parliamentarians, defense and foreign ministry personnel, economists, journalists and academics.

4. Require More from Partners. An enhanced Partnership will cost Partner states more money than what some national budgets are currently earmarking for PFP. Partners must be urged to improve interagency coordination and cooperation between all appropriate ministries including finance and interior. Adequate civilian control requires that no military element should be engaged in PFP without a civilian interface. Finally, new force requirements should be levied on Partner nations to reflect real world circumstances and IFOR "lessons learned." The Allied Command Europe, Rapid Reaction Force offers a model which would generate headquarter forces and more combat service and combat service support elements rather than combat troops.

A More Equal Partnership

In its start-up phase, the PFP program has more than proved its worth both in practical application and in creating for the 42 nations involved a working foundation for mutual trust and confidence reaching far beyond PFP and IFOR activities. The most visible and operational embodiment of PFP the PCC at SHAPE has developed into a permanent part of the post-Cold War NATO security architecture. From the outset, there were wide differences between Partner states in terms of their objectives in PFP, their military capabilities and rates of activity in the program. However, these differences were initially

bridged by PFP's flexibility, start-up momentum, relatively low initial costs, IFOR participation and the use of the rule of compromise and consensus. Circumstances now require fundamental changes to sustain a continued successful Partnership process.

NATO is destined to enlarge as it continues its role as the core structure of EuroAtlantic security but the enlargement process will strain the cohesion of PFP and could undermine the benefits of Partnership if major steps are not taken. The goal of restructuring Partnership for the future should be an expanded and more influential PFP, better balanced in its civilian, political and military components, and with a greater role in its own planning and decision-making. The desired result will be an enhanced Partnership becoming a more equal partner within an enlarged NATO.

About the Symposium

On October 1-2, 1996, the Institute for National Strategic Studies and Atlantic Council of the United States co-sponsored a symposium/workshop at the National Defense University at Fort McNair entitled "The Practice of Partnership" which brought together representatives of 21 of 26 Partner states and 11 NATO nations to present respective viewpoints of Partnership. This report outlines some of the principal issues discussed and draws on a number of workshop recommendations. Vernon D. Penner is a career Foreign Service Officer who formerly served as the Political Adviser to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies.

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