

## Young Professionals Day 2014



### Summary Report

Strategic Plans and Policy, Strategic Analysis Branch

Headquarters Allied Command Transformation

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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The Young Professionals Day (YPD) 2014 was a combined-event with the NATO Transformation Seminar (NTS), and the topics discussed were based on two topics:

- “*The Future of the Transatlantic Bond*”, and
- “*NATO in the 21st Century – New Roles, New Missions & Challenges*”.

Special appreciation is expressed to the following Mentors for their contribution to the Young Professionals Day, for it was their leadership, expertise, and guidance that made this event a success:

**Amb. Benoit d'Aboville**, Paris School of International Affairs, SciencesPo.

**Mrs. Gerlinde Niehus**, Head of Engagement Section of the Public Diplomacy Division.

And to our partners in the development of this event:

The Institut D'études Politiques de Paris, simply referred to as **Sciences Po**, and

Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, **FRS**.

And of course, thanks to the 35 Young Professionals coming from different schools and think tanks from across Europe and the United States. They are fearless in their discussion and debate, bringing to NATO a fresh perspective on topics important to NATO.

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## SUMMARY

The overall feedback from participants was that YPD was a success. The two groups discussed various topics, however, much of the discussions revolved around the following bullets:

### STRATCOM

- There is concern that NATO's messages are not reaching the youth of society. It is important that messages and storylines are adjusted to reach a younger audience, perhaps better utilizing on-line tools and discussion groups. Moreover it is the interest of NATO to enhance strategic communication, not only through improvement of outdated websites, but also by reaching people by other means, e.g., twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- One idea proposed is to integrate the youth through series of NATO Intern Alumni associations? This is just one example that would provide more opportunity for younger generation to discuss and contribute to NATO's thinking.
- A plan to better engage and educate of younger generations should be included, as NATO no longer resonates or is presented in current text books or syllabuses at colleges/schools across Europe and North America.
- It is considered a fact that NATO's partner policy is complex and not very well understood. That is the reason number one why it should be better communicated to the public.

### PERCEPTION

- Is NATO a global player or a regional power? This lack of clarity makes NATO less effective. If NATO is global then it should engage all over the world do so effectively and trumpet its success. If not, it should concentrate on the Euro Atlantic region and forget about problems from abroad.

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- Key words that define NATO are credibility and truthfulness. But, as a contradiction, there is also uncertainty regarding NATO's ability to reach its Level of Ambition.
- There is a perception that there is a clear European pillar of NATO, talking with one voice. But the reality is: there are 26 sovereign members, some outside EU, that accentuate the differences while negating the agreements. These differences cost on one hand, but bring different points of view when addressing common problems.
- If the Ukrainian crisis shows the "raison d'être" for NATO that proves that NATO has not evolved over the past 60 years. With no evolution, NATO is in the same position it was when created, and specific to engagement with Russia, it means a return of "cold-war" politico.
- On the contrary, and after 65 years, the Alliance now has the opportunity to adapt in a fast changing security environment where threats multiply and where the EU and the US are losing pre-eminence. With that as a backdrop - now is the time to develop a long term strategy to deal with declining power in a pragmatic manner
- Crimea is a wake-up call which has the potential of strengthening solidarity within the Alliance.
- Participants agreed that the Alliance needs to reflect upon its Russian strategy in the long-run. While doing so it is important (according to most of participants) that NATO maintain open communication channels with Russia.

### **CYBER, DEFENSIVE OR OFFENSIVE?**

- NATO must react to cyber-attacks by being defensive in nature.
- To do so, it must create continuous deterrence through STRATCOM.
- But NATO also must have the ability to go on the offensive if "at war" or in conflict.

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### CREDIBILITY

- Do European members suffer from the 'Bonsai armies' syndrome and does that mean that European NATO nations will be more of a force provider for out of area operations?
- NATO needs to formalize the relationship with the EU. At a minimum develop synergy with EU R&D and capability development.
- About the future of the Alliance - it is key for NATO to reinforce the dialogue between the US and the EU. While the EU must better prioritize and organize, the US must stop bashing Europe on capacities. Some participants argued that the US has no other choice but cooperate with the EU and vice-a-versa, so just get on with it.
- In spite of the US pivot to Asia, which is both militarily and economic, bonds with EU must continue. In this sense, the EU could also look towards Asia (certainly economically). However, there was a large consensus among participants that NATO should not engage with crises in Asia.
- The importance of technological advantage cannot be over-stated. There was a broad call for NATO to increase R&D cooperation within the Alliance and in cooperation with the European Defence Agency (on fundamental research). Special attention should be given to the question of security of supply chains, especially with Chinese parts and some subsystems being used in almost all weapon systems employed by the west.
- The 2% GDP target of defence budgets was largely described as symbolic. A target of 20% of defence budget dedicated to procurement and R&D was a more attainable goal.
- On partnerships, participants reiterated that it is a two-way street with interests on both sides. Hence, it was said to be of high importance to better differentiate partnerships and acknowledge their differences, stressing needs and expectations.
- Finally, it was clear to all participants that after the ISAF withdrawal, one major challenge would be to maintain the expeditionary capabilities of the Alliance; however, it was also recognized that the appetite to deploy and

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intervene was in decline. This must also be done through a better partnership policy.