

'Renewing NATO's partnerships: Towards a coherent and efficient framework' - NATO Defence College Forum Paper No 1, June 2006

This is the first of a new series of NDC papers that address fundamental issues concerning the Alliance. The topic addressed will be discussed at the Riga Summit of Foreign Ministers in November 2006 and as such is focussed on the NATO Headquarters staff (in particular the Secretary General's staff) and national staffs developing positions for the Summit. Partnerships are an integral element of NATO's security policy and existed since 1991. Originally, the intention was to meet NATO objectives through dialogue and cooperation but as the partnerships have grown and become more varied so their aims have become more ambitious. Although the original partnerships were largely successful there now exists some doubt as to whether the model will be equally successful with new partnerships. The paper identifies a number of problems and raises questions over the role of partnerships in attaining NATO goals. This is effectively an admission that, although the idea of partnerships in 1990 was a sound one, NATO did not have a clear vision of their role or ultimate scope. This paper is an attempt to analyse the nature of existing partnerships and then to offer new models where the emphasis on the functional, geographical and organisational strands differs. These new models are the Tailored Approach (geographically rationalised), the Functional Approach and the Mixed Approach. The paper tests each of these approaches against internal and external criteria and although the internal criteria are reasonably argued, the external criteria are far from being positive and robust as they pose basic questions that are left unanswered. For this reason it is difficult for the reader to assess whether the Approaches suggested represent valid Partnership models for the future.

In its conclusions the paper recognises the need for a long term NATO vision for its partnerships. What it fails to acknowledge is that this need is unlikely to be achieved until NATO identifies its role in the current geo-strategic environment that is dominated by security threats other than the direct military threats that are the basis of its Treaty-based objectives.

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