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The Atlantic Council of Canada + 165 University Ave., Suite 701, Toronto, ON M5H 3B8
Ph.: 416-979-1875 + F.: 416-979-0825 + Email: info@atlantic-council.ca

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Newsletter contributors

Kirsty Hong
Kirsty.Hong@Utoronto.ca

Chelsea Plante
CPlante@Balsillieschool.ca

Jonathan Preece
Jonathan.preece@atlantic-council.ca



Turkey's Dithering Support for NATO's Missile Defence Shield

By: Kirsty Hong

As the upcoming NATO summit in Lisbon fast approaches, Turkey has yet to decide whether it will vote in support of NATO's latest missile defence efforts in Europe. According to Turkish newspaper *Today's Zaman*, the U.S. has ramped up its efforts to persuade Turkey to back its missile defence plans. In response to such pressure, Turkey's National Security Council met on Wednesday to discuss its position on hosting a U.S.-backed NATO missile defence system on its territory. While the proposed system has been seen as a "welcome compromise" for many NATO members in comparison to the Bush Administration's 'Third Site' plan, the case for a missile defence shield in Europe is still controversial for some governments.

Military analysts and diplomats have suggested that Turkey is an ideal location for a forward radar system because it shares a border with Iran. However, while Turkey's endorsement of such a plan would no doubt please its NATO allies, this decision would carry weighty implications for Istanbul's relations with Iran. According to some Turkish security analysts, consenting to NATO's latest missile defence proposal would prevent Istanbul from pursuing an independent foreign policy as well as severely damage its relations with Iran: a state from which Turkey receives roughly one third of its energy supply. Illustrating Tehran's position on this matter, on October 26 Iran's Foreign Ministry expressed deep concern for NATO's missile defence plans, calling the expansion of missile defence systems into Turkey "seriously suspicious."

Although Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's has stated that Turkey does not feel threatened by any of its neighbours and thus is reluctant to sanction NATO's proposal, Turkey has been pursuing its own efforts to procure a missile defence system as a means of ensuring its national security. The Turkish government thus finds itself in a complicated position wherein it must appease its NATO allies without jeopardizing its relations with Iran. The difficulty for Turkey's National Security Council will be to find a balance between Turkey's short-term goals and long-term security interests.

To help with its decision, some Turkish officials have argued that if the U.S. and NATO can ensure Turkey will have greater operational command and control of the potential missile defence system, including access to all crucial data, Turkey might be swayed to vote in favour of this proposal. Other conditions mentioned include ensuring the system would protect the entire Turkish territory, omitting Iran's name as a prime impetus for a NATO missile defence shield, and preventing Israel from accessing important intelligence data on the system. However, even if these conditions are guaranteed, Turkey's precarious relations with Iran might undercut its support for NATO's new missile defence strategy.

Further Reading: "[U.S calls on Turkey to back NATO missile defense plans](#)", "[Proposed NATO missile defense shield in Turkey highly suspicious: Iran](#)", "[Global Security: NATO calls on countries to join the new defense system](#)", "[Turkey in dilemma over NATO shield](#)"

A Sign of the Times: Britain's Strategic Defence Review in an era of Austerity

By: Jonathan Preece

On October 19, the United Kingdom unveiled its Strategic Defence Review – the first such review since 1998 – outlining much anticipated cuts to the British military and defence budget. As a means of reducing Britain's mounting budget deficit, the Treasury Department recommended a 10% reduction in British military spending over the next four years. In the weeks running up to this review, critics argued that it was undertaken in haste and driven by fiscal rather than strategic considerations. As such, many analysts feared that military cuts would jeopardize British security by undercutting military operations in Afghanistan and projecting an image of weakness to the Taliban, al-Qaeda and the Islamist regime in Iran. Some went as far as to suggest – in a familiar British fashion – that the Strategic Defence Review would be the blueprint of British decline.

Highlighting American skepticism, both Secretary of State Hilary Clinton as well as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates voiced concern about the impact that these budgetary cuts would have on international peace and security. Speaking to the BBC, Clinton stated that severe cuts to British military spending could damage the North Atlantic Alliance and undermine NATO operations in Afghanistan. At a NATO meeting in Brussels on October 15, Gates echoed this position: "...as nations deal with their economic problems, we must guard against the hollowing out of the Alliance's military capability by spending reductions that cut too far into muscle." In the face of this diplomatic pressure, David Cameron's government was tasked with striking a balance between fiscal austerity and continued military prowess.

While London publicly acknowledged the need to trim fat, at the end of the day Cameron was unable to stomach the consequences of the Treasury's recommendations, opting instead for a 7.5% cut to military and defence spending. As a result, Britain will scrape nearly half of its armored tanks and a third of its biggest artillery guns. The British military will be able to maintain a 7,000 strong permanent brigade in the field (compared to the 9,500 currently in Afghanistan) and deliver an intervention force of 30,000 (down from the 45,000 British troops that took part in the invasion of Iraq in 2003). The British Air Force and Navy will each slash 5,000 personnel over the next four years, while the Ministry of Defence will cut 25,000 civilian staff from its payroll. However, with international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and cyber warfare being sited as prevalent security concerns, the review also earmarked funding increases to the British Special Forces, beefed up cyber-attack defences, as well as the British intelligence and security services. As stated in the Economist, "Britain may not be quite so gung-ho about throwing itself into every scrap...but this review should be seen more as a tactical retreat than surrender."

In the House of Commons, Cameron was quick to minimize the impact of these reductions: "We will continue to be one of the very few countries able to deploy a self-sustaining, properly equipped, brigade-sized force anywhere around the world and sustain it indefinitely if need be." He also sought to reassure Britain's Allies by insisting that British troops will remain in Afghanistan until 2015 and emphasizing that despite these cuts, Britain will still have the world's 4th largest defence budget and be one of the few NATO countries to meet the Alliance's military spending target of 2% of GDP.

Following the release of this review, Washington signaled that it was reassured that the cuts were not as significant as initially feared. Furthermore, Adm. James Stavridis, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, told the Financial Times: "I applaud the intent to retain the standard of 2% of GDP devoted to defence, an important and clear goal for the entire NATO Alliance."

While these reductions may not be as drastic as some anticipated, they do mean that Britain's ability to intervene abroad will be substantially diminished. Speaking to this point, the review affirms the British government's pledge to: "...[be] more selective in our use of Armed Forces, deploying them decisively at the right time but only where UK national interests are at stake; where we have a clear strategic aim; where the likely political, economic, and human costs are in

proportion to the likely benefits; where we have a viable exit strategy; and where justifiable under international law.”

When NATO leaders convene in Lisbon this month to adopt a New Strategic Concept, they are going to have to come to grips with the fact that the Alliance has now entered an era of austerity. Budget cuts have already forced some allies to withdraw from multinational initiatives such as NATO's UAV and the Joint Strike Fighters. In fact Britain is merely the latest of many NATO states to announce cuts to military spending: Italy reduced its military budget by 10%; Germany may reduce the Bundeswehr from 250,000 soldiers to 163,000; Denmark is considering a 500 million USD cut for 2014; and Canada as well as several Central European states are considering similar reductions. While the long-term impact of these cuts on NATO remains to be seen, it is clear that resource constraints will have a significant effect on NATO's strategic prioritization moving forward: Lisbon and beyond.

Further Reading: [NATO's Future amid Defence cuts](#), [The Incredible Shrinking Militaries of Europe](#), [British Foreign Secretary William Hague Friday Dismissed US concerns that cuts to London's defence spending could undermine the NATO military alliance.](#), [Defence Review Ends Iraq Sized Ventures](#), [British Defence Cuts will Weaken the Special Relationship and Undermine NATO](#), [Clinton Warns British Defence cuts could hit NATO](#), [The Strategic Defence Review: A Retreat, but not a Rout.](#)

Transition in Afghanistan: A Diplomatic Push

By: Chelsea Plante

Special representatives from more than 40 countries, together with 10 international organizations, met in Rome on October 18 to launch a diplomatic push to begin transferring leadership of military operations in Afghanistan from NATO to Kabul, while supporting its attempts at negotiating with the Taliban. The Rome meeting of the International Contact Group for Afghanistan was meant to lay the groundwork for discussions to take place during the NATO Summit meeting in Lisbon next month. “What we expect from Lisbon is a kickstart for next year starting this transition process”, Michael Steiner, Chair of the Rome discussions and Germany's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, told reporters.

The Push

General Petraeus, the top commander of the 150 000-strong US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, briefed the meeting on what Steiner said was the coalition's highest priority: training Afghan forces to take over security operation beginning next year. He focused considerable attention on the goal of gradually handing over military command to the Afghan government and pulling out of combat operations between 2011 to the end of 2014. However, it was also stressed that rather than representing a total withdrawal, troops will remain in Afghanistan after 2014 in a training and support role.

Richard Holbrooke, the US special representative, said that General Petraeus's report was very encouraging, and opined that despite increasing casualties suffered by the coalition and decreasing public approval of the war, there is “much evidence of an accelerated movement forward in most of the country.” Mark Sedwill, NATO's top civilian representative in Afghanistan confirmed this point, citing the arrival of an additional 30 000 US troops this year, the increased tempo of US Special Operations force attacks against the Taliban commanders, and ongoing US offensives in Kandahar and Helmand provinces as evidence of progress. For his part, Afghan President Hamid Karzai voiced similar optimism, stating that he expects this countrywide transition to be completed by the scheduled date of 2014.

Iran's Participation

Iran sent a representative to the meeting for the first time since the Group was formed in 2009 to discuss developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iran's deep political, cultural and economic ties to Afghanistan, as well as the transitional theme of the conference, may have motivated Iran's participation. Mohammed Ali Qanezadeh, director of Asian Affairs in the Iranian Foreign Ministry, not only took part in the in-depth briefing by General Petraeus on NATO's strategy for transition, but also called for a "holistic approach" in Afghanistan that included military actions, political negotiations and economic development. The Iranian delegate affirmed that when it comes to dealing with the Taliban, "there needs to be a mix of soft and hard approaches."

US military and civilian officials have given differing assessments of Iran's role in the Afghan war, at times accusing Tehran of promoting conflict by providing arms and training to insurgents as a means of tying down US troops and resources. More often, however, officials have emphasized Iran's interest in encouraging stability in Afghanistan, citing Iranian concerns about drug trafficking and refugee flows across Iran's border with Afghanistan. It is hoped that Iran's participation in this conference demonstrates a genuine interest in establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan. From the American point of view this is indeed a positive sign, as regional cooperation has been a pillar of the Obama Administration's approach to Afghanistan. According to Mr. Steiner, "[i]t's the most natural thing to have the Iranian representative here [...] it proves that we are on the right track [...] I think it is good news".

However, despite the rather optimistic tone of this meeting and the Afghan government's stated commitment to this process, Afghanistan's transition to consolidated peace and stability will require long-term assistance from the international community.

Further Reading: [Iran Sends Delegate to International Meeting on Afghanistan](#), [Iran joins international group's talks on Afghan strategy](#), [NATO summit should kickstart Afghan transition: diplomat](#), [Kabul Faces Broad Push to Take Military Lead](#)



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