

Public-Private Dialogue series
“The Future of Multidomain Operations”

Date: 31st October, 15:00 Zoom

Policy takeaways

Group 1: What is the definition of Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) in a multinational context?

- The concept of multi-domain operations (MDO) is a subject to varying interpretations and understandings, with discrepancies across all five domains. The shift towards MDO represents a significant cultural change, necessitating a long-term commitment to aligning the domains for optimal warfighting capabilities. To foster synergy on an international scale, it would be beneficial to establish a NATO-wide standardisation of terms and abbreviations, ensuring these resources are readily available and accessible to all.
- While NATO stands as the preeminent body for setting regulations and standards, it is imperative that these guidelines are the product of a collaborative process, with considerable input from the civilian sector. This is especially key when we consider newer domains such as cyber and space, where the civilian limitations must be factored in.
- The requirements are a crucial step and they must be set, but they must also be appropriate, avoiding any undue cost, complexity, and overall burden to the industry. In line with the 80/20 rule, regulations should differentiate between various points in the set regulation, prioritizing those most important for defence and security.
- The success of initiatives like European Sky Shield or European Ammunition Initiative underscores the importance of robust cooperation between the public and private sectors. The industry has realistic answers to the public sector queries and therefore can help draft modernisation plans of the militaries based on what is achievable. By offering specific technological insights, the industry can significantly contribute to shaping national defence planning, ensuring that the armed forces are meeting their goals.

Group 2: Turning grand visions into reality: what are the lessons learned from the national experiences when it comes to MDO?

- Building up on the experiences of NATO's countries, it is important to define a common approach that is characterized by the improvement of existing capabilities and processes rather than a revolution. This can happen only with constant dialogue and exchange of know-how between the actors involved.
- There is still work to be done when it comes to the conceptualization and definition of MDO. Despite NATO's efforts to define Multidomain Operations (MDO), interpretations of this concept vary widely across the alliance. The clarity of coordination within MDO is proportional to the specificity of the defined problem. The more precisely a problem is defined, the easier it becomes to coordinate efforts effectively.
- The lack of alignment regarding threat perceptions constitutes a significant challenge for NATO. This divergence directly impacts the implementation of MDO, especially in terms of integrating civil society, which relies heavily on how nations perceive threats.

While NATO strives to create coherence, individual nations retain autonomy over their capabilities and threat assessments. Additionally, the coordination of civilians remains a challenge because of NATO's military competencies.

- MDO is a mindset in the first place and therefore the process of understanding has to begin in people's minds before it can materialise. The implementation of future visions demands more than just technological advancements; but necessitates intellect and organisational adaptations.
- One significant hurdle in this transformative journey is the inter-service rivalries prevalent among different branches of the military. These rivalries often stem from miscommunications regarding varying concepts and definitions or from a competitive mindset. Overcoming these challenges is paramount. Addressing both aspects—miscommunication and competition—is essential, with the latter proving to be particularly challenging.
- To effectively implement MDO it should first be implemented horizontally, fostering cross domain sensor-shooter connectivity. The second step is vertical integration, encompassing tactical, operational, and strategic levels, creating a seamless integration that ensures a comprehensive and unified approach to military operations in the future.

Group 3: How to define the role of innovation and technology? What are its limits and how to mitigate them?

- **Enhancing Accuracy and Efficiency:** policies should prioritize the development and implementation of technologies that enable quicker and more accurate operations across multiple domains.
- **Multifunctionality and NATO Definitions:** it is crucial to emphasize a shared understanding among NATO nations regarding multifunctional capabilities, avoiding debates on definitions, to promote unity in multidomain operations.
- **Broader Spectrum Assessment:** the Allies must develop policies within NATO that incorporate a broader spectrum of nations in multidomain operations, including considerations for deterrence escalation management.
- **Shift to All Society and Information/Cyber Warfare:** recognize and adapt to the paradigm shift from strictly military to all society and from physical to information/cyber warfare, ensuring military strategies evolve accordingly.
- **Innovation Amidst Standardization:** policies should encourage innovation and creativity in technology adoption, recognizing that a push for standardization can potentially hinder innovation within NATO. In this regard, an important step is the formulation of policies that address the changing role of big IT, emphasizing the importance of interoperability and connectivity in the evolving technological landscape.
- **Geopolitical Role of Industry:** policies should acknowledge and address the geopolitical role of the industry, recognizing that companies are integral entities with a role in driving innovation in both military and civil spheres.
- **NATO should prompt Nations to develop policies that enable dynamic investment in the newest kits and technologies, considering the rapid evolution of capabilities and the need for agility in decision-making.**

- **Adapting Land Operations and Addressing Technological Limitations:** Encourage policies that explore adapting processes from air operations to land operations and address technological limitations by recognizing the ongoing role of human elements.
- **Mission-Focused Solutions:** Policies should shift focus from one-size-fits-all solutions to mission-focused approaches, recognizing the diverse combinations of old and current systems that can be creatively employed to achieve mission objectives.
- **Creativity in Mission Definition:** Promote policies that prioritize creativity in defining missions, understanding products, and developing innovative solutions that align with the evolving landscape of multidomain operations.