

## **Highlights of Strategic Concept Seminar 4 Washington, 22-23 February 2010**

The fourth Strategic Concept Seminar took place on February 23, 2010 at the National Defense University (NDU) in Washington, D.C. Participants debated NATO's further political and military transformation priorities including, structures, forces, and capabilities. The seminar and associated events were the capstone of the "reflection period" for the Group of Experts.

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States, addressed participants the evening before the seminar. Dr. Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense of the United States, Gen (Ret) James L. Jones, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and His Excellency Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary General of NATO, gave keynote addresses. Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau, President of the NDU, and General Stéphane Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (ACT), offered welcoming and closing remarks. The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, chair of the Group of Experts and Mr. Jeroen van der Veer, the Vice Chair, presided over the seminar and Secretary Albright made closing remarks. Links to these remarks can be found at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events\\_61583.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/events_61583.htm). The seminar was co-hosted by NDU and ACT, in partnership with the Atlantic Council of the United States, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the German Marshall Fund, and the Johns Hopkins University SAIS Center for Transatlantic Relations.

Participants in various panel discussions and breakout groups considered a wide range of ideas on the future military requirements of alliance strategy, possible changes in NATO decision-making and business practices, and how best to achieve military reform and effectiveness in a period of scarce resources.

The highlights below, prepared by NDU and ACT rapporteurs, are derived from the comments of seminar speakers or participants in the discussion sessions expressing their own opinions. They do not reflect the views of the Experts, Governments, or NATO's official views. The Group of Experts will continue to discuss and explore these and other issues over the next two months as they complete their final report and will present a set of recommendations to Secretary General Rasmussen in early May.

### **Session 1: Keeping Article 5 Credible**

Seminar speakers and participants offered their views on the future requirements of the collective defense commitments under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. On this vital topic, a variety of opinions were expressed.

- The future of NATO should be guided by four goals: 1) reassurance on Article 5 protections; 2) resilience for near article 5 threats; 3) shared responsibility for missions; and 4) re-engagement with partners.
- NATO defense must begin with defense of its territory. The founding concept on which NATO is built is that burden and risk are mutually shared. For this reason, honoring the Article 5 commitment is as critical today as it was 60 years ago. NATO must be more flexible so it can address new threats with multi-layered missile

defense, nuclear deterrence, cyber and energy security and defense of sea-lanes. For NATO to continue to be credible with the citizens of its member nations, it must be seen as having the capacity to protect them against such threats.

- Article 5 and non-Article 5 missions are synergistic and NATO's command structures must be flexible enough to fully support a full range of missions. While the specifics will not be the same for every operation, many aspects of deploying forces either in or out of Europe are the same. Forces will need to move—in some cases long distance, including outside of Europe—to defend the territory of a fellow ally. Strategic lift transport enhances NATO's overall ability for such missions.
- The alliance needs enhanced crisis response capabilities to deal with lower end contingencies.
- NATO needs to also focus more on strategic communications in the conduct of future operations to maintain support for its activities among member governments, partners, and the wider international community. While making clear that it remains an alliance committed to defense of its citizens and peaceful resolution of disputes, NATO needs to retain the core military capabilities required to convince any actor that an attack on member states has no chance of succeeding.
- There will not be enough common funding to address every need of the Alliance. Focusing on crucial life-saving capabilities that are fully interoperable and essential for operating in the information age would make NATO a far more flexible and capable Alliance. Flexibility and shared assets may be the best alternative to shrinking defense budgets and diminished capacity.
- The Alliance should look into the possibility of making more use of multinational forces, as a way to enable all willing nations to contribute to and access costly capabilities. The more nations insist on their own, often unnecessary, programs, the more the costs will balloon. Rather, NATO needs to promote common program/capability development.
- Developing better C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) is one of the keys to a strong and mobile force. It is the backbone of the military alliance, a force enabler, and a multiplier. By improving situational awareness and connecting decision makers, C4ISR makes forces lighter and more flexible. Some ways to improve C4ISR are through more timely intelligence sharing, modernization of control platforms, and better interoperability. C4ISR should be a top priority for funding because it provides one of the greatest returns for the investment.
- A key question that the new Strategic Concept will need to address is the role of nuclear weapons in Alliance deterrence strategy. Most speakers noted that U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, together with U.S. conventional forces stationed there, have contributed to trans-Atlantic stability and security for decades. They contend that nuclear weapons remain one of the strongest manifestations of reassurance and shared risks and responsibilities within the Alliance. These speakers argued that removal of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe could have unintended and far-reaching consequences, particularly given that current Russian

military doctrine is even more reliant on nuclear weapons than in the past. Several speakers asserted that ballistic missile defenses are a necessary but insufficient part of defending NATO and deterring potential nuclear attacks against the alliance.

- There were also strong views expressed by several seminar participants that decisions on nuclear basing should be taken by the Alliance as a whole, rather than as a result of disjointed national actions. They add that the relevant nuclear sections of the existing Strategic Concept have stood the test of time—the fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace, prevent intimidation, and ensure that no adversary ever sees aggression as a rational option. Widespread participation of European allies in aspects of the nuclear mission, they argue, will ensure a more effective common defense.
- Others argued the opposite case. They contend that concepts of deterrence and nuclear weapons deployments conceived during the Cold War are no longer effective and even dangerous. They believe that the remaining U.S. nuclear weapons based in Europe should be consolidated to reduce the risk of theft and that the Alliance should commit to create conditions to remove all U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe. These speakers urged Allied governments to take additional steps to enhance the security of existing nuclear weapons and to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in declaratory policy.
- Some speakers and participants argued that there may be more room for cuts in existing numbers of deployed nuclear weapons. Others disagreed and asserted that unilateral cuts have been and will continue to be an ineffective way to get Russia to reduce its thousands of mobile short-range nuclear systems. Several speakers urged Allies to consider entering into negotiations with Moscow that could lead to further reductions in NATO nuclear weapons and substantial cuts in Russia's much larger arsenal.

## **Session 2 – Adapting Capabilities for a New Era**

Speakers and participants offered their ideas for consideration about what military capabilities NATO will need to deal with emerging threats.

- The face of future conflict will likely be: more urban; on or close to a coastline; intrastate as opposed to war between states; driven by conflicts over resources; and/or overlapping with development and foreign assistance. These will be hybrid operations, with both military and civilian components. This does not mean that conflict between states will disappear, though the methods for responding to those threats may be less traditional. The Alliance needs to consider lessons-learned with respect to irregular and urban warfare from ISAF, and to evaluate whether to retain and institutionalize them in future NATO force structures and concepts of operation.
- NATO needs to play a larger role in defense of the global commons. It is already undertaking anti-piracy missions such as Ocean Shield. The opening up of Arctic sea lanes may create new demands for allies to ensure safety and security of transit and deal with crisis management in that region. Allies also need to develop early warning networks and effective defense of cyber and space assets. NATO needs to

think about how it would respond to attacks on space assets. Would it trigger an Article 5 response? Allies should also give more attention to defense and deterrence of cyber attacks. NATO's role in energy security is limited, but it can be an energy security enabler by training the security forces of key energy supplier states.

- Although each operation will have unique characteristics, an iterative lessons-learned process should be an integral part of NATO's operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere. These efforts should focus on a range of issues including command and control, equipment, tactics and practices. They should also institutionalize those ad hoc decision-making processes and solutions that will likely be constants in any future NATO operation. What should flow from this process is a common understanding among all NATO nations of how to conduct complex operations, stability operations and counterinsurgency.
- Stability operations have become a new and significant NATO mission and have a unique set of criteria: training indigenous forces; security sector reforms; and coordination and cooperation with the civilian sector. The more effective NATO can be in the development and training of indigenous forces, for example, the less likely it is that NATO will have to expend even greater resources at some future time.
- There will never be enough NATO civilians to fill every void in a stability operation, but NATO does not necessarily need all of these capabilities filled at the same levels. NATO should recruit and have available more civilians with specific skills and backgrounds, but these should be seen as advisors or a complement to the military; and as partners to what other international and non-governmental organizations bring to the operation. Developing the comprehensive approach for working with partners will ensure effective unity of action in the conduct of these complex missions.

### **Session 3 – Changing the Way NATO Does Business**

Seminar speakers and participants advanced a number of their proposals for enhancing Alliance business practices, decision-making processes, and structures.

- Several speakers argued that NATO must transform the way it makes decisions, organizes missions and training, generates funding from members, allocates and spends those funds, and establishes and implements partnerships with other nations or institutions. It was noted that NATO has hundreds of committees that have developed over the years. Some urged that Allies reassess the contemporary utility of many of these committees.
- The well-known coordination difficulties between NATO and the EU have negative consequences for operations when both organizations are involved. New forums are not needed, but scheduling meetings and summits “back-to-back,” so that key players can attend and discuss these critical matters could alleviate many of the organizational problems—problems which need to be resolved before deployment. A number of speakers urged that the U.S. must take the lead in achieving new trans-Atlantic cooperation.

- There is no adequate substitute for consensus, but how consensus is implemented is “fair game” for reform. All too often consensus from some members is agreeing to an operation without any intention of participating. It also gets used inappropriately by members who are not participating in an operation, but still try to block the ability of those nations that are engaged in accomplishing their mission. There is a big difference between a consensus decision and implementation of that decision. Unfortunately, the latter has been used to undermine the former.
- There is no need to re-legislate consensus at every level in the Alliance. One decision should be enough to permit the International Staff and International Military Staff to do what is necessary to carry out operations. Quick fixes could include moving decision making to those responsible for implementation, abandoning fixed speaking order lists in favor of real discussion, and granting the Secretary General the authority to move people and resources within the Alliance to address needs as they arise without a vote on every single move.
- The Alliance has earned the unfortunate distinction of making decisions but not implementing them. Instead of re-thinking consensus, NATO should make fewer little decisions, save consensus for the really big and important issues, and let the professionals do their job of implementing those decisions.
- Improving Alliance crisis response capabilities and the ability to deal with emerging threats will require some changes in decision-making processes. Allies should consider: placing a time limit—for example, a few hours or 24 hours—on breaking silence on certain urgent crisis decisions, thereby giving the Secretary General pre-delegated authorities to be able to provide an initial Alliance response to certain emergencies. To have effective missile defenses, there may be a need to give pre-designated authority to NATO civil or military authorities to take action to block missile strikes.

#### **Session 4 – Breakout Groups**

Participants in four breakout groups offered their ideas about how Allies could best cope with projected resource constraints, including through command restructuring, organizational reforms, and enhanced relations with industry.

##### **Breakout Group 1 on Aligning Resources and Strategy**

- It is unlikely that the free-fall in defense spending can be reversed, and the existing Alliance goal of member nations allocating two percent of GDP to defense is probably unrealistic. There may be wide agreement about traditional and emerging threats, but publics in many European countries do not believe these are imminent or existential dangers. Some NATO governments assume that other Allies will fill the gap, referred to as “free riding.”
- Possible solutions are public outreach to convince NATO publics that money is being spent for “their” security and reducing duplications by having individual Allies take on responsibility for doing what they do best.

### **Breakout Group 2 on Military Efficiencies**

- The current NATO budget process is ad hoc; driven by political views rather than military advice; has no standard method to set requirements priorities; and does not reflect the reality of current or future operations.
- Assuming flat or even decreased defense spending, draconian cuts will have to be made in the command structure, which is no longer suited for current or future missions and infrastructure which has no practical use. If a subordinate command is not being used, it should be cut, as should infrastructure. These tradeoffs offer a practical way to free up funding for essential capabilities.

### **Breakout Group 3 on Military/Command Structure Reform**

- Today's NATO is too big, too static, and basically unfit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century operating environment. Reform of the command structure could improve this situation by: 1) reducing the headquarters footprint, 2) making headquarters deployable, and 3) improving the relationship between command structure and force structure.
- A number of recommendations were discussed about reducing duplication in military headquarters structures at the command, component, and joint forces levels. An important step could include the creation of an independent commission to advise the command structure as recommended by U.S. Secretary of Defense Gates.

### **Breakout Group 4 on Collaboration with Industry**

- The principles of efficiency, interoperability, and sustainability should guide NATO defense development and acquisition programs, much of which can be accomplished through information sharing: exchanging information regarding ongoing research and development; making future NATO requirements clear to industry (using less expensive commercially available technologies); identifying shortfalls and interoperability gaps; and eliminating duplication of effort (increased cooperation with the EU and other partners).
- Competition in the defense industry is healthy if it does not serve solely to protect national industries. Guiding principles for collaboration with industry should be maintaining coherence, embracing success, and challenging bureaucracy.