

Strategic Concept Seminar 1 – Luxembourg, 16 October

The first Strategic Concept seminar took place in Luxembourg on 16 October, under the chairmanship of The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, chair of the Group of Experts and Vice Chair Jeroen van der Veer. The meeting was addressed by H.E. Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg; H.E. Jean-Marie Halsdorf, Minister of Defence of Luxembourg; and the Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero. All members of the Group of Experts participated in the discussions.

Participants from government, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and academic institutions presented a variety of challenging and provocative ideas and held lively discussions to begin thinking about the following broad themes:

1. NATO's enduring purpose in a changing security environment: The new security environment: NATO's strategic interests, what priorities and what vulnerabilities? NATO's contribution to global security. The aim was to reach a common understanding of major changes in the security environment and the implications of these changes for NATO's essential purpose and contribution to the freedom and security of its members.
2. Core tasks of the Alliance: Collective defence in today's security environment. Article 5 credibility and changing requirements. Adapting deterrence to the 21st century. The aim was to review the fundamental security missions of the Alliance and assess what remains unchanged and what needs to be adapted. As well as identifying what new tasks the Alliance still needs to address.
3. NATO's political role: Is NATO still the focal point for transatlantic political consultation and policy formulation and coordination? Anticipation and prevention: how to promote knowledge-based security within NATO? The aim was to explore the scope and efficiency of political consultation in NATO.
4. Priorities for a NATO strategy in the 21st century: three round tables discussed NATO's level of ambition in a constrained environment; hard and soft security – soft; and smart power and prioritization of missions – prevent, deter, protect, fight.

The purpose of the seminar was to stimulate a lively discussion and not to come to any conclusions at this point. Some of the highlights of presentations and discussions among participants included the following points, which the Experts Group will continue to discuss and explore in the coming months.

- NATO's past successes have an enduring value: they made war unthinkable among its member states; they provided a framework for democratic consolidation in Europe; and ended East-West conflict on peaceful terms through the path set by the Harmel report of pursuing defence and détente in tandem. NATO is a collective defence arrangement involved in cooperative security activities and a values-based political-military alliance.
- NATO's core purpose remains the defence of its members. The most likely future threats to member states are hybrid and asymmetrical, rather than classical armed attack. New capabilities are required for effective defence against terrorist, long range missile, and cyber attacks. One urgent task is to protect against a

WMD attack by a non-state actor, which requires steps to secure nuclear weapons, possible preventive actions to disrupt such attacks, and an active counter-proliferation policy.

- New transnational threats are only half the story, however. Geopolitics is back. Article 5 remains at the core and strategic reassurance of all members is important. In order to be out of area, NATO needs to be in area; there is a need to preserve a strong link between Article 5 and non-Article 5 tasks. Article 5 actions today would likely require deployable forces, so there is no inherent trade off between preparing for force projection and collective defence.
- Other tasks are likely to include: stabilization of weak and fragile states; prevention of genocide; strengthening governance and stability along NATO's periphery; mitigating the effects of natural or man-made disasters; combating piracy; and safeguarding energy flows. To deal with these challenges, the Alliance needs to develop partnerships and cooperative security arrangements.
- NATO's focus has shifted from the protection of territory to the protection of common strategic interests. Defence of these interests in the future will be more reliant on naval power.
- Other developments in the world, such as climate change, are likely to be threat catalysts and NATO may be called upon to deal with their security consequences. These could range from safeguarding sea lanes in the High North to dealing with future conflicts or humanitarian disasters in Africa.
- Consultations on security under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty remain a key principle and the very existence of this mechanism makes conflict less likely, but Article 4 consultations are underutilized. NATO needs a higher level of ambition for consultations. NATO also needs an effective crisis management and conflict prevention mechanism.
- Effective strategic reassurance under Article 5 requires contingency plans and a tailor-made deterrence, which should reflect the more complex strategic environment, be applicable out of area, be reinforced by the resolve to act, involve more actors, and be integrated with political dialogue. NATO must be ready to operate and reinforce deterrence in a proliferation environment through missile defence and other capabilities.
- Getting the issue of strategic reassurance right is key for handling relations with Russia. Strategic reassurance of allies and engagement of Russia on issues of mutual interest are complementary policies.
- To achieve NATO's fundamental tasks the following means are required: effective partnerships with governmental and non-governmental entities; a cooperative relationship with Russia; a better coordination of the constituent elements of policies; a reallocation of resources by strengthening non-military and drastically restructuring the military to make it more deployable; and a better division of labour between NATO-EU.

- Effective strategy will also require political will, effective means, and clarity about goals. What makes NATO unique is its integrated military structure, so there is a need to avoid a renationalization of defence policies in the context of the economic crisis.
- Afghanistan is a critical test for the Alliance. However, there is more to Afghanistan than NATO, and NATO is more than Afghanistan. Even if NATO does everything right, Afghanistan could remain unstable due to weak governance and the shortcomings of other actors and neighbouring states. This underscores the importance of the comprehensive approach and effective partnerships. Allies face an array of other security challenges that NATO must also be prepared to address.
- The new Strategic Concept needs to clarify NATO's identity – what NATO is about; NATO's effectiveness – how it does things; and NATO's legitimacy. It should address the following issues:
 - the balance between military and security activities;
 - the identification of threats, taking into account that a strict focus on unconventional threats will not reflect the preeminent concerns of all allies;
 - NATO as an Alliance of values – the re-emergence of the West as a political category;
 - how to deal with uncertainty about Russia;
 - Article 5 should be seen not just a military issue, but one of mindset – how credible is the Alliance solidarity; and
 - nuclear weapons – the 1999 Strategic Concept had a very clear articulation of the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence, but it will need to be reviewed in the context nuclear policy changes.
 - ultimately it must be understood by our democratic publics.