



Report on Wilton Park Conference 1011

THE TRANSATLANTIC STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

Friday 5 – Sunday 7 March 2010

In partnership with the **Atlantic Council**, the **Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique** and the **Royal United Service Institute**, with support from the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** and the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Key Points

- This conference brought together some forty-five policymakers, military officials, parliamentarians, and leading security experts from Europe and North America in order to contribute to the elaboration of the new Strategic Concept of the Atlantic Alliance through a high-level stock-taking exercise. The conference took place in extended roundtable format in order to provide for a comprehensive exchange of views between all participants, with the group assessing the analytic framework for the new Strategic Concept, the purposes it should serve, and its content.
- *The Strategic Concept's defining feature.* For the first time NATO's purpose, principles and partnerships must necessarily be considered in a global context. To that end, the conference placed Strategic Concept 2010 within the framework of the wider transatlantic strategic partnership and affirmed four key elements of NATO's purpose at a time of acute financial stress for members: to reaffirm the mutual security contract at the heart of Alliance; to reaffirm the mutual commitment to the protection and defence of Allies in the event of an attack; to demonstrate a readiness to help resolve international crises when invited; and to co-operate with others to resolve common security threats. The overriding goal must be to make NATO citizens feel safe.
- *Afghanistan.* The future of NATO is not dependent on the outcome in Afghanistan. However, crafting stability in Afghanistan is the most pressing challenge faced by the Alliance, and the solidarity and commitment demonstrated by the Allies therein will have a profound bearing on the future US commitment to the Alliance.

- *Russia.* Partnership with Russia is essential and Strategic Concept 2010 must reflect a desire for close co-operation with Moscow. If there is no deal with Russia there is no security in Europe. However, a dual track approach to Russia should be adopted, reaffirming strategic reassurance particularly for Allies in Central Europe. This strategic reassurance should include the conduct of exercises and training in the Baltic States.
- *Transatlantic Forum.* Strategic Concept 2010 must promote NATO as the natural forum for the discussion of defence and security issues by Europeans, Americans and Canadians, who share the same democratic values and commitment to freedom and respect for human rights. Europe is at best a collection of regional actors whilst the US plays on a global scale, so how to mesh Europe's regional role with the US global one constitutes a critical issue.
- *Collective Security and Defence.* Strategic Concept 2010 will seek to keep risk at strategic distance by re-affirming the centrality of Article 5 collective defence and re-energising both Article 3 (self-help and mutual aid) and Article 4 (consultations when threatened). However, what constitutes an armed attack on NATO member states will also need to be addressed.
- *Next Generation Partnerships.* NATO should create a common toolbox of partnership activities, including an Article 4 type consultation process regarding global strategic challenges that could be used with all NATO partners.

Situation Report on the Work of the Group of Experts

'The Alliance is at an inflection point. There is need for broad discussion.'

1. To help inform its discussions, the conference received a situation report on the state of thinking within the Group of Experts appointed by NATO's Secretary General to advise him on the Strategic Concept. The Group of Experts will launch a 3-4 page public document together with a 30 page official document in May 2010 to help explain to the Strategic Concept process to a wider public. It will advise the Secretary-General to focus on how to promote further specialisation, standardisation and effective decision-making. The report will address new security challenges as well as possible threats, explain NATO's role and establish the limits of NATO's scope of action by suggesting where and when others are better placed to act.

2. The Group of Experts will call for greater political and operational flexibility, particularly as it concerns the Comprehensive Approach. Strategic reassurance will be a central theme, but at the same time assurances will be given to the Russians that the Strategic Concept makes co-operation with Russia a high priority. The report will thus emphasise the importance of consultation, partnership between institutions, and the Open Door policy of the Alliance towards future members. It will urge strengthening the management and leadership tools of the Secretary-General. The need for NATO reform will be stressed, including a major reduction in the number of staff and committees and rationalisation of overlaps with partners such as the EU, as well as improved systems for measuring performance.

What is the Current State of the Transatlantic Strategic Partnership and Where does it Need to Go?

‘The Americans in, the Europeans up and the Russians With’

3. With Strategic Concept 2010 NATO is facing the great challenge of carrying out a far reaching self examination whilst engaged in the most substantial military operation in its history. Alliance members are also confronting a period of unprecedented budgetary constraint.

4. NATO’s relevance is challenged. An erosion of support for NATO is happening in both Europe and the US, but this erosion is considerably more pronounced in the US. Historically, alliances can’t survive unless there is a common view of security threats between the key players. Major differences in perceptions of security threats exist not only between Europe and America, but within Europe as well. The transatlantic strategic partnership should therefore move ahead on the following basis.

5. *A New Grand Bargain.* There is a need for a new grand bargain between a US engaged globally and a Europe with a regional focus. A renovated NATO must be the building block of a new transatlantic strategic partnership that is relevant to the problems and challenges faced by all members. Europe must remain sufficiently important to the US for Washington to make a proper politically and militarily investment in the Alliance. That will require bridging a security conceptual gap between an America that sees itself at war and a Europe that does not.

6. *Maintain NATO's Core Mission.* Collective defence through Article 5; the indivisibility of security through Article 4; NATO as a guarantor of peace in Europe through enlargement (Article 10); and the Alliance's contribution to broad peace and security (Article 2) provide the foundation for NATO's role in the transatlantic strategic partnership.

7. *Strategic Rehabilitation.* Strategic Concept 2010 must mark the beginning of strategic rehabilitation. To that end, Americans and Europeans must recognise that the transatlantic strategic partnership is not exclusive to NATO. A meaningful US-EU security relationship based on a US-EU Strategic Concept is also vital.

8. *Promote a Range of Institutional Partnership.* NATO should strive to establish a better basis for cooperation with the UN and EU. The NATO-EU partnership must act as an enabler of credible civil and military influence and effect.

9. *A New Road-Map for Afghanistan:* The Allies need to establish a new civilian-military road-map in Afghanistan based on the need to hold and build to re-inject political momentum into the campaign. Afghanistan constitutes a critical near-term priority for NATO, but the end of NATO's deployment there is likely to be messy. It is important to avoid creating the perception that if NATO 'fails' in Afghanistan, it will collapse.

10. *Meeting the New Security Challenges.* Terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, energy security and the nexus of failing states, criminality and illicit capital flows all form part of a new security agenda. The Allies need to consider how best to engage such threats and keep them at strategic distance.

11. *A Constructive Agenda towards Russia.* There is currently no coordinated transatlantic strategy towards Russia. While all agree on the need for a vigorous substantive dialogue, there are major differences regarding the basis on which to establish it. NATO should keep the possibility of future membership for Russia on the table, together with co-operation over Afghanistan, new security challenges and military to military relations. Equally, Russia also needs to meet NATO halfway.

12. NATO's first Secretary General Lord Ismay famously stated that the organisation's role was 'to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down'. NATO must now keep the US actively engaged (Americans in), boost Europe's role (Europeans up), and act in concert with rather than against Russia (Russians with).

What Should the New Strategic Concept Seek to Achieve?

'Big Change is Global Change'

13. *Confront Strategic Change.* The Concept must reflect the paradigm shift that has taken place in international relations since 1999 and the last Strategic Concept. It is time therefore that NATO's purpose, principles and partnerships be re-considered in Strategic Concept 2010.

14. *Conflict Prevention.* The Alliance must address symptoms as well as the consequences of conflict through a prevention role built on partnerships. Whilst success in Afghanistan is vital, Strategic Concept 2010 must consider the longer-term.

15. *The Strategic Concept 2010 Process.* The journey towards Strategic Concept 2010 has been as important as the goal, having embraced many people and groups. The political momentum generated must be turned into actual change. For example, strategic reassurance must be based on substantive change. To that end, contingency planning for the Baltic region as a whole must continue to develop.

16. *The Budget Deficit.* NATO is in a 'catastrophic position', facing a budget deficit of \$650m. The Secretary-General is required by defence ministers to report by July 2010 on proposed reforms that can improve the organisation's financial position.

17. *Acting NATO Smart.* The Alliance is going to have to act 'NATO Smart', requiring further reform of the NATO command structure, rationalising headquarters (breaking the geographic link), strengthening Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and Multiple Futures process, expanding the exercise programme, and reforming the Alliance's deterrence posture.

18. *The Minimum Level of Military Requirement:* Given the change both within and outside the Alliance, the strategic judgements implicit in Strategic Concept 2010 must define the minimum level of military requirement likely to meet future challenges. Credible military power is successful when it does not have to be used. NATO has reasonably good capacity to deploy force, but is much weaker in its ability to sustain deployed forces over time.

19. *A New Force Posture.* Through modernisation and transformation NATO must seek to strike a defence planning balance between collective defence and expeditionary forces.

The characteristics of forces needed for expeditionary operations and those for territorial defence have many similar features as the defence of Allies today requires expeditionary forces.

20. *Focussed Multinational Formations.* Re-establishing the relevance of focussed multinational formations, such as the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the High Readiness Forces (HRF) will lock smaller members into Alliance planning and thus prevent further cutting of defence expenditure.

21. *The Global Policeman Option has Gone.* NATO is a regional organisation with strong global links. Given the challenges that it faces, NATO must not become a talking shop. To that end Strategic Concept 2010 must strengthen three elements: NATO command structure, access to consultations on a permanent 24/7 basis, and defence planning. Whilst NATO cannot play the role of global policeman, support for the US in its global stabilising role will include securing sea and space lines of communication.

22. *The Cost of Readiness:* Strategic Concept 2010 must re-energise top-level political guidance and direction. Without it the military cannot effectively conduct their business. This is particularly important given that today positional forces and deployable forces are one and the same. The key issue is the degree of readiness at which forces are held. Readiness is expensive.

23. *The German Dilemma.* Germany is a strategic 'black hole' in the heart of the Alliance. In the absence of a Germany willing to fulfil its role as a leader of the European pillar of the Alliance, NATO is weakened to the extent that the burden on and consequence of American leadership will remain overwhelming. This imbalance undermines the functioning of the Alliance as an effective political forum.

What Should the New Strategic Concept Say?

'Complexity often undermines capacity'

24. Public support for NATO is still high but declining, especially in the United States. In considering the content of the new Strategic Concept, the first point is to think carefully about how the document can strengthen public support. It should not try to address too many different audiences. If necessary there should be separate documents drafted for the public

and practitioners. Strategic communications is critical, and Alliance public diplomacy could be reorganised to be the effective generator and guardian of the message. The new Strategic Concept may consequently be most effective as a short, sharp, simple document that the media can digest easily, accompanied by a work plan. Within this framework, Strategic Concept 2010 should have the following characteristics.

25. It should address real issues to re-establish the relevance of the Alliance built on three drivers: a new political flexible response; a strategic operational concept; and a 'brains-driven strategy'. NATO must stress the need to think ways out of problems rather than spend ways out of problems. To that end a continuous process of learning is vital, particularly for NATO forces, which places a particular premium on the modernisation of defence education and the work of the NATO Defence College.

26. The Strategic Concept must be honest with publics and treat them as adults. There is a whole raft of dangerous uncertainty to face but such is the nature of uncertainty that it would be easy to make the wrong strategic choices. It should emphasise the need for leadership at the level of heads of state and government to give the Alliance political momentum, particularly over pressing issues such as Afghanistan.

27. There is a need to recognise that NATO will act at times like a voluntary association in which countries participate on an ad hoc basis. In such an environment, solidarity together with the delegation of responsibility to others better placed to act will be a key element.

28. The new concept must make the case for modernising the defence architecture of the Alliance including missile defence, nuclear deterrence and cyber-defence with all of this architecture open to partners such as Russia. It should set the stage for a NATO *Nuclear Posture Review* that grips properly new realities such as the shifting balance of tactical nuclear weapons and the renovation of arms control as part of a modernised Alliance force posture.

29. The Strategic Concept needs to reaffirm the central role of NATO as a military alliance with the ability to deploy and sustain powerful armed forces built on interoperability and a military partnership open to all like-minded states. It should call for Allied Command Operations (ACO) to be properly prepared to conduct NATO operations and ACT to be given both the freedom and resources to transform through experiment. NATO needs to make defence planning systems more realistic, with members updating their forces but in a

'financially savvy' manner. However, common funding is unlikely to be extensive as it implies two budgets.

30. Strategic Concept 2010 should lay the basis for a new transatlantic compact in which Europeans acknowledge that the US is a permanent European power and the US encourages a 'friendly hegemon' (the EU) to emerge in Europe. In such a compact Europeans will prevent war in Europe and support the US elsewhere through NATO when it makes sense.

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