

# NATO After the Implementation of the New Strategic Concept

REMARKS AT THE IV FORUM ON EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY "IS CENTRAL EUROPE SAFER AFTER LISBON?" ON 17 MARCH 2011 IN WARSAW

## INTRODUCTION

The question we were given for this panel is: "Is Central Europe Safer After Lisbon?" My spontaneous answer is a clear and resounding yes since the new SC is a truly convincing response to the challenges NATO and all its member nations are confronted with at the beginning of the 2nd decade of the 21st century. The SC reaffirmed NATO's commitment to collectively defending any member who came under attack and looking at NATO's military capabilities NATO is adequately prepared to do so. Moreover, despite the unresolved situation in Afghanistan and the volatile situation at Europe's southern periphery there is nobody who could seriously threaten the Alliance or any of its member states by waging a conventional war, there is no competing organisation disposing of similar capabilities and competing ideas such as a new pan-European security agreement as proposed by President Medvedev have little to no chance to be pursued.

But the overall theme of this Forum is: NATO after the implementation of the New Strategic Concept. Hence one has to assume that the NATO nations will fully implement the Strategic Concept "Active Engagement, Modern Defence" and the Lisbon Summit Declaration. Should this really happen then NATO were indeed an alliance well prepared to cope with the manifold challenges of the 21st Century.

However, looking at today's NATO one has to say that most NATO countries are still best prepared for the war which is at this time the least likely conflict, a conventional war waged in Europe but most of them are not properly prepared to meet the

challenges of our time such as terrorism, cyber attack and proliferation of WMD and missiles. Moreover, there is a steady decline of defence expenditures in more or less all Non-US-NATO countries and against the background of the still unresolved global financial and economic crisis there is little hope that this development will be corrected any time soon. In addition there is not too much political preparedness to cope with the momentous change unfolding in the Arab world, which will most probably mean a dramatic change in Israel's security equation, which will result in a considerable increase in Turkey's strategic importance for both Europe and for NATO and which means undoubtedly that NATO's main emphasis will shift from Central and Eastern Europe to the Southern and South-Eastern periphery of Europe. Finally, there is little preparatory thinking what the consequences for the Euro-Atlantic region might be should the expected shift of the political main emphasis from the transatlantic area to the Asian-Pacific region really occur in the next decade or so. Against this assessment that today's NATO is inadequately prepared to meet the most probable dangers I would like to discuss from the point of view of a former military two issues: What should NATO do now to enhance its military capabilities and what steps should the alliance take in the mid term in order to be prepared for tomorrow's risks.

## THE NEXT STEPS

NATO agreed at Lisbon on focusing its military preparations on collective defence but this should and must not mean to return to the "euro-centric" alliance of the past since such a focus would probably decouple Europe from the US. NATO must assure all its member nations through its credible

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capability and indeed preparedness of defending the entire NTA that their security is and will remain guaranteed through the political will and the military capability of all NATO members to contribute to the defence of each NATO member state, which came under attack. A clear and convincing solution for the long debated question of missile defence would be a clear signal to all NATO nations that NATO does what it says. But the capability to protect all NATO countries has to be seen as the prerequisite for action beyond the NTA since the challenge of today is meeting the threats there where they have their origins and the objective has to be to keep the risks at a distance from the NTA. Thus NATO could hit two birds with one stone if all members were capable of contributing to expeditionary operations: It would protect in a much better way than through the traditional territorial defence its member countries and it would enhance its strategic flexibility since thus the Non-US NATO nations would be seen by the US as partners which matter. This means that next to missile defence NATO's C4ISR capabilities have to be improved, a capability which is indeed crucial for NATO's transformation into a 21st Century alliance and by far more important than any of the traditional procurement programs such as fighting vehicles, fighter aircraft or naval combatants. For this reason I am convinced that the first of these C4ISR programs, the NATO AGS, is the most important decision to be taken soon since it is indeed the key to a series of transformation efforts to follow. Having said this you can imagine how much I regret that Poland decided to abandon this program which fosters cohesion and enhances NATO's ability in coping with today's dangers such as piracy and which would also help in monitoring refugee movements across the Mediterranean.

The principle on which a program such as AGS is based is at the same time a future oriented formula and an option for ideas such as smart procurement.

This brings me to the mid-term challenges, which encompass as the first and most urgent steps the enhancement of NATO's strategic mobility, the establishment of some cyber operations capabilities and the improvement of our nations' NBC defences. Except the latter, which has to be tackled by nations individually but possibly by using identical equipment such as for instance a smart combat suit, which is at the same time a NBC protection suit, such programs render themselves for

either the establishment of NATO owned and operated component forces or for the pooling of assets. Such approaches are in my view the most promising formula for the modernisation of Non-US NATO forces and an affordable way of smart procurement.

They require that nations would be willing to transfer a small portion of their national sovereignty to an international body such as NATO, to accept multi-national manning and to agree on a cost sharing formula. There is simply no alternative to this approach as the example of missile defence so clearly proves but the nations' behaviour does not bode too well. Take the bad examples recently given by my country when Germany refused to participate in an AWACS deployment to Afghanistan.

The NATO nations will have to use their scarce resources in a truly smart ways if they want to be prepared for the numerous challenges which they neatly identified in the Lisbon documents and which an unruly future will bring. If the Non-US allies did so they would signal to the U.S. that they are willing to shoulder their part of the burden in defending collectively the NATO Treaty Area (NTA) stretching from Tallinn to Vancouver. Thus they could most probably succeed in keeping the Americans in Europe in the long-term as well. Such a long-term American commitment is as badly needed today as it was during the darkest hours of the Cold War for two reasons: First, Europe needs the Americans on its side if it wanted to achieve lasting peace and stability with Russia and, secondly, Europe needs a partner with global outreach since Europe does not and will not have a global projection capability for quite some time to come although most of the risks and dangers Europe is facing are of a global nature.

If the NATO nations were prepared to stop the unfortunate tendency which the Secretary general identified so properly at the Munich Security Conference when he stated that the Non-US-Allies spent 48 billions USD less on defence during the last two years thus increasing the US share of the NATO expenditures from 50 to 75% during that period then NATO would be able to implement the ambitious Lisbon agenda. We Europeans are called upon to bring to an end what in my view is a political scandal: We spend approximately 60% of what the US spend for defence but we produce not much more than 10% of the American power

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projection capabilities. The implementation of the truly excellent Lisbon document is thus in the hands of the European NATO nations. Should they succeed in getting their acts together and finding smart ways of procuring the materiel their armed forces will need for coping with the wide variety of new risks then one could say that Central Europe will be safer after the implementation of the Lisbon SC since NATO would be able to keep the risks at a distance and the Europeans would contribute their share to the common and indivisible security of the North American and European nations.

#### **CONCLUSION**

May I conclude by saying that in my conviction the U.S. is and remains the ultimate guarantor of European stability since Europe in its present status of diminished cohesion is simply not capable of coping with the two directional challenge it is confronted with: Europe must be capable of responding to risks and dangers which are increasingly global in their nature without disposing of global capabilities and Europe has to cope with an increasingly assertive and nationalistic and yet not really self-confident Russia on which most European countries depend in terms of energy security. To this end Europe needs NATO and through NATO the U.S. for persuading Russia to become serious in cooperation among equals. This means that NATO has to stick to its commitment to collective defence and you here in Poland as well as all NATO countries can rely upon NATO: The Alliance is willing and capable of successfully defending any ally who came under attack. Based on this guarantee it should be possible to achieve lasting stability. But in return the Americans expect the Europeans to be on their side there where common interests are at stake. Having said all this I do not really worry about NATO's future provided all NATO nations are determined to honour their commitments and to maintain cohesion.