

Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
Jaap de Hoop Scheffer
Spoken Word Applies

Global NATO: Overdue or Overstretch?
Secretary General's Speech at the SDA Conference
Brussels, 6 November 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. It's great to be back at the SDA. "Global NATO: Overdue or Overstretch", that's an interesting combination of words – another Gilles Merritt classic! It is obviously intended to provoke – and, I admit, it works. So let me focus on the theme of the conference, and offer you my views on both the terms "global" and "overstretch".

I have said it on many occasions, and I will say it again here today: we don't need a global NATO. That is not what our transformation is all about. The kind of NATO that we need – and that we are successfully creating – is an Alliance that defends its members against global threats: terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and failed states. To counter these threats, NATO doesn't need to become a "gendarme du monde". What we need is an increasingly global approach to security, with organisations, including NATO, playing their respective roles.

But doesn't such a demanding job description invite the danger of "overstretch", as the conference theme implies. Is the need for NATO to defend against global threats an invitation to get entangled in ever more demanding engagements, yet with limited means?

Clearly, coping with an ever increasing set of demands will remain a constant challenge. Right now, more than 50,000 soldiers are serving under NATO command in operations and missions on three continents. We have never seen our resources stretched like this before. And since the demand for NATO will not diminish, but certainly grow further, we must make sure the Alliance is able to deliver. And I believe that means we should concentrate on six key areas.

Number one, we need to continue to build up our capabilities.

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At our Riga Summit in three weeks' time, we will bring together key strands of NATO's work in that area, including missile defence, air-to-ground surveillance, terrorism-related work, and defence against weapons of mass destruction. [13 NATO-nations and one partner will sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the collective use of C-17 strategic transport aircraft.] And the NATO Response Force should reach its Full Operational Capability.

This demonstrates the tremendous progress we have already achieved. But I believe that even more needs to be done beyond Riga. We also need a much clearer NATO framework for training and employing Special Forces. That's why the Riga Summit will not be an end point, but merely a stepping stone in our continuing military transformation process.

Of course, having the right capabilities means more than having the right hardware. It also includes having the right defence planning system. That's why we are currently in the process of fine-tuning our defence planning process, based on the Comprehensive Political Guidance to be published in Riga. This is the framework which sets out the sort of Defence Capabilities we need to tackle the challenges we are most likely to face tomorrow. We need a planning process that is even more capabilities-based, even more tailored to the specific needs of individual Allies, and even more adaptive to deal with potential shortfalls.

My second point: We need to share risks and burdens more equitably.

One glaring example is the question of caveats and national restrictions on in theatre use of our forces. When it comes to sending their soldiers into operations, some NATO nations still insist on all kinds of restrictions. This limits the usability of their forces – and it inhibits our commanders' flexibility. In recent months, we have made progress in removing some of those caveats, yet we need to make an even greater effort. Today, NATO needs to cover the full spectrum of operations, from combat to peacekeeping. That's why putting caveats on operations means putting caveats on NATO's future. At Riga, I will convey this message to our Heads of State and Government, loud and clear.

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Another important element of burden-sharing is the reform of our funding arrangements. Just look at the NATO Response Force. According to our current rules, "costs lie where they fall", which means that nations pay their own way in Alliance operations. If the NRF is deployed, only those nations who are in the Force at the time of its deployment have to pay. In other words, if you're not in the NRF at that time, you don't pay. You're lucky. To me, this is almost a lottery, not a funding arrangement for an Alliance built on solidarity.

For this reason, I have proposed to extend common funding for a trial period for short term NRF deployments, particularly to the strategic airlift element. Obviously, this is matter under discussion. But if it works, it would significantly enhance the NRF's credibility and give it the catalyst role we want it to play for our force transformation. At the very least, it would take away national alibis for not committing.

My third point: We need to coordinate better with other actors.

A key lesson from the Balkans and now Afghanistan is the need to work more closely with other international organisations – governmental and non-governmental. Security and development go hand in hand, we all know that. But we don't always act as if we do. There is still too much separation between those who provide security and those who provide development.

We must bridge that gap. We need to coordinate much more closely with the UN, the EU, the NGOs – and not just in the field, but also at the strategic level. Nowhere is this more evident than in Kosovo and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, under NATO's lead, ISAF has now created a window of opportunity for development. It has to be exploited – fully and quickly. NATO is doing a lot, but we are neither a relief organisation nor a reconstruction agency. Now is the time for the international community to step in and help push Afghanistan further in the right direction.

Fourth, we need to further develop our partnerships.

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The strategic value of NATO's partnership policy is now beyond doubt. A NATO without partners has become truly unthinkable. But even good things can be made even better. In particular, we need to make our various partnership frameworks more coherent. To this end, we hope to make the tools from our Partnership for Peace programme available for other partnership frameworks, such as the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. We will also look at ways to exploit NATO's expertise in training other countries' security forces, notably in the Middle East.

And, last but certainly not least, we are going to deepen our ties with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This is a most timely development. Australia and New Zealand are already involved with us in Afghanistan. Japan and South Korea have also shown a willingness to shoulder a greater share of the international security burden. We all face the same threats and it is in their interest, as well as our own, that we come closer together.

Again, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, we don't need a global NATO. And I do not believe that anyone has suggested extending NATO's membership to Asia. Such notions are a diversion. The real issue is this: in dealing with "globalised insecurity", it matters less and less where a country sits on the map. What matters more is its mental map – its willingness to engage, together with others, to make a difference. That is the logic of NATO's global partnerships. It is simply a reflection of our transition from a geographical approach towards a functional approach to security.

Point Number Five: We need enhanced political dialogue.

Given the complex nature of our security environment, we can no longer look at NATO exclusively through the prism of capabilities. Again, Afghanistan is a case in point. To make a difference there, you've got to have sufficient military power, but you also need to have reconstruction and development, counter-narcotics policies, and democracy-building.

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In other words, Afghanistan demonstrates very clearly that we need to look at security in a more comprehensive fashion.

Such a holistic view requires, first and foremost, dialogue. It requires that we look at NATO not just as a force generation device, but also as a forum for a much more forward-looking discussion on future threats and challenges. In particular, we need to have an enlightened discussion on issues that require a clearer definition of what NATO's role should – or should not – be.

Energy security is a case in point. There are some who feel that this is not an appropriate subject for NATO, but others who believe just the opposite. My view is that the issue of energy security, to use a mixed metaphor, is coming down the pipeline, and that we need to look at what NATO's added value could be. As Secretary General, I will continue to stimulate serious thinking on this and other vital issues – in NATO's capitals as well as through debate among its member nations.

My final point: We need to break the deadlock in the NATO-EU relationship. This relationship is currently suffering from “understretch” rather than overstretch. Indeed, given the magnitude of today's security challenges, it is remarkable how narrow the common agenda of both institutions remains. All this despite many efforts, including by the SDA, to bring NATO and the EU closer together.

I am under no illusion about the time it will take to overcome the well-known formal obstacles to our cooperation. But this does not mean that we are condemned to inaction. NATO and the EU need a sustained dialogue about harmonising their military transformation, notably the NRF and the EU Battle Groups. They also need a sustained dialogue on Kosovo, where smooth cooperation between NATO and EU will become ever more important in the months ahead.

Our organisations also need to get away from replicating each others' initiatives. If NATO or the EU has come up with a worthwhile project, the other institution should not seek

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to create a similar initiative, but rather support the one that exists. NATO and the EU are in the business of security, not engaged in a beauty contest.

So, even if NATO-EU relations are not figuring on our Riga agenda, they should continue to figure prominently on our "to-do-list" in the months ahead. Because they are key to developing a truly holistic approach to security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have laid out six steps that NATO needs to take in order to deliver security in new ways and in new places. Some of these steps will be taken at Riga, others will take longer. After all, there will most probably be another Summit in 2008. And given NATO's 60th anniversary in 2009, we may well have yet another Summit opportunity.

This tight sequence of Summits will maintain some healthy pressure on moving NATO's transformation forward – and that is just as well. Because in a world of global challenges, institutions are no longer judged by what they represent. They are judged by what they actually achieve.

Thank you.