

NATO after the Riga Summit

Speech by Ambassador Dr. Edmund Duckwitz
at a dinner roundtable discussion
hosted by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, European Affairs Office
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you tonight. Exactly one week ago I returned from Riga. This evening I've brought with me, and can present to you, plans regarding the future of the Alliance.

From reading press coverage of Riga, it appears to have been more of an Afghanistan Summit than an event focusing on the future of the Alliance as a whole. Particularly in the German media, reports gave frontline coverage to this issue. Afghanistan is currently the public face of NATO.

Of course there are reasons for this. It is, after all, through its operations that an organisation is perceived in the public arena. The NATO Secretary General once said: "Today, our institutions are being judged less by what they represent but rather by what they can achieve." What NATO can achieve – this is precisely the issue we addressed in Riga.

Afghanistan represents the Alliance's biggest challenge to date. Since October, the International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, area of responsibility covers all of Afghanistan. Some 32,000 soldiers are now deployed under NATO command – more than in any previous operation. For the first time ever, the Alliance has suffered losses in its operations. The security situation in the south and the east remains tense. More than 90 percent of the world's drug poppies are grown in Afghanistan, which is also the fourth poorest country in the world. Corruption is rampant. In other words: we are facing a whole range of military and civilian challenges in Afghanistan.

In the run-up to Riga, operational constraints – or caveats, as they are also called - on national contingents received the largest headlines. On this, I can only say that many countries limit their operations in completely different ways. At Riga, these so-called "caveats" could be partially reduced. Troops can now more flexibly be deployed where NATO needs them.

As far as Germany is concerned, we are fulfilling our mission. Providing assistance in emergencies outside of the northern region has always been part of our mandate. This has just recently been reconfirmed by the German Bundestag.

Germany's engagement is needed in the north. As the third largest ISAF troop provider, we are successfully performing the task we have assumed: Regional Command North. This area is home to 40% of the Afghan population. The first stage, providing for a safe and secure environment, has for the most part been completed. Civilian reconstruction has also gotten off to a successful start. In the north, we have adopted a comprehensive approach from day one. It includes both civilian and military engagement. This has earned us widespread acceptance among the population. These successes are meant to have a positive effect on the rest of the country. **Therefore, what has been achieved in the north must be sustainably secured.**

Without any doubt, the situation in the south and the east must also soon improve. At Riga, Germany, too, advocated enhancing the Alliance's linkage between civilian and military engagement in these regions. At the summit, NATO nations agreed to establish a contact group on Afghanistan. The details still need to be worked out. We already have a similar body: the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, or JCMB.

No matter which committee serves as our vehicle: we must improve coordination of non-military activities in Afghanistan, and we must create better conditions for coordinating the reconstruction efforts of the various actors on the ground. This includes the United Nations, the World Bank, the EU and, most importantly, the Afghan Government. At Riga, there was consensus on the fact that Afghanistan is a political task. This unity of the Alliance sends a positive signal for the future conduct of the operation. Only if we win the hearts and minds of the population will the Taliban not stand a chance. That means we have to give the people a clear social economic and democratic perspective. Peace and stability are only possible with development.

Of course, military engagement remains important in the unsettled regions. We know that Afghanistan is an overarching Alliance project that calls for solidarity. And it is important to state that Riga has shown that the Allies stand shoulder-to-shoulder behind ISAF's operation.

Due to the large debate over Afghanistan, the Western Balkans have somewhat moved out of the public spotlight. However, we also addressed this region at Riga. For years, the Western Balkans were the site of numerous bloody conflicts. Today, negotiations on the future status of Kosovo are a key to achieving sustainable peace in the region. At Riga, NATO has made a commitment that it will continue to assume responsibility for the security situation during status negotiations and beyond. Kosovo will be the last – albeit the most difficult – tile that must still be inserted into the new mosaic of a stable regional security architecture.

Since Riga, almost all Western Balkan countries have now in one way or another been drawn closer to transatlantic structures. This is another step towards achieving lasting stability. Macedonia – or FYROM to use the official term -, Albania, and Croatia are now aspirants for possible Alliance membership. Within the context of the Membership Action Plan, they all have made progress in democratisation and implementing the rule of law. These countries seek to become part of the transatlantic community of values. They received good news at Riga: provided they continue to make good progress on reform, one or several of these aspirants – based on individual “performance” standards – will be sent a positive signal for membership at the 2008 summit.

Furthermore, Germany was a part of the effort at Riga to invite Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the Partnership for Peace. This invitation was extended at the summit, which we consider to be a great success.

In our further cooperation with these countries, we will call upon them to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. We in particular wish to help Serbia strengthen its democracy and promote the rule of law. The Partnership for Peace is an incentive for this. **We are convinced that isolation would be counterproductive.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Afghanistan and the Western Balkans were major issues at Riga that will continue to engage us. In both missions, **it has become obvious that NATO is no longer operating alone.**

On the Balkans, as in Afghanistan, the Alliance is working together with partners. Partnerships provide a basis for ensuring that NATO can successfully tackle its global tasks: 18 nations outside of the Alliance are currently providing military or civilian support to Allied missions and operations. In addition to several Mediterranean countries and countries in the broader Middle East region, the Alliance has partnerships with so-called Contact Countries – Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan. We also seek to intensify our relationship with these, on a case-by-case basis and to the extent that they express an interest in cooperation.

Germany believes that cooperation should be pragmatic and flexible. We do not want a new “global partnership” that would develop into an excessive and unwieldy format of more than fifty countries. We want each of our partners to be able to participate in operations and training programmes on a case-by-case basis, depending on the regional and thematic context and in accordance with their own wishes and aims. That is what we agreed on at Riga, and we consider this to be a satisfactory outcome. To make it very clear and avoid any misunderstanding: **The core of the Alliance remains transatlantic.**

Besides the focus on political discussions at Riga, one must not forget that without the necessary military capabilities, many of our missions and operations would be a pile of paper – and nothing more. Riga therefore also focused on the Alliance’s military transformation.

It was an important step that Full Operational Capability could be declared at Riga for the NATO Response Force, or NRF. The NRF is not only a catalyst for NATO’s transformation process, it is above all a rapidly-deployable, technologically advanced force that can be employed worldwide on land, at sea and in the air.

The NRF performs a wide spectrum of tasks, including evacuations, disaster management, counterterrorism, and acting as an entry force for larger, follow-on forces. By declaring Full Operational Capability, we have also conveyed a clear signal of our military strength. Some improvement is still needed so that the NRF can effectively perform the particularly demanding tasks that lie at the upper – or highly intensive – end of its operational spectrum. These deficits must be resolutely addressed following Riga. Essentially, NATO nations must be willing to provide personnel and material to the NRF on a sustainable basis. We want this to be achieved – if possible – through long-term and transparent arrangements for the provision of Allied troops. The aim is to guarantee fair burden sharing within the Alliance.

After all, military assets need to be moved to the theatre of operations and back again. Strategic airlift is an indispensable capability not only for the NRF, but for all NATO-led operations. Under a German-led initiative, 15 NATO nations and two partner countries – Finland and Sweden – have formed the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) consortium to charter airlift capability. This is an interim solution for the countries in order to meet their national airlift requirements up until the planned introduction of the Airbus A400M. This solution has meanwhile proven effective in operations.

In addition to SALIS and the Airbus A400M, various initiatives are currently being discussed within NATO and the EU to improve strategic airlift capability. The wide range of proposals include joint approaches – for example the UK initiative of a multinational acquisition of three or four Boeing C-17 aircrafts.

Independent of the “C-17 initiative”, which was presented on the sidelines of the NATO summit, Germany supports all national and multinational initiatives that aim to develop joint

NATO-EU solutions. We also want to improve transparency between both organisations and to enhance coordination of available assets. This includes the multinational coordination of airlift capability with the aim of optimising aircraft utilisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are the four key issues that I have brought with me from Riga: the operation in Afghanistan; our engagement in the Western Balkans; a short to medium-term consensus on the further development of NATO's partnerships; and further steps toward military transformation.

Now you may think: Was Riga not supposed to focus on the transformation of the Alliance? Some of you may still be looking for the major political ideas and innovations that one would expect from such a high-level summit.

On balance, Riga was a working summit. It was in part a political follow-up to current Alliance practices, and in part it focused on facing up to the Alliance's future challenges. Should this be viewed as a disappointing outcome?

Before I give an answer to this question I would like to remind you: The mind is said to be like the stomach: "It's not how much you put into it that counts, but how much it digests". In keeping with this metaphor, Riga is merely the appetiser to a multi-course meal. It is designed to whet the appetite and prepare the stomach for the following courses, which are the 2008 NATO summit, and the 2009 summit that will mark the Alliance's 60th anniversary. **The issue of transformation will therefore be dealt with by a series of three summits extending through 2009.**

By then, the Alliance must have completed its political and military transformation. Why such a tight time schedule? As some of you may know from personal experience, summits create one thing for sure: pressure to act and, more importantly, to achieve consensus. Although summits may be short, preparing them requires an enormous amount of work and coordination. We must harness these dynamics, and we must take full advantage of the opportunities that the 2008 and 2009 summits present.

Ladies and Gentlemen, NATO will have to reorient itself in three main areas: First, a coordinated Alliance concept relating to new memberships and partnerships. Second, developing competences in cooperation with other actors, such as the EU. Third, defining the Alliance's tasks.

On the first issue: countries that support our aims and operations must be drawn closer to the Alliance. NATO must find ways to deploy these pooled resources effectively, while avoiding conflict.

There is a rising demand for crisis intervention and stabilisation forces, at the same time this is leading to growing burdens. That is why expanding cooperation with partners who make substantial contributions to NATO operations makes sense. Ranging from interoperability of armed forces to political dialogue, drawing new partners closer also calls for new suitable formats.

We believe the Alliance's structures should grow along with its tasks, and not vice versa. I have already mentioned that, at Riga, Germany argued in favour of flexible, individually tailored partner formats. For example, the Alliance met with all troop providers, the United

Nations, and the EU in November to discuss the way ahead in Afghanistan. That is precisely the kind of case-by-case scenario we have in mind.

This issue has sparked great controversy within the Alliance. US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns used the keyword “global NATO” in an interview before Riga. Overall, this term has become part and parcel of Anglo-American press coverage. “Global NATO” is a catchy buzzword and suggests the rise of something big, new and powerful. We must admit that the North Atlantic Treaty geographically limits NATO membership to European countries. However, if we consider the new operational challenges the Alliance is taking on, geographic criteria are becoming less important. In contrast, the position of countries on a “mental map” is becoming increasingly significant. How else can one explain that Australia, South Korea and Japan are participating in ISAF operations? They, too, fear the further spread of terrorism – and that is why their soldiers are stationed in Afghanistan.

In other words: In the post-September 11 world, threat scenarios are increasingly targeting communities of values that share a similar cultural background. Within a global NATO, partnerships could be enhanced to become quasi-memberships. **In this potential scenario the transatlantic core of the Alliance more and more would be transformed into a Western community of values.**

The question is: Do we really want this to happen? We have to admit: The Alliance is attempting to sound its theme for the coming years with a big orchestra of many different actors that is difficult to conduct. But it has one great advantage: it avoids the formation of clear-cut blocs of “like-minded countries” that would set a “global NATO” against the rest of the world. Forging a stable Alliance is a good thing –implicitly dividing the world into good and evil would be a grave mistake. The great challenge facing NATO will be to defend our security policy interests in the world without allowing rifts to emerge between different communities of values. **NATO must avoid the formation of new blocs.**

NATO may nobly insist that it is undergoing transformation from a Cold War to a value-oriented Alliance. This is certainly true. However, the organisation’s purpose has not changed one bit. We should therefore clearly state that NATO remains what it has always been: a security policy alliance that serves the interests of its Member Countries. The threats it is facing and the way, these must be met, may have evolved. **But the objective of the Alliance remains the same: guaranteeing the security of NATO nations.**

To achieve this goal, we need Russia as a key strategic partner – in the same way as Russia needs us. This is the level on which we must engage in dialogue as equal partners.

Cooperation between NATO and Russia is proving increasingly difficult. Drawing East European countries closer to the Alliance is viewed with scepticism in Russia. From a Russian national security policy perspective, this is understandable: how can an Alliance of Russia’s former sworn enemies dare to encroach on its glaxis? It is in the interest of the Alliance to ensure that Russia does not steer a security policy course away from the Alliance. Only deepened dialogue can establish a stable basis for rapprochement – to both sides’ advantage.

We must seize the opportunity that the fifth anniversary of the NATO-Russia Council in 2007 presents, to establish an active dialogue. By all means, we must not shy away from disputes – and we should formulate common interests. We must fill NATO-Russia cooperation with life and substance. If we succeed, this anniversary will be crowned by a great success.

Up to now, we have focused on the world outside of the Alliance. However, a great challenge also awaits us “at home” – that is, among our own members. When Romania and Bulgaria join the EU on 1 January 2007, 21 NATO nations will also be EU Member States. And yet, relations between both organisations can stand improvement.

At Riga, the Alliance agreed on improving its strategic partnership with the EU. During the upcoming EU Presidency, Germany will do its utmost to advance this effort. But we must also be realistic. Diverging interests and specific problems cannot be resolved overnight.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I will now address the final and most important issue: What specific tasks will a “transformed NATO” take on?

Currently, the Alliance is performing peacekeeping in the Balkans, combat operations in Afghanistan, maritime air operations in the Mediterranean and humanitarian airlift for earthquake victims in Kashmir. To many observers, the Alliance currently appears more driven by external factors than by the shared strategic aims of its members.

There is in fact no up-to-date policy document, setting out NATO’s tasks. The Comprehensive Political Guidance that has been endorsed at Riga, reaffirms and further develops the 1999 Strategic Concept. Efforts must now focus on reaching consensus by 2009, on where the Alliance is heading.

We must recall the paramount aim of the Alliance. NATO is neither an emergency response organisation, nor is it a global policeman. It is the forum for transatlantic security policy interests. This is its primary purpose.

The **first critical** question now is: **How** should the Alliance respond to the security policy challenges it faces? How should we deal with the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and failing and failed states?

The **second question** is: Should the Alliance set itself **further-reaching aims**, for example in the civilian domain?

According to this list of priorities and in this order NATO must find answers to these questions. Discussions will not always be agreeable and easy, but only if these issues are addressed candidly, we will achieve progress. Konrad Adenauer once said that “If two people are of the same opinion, they’re both useless.” Bearing this in mind, we must not be afraid of hard and honest debate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased that you have invited me this evening as an expert to speak on NATO-related issues. But please do not forget that “An expert is someone who afterwards can tell you exactly why his prognosis was not correct”. Thank you for your attention.