



Parliamentary Update (Joint AFET-SEDE Committee 27 January 2010) NATO

ISIS Europe regularly provides updates of Committee sittings in the European Parliament. In this joint AFET-SEDE sitting, MEPs conducted an exchange of views with Madeleine Albright, Former US Secretary of State and Chair of the Group of Experts advising NATO Secretary General Fogh Anders Rasmussen on the new NATO Strategic Concept and with Jeroen van der Veer, Former President and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Dutch Shell PLC and Vice-Chair of the Group of Experts.

Exchange of views with Madeleine Albright, Chair of the Group of Experts advising NATO Secretary General Fogh Anders Rasmussen on the new NATO Strategic Concept¹

MEP Arnaud Danjean (PPE), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, stated that the EU's interest in the development of the upcoming NATO Strategic Concept was particularly high since ESDP had evolved significantly since the previous review in 1999. Danjean went on to say that the EU now benefits from greater experience and coherence in security and defence policy, and that the EU was eager to find out how this evolution would play out in terms of NATO-EU relations and cooperation.

Madeleine Albright, Former US Secretary of State and Chair of the Group of Experts, opened by summarising the purpose and process of the group of experts she chairs in the development of NATO's new Strategic Concept. She explained that the role of the 12-member group of experts is to advise NATO Secretary General Rasmussen as he drafts the new Strategic Concept to present to the Allies for their approval. The process leading to a new Strategic Concept will have three distinct phases: a reflection phase through a series of seminars; a consultation phase with allied capitals; and a drafting and final negotiation phase.

Albright elaborated on the reflection phase. The first seminar, held in Luxemburg in October of 2009, examined NATO's core tasks and functions: the meaning of collective defence and deterrence in today's environment; how to confront a broader spectrum of threats to the Alliance's populations; and NATO's role in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. The second seminar which took place in Slovenia in November of 2009 looked at NATO as a part of a network of security actors in contributing to global civil and military crisis management and NATO's likely tasks with a view to enhancing cooperation with international organisations and NGOs. A third seminar recently took place in Norway and looked at NATO and the Euro-Atlantic security environment: NATO's role in building security in the Euro-Atlantic area, enlargement and NATO's partnerships including relations with Russia. The fourth and final seminar will focus on forces and capabilities, including defence planning and transformation. It will also look at procurement at a time of increased financial constraints, requiring flexibility and prioritisation.

Explaining the consultation phase, Albright said that following the seminars, experts will visit Allied capitals to discuss their findings and proposals with governments and, where possible, parliamentary committees. The consultation phase will include a gathering in Prague on asymmetrical threats and discussions with Russian authorities in Moscow. In April 2010 the Group of Experts should present their

¹ For independent analysis of NATO, please see NATO Watch www.natowatch.org

analysis and recommendations to the Secretary General. Based on the experts' analysis and recommendations and Allies' initial reactions, the Secretary General will produce his own report on elements in a new Strategic Concept. It will be submitted to governments and – before the summer– the Secretary General will collect political guidance from member states on the drafting of the new Strategic Concept.

After July 2010 the Secretary General will prepare his draft of the concept, and he will meet with Permanent Representatives to discuss the evolving drafts. Finally, the Secretary General will present the Strategic Concept text to the NATO summit expected to be held in the autumn of 2010. After approval by the Allied Heads of State and Government, it henceforth will become NATO's new Strategic Concept.

Albright emphasized that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty covering collective defence will remain all-important in the new Strategic Concept. Albright summarised the task of the Expert Group as thinking again on what NATO can and should do to meet the wide range of challenges posed by today's security environment, in a strong, versatile, adapted and flexible manner. Albright suggested that charting NATO's future is not just an academic/bureaucratic exercise, but rather a test for leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, as the world remains an extremely dangerous place and that NATO's response to crisis situations has not always been adequate.

The Group of Experts Vice-chair, Mr. Jeroen van der Veer, stated that the end product of this process will be Secretary General Rasmussen's commitment to a new Strategic Concept by the end of 2010. Van der Veer stated that one difference NATO faces today in reviewing its Strategic Concept compared to 1991 and 1999, may be a slight decline for public support for NATO. Van der Veer insisted on the importance of brevity, conciseness and clarity in the final document, advancing that producing a short document with very high clarity for what NATO stands for would be important in increasing public support and understanding of the alliance. He proposed that if "not every country is a friend of NATO", clarity of mission and clear public support would only serve to increase the Alliance's legitimacy and influence across the globe.

MEP Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (PPE) critiqued the lack of consultation and cooperation between NATO and the EU; underlining that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament adopt completely separate approaches to the same topics and concerns. Saryusz-Wolski lamented the fact that cooperation had not increased with Javier Solana's move from NATO's Private Office to the Council of the EU, and that both sides still ignore each other. Citing a converging of the two organisations, "Europeanization of NATO" (increased consideration of civil dimensions within the alliance), and an "Otanization de l'Europe" (increased consideration of "hard power" capabilities within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), he asked Albright how synergy can be built and how approaches can be brought together. Echoing Saryusz-Wolski's comments, MEP Neyts-Uytterbroeck (ALDE) commented that although NATO and the EU share the same concerns, competition unfortunately exists. Hence she asked that the Group of Experts address this fact in their work. Likewise, MEP Elmar Brok (PPE) questioned how NATO and the EU can reach joint decisions together, thus "breathing new life" into their relationship. MEP Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL) inquired as to the role the Comprehensive Approach² would play in the new Strategic Concept, especially in the absence of NATO civilian capabilities, and whether the use of EU civilian capabilities would be formalized (perhaps in the form of a revised Berlin Plus).

MEP Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR), striking a different tone than his colleagues, had some words of warning for Albright, cautioning that CSDP was nothing but a "smoke and mirrors" political project, had no real military capabilities to speak of, and had nothing to offer to the important work performed by NATO. He insisted that there was a need for a clear division of tasks, with NATO retaining its traditional military

² Comprehensive Approach is the coordination with a wide spectrum of actors from the international community, both military and civilian

defence role while the EU could better focus its energies on civil reconstruction. He warned that the EU's efforts in the realm of CSDP closely duplicated tried and tested NATO structures and concepts, and that this issue was closely linked to resource management. Van Orden argued that individual EU Member States need to do more in the realm of military capabilities and global influence, but that the EU as a whole should not.

In response to Van Orden's cautioning and the several MEPs' exhortations for closer cooperation, Albright admitted that the problem of competition in an era of scarce resources and overwhelming challenges did exist. Albright went on to say that the Alliance's experience in the Balkans and in Afghanistan, as well as discussions during the Slovenia seminar, suggested that civilian capabilities were clearly needed in addition to military ones in order to respond to today's typical crisis. Albright suggested that this was an area where NATO would welcome increased cooperation with the EU. She posited that not all countries duplicate the others; and that NATO is the organization that "keeps the US in Europe", and helps ensure that North America is part of the discussion on European security issues.

The topic of how the NATO- Russia relationship would factor into the new Strategic Concept came up throughout the session. In response to MEP Hannes Swoboda's (S&D) enquiry on the basic direction of NATO-Russia relations, Albright answered that there is a clear need for a functional relationship between the two, and used the Expert Group's upcoming visit to Moscow as an example of the pragmatic approach NATO was taking to the issue. While Albright admitted that there had been a certain "reconnect" since relations were strained by Russia's invasion of Georgia, there was a need for increased transparency in Russia's actions. While she emphasised that Russia had to be taken into account, it could not be "the tail that wags the dog".

Addressing MEP Michael Gahler's (PPE) comments on the inherent contradiction present in the term "NATO-Russia Strategic Partnership" (lack of shared values and the fact that most NATO members joined the Alliance for protection against the former USSR and Russia), van der Veer submitted that the reset in NATO-Russia relations had been accompanied by a sense of "reassurance" in the broader sense, and that Russia had become an important actor in many of the security issues the Alliance faces today.

In the framework of NATO's policy towards neighbouring states, MEP Christine Lösing (GUE/NGL) asked what Albright thought of Russian President Medvedev's proposal of a new European Security Framework. Albright responded that Medvedev's proposal would be discussed, and that an "inventory would be taken" of the issues that needed to be looked at. She continued to say that while the NATO-Russia relationship is an important one, is it not the only one; NATO-China relations also need to be seriously considered.

Replying to MEP Hannes Swoboda's (S&D) request for clarification on the role NATO intended to take with regards to energy security, van der Veer replied that there were, in his opinion, three paths towards security of energy supply for any individual nation. Self-sufficiency (e.g. France with nuclear power); partnership with a supplier while a nation builds up its own energy infrastructure; and diversification through various routes (LNG, nuclear, construction of new pipelines). Therefore, he did not view energy security as a task for NATO as a whole, but rather for individual Allies.

Addressing MEP Marietta Giannakou's (PPE) question on whether there would be any changes to NATO's "Open Door" enlargement policy in comparison to 1999, Albright answered that it is important to remember that NATO is an alliance of democracies and that requirements exist for membership (such as subordination of military structures to political ones). She reminded those present that NATO is not a philanthropic organisation but a military alliance. Referring to Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, she said that the Alliance was open to new members but that requirements must be fulfilled.

Several MEPs present mentioned nuclear issues. MEP Roberto Gualtieri (S&D) said that he appreciated the US President Obama administration's prioritizing of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and inquired as to whether the new Strategic Concept would incorporate the topic. MEP Andrew Duff (ALDE) asked whether the future of UK and French nuclear deterrence capabilities would be taken up in the new Strategic Concept, and wondered if the two Alliance members were open to discussion concerning their nuclear arsenals or whether they were "intimidated". Albright replied that nuclear issues would of course be considered in the expert group's deliberations, especially in the upcoming seminar on military capabilities, but that she was unable to go into detail as the issue hadn't yet been thoroughly discussed.

Both Albright and Van der Veer took up MEP Christine Lösing's (GUE/NGL) enquiry on whether the final document of the Strategic Concept would be published and whether it would be available to Parliamentarians. They answered that the advice that they give to Secretary General Rasmussen will not be published, but will be available.

In her concluding remarks, Albright assured the MEPs that she was both intrigued and pleased by the wide range of issues they had brought up during the session, and apologised for not being able to answer all the questions since the Group of Experts had not yet finished their work and still had to reach their conclusions. She re-affirmed that Article 5 would remain central to the new Strategic Concept, but suggested that in today's security environment, what exactly constituted an "armed attack" would have to be revisited. Albright assured the MEPs that the US wants a strong European Partner, and that their communality of values is stronger than in any other global relationship. Albright closed by saying that most wish to see an active NATO (if not a pre-emptive one), and by expressing hope that the dialogue was just beginning.

By Paul Sturm, Programme Associate, ISIS Europe



international security information service, europe

Rue Archimède 50, 1000 Brussels Tel: +32 (0)2 230 7446 Fax: +32 (0)2 230 6113
E-mail: info@isis-europe.org Internet: www.isis-europe.org