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NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept: Five Markers of Success

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On November 19, NATO leaders will meet in Lisbon for a formal heads-of-state summit. The dominant issue will be the adoption of NATO's new Strategic Concept, the first of the new millennium. It comes at a precarious time for the alliance, as NATO operations in Afghanistan approach their 10th year. Further, President Barack Obama's poor handling of relations with Central and Eastern Europe has caused some allies to question the credibility of NATO's guarantee of their territorial integrity.

For the new Strategic Concept to be truly meaningful, a clear vision must be articulated behind which all allies can rally. It must address seemingly intractable issues such as NATO–Russian relations, the NATO–EU relationship, missile defense, and the presence of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. A measure of success can be gauged in five areas:

1. A fairer sharing of the burden among NATO members of the common defense;
2. Reaffirmation that collective defense requires NATO to protect its borders *and* act beyond its geography to ensure its security;
3. A protect-and-defend strategy that includes layered defense missiles and the continued presence of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on European soil;
4. A recommitment to further enlargement of the alliance; and
5. A restatement of the primacy of NATO in Europe's security architecture.

Toward More Equitable Burden-Sharing. The Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, led by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, stated, "A seat at NATO's table is not an entitlement but an ongoing responsibility that each ally must meet." However, just five NATO members (Albania, France, Greece, the U.K., and the U.S.) spend the alliance's benchmark of 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. A fairer solution to the shortages of manpower, equipment, and resources should be found.

In light of the austerity budgets sweeping Europe, members should seek to do more with their existing expenditures. First, members could remove the national caveats placed on the deployment of troops and equipment, most notably in Afghanistan. National caveats have effectively created a two-tiered alliance where some nations' soldiers fight and die and others do not. This is unhealthy for the political robustness of the alliance and unfairly apportions the burden for the common defense.

Second, cost savings, as well as greater interoperability, can be realized through multinational procurement projects, such as NATO's Strategic Airlift Capability consortium and the Airborne Warning

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and Control System. The enormous costs associated with modern high-tech weaponry means defense expenditures should take on a more global and interoperable character. Thirdly, all members should pledge to reach NATO's benchmark of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense by 2015—regardless of national budgetary constraints.

Article V: In and Out of Area. At the 1999 Washington summit, NATO leaders stated that the alliance was likely to undertake more out-of-area operations in the future.¹ Newer NATO members from Central and Eastern Europe however, remain nervous about refocusing the alliance away from traditional Article V operations, preferring instead to concentrate on preparing the alliance to defend European territory against conventional attacks.

NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept should put this false dichotomy to rest and reaffirm the principle that in- and out-of-area operations are core functions of the alliance. The 9/11 terrorist attacks demonstrated that security can no longer be assured by merely deterring national armies from crossing NATO's borders. Also, for the vast majority of NATO members, defending the territorial integrity of another ally would be an expeditionary operation. In terms of the forces, training, and support equipment needed for in- or out-of-area operations, there is little difference between the necessary defense capabilities.²

Strengthening the NATO Response Force (NRF) and ensuring that its rotations are fully available is essential to the alliance's transformation. The NRF is a highly able, rapid-reaction unit designed to be a

first-in force for the types of missions envisaged since 1999. However, its force generation problems have been legendary, and the bulk of members' expeditionary troops have been stretched thin by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

An annual NRF land exercise should be constituted, similar to the NRF's annual maritime exercises. Also, members should recommit to reaching NATO's goal that 40 percent of its land forces be deployable, which will allow forces to be available for both large-scale annual exercises and to fully staff its rotations.

Missile Defense and Tactical Nuclear Weapons. Article V can best be reinforced with a protect-and-defend strategy that includes the continued presence of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and the erection of transatlantic missile defense architecture.³

The Group of Experts states, "As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO should continue to maintain secure and reliable nuclear forces, with widely shared responsibility for deployment and operational support, at the minimum level required by the prevailing security environment."⁴ At the Lisbon summit, President Obama should make a commitment to maintaining U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and promise that any removal of the U.S. arsenal from Europe will be a decision made in consultation with the NATO alliance as a whole.⁵ The allies should fairly share the burden of NATO's nuclear deterrence by upgrading their air forces' capabilities to deliver these weapons as well as future modernized U.S. tactical nuclear weapons.

1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The Alliance's Strategic Concept: Approved by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C.," April 24, 1999, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm (November 15, 2010).
2. Karl-Heinz Kamp, "The Way to NATO's New Strategic Concept," NATO Defense College, June 2009, at <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/series.php?icode=1> (November 15, 2010).
3. For an explanation of the protect-and-defend strategy, see Andrei Shoumikhin and Baker Spring, "Strategic Nuclear Arms Control for the Protect and Defend Strategy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2266, May 4, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/05/strategic-nuclear-arms-control-for-the-protect-and-defend-strategy>.
4. Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement," May 17, 2010, p. 11, at <http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf> (November 2, 2010).
5. The alliance's nuclear policy is made by the Nuclear Planning Group, which consists of all alliance members except France. See North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The Nuclear Planning Group," April 30, 2007, at <http://www.nato.int/issues/npg/index.html> (November 2, 2010).

NATO's nuclear deterrent should be reinforced by missile defenses—one cannot be traded for the other. The principle of missile defense has long been agreed on by the alliance, but NATO's Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense concept is no longer adequate for today's defense needs by itself. It is now necessary for European missile defenses to be expanded to protect populations and territory as well as troops.

Europe's contribution to transatlantic-wide missile defense architecture is about more than hosting U.S. sensors and interceptors. The most effective missile defense architecture will be based on the concept of a layered defense, which will be capable of intercepting attacking ballistic missiles in the boost, midcourse, and terminal phases of flight. Supporting such a missile defense constellation by linking together members' capabilities is estimated to be just €200 million (\$279 million) over 10 years.

Enlargement. Under Article X of the Washington Treaty, NATO is obliged to enlarge the alliance further, and NATO enlargement is a story of success. The alliance's prevarication on granting Membership Action Plan (MAP) accession for Georgia and Ukraine at the Bucharest summit has been followed by a series of dramatic events, and NATO's window of opportunity to secure these countries is rapidly closing.

Georgia has said that it still wishes to pursue a dedicated MAP and was one of the first countries to respond to President Obama's request for additional troops in Afghanistan when he announced the U.S. surge in December 2009. And it is past time for Macedonia to accede to the alliance, having completed its MAP requirements in 2008 and having been one of the highest per capita providers of troops for the mission in Afghanistan.

NATO should rally behind its open-door policy and send the message in the new Strategic Concept that the alliance is open for business. The Obama Administration should position itself as a champion of NATO enlargement and specifically endorse both the immediate accession of Macedonia and the granting of a MAP to Georgia at the summit.

NATO–EU Relations. NATO's primacy in the transatlantic security architecture should be restated in the new Strategic Concept. However, that does not mean that there is not room for further cooperation with the EU, namely by ensuring that Brussels' extensive civilian resources are made available for NATO missions as part of the alliance's new "comprehensive approach" to security. NATO already performs extensive civilian missions, such as the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, so the EU should seek to complement, rather than replace, the alliance's existing civilian security work.

The EU certainly has a generous pool of civilian resources at its disposal, having fulfilled its Feira goals for civilian crisis management (5,700 police officers, 630 legal experts, 560 civilian administration experts, and 5,000 civil protection experts). In order to leverage these resources more successfully than in separate missions such as EUPOL Afghanistan, the EU should integrate its resources with NATO and operate under its command instead of under separate planning and command structures.

More Than a Paper Tiger. NATO does not need a new treaty to replace the Washington Treaty, and a new treaty should not be the goal of the new Strategic Concept. Instead, the Strategic Concept should revise NATO's core competencies, outline the future direction of the alliance, and increase the commitment of the member states both financially and politically.

As a military alliance, NATO must get in the business of confronting future strategic threats such as the proliferation of ballistic missile technology. Most important, though, the 2010 Strategic Concept cannot be a wasted exercise; it should be the point at which the alliance rallies around a new security and defense vision for the 21st century.

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