

SDA Evening Debate

A Full and Urgent Agenda for NATO in the 21st Century

An evening debate with Ivo Daalder



June 8, 2009
Bibliothèque Solvay, Brussels



SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA

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Programme

‘A Full and Urgent Agenda for NATO in the 21st Century’

An evening debate with Ivo Daalder

Monday, June 8, 2009
Bibliothèque Solvay, 18:00-19:00



Speaking to 180 ambassadors, policymakers, journalists and think-tankers at the SDA's June 8th evening debate, new US Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder outlined the Obama administration's policy priorities for the Alliance. He described the administration's focus within the Alliance as being three-fold: achieving its objective in Afghanistan of disrupting, dismantling and defeating Al Qaeda, creating a more productive NATO-Russia relationship, and building a 'new NATO for a new century', capable of addressing a host of evolving transatlantic security challenges.

Event Summary

On June 8, the Security and Defence Agenda (SDA) welcomed new US Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder to an evening debate held in Brussels. Speaking to an audience of approximately 180 ambassadors, high-level policymakers, journalists and think-tankers, Daalder outlined the Obama administration's policy priorities for the Alliance.



Ivo Daalder

A self-described "transatlanticist at heart", the Dutch-born Daalder said that while he was new to Brussels, he was well-acquainted with both Europe and the institution of NATO. He saw the most pressing issue as being how to adapt the Atlantic Alliance to a rapidly-changing world and, indeed, rapidly evolving security challenges. To explain the nature of these threats in an increasingly interdependent world, Daalder quoted President Obama: "The same forces that have brought us closer together have also given rise to new dangers that threaten to tear our world apart, dangers that cannot be contained by the nearest border or the furthest ocean."

Daalder described these dangers as being imminent, not "looming on the horizon," and saw the reform and adaptation of international institutions, including NATO,

to such dangers as being critically important. He highlighted recent missions such as sending bridges to Indonesia after the tsunami, cooperating to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden, and preserving and promoting peace in Southern Europe and the Western Balkans as evidence of NATO's versatility. Advocating greater efficiency of resources and stronger partnerships, Daalder said that NATO was currently at the centre of American foreign policy and that with the US doing more, Europe had to as well. With NATO being a joint effort, he described the Alliance as being where Washington looks first for international partners and that the "Obama administration understands that the United States cannot act alone."

Citing collective security as still being NATO's *raison d'être*, Daalder went on to describe what he saw as being the three fundamental priorities for NATO in today's international security environment:

- Achieving its objective in Afghanistan of disrupting, dismantling and defeating Al Qaeda
- Creating a more productive NATO-Russia relationship
- Building a "new NATO for a new century" which is capable of addressing a host of evolving transatlantic security challenges.

Success in Afghanistan, he explained, was crucial for the international community and critical for NATO in particular. Echoing President Obama's recent speech in Cairo, Daalder reminded the audience why a continued – and indeed, reinvigorated – commitment to the Alliance's objective in Afghanistan was necessary. Quoting President Obama, he

said: "We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case." As the largest and most challenging operation in NATO's history, Daalder described the Obama administration's guiding principles in Afghanistan as premised on a regional framework that includes Pakistan, a build-up of Afghan capacity so that citizens have greater responsibility and autonomy, and a comprehensive approach which incorporates security, improved governance and the rule of law, and economic development. He urged NATO member states to fulfill their responsibility to implement that strategy for Afghanistan, agreed upon during the Strasbourg/Kehl summit in April, and explained that as a NATO mission, the US expected all involved – Europeans, Canadians, and partners – to contribute their fair share and "do more, now and over the longer term." Although he recognised the constraints caused by the financial crisis, he advocated increased assistance to both Afghanistan and Pakistan by EU member states.

He saw the upcoming Afghan elections, scheduled for August of this year, as being the next critical phase for the Alliance: "NATO will have a crucial role to play to make sure that the Afghan people's expectations will not be damaged." While NATO plans to deploy an extra 3,000 troops to ensure the safety of voters, Daalder emphasised that NATO's work in Afghanistan would not end once votes were cast. Afghanistan was the "priority mission" for the allies and consequently, NATO member states needed to "think about what we can bring to the task

collectively, both in terms of troop totals but also in terms of strategic thinking." He also reminded the audience of the real and urgent threat that fundamentalism in



Ivo Daalder and Giles Merritt

places like Afghanistan poses to global peace and stability and commented that the allies needed to do a better job of convincing the Afghan population of the mission's effectiveness and positive impact.

Quoting a recent ISAF survey, Daalder said that during the first quarter of 2009 public perceptions of security in Afghanistan rose despite an increase in attacks by the Taliban. But in order to ensure that Afghans continue to reject the Taliban, Daalder stressed the importance of facilitating a better police force and government services and economic opportunity.

Turning next to Russia, Daalder saw consensus amongst the US and European allies on how to deal with Russia as vital and called for not only a reset in US-Russian relations, but also a more productive NATO-Russia relationship. While Russia was seen by the Obama administration as a potential partner, Daalder was clear on potentially

expanding Russian influence: "We will not recognise a Russian sphere of privileged interest." Touching upon Russian relations with former Soviet states he said that the US would support the right of all countries – including Georgia and Ukraine – to choose their own alliances and would not recognise break-away Georgian regions as autonomous. These issues aside, he saw potential for cooperation with Russia on issues like Afghanistan, piracy, narco-trafficking, arms control, non-proliferation and missile defence, although he said that it was not the time – and NATO was not the place – for an open debate on missile defence. He explained that future decisions made by the Obama administration on missile defence would be driven by the cost and effectiveness of the system and the nature of the threat from Iran.

He described the third priority for NATO as revitalising "the most successful military Alliance in history," a goal that he saw as being facilitated by the new administration in Washington, the new civilian and military leadership in Brussels and at



Ivo Daalder

SHAPE, and the recently-approved mandate to devise a new strategic concept for the Alliance. NATO would continue to be a "beacon of stability and peace," but it would have to adapt to a

world that was vastly different to the one that founded it in 1949: "During the Cold War, the core commitment of our Alliance – that an attack against one is an attack against all – was clearly directed against a specific threat: a possible attack by the Soviet Union. This core commitment remains just as strong and important today – but against what threat?" Daalder asked.

He lauded France's return to NATO's military structures as offering an opportunity to strengthen NATO-EU cooperation on matters of security and defence, saying that, previously, NATO and EU were "sitting facing each other in opposite directions in the same rowboat, drifting in circles," but that now "they have repositioned to row downstream in the same direction". While he saw enhancing NATO partnerships with countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea as beneficial, he stressed the importance of modernising the way NATO does business.

Finally, Daalder returned to the issue of burden-sharing, saying that the economic crisis affected all members of the Alliance and some allies have reduced outlays for defence as a response. This could become particularly problematic for the Alliance since the burden of defence could consequently fall "more and more heavily on fewer and fewer members." He concluded by describing NATO as being "changing dynamic in global security and politics – a dynamic newly marked by interconnectedness and international cooperation."

Q & A Session

The first question of the evening came from Baroness Mia Doornaert, Diplomatic Editor of the Belgian newspaper De



Mia Doornaert

Standaard, who asked Ambassador Daalder to elaborate on his call for increased strategic thinking within the Alliance. Daalder explained that before the Obama administration conducted its own strategic policy review, it engaged in a broad campaign of engaging in dialogue with European counterparts. "We drew on the experiences we all had together," he said.

Brooks Tigner of Jane's International Defence Review commented that Pakistan was now a greater threat and asked what NATO and the US should be doing in Pakistan besides offering political support. He also wondered whether the economic burden within NATO was falling more on the shoulders of the US than on its European counterparts in the Alliance. Daalder agreed that Pakistan was vital to



Brooks Tigner

regional security and "a direct and immediate concern" to both the US and the EU, and he emphasised the importance of the Pakistani army's recent counter-insurgency operations. He said that the US has decided to spend \$7.5 billion in essential economic and social assistance over the course of the next five years there. Addressing the issue of financing NATO operations, Daalder reminded the audience that the economic downturn that Alliance members are experiencing at the moment pales in comparison to the situation on the ground for Pakistani civilians. He went on to say that if the US can spend \$7.5 billion, Europe can do so as well.

The next question came from Fabrice Pothier, Director of Carnegie Europe, who wondered what the EU really brought to the table in support of Alliance missions and where Ambassador Daalder saw the EU-NATO relationship going. Daalder said that while Europe's contributions in Afghanistan were indeed the largest in the history of the Alliance, there was still a



Fabrice Pothier

need for “more troops, more trainers, more funds and more civilians” as well as a consensus amongst Alliance members on how to move forward in the region.



Edward Hanlon

Turning next to the hot-button issue of NATO enlargement, Ed Hanlon, President of Raytheon International's European division, asked how much further the Alliance should enlarge and whether partner relationships with countries like Japan and Australia should be formalised. Daalder saw enlargement as an important



Giles Merritt

stimulus for reform and democratic change and consequently explained that the process of enlargement itself was just as important for international security as the act of formally joining the Alliance. On the issue of partnerships he saw many benefits in building relationships with nations willing to contribute to NATO operations.

SDA Director Giles Merritt concluded the debate by observing that the current situation was one of new faces and administrations faced with old, recurring problems such as the gap in capabilities within the Alliance and what he described as the “unwillingness of some allies to commit the necessary resources.” Addressing these challenges ahead, Ambassador Daalder emphasised the importance of practical solutions, describing the Obama administration as focused on “fixing problems pragmatically and without a fixation on ideas ... and ideologies.”

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About the Security & Defence Agenda



The Security & Defence Agenda (SDA) is the only specialist Brussels-based think-tank where EU institutions, NATO, national governments, industry, specialised and international media, think tanks, academia and NGOs gather to discuss the future of European and transatlantic security and defence policies in Europe and worldwide.

Building on the combined expertise and authority of those involved in our meetings, the SDA gives greater prominence to the complex questions of how EU and NATO policies can complement one another, and how transatlantic challenges such as terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction can be met.

By offering a high-level and neutral platform for debate, the SDA sets out to clarify policy positions, stimulate discussion and ensure a wider understanding of defence and security issues by the press and public opinion.

SDA Activities:

- Monthly Roundtables and Evening debates
- Press Dinners and Lunches
- International Conferences
- Reporting Groups and special events



The Security & Defence Agenda would like to thank its members and partners for their support.



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