

**Kurt Volker**

IDEAS. INFLUENCE. IMPACT.

A New Transatlantic Compact

STRATCON 2010 – The Challenge

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO stands at a crossroads. Will it reinvent itself yet again, to serve as the foundation for the security and defense of Europe and North America in a world of diverse, non-conventional threats, many of which come from outside of Europe? Will it return to a passive, geographically defined approach of protecting the territory of European Allies against armed attack? Will it merge these visions into a new hybrid? Will it retain the political will and resource commitments of its members, whether in Europe or North America?

In short, as Brent Scowcroft, Chairman of the Atlantic Council's International Advisory Board, put it: "What is NATO for?" These are the core questions Allies must answer in drafting the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept.

NATO Transformation Since 1989

To be sure, NATO has already taken substantial steps to adapt to the end of the Cold War in four principal ways:

- By admitting 12 new members, and thereby building a more democratic prosperous and secure Euro-Atlantic area;
- By creating partnerships – the Partnership for Peace and Mediterranean Dialogue, the NATO-Russia Council and NATO-Ukraine Commission, the Istanbul Initiative, the growth of partnership with friends around the globe, and the NATO-Georgia Commission;

The Strategic Advisors Group

To tackle the tough issues facing NATO and the transatlantic community, the Atlantic Council created the Strategic Advisors Group (SAG). Co-chaired by Atlantic Council Chairman Senator Chuck Hagel and Airbus CEO Tom Enders, the SAG is comprised of North American and European preeminent defense experts. Founded in 2007 by then-Atlantic Council Chairman General James L. Jones, General Brent Scowcroft, and former Norwegian Minister of Defense Kristin Krohn Devold, the SAG provides timely insights and analysis to policymakers and the public on strategic issues in the transatlantic security partnership through issuing policy briefs and reports, hosting strategy sessions for senior civilian and military officials, and providing informal expert advice to decision-makers.

The SAG and its activities are generously sponsored by the Scowcroft Group, EADS North America, and Airbus.

- By becoming operational – from zero operations before 1995 to Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Active Endeavor, airlift to Darfur, and humanitarian relief; and
- By moving away from large, heavy militaries to smaller, lighter, more expeditionary, and more sustainable defense forces.

Each of these aspects of transformation has been vital to NATO carrying out its founding mission of collective defense, but in a vastly different security environment.

Kurt Volker is a Senior Advisor to the Atlantic Council, member of the Strategic Advisors Group, and Managing Director of the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the Atlantic Council.

Allies Divided

Yet simultaneous with this remarkable transformation, NATO has lost the underlying consensus that holds its members together. NATO is more divided over fundamentals today than at any time in its history. Allies disagree on such key issues as:

- the importance of Afghanistan;
- the nature of our relationship with Russia;
- what constitutes an Article 5 threat;
- whether NATO is the principal venue for the security and defense of Europe;
- whether, when and how NATO should continue to enlarge;
- what “solidarity” means in the face of 21st century challenges;
- how much our societies should invest in security and defense; and
- how much NATO should focus inside the Euro-Atlantic area, versus addressing threats that arise far from its own territory.

A Toolbox, For What?

Many of the questions debated among experts in connection with the Strategic Concept are about specifics: what are the civil and military capabilities and structures needed to meet traditional Article 5 scenarios, to tackle far-afield crisis management and counter-insurgency operations, and to manage non-traditional threats such as cyber-attacks and energy shut-offs. Other questions focus on improving NATO decision-making and reforming of NATO’s headquarters and command structure.

All of these questions are highly relevant to improving NATO’s effectiveness. But the question returns: effectiveness for what? Here, Allies disagree. Actually carrying out any recommendation related to the above will depend upon Allies displaying concerted political will and dedicating the human and financial resources to assure effective implementation. There must be confidence in NATO’s vision and mission.

This, in turn, depends upon establishing an underlying consensus about the nature of the threats we face, and NATO’s role in meeting them. This is all the more true when publics and government budgets remain battered by the global financial crisis, where NATO’s most important operation – ISAF – remains deeply unpopular, and where Europeans and North Americans genuinely hold different perceptions about threats in the 21st century world.

A New Transatlantic Compact

The starting point for the Strategic Concept has to be the reconciliation of three distinct roles for NATO, as seen by Central Europeans, West Europeans, and North Americans. In short-hand, these “three NATOs” are:

- active deterrence and defense in the Eastern half of Europe, near Russia;
- more traditional, and more passive collective defense of European territory as a whole; and
- expeditionary operations and non-traditional security and defense measures to meet an array of non-traditional security threats, unlimited by geography.

All three concepts are valid, yet they are not felt equally by all Alliance members. Central Europeans may fear Russia, while some West Europeans may not. Americans may care most about Afghanistan, while this is a war of “choice” rather than “necessity” for many in Europe. West Europeans may value America’s commitment to Europe as an insurance policy, but that policy will only be in effect if America feels that Europe is contributing to global security.

The goal of the Strategic Concept must be to forge these three visions for NATO into a single compact – a balanced and more sustainable vision for NATO – and to appeal to a commitment of trust and solidarity among Allies to sustain such a role well into the future.

“A new Strategic Concept simultaneously must reaffirm the fundamental value of NATO and reinforce those principles that led to its creation.”

– **Senator Richard Lugar speaking at the ‘NATO Forum’ at the Atlantic Council, September 28, 2009**

Core Areas of Consensus – Recommendations

Some of the basic building blocks for such a consensus could include the following:

- NATO should be the **essential venue for strategic consultation** among the Allies to build common views on security threats and means of meeting them. The members of NATO share common democratic values, face the same challenges in the world, and must work together to address these challenges successfully.
- **All threats to the security of Allies are equally valid, whether military or non-military in nature.** Whether they can be considered “Article 5 threats” depends upon the circumstances. NATO should have a wide tool box of military and civilian capacities to contribute to meeting these threats.
- NATO retains a vital legacy role of **guaranteeing stability and security within Europe**, including the territorial defense of its members against armed attack, even if there is little likelihood such an attack would occur. For this role to be credible, it must be planned and exercised.
- The work of building a **Europe whole, free and at peace** is not over. NATO should continue to project a vision of a wholly democratic, prosperous and secure Euro-Atlantic space – inclusive of Russia – in which further NATO enlargement acts as an incentive and guarantor.
- In a globalized world, **threats to Allies can come from anywhere**; they are not limited to European geography. Likewise, NATO’s response needs to be flexible enough to enable the Alliance to act anywhere to address such threats.
- Likewise, in an increasingly globalized world, **NATO should act in concert with partners and other institutions wherever possible.** This includes Russia, the United Nations, the European Union, regional partners such as Central Asian states, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and global partners such as Australia and Japan.

- Allies share a common obligation to ensure the success of NATO operations, based on an unshakeable principle of solidarity. Once NATO has agreed by consensus on a policy or operation, Allies must **dedicate all the resources possible** to bring about success.

Conclusion

Adopting a common view of these issues is the essential political underpinning to the more detailed work that is needed to improve NATO’s effectiveness. The effort to produce a new Strategic Concept is just getting started.

It should be a shared goal for people who prize our democratic values on both sides of the Atlantic that this Strategic Concept rise to the monumental challenge of building a new transatlantic security compact for the 21st century.

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STRATCON 2010

The Strategic Advisors Group’s STRATCON 2010 project seeks to shape and inform the transatlantic debate over NATO’s new Strategic Concept. STRATCON 2010 will issue publications to define the critical issues NATO must confront in drafting a new Strategic Concept. This issue brief is the first in this series. For more information about the SAG or STRATCON 2010, please contact Vice President and Director of the Program on International Security Damon Wilson at dwilson@acus.org or Program Assistant Director Jeff Lightfoot at jlightfoot@acus.org.

The Atlantic Council of the United States has as its mission the renewal of the Atlantic community for 21st century global challenges through constructive U.S.-European leadership and engagement in world affairs. Led by Senator Chuck Hagel, Chairman, and Frederick Kempe, President and CEO, the Atlantic Council embodies a network of policy, academic and business leaders who foster transatlantic ties through non-partisan and cross-national discussions and studies.

1101 15th Street NW • 11th Floor • Washington, DC 20005 • (202) 778-4957 • www.acus.org



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Kurt Volker

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Chuck Wald

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Rob de Wijk

Hague Centre for Strategic Studies