



BULLETIN

No. 76 (152) • May 20, 2010 • © PISM

Editors: Jacek Foks (Editor-in-Chief), Łukasz Adamski, Beata Górka-Winter, Leszek Jesień,
Agnieszka Kondek (Executive Editor), Łukasz Kulesa, Marek Madej, Ernest Wyciszkiwicz

Report of the Group of Experts on NATO New Strategic Concept

by Marek Madej

The report on the New Strategic Concept for NATO published on 17 May and drafted by the Group of Experts made up of twelve independent specialists, contains non-binding recommendations for new concept. The NATO secretary general, for whom the report was drawn up, is responsible for preparing an initial draft concept, which is to be adopted at the next NATO summit in Lisbon (19–20 November). The report emphasizes the significance of NATO's traditional collective defense tasks. Despite the ambiguity of some of the recommendations, for instance regarding cooperation with Russia, the report provides a sound foundation for further work on the new strategic concept.

Content of the Report. The report is divided into five sections, and—although it was not the Group's task to prepare a draft strategic concept—the structure of the report can be interpreted as implying how the concept should be structured.

Section one embraces forecasts for the development of the security environment over the next decade. It stresses the regional nature of NATO and the need to focus on the Euro-Atlantic area, while maintaining the capability to operate effectively beyond it as well. Listed are the most likely threats to NATO members until 2020, including terrorist attacks, cyberterrorism and attacks using weapons of mass destruction (especially the potential threat posed by Iran).

Section two identifies the four main functions of NATO. The first is to act as a deterrent and defend NATO members against armed aggression regardless of its nature and origin as provided for under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The second embraces NATO's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security, for instance through collaboration with other organizations (EU, OSCE, UN), partnerships (including special relations with Russia, Ukraine and Georgia) and a continuation of NATO's "open door" policy. The third is the function of the forum for transatlantic dialogue on security issues (in this respect the report emphasizes the potential of Article 4 of the Washington Treaty), while the fourth function, which deals more with implementation, is to enhance the mechanisms of cooperation with partners. Emphasis is placed on the tasks relating to defense and deterrence, and flexible approach is needed to the sources of potential threats in view of unconventional hazards, such as a cyber attack.

Section three depicts the Alliance's cooperation with other organizations, reiterating the need for reform in this respect (suggesting preparation of a new document that would regulate all partnership issues). Attention is also paid to the importance and potential of NATO-EU cooperation, especially after the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force, but no mention is made of measures aimed at enhancing it. Recommendations on cooperation with Russia, which is singled out as a country of exceptional significance for NATO, nonetheless do not go beyond statements affirming the differences between NATO members in their approach to Russia and a general appeal for NATO to demonstrate its readiness to expand this cooperation. Also included are incoherent—and hence difficult to implement—suggestions for combining measures appeasing the fears of some NATO members about NATO's credibility—without identifying Russia as a source of potential threats—with "constructive involvement" of that partner. Also significant is the suggestion that NATO formalize its ties with non-European organizations, including with the Collective Security Treaty Organization—something the Alliance has so far been reluctant to do.

In section four, which deals with NATO's internal organization, a list of criteria for deciding on out-of-area missions is of special importance. It includes the level of a threat requiring a response, compliance of the mission with international law, impact on NATO's ongoing operations, scale of public support for the mission, determination of member states' governments and the foreseeable

consequences of refraining from action (no reference is made to geographical criteria). The report is also in favor of retaining the principles of NATO's current enlargement policy (with emphasis on voluntary membership), and it recommends a streamlining of the decision-making process (the scope of potential departure from the rule of consensus is indicated, also through delegation of some decision-making powers to the secretary general or NATO military leadership in crisis situations, such as a missile attack). A brief and only superficial mention is made of the need for reforming NATO's financing and for boosting its role in arms control.

Section five, concerning the organization of NATO forces and resources, emphasizes that a balanced expansion of NATO's military capacity is needed, incorporating to a greater extent than in recent years the requirements of NATO's traditional missions and the need for developing NATO's reassurance instruments, also through changes in the system of exercises and training as well as defense planning. Reiterated is the necessity of the member states' compliance with relevant NATO standards regarding forces' mobility and ability to deploy. By specifying the requirements of the so-called all-out approach in NATO missions (especially *out-of-area*), the document highlights the importance of the ability to cooperate with external partners, but also the need for NATO to have its own fundamental civilian resources. The question of NATO's nuclear strategy is addressed in a traditional way, with U.S. nuclear presence in Europe seen as justified. While emphasis is placed on increasing NATO's anti-missile defense capabilities, a skeptical approach is adopted to a development of NATO's non-military security capabilities, with the exception of cyber security.

Analysis and Perspectives. The report is successful to a large extent in balancing the often diverse standpoints of NATO members. Emphasis on the importance of tasks under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (even if a flexible approach thereto is stipulated) and a departure from proposals for greater NATO activity in non-military areas (e.g. combating climate change) makes the report appear conservative in nature and in general closer to the position of the states with a more traditional definition of NATO tasks (most members admitted after 1999, Norway, Turkey, and to some extent France). On key issues the document also reflects closely the position of the United States (great importance of and a flexible approach to the tasks provided for under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, role of nuclear weapons, anti-missile defense), so its recommendations are more likely to be taken into consideration when the new concept is drawn up. The authors have demonstrated a realistic approach by not proposing solutions that are too ambitious (for example when defining standards for conventional forces), but at the same time indicating problems that require effective preventive measures (e.g. emphasis on the determination of governments in their efforts to gain public support for defense spending). In places the wording of the report is quite general and does not go beyond signalling a problem or appealing for action, but without making any specific proposals. It is symptomatic that this refers to those recommendations that have been considered major NATO problems for a long time (relations with the EU, financing) or are currently highly controversial (relations with Russia). This might reflect the scale of objective difficulties in resolving these problems, but also vast differences of opinion within the Group.

The report provides a good foundation for further work on the strategic concept and the solutions it proposes are likely to be reflected in the draft to be prepared by the secretary general, who has publicly presented similar views on individual aspects of NATO's activity. The likelihood that a considerable number of the report's recommendations will be incorporated into the new concept is increased by the tight schedule, as Anders Fogh Rasmussen is to present the first draft in mid-October, a month before the Lisbon summit. With the publication of the report, work on the concept is entering a key phase, as the states will now be more resolute in presenting their points of view. It is assumed that they will also be more inclined to compromise for fear of a fiasco of the entire process, and this too might encourage them to make use of the Group's recommendations, which are after all a result of more than ten months of consultations within NATO.

Poland would welcome the wording of the new concept that would be close to the Group's recommendations, as its most important interests and suggestions (high importance of traditional tasks and safeguarding means that would guarantee readiness to implement them; maintaining an "open door" policy; transparent criteria for out of area involvement) would to a significant extent be met. It is vital for Poland, however, to remain involved in debates on the new strategic concept in order to safeguard that the report's recommendations favorable for Poland are included in the final document, but also to present its own proposals on issues approached in the report on a general basis only.