

NOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEECH OF NARCIS SERRA

SEMINAR: EU FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE LISBON TREATY

THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT OF NATO AND THE EUROPEAN INTERESTS

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At its Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in April 2009, the North Atlantic Council decided to develop a New Strategic Concept (NSC) to replace the one approved in 1999 and accordingly tasked the Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, to convene a broad group of experts to prepare the ground before the debate among the member countries. Headed by Madeleine Albright, the group published its report last May under the title: 'NATO 2020'. It should be recognised, first of all, that this is a valuable document offering lucid analysis of the present-day situation along with many ideas concerning the reform of NATO, although in some aspects it reflects the consequences of compromise between diverging positions.

The expedience of a new strategic concept is undeniable, as the report notes in stating: "[...] the time is right to take a fresh look at the Alliance's missions, procedures and plans".¹ This view is based on the fact that the world has changed significantly since 1999, with the attack on the Twin Towers in New York through to the new risks and threats that have been emerging since. However, it should not be forgotten that if a NSC is to make sense, the most significant change is that which has occurred in the foreign policy of the United States. Improving mechanisms and policies of the Alliance would not be possible if the United States continued prioritising the "coalition of the willing" over acting with existing international institutions. The report also states that the Alliance needs a NSC "but it does not require wholesale change".² This is true but it might be added that radical changes are not possible either. In Europe, a consensus that would be necessary on enough conditions does not exist, and neither does the United States have a sufficiently precise idea of the most appropriate mix whereby the Alliance might be somewhere between a military instrument and a forum of international stability.

These notes aim to contribute some remarks on four of the points that will be of relevance in the NSC: NATO's relations with the European Union; the new missions; relations with Russia; and NATO's partnerships in a global world.

EU-NATO Relations

The NSC provides a good opportunity for taking the United States' relationship with Europe a step forward. Such a step would mean consideration of the multilateral institution of the EU as NATO's basic interlocutor. It is vital for the future of the Alliance that there should be dialogue between the USA and the European Union,

¹ "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement". Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010, page 5.

² "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement". Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010, page 8.

rather than dialogue between the United States and the 27 countries comprising the Union. There were times when the USA believed that a divided Europe was more manageable, or when being deeply engaged with the different countries of Europe allowed it to shape agreements being worked out at the heart of NATO. If the Alliance is to remain a useful, effective organism, a complementarity and coordination with the performances of the EU is required, regardless of the Union's strengths and weaknesses. Again, in a progressively multipolar world, it would be in the interests of the United States that Europe constituted one of these poles. This would require a united Europe; a Europe prepared to be a global actor.

If any advance is to be made along these lines, such a change of position by the United States would have to happen. This would be no easy matter. It would also be helpful if the United States could describe with greater precision the kind of connection it seeks from NATO with its global strategy. In this regard, the National Security Strategy recently published by President Barack Obama is a good start: "Alliances are force multipliers. [...] The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the pre-eminent security alliance in the world today."³

However, it is the European Union that has the longer way to go. First of all, it must demonstrate that it is taking the best possible advantage of the foreign policy capacities and security offered by the Lisbon Treaty. Second, we Europeans need to understand and put into practice the fact that, in return for the Americans fulfilling the commitment of solidarity stipulated in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, we must find effective ways of cooperating with the United States in seeking solutions to shared threats and risks in other parts of the globe. Third, progress must be made with the great themes of foreign policy and security in order to keep constructing an *acquis* of consensus with regard to security. Once NATO has approved the NSC, opening up discussion on a new strategy of European security would be one way of articulating this debate, as long as we guarantee that there is no chance of reverting to the positions of the European Security Strategy drawn up in 2003.

All the aforesaid cannot be included in the NSC but it is indeed necessary that this document should incorporate explicit recognition of the existence of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This would reveal that there is the political will to advance in this direction. Another way of demonstrating such political will would be to move along the path opened up by the Berlin-Plus agreement by providing greater support to the "Petersberg tasks", whether initiated or led by the EU. At this point, we must pre-empt the risk that NATO might move in the opposite direction, which is to say by preparing and undertaking missions with a broad civil component financed by the EU. This would mean going counter to an effective division of labour between the two organisms.

The above would entail noticeably reducing the existing levels of competition between NATO and the EU in order to raise the degree of cooperation between the two institutions. Complementarity must be boosted if we wish to improve efficacy at a time of generalised financial restrictions. Improving complementarity means coming to agreement over the fields of specialisation of each organism, which leads us to raise the question of NATO missions in present-day scenarios.

NATO Missions

Considering the change in threats and in the nature of conflicts since the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO has had to pull off a Copernican turn with regard to two of its essential features in its first forty years of existence: providing collective security vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and creating a military instrument of action. By 1967 the Harmel Report was already proposing the "dual track" idea, adding to the military mission by seeking an improvement in diplomatic relations with the Warsaw Pact. Many years have gone by since Russia was considered an enemy; the last decade has delivered conclusive proof that the European Security Strategy was correct in stating that no conflict today has a purely military solution.⁴ NATO missions have changed and must continue to do so. Yet what must be avoided is defining threats so broadly that it dilutes the Alliance's capacities and effectiveness in dealing with basic issues. Hence, combating organised crime, ensuring energy security, and the management of migration-related problems should not be seen as objectives of the Alliance.

³ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, May 2010, page 41.

⁴ A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, Brussels, December 2003, page 7

NATO must confine its activities to planning and carrying out missions in which the use of the military instrument is a necessary component.

As the NATO 2020 report states, it is true that “the line between military and non-military threats is becoming blurred”,⁵ although this does not mean that the best response would be to develop civil capacities within the Alliance. What NATO needs is to be able to create a more flexible military instrument that might effectively be coordinated with the civil capacities of other international institutions better situated for taking a leadership role in conflict resolution.

The NATO 2020 Report unflinchingly deals with the lessons that should be learned from Afghanistan and makes several points that are absolutely right. Yet it fails to include such an important issue as the fact that the handling of a conflict cannot be divided into two periods i.e. the initial military action followed by the civil action. Afghanistan (and Iraq) has demonstrated that when conflicts are followed along exclusive military lines of logic, it creates conditions that ultimately render the conflict irresolvable, no matter how well the civil mechanisms are applied.

Introducing civilian capacities within NATO would not be an adequate response. This would create different kinds of internal dysfunction besides fostering competition between other existing international organisms. It is a matter of accepting the limits of the military instrument as well as its subordination to political and diplomatic approaches in the management of any particular conflict.

Relations with Russia

Relations with Russia constitute one of the great challenges that NATO faces today. NATO does not consider Russia an enemy and neither does Russia see NATO as such. Although the Russian Security Strategy of 2009 speaks of NATO as a danger, it does hold that a security policy is strictly defensive, a view which should permit more fruitful dialogue.⁶

The Alliance must put an end to the dated scenario where Russia is neither an enemy nor a partner. If it does put an end to it, the security and stability of the European continent would be markedly improved.

In Berlin in 2008, President Medvedev suggested convening a broad-based conference to discuss a new architecture of European security. He probably did so more with a view to favouring his position in the debate than thinking that such a conference would be accepted. President Obama responded with an agreement on the reduction of nuclear warheads and radical change in the anti-missile defence system, alongside offering Russia the chance to join the initiative. The fact is that there has been no European response. The diversity of positions in the EU regarding relations with Russia has made this very difficult. Drafting the NSC may help to broaden agreements on the matter, especially if the United States helps in defining a common position. The firm stance of President Obama hitherto has shown European countries that there is a need for achieving a common policy if they wish to deal with the fact that the United States bases its approach on the matter in an increasingly bilateral fashion.

The reality is that Russia and NATO have many threats in common and that they are cooperating in facing them. One might cite examples ranging from monitoring non-proliferation – with the clear example of Iran – to the anti-terrorist struggle, through to combating drug trafficking and cooperation in NATO operations in Afghanistan (ISAF).

It seems clear that it would be a good idea to deepen cooperation in the domains where it already exists. Moreover, it could be proposed that Russia should become increasingly engaged in crisis management missions, whether with NATO or the EU.

Strengthening the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) should be another goal, this time with a view to moving beyond

⁵ “NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement”. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010, page 24.

⁶ Russian National Security Strategy to 2020, Moscow, May 2009.

the present situation with two distinct parts and limited levels of trust (which is to say 28 NATO countries plus a different member i.e. Russia) in a NRC that would effectively assuage existing doubts as to the intentions of each party while improving the atmosphere of mutual trust.

Eventually, collaboration might continue with an updating of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as well as discussions about the new anti-missile defence system. Advancing in all these terrains would bring undeniable common benefits. As for the latter question, it is worth emphasising that opening up the anti-missile defence system is an initiative that means shifting from a scheme of cooperative security to one of collective security, with all the benefits and obligations that this entails.

When improving cooperation with Russia in the field of security appears on the agenda, the word “reassurance” immediately arises in relation to a series of countries whose history and vicinity make them somewhat more reticent regarding such a position, which favours giving momentum to partnership with Russia.

On this point, it should be made clear that such misgivings are well founded and that Russia is continuing to give off signals of keeping up a zone of influence in its surrounds. While that might very well be the case, it is still true that the greatest source of reassurance for these countries comes from the solidarity expressed in Article 5 of the Treaty and from the commitment of the United States within the core of NATO. Seeking such reassurance in contingency planning or exercises is an error that tends to perpetuate the situation we are attempting to go beyond.

In a recent report of the Council on Foreign Relations on the future of NATO it is stated that “NATO needs to take seriously contingency planning for the protection of the Baltic States, particularly Estonia and Latvia, while recognizing that transparency is essential to assure the Russians these efforts are purely defensive.”⁷ However, affirming that this is about defensive activities does not resolve the problem if what we really want is to improve mutual trust as a basis for greater cooperation and stability. The path to follow is that of convincing these countries that any medium-term boosting of their security depends on greater cooperation. Evidently such a renunciation of contingency plans and exercises should be agreed with and reciprocated by Russia.

In this regard, the events in Kyrgyzstan reveal how full advantage has not been taken of all the possibilities for cooperation that are afforded by the evolution of such events. The request for help from the provisional government provided an opportunity for NATO – or the European Union – to join with Russia in a humanitarian operation directed by the latter. This would have given rise to recognition of the status and capabilities of Russia, demonstrating a spirit of partnership among equals.

The Partnership in a Global World

NATO is a regional actor, not a global actor. The United States and the European Union are global actors, as are the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund. This is not to say that the NSC should not be written with the global context of an evermore multipolar and interdependent world in mind. Less does it imply, still, that NATO should act only within its own area. NATO should be prepared, as events of recent years have shown, to act outside its area, at a great distance and in a sustainable fashion. Such interventions will not, in the foreseeable future, be carried out alone but by working with other regional or global institutions, and not always with NATO leading the mission.

A recent report of the Atlantic Council touches upon this point. “There will be times when having a United Nations, European Union or OSCE flag on an operation, rather than a NATO flag, will afford a better chance of success.”⁸

⁷ Goldgeier, James M., *The Future of NATO*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council Special Report, N° 51, February 2010, page 13.

⁸ Lindley-French, Julian and Boyer, Yves, *STRATCON 2010: An Alliance for a Global Century*, Washington: Atlantic Council, Strategic Advisors Group, April 2010, page 2.

This is a dimension that will have increasing importance in the future: NATO supporting schemes of cooperative security with an enabling role. The partnership with other countries or international organisations must evolve into becoming a normal mechanism of action in a context of growing interdependence and multipolarity.

In the domain of partnership, collaboration with the United Nations should take priority. This has already been noted in the NATO 2020 report, which says, “[...] security depends increasingly on a rule-based international order. One of NATO’s priorities, therefore, should be to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to fulfil its responsibilities”.⁹ Accordingly, it is in everyone’s interests that NATO missions and the role of the UN should be carefully delimited. In February this year, Anders Fogh Rasmussen put forth the idea of conceiving NATO as a “[...] hub of a network of security partnerships and a centre for consultation on international security issues”.¹⁰ Riccardo Alcaro, in another report published by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) considers that “[...] it would be best if the strategic concept clarified that the only conceivable hub of a network of security organisations is the United Nations”.¹¹

I believe that the line marked out by the Albright report and the IAI is the right one in the present circumstances. This is so because the legitimacy and support of international public opinion and of the NATO member states are essential elements if interventions are to bring about stable solutions.

NATO bestows a legitimacy that no unilateral decision of any of its members would have, but at present the main source of legitimacy is, without a doubt, the United Nations Security Council.

This is why we should anticipate that partnership – in particular with the United Nations – will be the most common way of working in the foreseeable future. This form of action will derive from Article 4 of the Treaty (consultation in case of threat to any of the Parties), rather than Article 5, which deals with responding to an armed attack against any member country. If we wish to uphold the validity of one of the three goals identified by Lord Ismay in 1949 – “To keep the Americans in” – it would seem that judicious use of Article 4 would be a good way of going about it.

NATO must lead the efforts towards a more frequent and intensive use of multilateral institutions. In a progressively multipolar world, although the pre-eminence of the United States will be unquestionable for many years, we must create and make use of multilateral structures in which the emerging powers feel comfortable. We must cultivate not only the areas of compatible interests but also, and in particular, those in which our values and their interests might coincide.

Order and stability in a multipolar world depend on making its institutions multilateral. If we are to be pragmatic, we would do well to recognise that it is not essential that this goal – the multilateralisation of an interdependent and multipolar world – should be made explicit in the NSC. However, it is in our interests that Europe should manage to make this concern compatible or possible in the strategy that is to be approved in the Atlantic Council next autumn.

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⁹ “NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement”. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010, page 25.

¹⁰ “NATO in the 21st Century: Towards Global Connectivity”, Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Munich Security Conference, 7 February 2010.

¹¹ Alcaro, Riccardo, Combining Realism with Vision: Options for NATO’s New Strategic Concept, Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, Documenti IAI, N°10, May 2010, page 17.