

# Implementing NATO's New Strategic Concept

## Thinking Outside the Box: A Ten-Point Plan for NATO's Next 20 Years

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The author explores the scope for far-reaching developments in NATO and their potential for transforming the security of areas of the world well beyond the original confines of the North Atlantic Treaty area. He explains the underlying philosophy of his approach and the vision he has for extending the democratic values that underpin the Alliance in order to build a sustainable global structure for confronting security challenges in the coming decades leading up to 2030. The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent any official policy or government institution.

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## 1. Introduction: The Rationale for Thinking Outside the Box

At the Strasbourg Summit in 2009 NATO leaders took the decision to launch a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance. For the first time ever they charged the Secretary General of NATO to undertake this task on their behalf and invited him to set up a Group of Experts to assist him. The Group, established under the chairmanship of Madeleine Albright, undertook many discussions with experts, meetings with interested organisations and visits to government and non-governmental organisations in member and partner countries. It completed its work in May 2010 and published its report. On the basis of this report the Secretary General has been undertaking further discussions with the Permanent Representatives on the North Atlantic Council prior to submitting his Strategic Concept document to the Heads of State and Government at their Summit in Lisbon on 19/20 November 2010.

In parallel with this process the sponsors of the Shadow NATO Summit II have participated in and followed the progress of the discussion, welcoming the unprecedented openness of the debate as well as the invitation to committed non-governmental organisations and to interested observers to take part in it. An end, it seemed, to the closed door culture of earlier times when security matters of major public interest and global importance were examined, discussed and decided upon in camera. Sadly, not so. Since the presentation of Madeleine Albright's report the doors have again gently closed and it seems that they will remain so until the document appears at the 19/20 November Summit, with the traditional puff of white smoke, from a process as closed as a Vatican enclave.

That does not mean that it will be a bad document or that the decisions it will embrace are wrong. But it does mean that the public debate is once again playing catch-up and is forced to discuss the interpretation of the new document and the manner of its implementation without having had the opportunity to explore in full the intellectual process that generated it.

So be it. Anticipating some of the content of the document, including some of its probable omissions, this paper attempts to chart a path towards its implementation over the next ten and twenty years of NATO's extraordinary evolution.

Throughout the debate surrounding the development of the new concept, there have been extensive efforts to prepare the Alliance for its role in a world that has changed significantly since the preparation of the last Strategic Concept in 1999 - a world which can be expected to change even

more fundamentally in the next two decades. The change of approach represented by the decision to commission the Secretary General to undertake the work is itself of huge significance. Although the final document will take account of the views and comments and criticisms put forward in the course of discussions with Member and Partner countries within the Alliance, it will not be a text negotiated line by line by the member governments – or not quite. Efforts to force the document through the traditional communiqué drafting system will undoubtedly have succeeded to some extent but perhaps not entirely. With any luck the approved document will not represent, like many political documents, the lowest common denominator of national positions. Like all such documents it will contain compromises of one form or another, but for the first time it can and should be expected to represent the most forward-looking and ambitious framework for the future work of the Alliance over the next two decades – not the lowest, but dare we say it, the highest common denominator.

The impact of 3-5 year electoral cycles often forces governments and intergovernmental organisations to address only the most urgent problems and to follow the course of events rather than being in the lead. This new conceptual framework should allow us to take the opposite approach and to develop the capacity of NATO to address the challenges that we can reasonably expect to become urgent in a mid-term perspective of 5-20 years from now, as well as challenges which we may not now be in a position to predict but which could also confront us. They must not be allowed to catch us unprepared or unable to deal with them. In 1989 the world was caught unawares. No one could have expected the events which led to the end of the division of Europe to take the direction and speed they did. The Alliance, to its credit, came out of the experience successfully, thanks to the foresight and imagination of the early steps taken to establish contacts and dialogue across hitherto forbidden boundaries and to transform its structures and procedures. But it did not emerge from this experience unscathed and has stumbled and cracked at times when the demands have been too great, opportunities missed and mistakes made.

In these circumstances it is vital that the opportunity to think outside the box and to imagine the seemingly unimaginable should not be missed. Twenty years ago it would have been inconceivable that NATO would now be an Alliance of 28 member states with an extensive range of wider partnerships and that it would be successfully conducting operations designed to bring greater stability and peace to regions of the world well outside the strict limits of the North Atlantic area. Who can say what surprises await

us in 2030 and how much better it would be if the flexibility and capacity to deal with them had already been built into our preparations for those events? The adoption of any Strategic Concept is just the start of the preparations for drafting the next one. This paper attempts to contribute positively to that process.

My purpose is to offer some provocative but hopefully exciting and stimulating ideas which could influence the debate in the weeks following the adoption of the new Strategic Concept and in the months and years after that. It is based on brainstorming discussions I have had over the past two decades with intellectuals and visionary political thinkers, politicians, scholars, military officers, businessmen and analysts in the course of my Presidency of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, my time as a Minister in the Bulgarian Government and my official and unofficial contacts in Europe, the US and elsewhere throughout that period.

Some of the ideas I am putting forward may appear to some to be too strange, too foreign and too shocking to be realistic. They may even seem more outlandish than the parliamentary bill which I submitted in August 1990 advocating the immediate dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the rapid accession of Bulgaria to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. When I was invited to NATO by the then Secretary General Manfred Woerner, he told me that the ambassadors of the 16 NATO member countries had laughed loudly at this outrageous proposal. But he himself and some of those advising him did not laugh.

During a discussion about the ideas developed in this paper an old friend told me frankly that he did not agree with my "bigger is better" philosophy for NATO. My response is to point to the unique nature of the North Atlantic Alliance and to its unprecedented success, despite its mixed reputation at home and abroad. It is, undeniably, an alliance that works despite the differences within it and despite the obstacles outside it. It has outlasted any other similar attempt to protect peace in history and at the very least must be viewed as a potential model for managing peace on a wider, even a global scale. Of course it has to be maintained, modernised and adapted to new situations but when we have something that has a proven track record of achievement, why would we not spread its benefits on a larger canvas? The strategy proposed is based on that philosophical approach. The process and speed of globalisation in today's environment does not allow us to think as we did in the past in narrow, regional terms. By gradually extending the democratic ideals and the principles and cooperative approaches developed by NATO over more than sixty years and by embracing the new opportunities we have to do so, we can advance

the cause of greater security and stability in this increasingly interdependent world.

The globalisation process itself can be expected to accelerate at almost unimaginable speed in the next two decades. This means inevitably that we have to examine future relationships between a much wider range of geo-political forces and influences than in the past. This paper may therefore seem detached from reality when viewed solely from the stance of today's environment and from the perspective of East, West, North and South political alliances and divisions. This is not accidental. We have to be as bold in our thinking as we can and if that means inviting criticism for launching ideas that are too challenging from the standpoint of today, we should live with that.

How bold do we need to be, in perspective? The scientific community, year on year, comes up with more and more rational argument that we are not alone as life forms in this universe. There is a growing and serious body of opinion willing to suggest and to point to evidence that there are other planets and other solar systems that could support life in one form or another. It would be astonishing, they argue, if this rather tiny world in this fairly small solar system were to be the only one that had somehow emerged from dust clouds and big or bigger bangs to be capable of sustaining life. That would surely be too much of a coincidence and science does not much like having to explain things in terms of coincidence. The other element about which there seems to be a growing harmony of scientific opinion is that the distances between potentially life-supporting planets mean that it is likely to take light years before contact could be made between any two planetary systems with life potential!

So there is no rush! NATO's new Strategic Concept does not have to face the challenge of charting a course which will take our world into new orbits and establish new contacts with life forms that may be friendly or may be hostile but will certainly be unknown and from our perspective unpredictable. A future Strategic Concept, further down the line, may have to do just that. But for our purposes we do not need to think in terms of light years – we can be content with looking a few decades down the road. But even then we must be prepared for the unpredictable. Forgive me if I therefore fail to apologise for raising notions that might at this moment seem farfetched but which, in relative terms, are entirely imaginable.

Until 1989 the dividing line between East and West was defined primarily by the values represented by the Atlantic Alliance and those that confronted it. Between 1989 and 2009 the values embodied in the Alliance became the glue that

has reunited the West primarily with those parts of Eastern and Central Europe which were not part of the Soviet Union. It is not hard to imagine that in the next decade or so it will again be those same values that help to bring about the coherence needed and conceivably even the unity between Atlantic and European political development and that of Russia.

The process cannot be hurried but its conclusion is surely undeniable. The day when Russia is a fully paid-up member of what we now know as NATO and assumes her rightful place in its councils, will also be the day when a new process begins – one which will gradually lead to a coherent security and crisis management structure stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostock.

And with that prize within our sights, the same centrifugal spread of tried and tested values will allow us to contemplate a cohesion from which benefits will flow which will bring hope to areas of the world far removed from the Euro-Atlantic area of today – areas such as China and other parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In twenty years time we will be in many respects close neighbours. If we are wise enough, we could also be potential partners in all our endeavours, whether they be political, economic, environmental or cultural.

The approach I propose builds initially on work in our immediate neighbourhood and in those parts of Europe that are emerging from decades of paralysis under non-democratic regimes. It seeks to steal a march on history by incorporating simultaneously approaches which encompass the security interests and development goals of a much wider world. We should have as our aim not just reaching out for the optimal level of cohesion with our immediate geographical neighbours. This we can and should achieve by exploiting the full potential of all the existing instruments of intergovernmental cooperation that are available to us through Alliances, Unions, Partnerships, Dialogues, Action Plans and Special Agreements. Other initiatives within NATO as well as those that have been established within the OSCE, the European Union and the Council of Europe are also important. But we should go further – much further. We have to set out on a course that seeks to develop new partnerships and dialogues and cooperative endeavours, working with existing structures in Asia, in China, Japan, India and Pakistan, with those in the Middle East and in the democratic countries of Africa and Latin America. Where such structures are struggling or do not exist at all, we have to help to establish them, to nurture them and to offer them incentives to reciprocate and to work with us.

The following pages offer concrete proposals and

precise steps to move the theoretical discussion of long-term projections on to a practical and more down-to-earth level. I know that there will not be universal acclaim or even tolerance for some of the ideas expressed here. Equally, I know that without a willingness of its founding fathers to think “outside the box”, the Atlantic Alliance would never have been created.

It would be unrealistic for any writer to claim to have touched upon all the concerns that fuel our political thinking and alas, that is not the case here. But I do ardently believe that with a willingness to face up to these issues and a recognition that nothing so important can lie ahead of us, we have a better chance now of shaping the future in a positive direction than we might be facing if we stand about doing nothing. However we will have only ourselves to blame if we neglect the need to inform the public of our intentions, to win their agreement that these are the right directions for us to take and to engage them in future discussion.

Since its creation, the North Atlantic Alliance has been dependent on a sufficient level of public support and understanding for its role and policies, given expression at regular intervals through the ballot box, to pursue its tasks and to fulfill its destiny. This has never been an easy task for its role is inevitably one which invites criticism and its actions will not necessarily be universally popular.

However a more open public strategy can be imagined. NATO policies must be described in terms which can be more readily understood and which seek to dispel once and for all any notion that its intentions and policies are aggressive or aimed at belittling or disregarding the interests of others. The underlying message of its pronouncements must emphasise that, on the contrary, its overall objective is to extend the prospect of enhanced security and the opportunity for self-fulfillment as far afield as possible. This is not only in the interests of the many people around the world to whom such prospects are currently denied but in the interests of the member countries of the Alliance themselves.

By making cooperation both within NATO and between NATO and its various partners more understandable and more accessible we stand to gain more than just an element of public support. The development of the policies and structures that will be needed in the next 20 years rests firmly on one of the main pillars of democracy, namely approval by the electorate. But this is not a beauty contest. If we overlook the importance of the image we have as an Alliance, we have only ourselves to blame if our worst enemy turns out to be our reputation. By contrast, with enhanced popular understanding and endorsement, it

becomes easier to secure support for the necessary funding and vital commitments required for joint action to be taken, including the willingness of the member and partner countries to provide the essential logistical resources and forces. The same public understanding and endorsement can itself play a preventive role and may even replace the need for political or military intervention in some circumstances. At the end of this paper I examine ways in which these goals might be achieved.

Finally, it would not be the act of a wise man to launch views on the potential for improvements in our approach as an international community to future security challenges without inviting comment and criticism. Nor would it be sensible to pretend to have all the answers. For this reason I invite readers of this paper to react critically and to send in their comments, favourable or otherwise, to the Atlantic Club's website ([www.atlantic-club.org](http://www.atlantic-club.org)). I want an open debate and that means that I am as passionate about listening to counter-arguments and alternatives to these proposals as I am about putting forward radical but achievable targets for our globalised trans-atlantic security structures.

*Note: This paper owes much to the input it has received from many different sources. It has been my privilege to listen to them all and to attempt to condense the ideas and concerns to which others have devoted their time and their convictions. I do not propose to name those involved - they will be able to recognise for themselves the value of the contributions they have made. But at the end of the day it is I who must assume responsibility for the strategy I am proposing - one which I hope may have a beneficial effect not only on the debate on the way forward that I fervently hope will take place but on the outcome of the debate as well.*

## **2. NATO and the European Union: Reinforcing Europe**

The rationale for this out-of-the-box investigation is to try to prepare the NATO of 2010 for the NATO that it may have to be in 2030. I have outlined in very general terms my overall vision for steps to put the Alliance on the right course to fulfill what may well become its destiny in the next five, ten and twenty years. Inevitably there are some issues that are more urgent than others and some that, regardless of time-scale, demand a higher priority.

For many, it is not a secret that one of our first priorities has to be the relationship between NATO and the European Union. Let us be frank. NATO-EU cooperation has fallen far below its potential. For a large part of their existence the two organisations barely spoke to each other and

often seemed to deny each other's existence. Yet the historical record clearly demonstrates that the creation of the Alliance and the development of the European Communities were integral parts of the same process. Indeed the latter would not have been possible without the former – the fact that the European process was able to move forward progressively in its earlier years without having to address the East-West security problem, because it was already being addressed in the wider North Atlantic context, can be said to be one of the first great achievements of NATO.

More recently there have been formal measures to bring sensible solutions to the nonsensical gulf in the interaction between the two. There have been contacts and some measure of coordination of military activities in relation to peace-keeping roles. NATO support has been provided for EU-led operations. The EU has inherited certain NATO roles. However the synergy between the two organisations that could and should be readily attainable has not only been elusive but its absence has damaged the credibility of both.

This can now change. The return of France to NATO's integrated military structure and the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty provide a new and welcome opportunity to relaunch this process and to set it on a new and altogether more positive course. I propose the early establishment of a NATO-EU Synergy Commission, with senior representation from both sides, to take the process forward with a fixed-target timetable to be proposed by NATO leaders as soon as possible after the Lisbon Summit. It will of course be for the EU to respond and to make its own suggestions for the follow-on steps but by making this a priority for itself, NATO can inject new energy into the discussions and become a catalyst for long-overdue action.

An integral part of the desired synergy should be the formulation of a genuinely unified EU Security Policy. Its purpose would not be to emulate the appearance of rivalry that has bedeviled the relationship in the past but rather, concretely, to strengthen Europe's contribution to NATO while simultaneously enhancing the EU's own potential both politically and militarily. Defence expenditure in Europe is currently some 5 times less efficient than that of the United States. European Defence Ministers around the NATO table face constant and justified pressure to step up their performance and to take on a more equitable burden of the costs of NATO operations. They are unlikely to be able to do that individually but collectively, within the framework of a unified EU-wide policy, there is no reason why they should not be able to do so. And by calling for a unified policy, we are expressing a fervent hope that new delimitations of the European space will not be drawn up nor old and out-of-date ones repeated:

the process must be open to potential future members of the EU including Turkey. Support for this approach should not be hard to find from both the North American and European members of NATO and it is there that the initiative may need to be taken. For the EU itself, there is a job to be done in eliminating the tendency to see NATO and EU roles in competition with each other and to stimulate public awareness of the benefits to be gained from looking at this issue in a new light.

The time may come when the synergy that has proved so elusive in the past can be taken for granted. When that is the case and when the European Union and the Alliance are working together in harmony, it is even possible to envisage a symbolic enhancement and Europeanisation of the NATO logo, blending the compass rose with the twelve stars of the EU flag. But until then, the most important task is to move forward rapidly on a unified agenda to achieve what could and should have been achieved a long time ago. It will be easier to achieve this if a greater degree of honesty and historical accuracy is injected into the debate.

For too long the myth has been allowed to persist that the European Union emerged miraculously from its origins like a perfectly formed egg protected by its own shell. It is time for EU realists to come forward and for EU propagandists to admit that while the egg may have been a European-only construction in name, it was built on the shoulders of the Marshall Plan and the shell that protected it and allowed it to develop was NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 was the precondition that allowed the European Coal and Steel Community of 1951 and the Treaty of Rome of 1957 to come into being and to evolve. This is not about paying debts but about dismissing the falsehoods that have allowed the perception to take hold that there is an irreconcilable gulf between the two organisations. By accepting the reality and acknowledging historical truths, a great deal of the debris that has unnecessarily cluttered and thwarted the relationship can be cleared away and a new path of rational interdependence established.

### **3. NATO and Russia: Reuniting Europe**

It is not difficult for me to state unequivocally that the next priority has to be NATO and Russia. The reason is simple: NATO's determination to interact positively with Russia and to take as a given the importance of Russia's influence and potential contribution to solving the security issues of the globalised world is often thwarted by outdated and inaccurate representations of NATO's role. The barrier to progress comes not from those seriously committed to ensuring Russia's future security and well-being but from those who mistakenly believe that perpetuating the old divisions is in

Russia's interests. Unless that barrier can be overcome, influenced as it is by outdated stereotypes, the short-term future looks depressing. But any serious examination of what Russia and NATO have to gain by working together, and how much they have to lose by allowing history to poison their future cooperation, makes clear the direction in which they have to go.

The best way of confronting this problem is to upgrade NATO's relationship with Russia at the earliest opportunity. It has an institutionalised form in the NATO-Russia Council and has seen successful manifestations of cooperation in different spheres, but its true potential for fruitful cooperation has never really taken off. Deeply engrained mistrust and a degree of mutual suspicion about each other's real intentions may be one of the main reasons for this but that cannot be allowed to continue to be an impediment to the relationship. It seems to me realistic that by 2020/30 a mature relationship with Russia will have been translated into the full participation of Russia in NATO councils and deliberations and decisions. The security of both Russia and its future allies and of the whole Euro-Atlantic zone demands it. The issue is therefore not if but when and how to manage the process with the minimum delay. Fresh proof of that may be offered by NATO-Russia collaboration in building a common Anti Missile Defence - an effort unthinkable only some 20 years ago. Discussion of Russian involvement in supporting international efforts in Afghanistan may be another encouraging sign.

The Membership Action Plan known, as the MAP, is a skillfully devised and flexible formula for a step by step integration in which every recent new member of the Alliance has participated prior to accession. It is itself a learning and a confidence-building process which goes far to dispel any doubts about what NATO membership means. It can be entered into without commitment. Potential future members have everything to gain and nothing to lose by signing up to it.

A tailor-made Membership Action Plan should now be offered to Russia. It must be an open-ended and relatively long-term engagement which will offer a new perspective to the Russian leadership without compromising in any way Russian prestige or self-esteem. It will contribute to the democratisation process to which the leadership in Moscow is committed and will help to foster among the Russian public and with public opinion in the wider world a perception of NATO which is both accurate and positive. To put it another way it will help to convince national and international critics that Russian and NATO security interests are not somehow in opposition or that they can be served without joint and coordinated steps to

promote them both. It will have a directly beneficial effect on cooperation between the members of the United Nations Security Council and will also help to strengthen the authority of the UNSC and its ultimate responsibility for global peace and security.

By the same token the MAP should be offered to all existing Partner countries, each one of which will emerge from the process with strengthened democratic structures, enhanced security and a more influential voice in international affairs. It is in all their interests that participation in individual MAPs should become part of everyday business in the next few years, assisting in the process of democratisation in some cases and helping in the resolution of frozen conflicts in others. The benefits to countries such as Belarus, Moldova and Serbia would be tremendous and progress in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine, which have long had MAPs pending, would also be substantially enhanced once the process becomes part of the usual business of government.

Further down the road, the R-Day, when Russia joins NATO, will be the culmination of a win-win game for Russia and the Alliance. It will finally close the door on the legacy of the Cold War and the division of Europe and will offer new and exciting horizons for Russia. The perception of NATO in Russia and in the wider world will be enhanced and old, damaging preconceptions and misperceptions will be consigned to history, where they belong. The common ground and complementarity between NATO and the OSCE will become apparent and will allow a better distribution of labour between them. There is a real possibility of achieving a genuine synergy between the Helsinki Process of 1975, which gave birth to the OSCE and was the motor for greater cohesion in the Euro-Atlantic area from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and the North Atlantic Treaty which has provided stability and fostered democracy since 1949. And who knows, it may even be possible to contemplate a merger of the two and an unprecedented contraction of international bureaucratic structures.

#### **4. De Facto Allies: NATO's Extended Family**

In trying to confront head-on the challenges we face – in a 5-20 year projection – we should not neglect the sphere of our international relations represented by some of those countries which have been for so long our de facto allies, namely Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. Contacts and strategic partnerships between these countries and NATO have been in place for some considerable time but have yet to evolve in the positive direction that common sense dictates. With globalisation, the days of considering

ourselves geographically remote from each other are far behind us. Australia and New Zealand, recognised by the UN as members of the Western group, share a cultural identity with many of the member countries of NATO but all four countries have recognised that they share a common destiny with their Western allies and have consistently proved their loyalty and friendship and their sense of shared basic values. Their role in Afghanistan is just one manifestation of this recognition.

There is solid ground for offering all four countries the prospect of cementing these alliances through de jure membership of the new NATO. They may not wish, today, to take that step but there can be no reason why NATO's Open Door should not be open for them too, if in future they wish to take that course. In the meantime, each should be invited to elaborate a Membership Action Plan, which will bring advantages to each of them, whether or not they follow it to its natural conclusion.

The general advantages of this well-tried formula are described above but there are obvious specific advantages for each of the four. One need only think of the potential impact on Japan's ability to play her full part in international affairs without the constraints of the neutrality imposed under her constitution. The removal of this wartime legacy would free her in much the same way that Germany rid herself of a similar legacy in 1955, when she joined NATO. There was opposition when that was first mooted but the opposition was overcome in a relatively short timeframe. In Japan's case much time has elapsed and growing global interdependence suggests that the time has come for Japan to move on too.

In the case of South Korea, where a parallel with the Federal Republic of Germany might also serve as a precedent, the eventual reunification of the peninsula – seemingly impossible from where we stand now – would also become a more realistic goal. After all, even in the 1980s those who might have dared to anticipate a unification of Germany would have been regarded as deluding themselves. Is the reunification of the Korean peninsula sometime in the next twenty years any less conceivable?

Complying with the demands of the MAP process should pose little difficulty for any of the four countries but the potential it would offer to each of them by drawing them closer to the Alliance should not be underestimated.

#### **5. North Korea and the Korean Peninsula: Europe's Potential Role**

There is one specific area where there is a

potential for EU action, namely in relation to North Korea [1]. If the European Union is to fulfill its role as a global player on the world stage I believe it must start by playing a leading role in reaching out to North Korea in the interests of international security and the eventual unification of the Korean peninsula.

The new institutional arrangements for the European Union created by the Lisbon Treaty provide the encouragement and legal authority for Europe to realise its long-term goal of becoming an effective actor on the global stage with regard to foreign and security affairs. An important test of these ambitions will be the extent to which the EU is seen to be involved in global issues as a whole. Recent developments on the Korean peninsula are a stark reminder that the Korean problem is one of the most important and long-standing global issues we face – one that involves every other significant actor on the global stage apart from the European Union. The EU is in fact conspicuously absent from the process.

A quick glance at those who are involved makes this abundantly clear. The Six Party Talks bring together the US, Russia, China, Japan and South Korea. Under a UN Security Council Resolution of 1950, the United Nations and seventeen of its members, including France, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Greece, Turkey, Canada and Australia are also involved.

To be fair, the EU does provide agricultural assistance to The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), it does seek opportunities to provide development assistance and it has voiced concerns for the human rights situation in North Korea. But while these steps might be appropriate for a humanitarian organisation such as the Red Cross, they are hardly sufficient as the platform of an intergovernmental organisation which claims, according to the Lisbon Treaty, to be a genuine political actor on the global stage.

Today, with the North Korean issue once again on the agenda of the UN Security Council, there is an opportunity for the European Union to take an active part in supporting the Six Party Talks and the efforts of the UN. Among the 27 members of the EU there are now a number of countries which the DPRK feels it can trust, giving the EU a much better and more compelling chance of influencing Pyongyang than earlier manifestations of the Union.

Moreover there has been a tendency within the DPRK to see the other five participants in the Six Party Talks as part of a conspiracy – or as they put it, “a conspiracy of our neighbours against our sovereignty”. The involvement of a new big broker in the discussions in the form of the EU, which cannot be seen as a hostile neighbour,

could have a significant and beneficial fresh impact on progress. In parenthesis I also envisage another role for the EU in taking over the role of at least some of the 30,000 US troops now deployed in South Korea – but that is something for discussion outside just the EU framework.

Any future EU policy towards Korea needs to address one specific question, to which admittedly there are several possible answers, namely what should be the EU's specific contribution with regard to the DPRK? Should it just emulate the positions adopted by the five other parties to the Six Party Talks, or should it bring added value with a new specifically EU input to them?

One possible solution is for the EU to offer its know-how in order to mitigate if not immediately eliminate the effects of the largest single issue facing the DPRK, namely its self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world. The major cause of this isolation is the extent of the auto-immunity that the government has put in place to prevent information crossing its borders in either direction.

When I compare this situation to my experience of other countries which have become serious causes of concern to the international community from a security point of view – countries such as Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Cuba, Libya, Iran, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia - the DPRK is by far the most isolated and information-deprived nation of them all. Addressing this fundamental weakness lies beyond the mandate of the Six Party Talks and of UN Security Council Resolutions relating to North Korea. However it does represent at least one significant area where the EU could play a historic role – and in so doing help to bring closer the eventual goal of unifying the Korean peninsula. There is also a useful role for the OSCE in this context by inviting North Korea, like its southern neighbour, to work with the OSCE as an Asian partner.

In becoming a global actor – which it is inevitably bound to be – the EU cannot simply distance itself from conflicts affecting civilisation of the magnitude of the Korean issue. 60 years of shying away from the problem is enough. And although this is not an area for action by NATO, it is an issue of international security concern and accordingly any such initiative by the EU would merit NATO endorsement.

## **6. China and Asia: Global Outreach**

It sometimes seems that the evolution of China and its future global influence is on a scale so vast and of such enormous strategic significance that it is too much to contemplate. It is as astonishing as it is incomprehensible that conferences and debates about global affairs can take place again



and again throughout Europe and North America with barely a mention of China. It is almost as if the awe-inspiring dimensions of China and of her potential impact on the world stage are imponderable factors but ignoring them is of course nonsense. If the global community and China itself do not embrace this potential positively and take practical steps to put their relations on a positive trajectory, they will not only miss huge opportunities but risk endangering their mutual interests irretrievably.

So what practical steps can be taken? A Joint NATO-China Council designed to provide a basis for dialogue and to generate enhanced mutual understanding in both directions would have immediate benefits. The creation of such a forum alone will not of course provide those benefits unless the forum takes on a meaningful, concrete form and sets itself realistic mutually agreed targets. But if it does that, the whole dynamic of relations within the United Nations Security Council - sometimes in recent years the cause of negative tensions - will be changed for the better. With that improvement many other practical results can be anticipated. It will facilitate the identification of willing partners for NATO-led peace-promoting operations; provide a more secure basis for searching for common solutions to problems such as those generated by the situation in Burma or that in Sudan; support the Chinese leadership in developing democracy; and free China and Russia from the problems they have often faced in the context of the UNSC as well as improving their own bilateral relations. From each of these other advantages will begin to flow. Kick-starting this process by entering into a new open-ended relationship facilitated by the creation of a Joint Council is not an over-ambitious project for either the Chinese leadership or the governments of NATO member countries but it is certainly one that has the potential to take relations forward dramatically within the time frame of a few years. Confucius would approve.

Elsewhere in Asia the positive spin-off from the creation of the NATO-China Council would very rapidly become apparent. But more can and should be done. ASEAN brings together ten East Asian nations and a population of over half a billion people. The joint political and economic weight of this group undeniably will continue to exert a growing influence not only in the Asia-Pacific region but throughout the world. The recently activated free trade area established between China and ASEAN will impact on the extent and speed of globalisation in no uncertain terms.

By proposing to ASEAN the creation of a Joint NATO-ASEAN Commission, including representation from Ministries' of Economic

Affairs, the members of the Alliance will simultaneously be investing in the political and economic well-being of the region and helping to bridge cultural differences between the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific areas. For their part the members of ASEAN[2] will acquire a greater stake in globalisation issues and an increased voice in global councils. It is a prize worth having for all concerned.

Another country which has sought to expand its options and to develop its contacts beyond its immediate neighbours is Mongolia. In 2004, strongly supported by the Bulgarian Chairmanship, she became the OSCE's most recent Asian partner. Soon after she indicated interest in joining NATO's Partnership for Peace. No answer has yet been forthcoming from NATO but it is high time for progress and for a genuine hand of friendship to be extended towards this predominantly Buddhist country. In isolation from the new approaches towards Russia and China that I have advocated and their successful evolution, this would be difficult to envisage but in that scenario all this becomes possible. The Alliance must not turn down opportunities to develop its role as a catalyst for peace in a globalised world and needs to offer Mongolia much more positive perspectives in the framework of PfP as soon as it can.

Absent from this section so far is a very important Asian and world player, namely India. This is a unique country, a geopolitical phenomenon with a complexity of democratic practices and inter-relationships within the Non-Aligned Movement, with Pakistan, with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) with which she seeks closer involvement, and with the UNSCR of which she aspires to be a permanent member. This calls for a NATO strategy towards India which develops in parallel with the progress and directions of India's own development. At the very least NATO must ensure that India is seen as a vital part of the equation and that her role as a potential bridge to the Non-Aligned Movement is not overlooked.

## **7. Africa, the South Atlantic and Latin America: Broader Outreach**

History has taught us that peaceful relationships depend on strategic gateways and bridges across natural or man-made divisions. It is therefore far from fanciful to seek to maintain such access where it exists and to rebuild it where it does not, to continents and countries which do not at first sight look as if they have much common ground to share with the North Atlantic Alliance. With its Mediterranean Dialogue and its Istanbul Initiative, NATO has edged somewhat timidly towards the African continent but to date, despite common regional interests, there are few obvious mechanisms for developing relations. Many

theories exist about globalisation and the direction it will take. What would seem to be self-evident is that a globalisation process which is not actively managed will not mean an absence of growing global interdependence but merely the absence of confidence in the process and of stability in its outcome. Hence the need for the broadest possible approach in NATO's relations with the rest of the world and that includes Africa and Latin America.

Where can we look for gateways? I suggest three – two relating to Africa and the South Atlantic and one to South America – each quite different and each for entirely different reasons.

Cape Verde is a former Portuguese colony culturally close to the Azores, with no indigenous population, in fact uninhabited until the arrival of Europeans in 1462. A stable democracy – some say a pearl of democracy - which punches above her weight politically and economically in the region, she poses no threats and does not risk becoming an exporter of conflict or division. She sits on the crossroads of the strategically vital North American-African axis and the South American-European axis. NATO exercises off her shores and the EU has a Special Partnership Agreement with her. An invitation to Cape Verde to participate in Partnership for Peace and to move towards a suitable MAP process may not be an obvious choice but it makes the utmost good sense. The African Union and the African continent will understand its significance and also benefit.

In parallel the offer of a special Cooperation Agreement to the African Union would achieve important psychological goals as well as practical objectives. The former include the development of a more positive perception of NATO's role in the modern world. The latter include facilitating on-going operations in Sudan and making progress in addressing the growing problems off the coast of Somalia.

And what can be undertaken of relevance to South America? Cuba is on the threshold of major social and political change – a time in more than one nation's history, including my own, when a significant change of foreign policy direction also becomes possible. I can see parallels between Cuban society today and Bulgaria in the late 1980s. A new democratic Cuba may not emerge tomorrow but is likely to do so over the course of the next decade and the international community must be ready to embrace her when that occurs.

Cuba can be the gateway to Latin America and a significant new pillar of the transatlantic link. The realities faced by Cuba at this moment and the inevitable drawing back demanded by her

economic situation from the social support structures of the past are untenable unless she is also able to benefit from involvement in the processes of globalisation. I can therefore readily foresee a specific form of MAP designed for Cuba that would oil the mechanisms. An early signal that the Alliance looks forward to developing that relationship would not be out of place.

It goes without saying that growing cooperation with Brazil, Chile and Argentina will also be an essential and natural part of the process of globalisation but in view of their size and geopolitical importance, cooperation agreements as opposed to integration efforts will be the order of the day.

## **8. Afghanistan, Pakistan Iran, Iraq and the Middle East: Developing a Uniform Dialogue**

At some point in time it is imperative that Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and the Middle East as a whole are implicated in a practical sense in the whole "globalisation of security" process. We may not be able to envisage that as an immediate prospect but if we are serious about future security we cannot afford to lose sight of that goal. With that admittedly longer-term perspective in mind, I believe that there are specific and more immediate measures that can be taken to address the concerns of these countries.

A measure of practical bilateral security cooperation between NATO and some of the countries in the region has been facilitated by the Alliance's Mediterranean Dialogue and its Istanbul Initiative launched in 1994 and 2004 respectively. Opportunities to extend and deepen such cooperation with the countries concerned should certainly not be missed but it would be difficult to envisage extending these bilateral arrangements to the many other countries of the Middle East as a whole. I believe that something broader and more comprehensive is both desirable and achievable. It should take the form of a structured Dialogue between the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and NATO. The exact format of the Dialogue will have to be elaborated in consultation with the OIC, working together to develop a meaningful outcome which is greater than the sum of its constituents. In other words, the ambitions for the dialogue should amount to more than just an amalgamation of individual relationships with the 57 members of the OIC.

What is the rationale for this approach? The need for enhanced mutual understanding and tolerance between the Islamic world and the countries which make up the Euro-Atlantic community is self-evident. Moreover in the religious context this need has been at least partially recognised and

steps taken to address it. The unprecedented open letter by leaders of the Muslim faith to leaders of the Christian faith in October 2007 - entitled "A Common Word between Us and You" - has been widely embraced by religious communities and has become the leading interfaith and bridge-building dialogue between Moslems and Christians. There is scope for much-needed and similar interfaith contacts between the Muslim world and other faiths but that falls outside the parameters of NATO. What is clearly within those parameters however, is a wider intercultural dialogue involving all NATO and OIC countries. Its establishment, say over the course of the next 5 years, would contribute concretely to the reciprocal improvement of perceptions (and elimination of misperceptions) which frequently make progress in addressing political, economic and security issues illusive and difficult to achieve. Such a NATO-OIC dialogue could be effective at different levels, including contacts between government departments with responsibilities in the field of cultural exchanges.

Promoting tolerance and understanding is as much a cultural issue as it is a religious one and the presence of ethnic minorities throughout the Euro-Atlantic area makes enhanced intercultural dialogue just as much a domestic imperative as it is a foreign policy issue. Without concrete and reciprocal efforts to address this matter, the scope for resolving political and other problems is bound to remain limited. Is a NATO-Islamic Dialogue Forum a solution to these problems? No. But could it contribute to their resolution? Undoubtedly, its existence could have eased some of the difficulties encountered in recent years with respect to Iraq and Afghanistan. Today it could exert a positive influence on issues concerning Pakistan or relations with Iran. And in the future it could open up a vital gateway to the broader Middle East.

### **9. Israel, Palestine and the Mediterranean Partners - Helping to address the World's Oldest Conflict**

NATO's Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) must be drawn closer to the centre of action of the Alliance, both in terms of bilateral initiatives and multilateral measures on the lines I have indicated above. When Palestine becomes an independent state as it must and will, she will also naturally become part of the Mediterranean Dialogue and in those circumstances developments that have previously been unthinkable become much more realistic. Israeli as well as Palestinian participation in the Partnership for Peace programme is entirely possible. Further down the road, Membership Action Plans with long-term schedules should be no less imaginable than a NATO-Russia partnership programme once was. And if we raise

the prospect of Joint Israeli-Palestinian defence units, trained and assisted by NATO and given the benefit of NATO's experience in the contexts of Iraq and Afghanistan, is that going too far? For today of course. But in 10-20 year timeframe, I do not think so.

### **10. Tackling the NATO Image Problem: Our Greatest Challenge**

Part of the solution to the problem of transforming NATO's public image and its image abroad is to be found in following the different paths towards a more global future that I have outlined in the preceding pages. As public opinion begins to understand the response made by the Alliance to the demands of global interdependence, to witness the progress made and to appreciate the benefits of enhanced security on a much broader canvas than has been contemplated before, the obstacles to many of the difficulties we now face will diminish. However we cannot wait for that to happen. The course I am advocating can only be successful if its overall direction is understood and supported by public opinion.

To achieve that there has to be a serious and sustained programme of activities specifically aimed at creating acceptance and ultimately enthusiasm and support for the work that the Alliance needs to undertake in order to fulfill its new mandate. The primary responsibility for conveying positive messages to our publics and for winning their confidence, trust and support in often difficult circumstances, belongs of course to our own governments. They must not neglect their responsibilities in this hugely important field. But they do not have to do it alone. The parliamentary assemblies and the non-governmental organisations and think tanks which exist to promote and challenge the decisions being made by our governments are not constrained by inter-governmental rules of engagement. Instead they can enjoy the freedom to explore their vision and to experiment with their actions in ways from which we can all benefit. We need to give them the licence and the encouragement to do that but we need to go further.

I believe that two bold initiatives should be taken in this context within the next year. First, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly should take the lead in developing new contacts with new partners both on a regional and global basis, inviting them to explore ways in which NATO could and should develop its future relations on the lines I am proposing in this paper. The Assembly can be a major tool in this venture if it is used with vision and encouraged to move far further than the Alliance itself can yet go in building up its contacts in all those areas of the world with which NATO may need to be working in close cooperation over the next twenty years.

Secondly, I believe that NATO leaders now have an opportunity to launch a major initiative aimed at building up a broad-based and inter-linked web of energetic non-governmental bodies - not necessarily uniform in structure or character - with a mandate to take discussion of global security to the public and to do so at an altogether new level. In so doing so, and in making their support explicit in a formal declaration, NATO leaders can simultaneously offer a platform for the widest possible discussion of global security concerns as expressed through the work and activities of these bodies.

My experience within the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria has convinced me that the success of its role in transforming national public opinion and support for NATO can be emulated and built upon elsewhere. The Club has a proven track record as a unifying force with a wide constituency capable of bringing about fundamental changes in public attitudes towards issues of critical national importance through a process of education and high visibility activities. In 1990, 85% of the Bulgarian population was opposed to if not downright hostile towards NATO. By 2004, in other words during a period much shorter than the 20 year projection that we are now discussing for NATO itself, 70% of the population were in favour of membership of the Alliance. A network of newly energised organisations extending throughout the member and partner countries and in every country to which contacts with NATO are relevant could undoubtedly, over a similar period, achieve similar success.

I can anticipate objections to both proposals on different grounds including cost. This is not the time to be demanding new budgets for work of this kind. My response is unequivocal: the small amounts of funding needed to give meaning to these initiatives would be repaid tenfold by their impact. Corporate funding could be obtained for a significant proportion of the work, as we were able to do in Bulgaria, once it has become evident that the initiatives are serious, far-reaching and – best of all – aimed at achievable goals. The corporate world has a vested interest and a major economic incentive in extending stability as widely as possible in a world in which globalisation is as much a part of business planning and prospects as it is a security or an environmental issue. It is time for a public/private partnership, or if you like a corporate business and governmental alliance, dedicated to the dissemination of security and stability as far afield as possible.

The not-inconsiderable experience and know-how gained by the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria over the past two decades would certainly be available to support the endeavour to build up the network I envisage. We would be willing to work with non-

governmental bodies in member and partner and future partner countries to create a network of NGO partnerships working in parallel to the partnerships and relationships established between NATO and individual governments.

NATO, like other bodies established on democratic principles, has a vital interest in making sure that public understanding of its role is its strongest ally. Taking the lead in promoting unprecedented new programmes to make public opinion more aware of the issues at stake and more involved in deliberations about its long term goals would be one of the best investments it could make.

## **Conclusion**

The totality of the proposals made above have a common purpose. They are designed to enable countries and communities across the world to discover their potential for moving beyond the world of conflict to a world uniquely focused on securing the basis for peaceful economic and political and social development, irrespective of regional, cultural, religious, ideological or philosophical differences. They may be difficult to achieve and they are undoubtedly ambitious, but I do not believe that they are unrealistic.

Solomon Passy  
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[1] *An article on this topic by the same author was published in New Europe on 10 October 2010 and can also be found at <http://www.atlantic-club.org> under publications.*

[2] *ASEAN member countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam*