

**SACT's REMARKS to**

**Columbia University**

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**Approved Outline for the Speech at Columbia University**

**“The Future of the Alliance: NATO facing challenges” (24-30mins)**

## **Welcome:**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much, Director Betts, for your kind introduction. It is genuinely an honour to be here at Columbia and I am delighted to address such a distinguished audience.

From the very start, I believe the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies grasped the importance of understanding the security challenges, both current and future.

Mr William Fox, its first Director, hoped it would “narrow the gap between a preferred future after study and what we would otherwise get” and Arnold Saltzman, who later gave the institute its current name, highlighted the need to “look beyond immediate crises and plan for a peaceful future”.

I therefore deeply appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you about NATO’s future and the challenges the Alliance faces today and will confront tomorrow.

## **Introduction:**

The Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies and NATO are in a sense distant cousins. The same year Dwight D. Eisenhower, then President of Columbia, founded the institute to promote an understanding of the “disastrous consequences of war upon man’s spiritual, intellectual, and material progress”, he was appointed NATO’s first Supreme Allied Commander Europe, two years after the Alliance’s creation.

It will surprise no one here if I tell you that in order to better understand NATO and its future, it is important to also understand the Alliance’s past.

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The foundations of NATO were officially laid down on the 4th of April 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, more commonly known as the Washington Treaty, after the city in which it was signed.

The Treaty committed each member to sharing the risks, responsibilities, and benefits of collective security.

It also committed them to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and stated that NATO members formed a unique community of values committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

NATO's essential and enduring purpose was, and is, to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.

Collective defence remains at the heart of the Alliance and creates a spirit of solidarity and cohesion among its members.

In addition to collective defence and its shared values, the principle of consensus-based decision-making and the importance of consultation define the spirit of the Alliance, together with its defensive nature and its flexibility.

This is true for its twelve founding members, as it is for the sixteen additional nations who have joined the Alliance over the last decades since its foundation.

I should pause to praise the skill of the Treaty's writers whose text has proved so flexible that NATO has been able to adapt to a changing security environment without the original text being modified.

## **Past Adaption:**

Generally speaking, there have been three distinct periods during which the Alliance's strategic thinking had to evolve:

- the Cold War period;
- the immediate post-Cold War period; and
- the security environment since 9/11.

## **Cold War Period**

During the Cold War period, from 1949 to 1991, international relations were dominated by a bipolar confrontation between East and West.

Emphasis was therefore initially more on tension and confrontation than it was on dialogue and cooperation.

This led to an often dangerous and expensive arms race.

NATO's first Strategic Concept, approved in January 1950, stated that its primary function was to deter aggression and that NATO forces would only be engaged if this primary function failed and an attack was launched.

Therefore, the Alliance should "insure the ability to carry out strategic bombing promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons, without exception".

The fourth Strategic Concept, issued in January 1968, stated that the Alliance concept of deterrence was based on the flexibility required to prevent the potential aggressor from predicting, with any degree of confidence, what NATO's specific response might be to an aggression.

This would lead an aggressor to conclude that an unacceptable degree of risk would be involved regardless of the nature of his attack.

By the mid- to late 80s, the two blocs of the Cold War moved to confidence-building.

### *Immediate post-Cold War period*

In 1991, a new era commenced. The once formidable Soviet Empire dissolved and the members of the Warsaw Pact, Russia and others, became NATO partners and happily in some cases members of the Alliance.

For the Alliance, the period was characterized by dialogue and cooperation, and a search for new ways of contributing to peace and stability such as multinational crisis management.

The 1991 Strategic Concept therefore differed dramatically from preceding strategic documents.

- First, it was a non-confrontational document that was released to the public; and
- Secondly, while maintaining the security of its members as its fundamental purpose (i.e., collective defence), it sought to improve and expand security for Europe as a whole through partnership and cooperation with former adversaries.

It also reduced the use of nuclear forces to a minimum level, sufficient to preserve peace and stability.

In 1999, as the Allies celebrated NATO's 50th anniversary, a new Strategic Concept was agreed that committed members to common defence and to peace and stability in the wider Euro-Atlantic area.

It was based on a broad definition of security which recognized the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors in addition to the defence dimension.

Informed by events in the Balkans, it identified the new risks that had emerged since the end of the Cold War, which included terrorism, ethnic conflict, human rights abuses, political instability, economic fragility, and the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their means of delivery.

It noted that NATO had managed to adapt and play an important role in the post-Cold War environment, and established guidelines for the Alliance's forces and operational planners.

The strategy called for the continued development of the military capabilities needed for the full range of the Alliance's missions, from collective defence to peace support and other crisis-response operations.

It also stipulated that the Alliance would maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces.

### *Security environment since 9/11*

The 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States brought the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to the fore.

NATO needed to protect its populations both at home and abroad.

It therefore underwent major internal reforms to adapt military structures and capabilities to equip members for new tasks, such as leading the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

This led to a thorough debate and analysis of NATO issues. These discussions and the economic context presented an opportunity for a profound rethink, reprioritization and reform of NATO which eventually led to the current Strategic Concept, which was agreed at the NATO Lisbon Summit in 2010.

After reiterating NATO's enduring purpose and key values and principles, the 2010 Strategic Concept defines the Organization's three core tasks thus:

"The modern security environment contains a broad and evolving set of challenges to the security of NATO's territory and populations.

In order to assure their security, the Alliance must and will continue fulfilling effectively three essential core tasks, all of which contribute to safeguarding Alliance members, and always in accordance with international law":

- Collective Defence and deterrence
- Crisis management
- Cooperative security

**Adaption needed today to prepare the Alliance for future challenges:**

Even though most of our security challenges were anticipated in NATO's current Strategic Concept, today's security context is more uncertain, more volatile, and more complex than we had ever imagined possible.

While the core tasks and principles of the concept remain valid, the security environment has evolved.

Although, based on the Strategic Concept 2010, NATO has focused on the immediate requirements of expeditionary operations, the risk for state-to-state conflicts and challenges to territorial integrity has moved closer to the Alliance's borders than envisioned.

### Threats

Threats have grown in number and amplitude. They range from possible confrontation with state actors, hybrid scenarios, cyber and terrorist attacks, all of which affect not only Europe, but the United States as well.

Let me expand on the threats and challenges we face with more details and give you some examples.

### East

To the East, the crisis in Ukraine has shown a heightened risk associated with conflicts between states.

In Crimea, we witnessed a state challenge the international principles established in Helsinki, which guarantee the sanctity of borders and the territorial integrity of Nations.

The use of Hybrid Warfare through the coordination of all instruments of power by state actors, requires us to develop our own new comprehensive and inclusive responses.

### South

To the South, we are witnessing the destabilisation of entire regions. The lawless zones emerging on Europe's periphery,

especially in Syria and Libya, provide support bases and safe havens for terrorist and extremist groups which have struck deep inside Alliance territory, as we saw recently in Belgium, Turkey, the USA, and in France.

These major security issues as well as the massive influx of refugees have one main root cause: failing and failed states.

This long-term instability is likely to keep us engaged for many years to come.

### North

We also believe we cannot afford to forget the High North. We need to anticipate potential instability related to the growing competition over resources.

An increase of military activities in the Arctic region is already noticeable through major exercises and the establishment of military footprints.

These activities in a region that is so rich in resources must be viewed in conjunction with the other strategic regions. In reality, NATO needs to look in all directions, in a “360 degree” approach.

### Future Challenges

But I would argue that we should go beyond a geography-based approach of threats.

Hybrid and extremist strategies may be manifested in a different manner and in other directions in the future. The Alliance must prepare itself for possible new strategic surprises.

We must understand the risks and opportunities resulting from the political, human, technological, economic, or environmental trends which might shape the future strategic context.

Such future trends are identified and analysed in the Strategic Foresight Analysis, a report that is produced periodically by my command, Allied Command Transformation.

To give you one example, let me touch upon the risk associated with the acceleration in the development and spread of new technologies.

We have seen non-state actors sharing lessons learned and techniques, using modern information technology and extensive strategic communication tools.

They will also increasingly be empowered by access to technologically advanced weapons and dual-use technologies.

We are witnessing the development of advanced weapon systems intended to neutralize our ability to deploy our forces when and where we choose.

### *How can we deal with these Challenges?*

Seeing these current and potential future challenges for our security, one might wonder what the Alliance does to react to this continuously increasing speed of change.

This is a fair question, especially since many Allies chose to make the most of their peace dividends following the end of the Cold War and cut their defence budgets excessively over the past decades.

As already mentioned, Allies may have focused their military forces too much on crisis management. With this expeditionary mindset,

our political and technological edge to offset emerging threats has been put under increasing pressure.

While hybrid scenarios, for instance, are envisioned in the strategic concept 2010, we may not have prepared ourselves sufficiently and take the necessary steps to maintain our dominance.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, how, in this continuously changing security environment can our Alliance deal with these many challenges and maintain its dominance today and in the future?

What does the Alliance have to do to fulfil all core tasks defined in the current Strategic Concept?

How can we translate these tasks into military strategic effects which, collectively, will enable the Alliance to defeat all possible threats we could face?

### Posture

To do this, our Alliance needs to permanently adapt its deterrence and defence posture, a posture that must be credible at the political and military level, today and tomorrow.

This posture is built upon the appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear, and missile defence forces at the appropriate level of readiness and responsiveness.

## Credibility of Posture

### *1. Military Credibility/Responsiveness*

Readiness and responsiveness are the main drivers for the credibility of our posture.

The right balance between a permanent forward presence and flexible reinforcement of forces is at the heart of our work on the way to the Warsaw Summit.

During the last couple of decades, during which the Alliance focused more on expeditionary crisis management operations, the right level of responsiveness to any possible threat was neglected.

To regain the right level of responsiveness, we will concentrate our efforts on the military capacity of the Alliance, focusing on six areas:

- Command and Control,
- Collective Training and Exercises,
- Partnerships,
- Logistics and Sustainability,
- Human Capital, and
- Capabilities.

Let me shortly expand on these six areas.

Decision-making and strategic awareness will be key tenets of success in future operations.

Therefore, we need a new approach for Command and Control, which has always been NATO's main strength. At the heart of this new Command and Control will be new architectures to act faster and more efficiently than our opponents.

In these architectures, we need to build a permanent and robust strategic assessment process. This process would enhance ways

to collect and process huge amounts of data together with a wide range of actors. It would enable decision makers to connect seemingly unrelated events and react timely when necessary.

To increase our forces' responsiveness, we will also need to continue to exercise them in order to train and improve their interoperability from the onset.

This also includes relations with NATO's Partners, since it is highly unlikely that future NATO operations would be conducted without the involvement of Partners.

We will also need to think about new and innovative approaches to logistics and sustainability. We must imagine new ways to improve deployment of our forces. This includes more cooperation and mutual support within the civil and military logistics and sustainment environment.

In terms of Human Capital, we must consider the human factor in future capabilities that will integrate more autonomous systems and artificial intelligence. Leaders need to be educated to look at the future challenges with a new mindset.

And last, but not least, we will need to incorporate more flexibility in our capability development process to deal with urgent requirements and a long term vision to ensure we take the right decisions for the future.

The implementation of the Readiness Action Plan, agreed at the last NATO Summit in Wales, is addressing issues in all the six areas, but has only been a first step. We need to continuously build on these areas, as they will enable us to deliver the posture that we need today and in the future.

## *2. Demonstrating capabilities (Exercises)*

In order to reach full credibility of our posture, it is important to demonstrate our capabilities. As previously mentioned, our exercises are important to train and increase interoperability between NATO and Partners. But, they also serve as a vehicle to demonstrate the credibility of our posture by displaying the full scope of our abilities.

Secondly, they confirm and improve our forces' readiness and responsiveness.

And thirdly, they serve as a platform for trials and experimentation of new technologies and concepts.

## *3. Partners*

Our posture's credibility will also increasingly depend on our ability to act together with our Partners.

With regards to the challenges in the South, a main effort for the future is to strengthen states through the development of strong partnerships and supporting them to increase their own defence and security capacities.

NATO must coordinate its efforts with other International Organizations to ensure the initiatives related to Partners are complementary.

Acknowledging the wide variety of NATO's Partners – like Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Jordan, or Sweden (to name just a few) – it is obvious we will need individual and specific plans for a mutually beneficial and fruitful partnership.

This is why NATO is developing individually tailored roadmaps with each Partner, in order to gain the most value for both sides in a win-win approach.

#### *4. Investment*

Another important factor to bolster the credibility of the Alliance's posture is the reinvestment in defence.

Political leaders must turn the investment pledge made at the Wales Summit into reality, especially when many potential opponents are clearly reinvesting in their defence.

Many Allies have already demonstrated their intent to fulfil the commitments made at the last NATO Summit in Wales, but more can be done.

I would like to highlight that, beside the pledge to invest 2% of the GDP in Defence, the pledge to use 20% of annual defence spending on major new equipment, including related Research & Development, will be crucial to keep up with the rapid pace of major technological change and prepare for the future.

The Alliance needs to create a new momentum, to make sure our forces are prepared to adapt to the future and keep the edge to offset any potential opponent.

To support and implement creative ideas we are working on a new innovation initiative for the Warsaw Summit.

#### *5. Innovation*

This initiative is aimed at improving our ability to anticipate future technological breakthroughs which might change how we plan and conduct operations or even the very nature of warfare itself.

The Alliance needs to use innovation in order to develop new operational concepts and work closely with a strong and innovative defence industry on both sides of the Atlantic and capitalize on any technological breakthroughs.

It is vital that we maintain a strong connection between the Alliance's vision for the future, the "US Defense Innovation Initiative", and all the Nations' equivalent initiatives, whether they are implemented nationally or within the framework of the European Union, in order to maintain and continuously improve interoperability.

I wish to insist on one fact if we consider the 28 nations of our Alliance: nowhere else in the world is there such a powerful industry and such a level of investment in research and development.

Nowhere else in the world is there such concentration and diversity of expertise that can be harnessed to generate innovation.

### Resilience

As I stated before, in order to give NATO the ability to react to any "strategic surprise" in the future, we need to build a posture that is ready, responsive, and credible. One more aspect that is very important in this regard and that I want to touch upon is resilience.

Resilience has become vital in our response to emerging security challenges.

Despite our best efforts, we are unlikely to be able to avoid being "surprised" in the future. Things will happen whose magnitude or timing could not be foreseen.

But to respond to these "surprises" swiftly, the Alliance needs to take resilience into account.

Resilience, our ability to resist and recover, must be enforced to fit the modern era. It demands a strong interconnection between the military, public, and private sectors.

The ways Nations and Partners integrate their own resilience efforts across society are of paramount importance to the Alliance.

Resilience will in fact be a major factor for the Alliance's deterrence, since potential aggressors will see that they cannot succeed or achieve their objectives, because the Alliance is prepared and will recover from any blow, strike, or "strategic surprise".

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, it is clear that we will face changing and new instability situations in the future and it will not be possible to completely avoid so-called "strategic surprises".

But in order to cope with these future challenges, NATO will remain a unique and united community of values, committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

As stated in NATO's founding document, the Washington Treaty, the Alliance will remain "resolved to unite [its] efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security."

The Alliance has successfully dealt with the many challenges its members faced throughout its history by preserving peace and stability within the Allies' territories. NATO will succeed once more in the future.

I would like to stress that, whilst we work on many projects that enable our forces to be more reactive, the Alliance's entire strength is built on the combined forces of 28 Allies (soon 29) and 41 Partner nations which can operate in coordination with many other

organizations, especially the European Union and the United Nations.

Let me end on a more personal note and encourage you to remain engaged and interested in the strategic environment and security policy matters in general.

I take this opportunity to encourage all of you to engage with my Command, Allied Command Transformation.

We have developed the web-based Innovation Hub that you can reach through our Command's homepage. It brings people with different backgrounds and perspectives together to discuss, collaborate, and design solutions for the many challenges our nations face.

Thank you for your attention and I am looking forward to your questions and a fruitful discussion.