



Wilton Park



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Conference report

**Re-engineering the transatlantic security and  
defence relationship**

Monday 12 – Wednesday 14 September 2011 | WP1129



## Conference report

# Re-engineering the transatlantic security and defence relationship

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Meeting in Lisbon in November 2010, the NATO allies brought the Alliance's strategy up to date with a new Strategic Concept that documented how much NATO's world had changed since the last Strategic Concept was agreed in 1999, and adjusted NATO's policies and programmes to deal with new international challenges. As the allies start to prepare for their May 2012 summit in Chicago, Illinois, President Obama's home town, they must decide on how the goals set in the Lisbon Strategic Concept can be met when financial realities on both sides of the Atlantic will reduce resources available for defence efforts, the Eurozone may remain in danger of collapse, and the United States is partially paralysed by political gridlock as it faces national elections in November 2012. At the same time, the international system seems to call for even more effective transatlantic security cooperation. At Wilton Park in September 2011, a high-level group of US, Canadian and European defence and foreign policy experts and officials met to develop recommendations for the allies as they begin to shape the Chicago agenda. Much of the discussion focused around the question of how best to re-validate the Alliance in an age of austerity. The key points below suggest some of the themes and specific steps the allies should consider as summit goals and accomplishments.

### Key points

- The Lisbon Strategic Concept brought NATO strategy up to date, reaffirming the importance of the collective defence guarantees implicit in Article 5 of the NATO treaty and their intimate relationship with the growing need to work together to mitigate and deal with crises well beyond Alliance borders that nonetheless could threaten allied interests. However, implementation of the new concept's mandates requires much more work by all the allies.
- The transatlantic relationship is broad and deep. The NATO Alliance is at its heart, but the relationship includes profound shared political and economic interests and cooperation. Particularly now that economic conditions will significantly constrain resources available for defence, all the allies need their fellow allies even more. No one of the allies alone, including the United States and the larger European powers, can provide the quality of security for their people and countries that can be provided by all of them working together.
- At a time of diminishing resources for defence on both sides of the Atlantic, NATO's

benchmark for member state defence budgets to equal at least 2% of GDP should be dropped in favour of new, qualitative measures for defence spending. The allies should pledge to make qualitative improvements to NATO's capabilities by rationalising expenditures, eliminating obsolete programmes and systems, avoiding unnecessary duplication, and pooling resources and capabilities as part of a strategy of "smart defence." To help implement a smart defence approach, they should establish "Mission Focus Groups" organised around the core capability requirements of the three Strategic Concept tasks (collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security), and led by European allies and Canada. These working groups would concentrate on critical areas of responsibility to help define defence spending and investment priorities for participating allies.

- The allies should determine, individually and collectively, what capabilities they will most need in the future and make those capabilities their highest priorities for the resources that are available. Some specialisation among allies may be required for the most effective use of resources. The important guideline in this and other areas is that the allies can divide up tasks amongst themselves, but they never should divide responsibility for Alliance goals and missions.
- The allies must acknowledge that their long-term security will be in jeopardy unless they make difficult decisions about priorities in Chicago. The leaders in Chicago should be joined not just by foreign and defence ministers, but also by economics and finance ministers to bring their expertise to bear on resource decisions and strategies.
- Because the common security of the Alliance depends on and can be challenged by events well beyond the territory of the allies, NATO must be an outward-looking Alliance that seeks out and strengthens global partnerships. This includes enhancing working relationships with the European Union, the United Nations, and private organisations that engage in zones of conflict where NATO is involved.
- The allies should note the growing importance of the partnerships developed through the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, particularly when the Middle Eastern and South Asian regions have entered a period of tumult and political change. The allies should strengthen those partnerships as part of their goal of supporting democratic values on which the Alliance is based. Those values and ideas have served the Alliance well in the continuing struggle against al Qaeda and its allies, and will continue to do so.
- Turkey, a valued NATO ally, will play an even more important role in its region than in the past. Given the growing likelihood that Turkey will not become a member of the European Union in the foreseeable future, the allies should find other ways to reinforce Turkey's links to the West and recognise Turkey's critical role in its region and on behalf of the Alliance.
- The partnership between NATO and Russia remains a critical element of European and global security. In spite of sceptical and even antagonistic attitudes toward NATO in some Russian quarters, it is in the interest of the allies to keep a hand open to Russia for cooperation in a wide range of areas, from the struggle against terror to the realm of missile defence to nuclear and conventional arms control.
- The allies should explicitly reiterate in Chicago that security does not just come out of the barrels of guns. As already indicated at Lisbon, they need to work together to make better use of their non-military resources, including diplomacy and development, to keep troubling conditions elsewhere from boiling up into conflicts that threaten allied interests. To make more effective use of their prodigious non-military resources, the allies should convene an intergovernmental forum, perhaps in parallel with the Chicago summit, among all NATO and European Union members, to formulate plans for cooperative programmes of crisis prevention and avoidance, drawing on all non-military resources of all NATO and EU members, as well as of these two key Western institutions.

- As part of their efforts to mitigate potentially threatening conflicts, the allies should develop new initiatives to revitalise non-proliferation efforts. This should include attempts to reconcile conflicts and tensions that create pressures for weapons proliferation.
- While recognising the need for better engagement of their non-military resources on behalf of security, many of which can be deployed for little net cost, the allies should agree that force improvements mandated by the Lisbon Strategic Concept will receive the highest priority in future national budgetary decisions.
- Finally, while NATO's involvement in Libya, on top of its experiences in Afghanistan, has left the Alliance with important lessons concerning defence priorities, it also reflected NATO's strength as a flexible and effective framework for combining the capabilities of European and North American allies on behalf of transatlantic values and interests, with support of the international community.

## **The current environment**

1. It is not even one year from NATO's Lisbon Summit meeting at which a new Strategic Concept was agreed. The move was overdue, as the last full concept was agreed in 1999 at the Washington Summit. Since that time, the world has changed dramatically with major events including: the 9/11 attacks on the United States; the beginning of a long war in Afghanistan in response to those attacks; a war of choice against Saddam Hussein's Iraq; decisions by NATO to take responsibility for the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan; revolts against authoritarian regimes in the Middle East; a successful strike by US special forces that killed Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda's leader and the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks; and NATO's 2011 UN-mandated operation to protect Libyan civilians, which in effect led to supporting the rebellion seeking to remove dictator Muammar Gaddafi from power.
2. The NATO of the early 1990s that focused on membership enlargement and stability was much more comfortable for many allies than the Alliance that now has participated in the use of force in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, counter-piracy operations and Libya. NATO undertook these operations in response to challenges to Western security interests and international stability, but they have also taxed Alliance resources and political consensus.
3. The Libya campaign – NATO's most recent operation – reflected the Alliance's strength as a flexible and effective framework for combining the capabilities of European and North American allies on behalf of transatlantic values and interests. With the United States playing only a supporting rather than a leading role, Libya represented a fundamental change from the way that NATO has conducted previous military operations, and brought into play the possibility of new forms of "burden-sharing" within the Alliance. There has been an approximately 50-50 split between the US and the rest of the Alliance in the contribution of military capabilities through the duration of NATO's Libya campaign, Operation Unified Protector (OUP). Operational planning for OUP was carried out almost entirely by European military officers within the NATO command structure. Washington's decision to play a supporting rather than leading role in OUP stemmed from a combination of factors rather than from a simple view that European allies need to contribute more, and not least from concern over the optics of having the United States lead a military campaign in yet another Islamic state. While OUP may not constitute "the" model now for NATO operations, having been done once it will certainly be on the table as an option for the future
4. It is clear that there are divisions among NATO allies both in terms of capabilities and political will. Some are able and willing; others are willing but not able; some are able but not willing; and others are neither willing nor able. The groupings differ according to different scenarios. The experience in Libya demonstrated that NATO is able to operate with those who are willing and able acting while others share in the

responsibility by allowing a NATO operation to proceed even though all allies are not participating directly. This combination of operational flexibility and political solidarity has indeed characterised all NATO military operations since the end of the Cold War. NATO's political decision-making in authorising OUP was considerably faster than in the case of the Balkans operations of the 1990s, perhaps reflecting the development over time of greater acceptance of this principle within the Alliance.

5. This said, Libya provided important lessons concerning defence priorities, as NATO struggled to deploy and sustain the full suite of operational capabilities needed for the campaign. The Alliance passed a relatively modest "stress test," but with not very much margin.
6. Perhaps most importantly, the global economy in recent years has sunk into a serious, perhaps "double-dip," recession that has created an entirely new and much less permissive environment for defence spending, improvements to current forces, and investment in research and development to prepare for future security challenges. At the same time, the long war in Afghanistan has worn down public support for that effort, perhaps long before the objectives set for ISAF have been accomplished. The American public has now joined the majority of Europeans in wanting to bring the troops home, a sentiment that was strengthened when bin Laden was killed by US Special Forces in 2011.
7. While popular support for the war and nation-building effort in Afghanistan has waned dramatically, support for NATO remains remarkably strong among publics on both sides of the Atlantic. A new German Marshall Fund annual Transatlantic Trends survey released in September 2011 revealed that 65 percent of Americans surveyed want to reduce or withdraw troops from Afghanistan. At the same time, some 62 percent of US and European Union respondents still regard NATO as "essential." This result came in spite of the fact that Americans are showing more isolationist tendencies today and, by a slim majority, believe that Asian countries are more important to US national interests than the countries of the European Union.
8. The sense of urgency behind the task of demonstrating that the transatlantic Alliance still deserves the support it receives from allied publics was heightened in June 2011 by a speech to an audience in Brussels, Belgium by outgoing US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates. Gates acknowledged that, under current economic and political circumstances, the allies were not likely to increase defence spending to strengthen European contributions to the Alliance. Gates concluded his frank talk by observing "...if current trends in the decline of European defence capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders – those for whom the Cold War was not the formative experience that it was for me – may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost."
9. Many headlines and subsequent opinion pieces suggested that Secretary Gates was forecasting the end of the Alliance. However, the Gates speech was much more of a warning than a prediction, as a careful reading of the text and its qualifiers reveals. The shot across the European bow was nonetheless warranted and it resonated with much of the American political spectrum.
10. Against this complex and challenging background, the NATO allies have agreed to hold their next summit meeting in President Obama's home town of Chicago, Illinois in May 2012. For some, the scheduling of another summit so soon after Lisbon and before most of the goals identified there could be accomplished, seemed ill-advised. However, since the summit will take place, the question is what the allies should seek to accomplish, given the great variety of factors currently in play.

### **Chicago Summit Objectives**

11. A NATO summit always seeks to cover all the bases traditionally considered to be relevant to the commitment made by the allies to work together to defend their nations

and to protect against challenges to their interests. As such, the Chicago meeting will undoubtedly record the progress made in Afghanistan toward turning security responsibilities over to Afghan government security forces. It will reaffirm NATO's core missions, specified in Lisbon as collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security. It will carry forward the Lisbon Strategic Concept's consolidation of the first two missions, effectively merging the implications of Articles 5 (collective defence) and 4 (non-collective defence cooperation), confirming allied intentions to cooperate in dealing with all potential threats to the territorial integrity and interests of NATO members, whether or not an attack has taken place. The cooperative security mission will be confirmed as a way to produce wider circles of cooperation in dealing with threats and instabilities and more solid relationships with other countries, including Russia, to promote security cooperation and mitigate conflicts.

## The Messages

12. The Chicago summit needs to produce convincing political messages to important Alliance audiences as well as plans and programmes that are relevant to the broad security interests of the allies and that take into account contemporary political, economic and security conditions in the world.
13. The most important general message from Chicago should be that the allies recognise that current economic difficulties, as well as competing priorities such as homeland security, will limit financial resources available for defence, perhaps for some time into the future. With diminishing resources for defence on both sides of the Atlantic, NATO's benchmark for member state defence budgets to equal at least 2% of GDP should be dropped in favour of new, qualitative measures for defence spending. It makes little sense to stand by a specific goal that clearly will be met by very few allies. The new guideline should focus on what expenditures will produce useful capabilities, not how much is being spent.
14. The allies therefore need to commit to finding ways to make qualitative defence improvements on a prioritised basis even if they go about cutting funds for defence. This will be a very challenging task. Governments owe it to their publics, however, as well as to their deliberative bodies, to demonstrate how they will avoid compromising security while dealing with the very real financial limitations on defence spending. The important guideline in this and other areas is that the allies can divide up tasks amongst themselves, but they must never divide responsibility for Alliance goals and missions. The collective needs to stand united if the Alliance is to remain vital and relevant.
15. Another key message that needs to be sent to publics on both sides of the Atlantic is that the transatlantic Alliance is broad and deep. NATO is at its heart, but the relationship includes profound shared political and economic values, interests and cooperation that transcend military cooperation.
16. Particularly at a time when economic conditions constrain resources available for defence, all the allies need their fellow allies even more. No one of the allies alone, including the United States and the larger European powers, can provide the quality of security for their people and countries that can be provided by all of them working together.
17. This sense of solidarity could be made clear by inviting finance and economic ministers to the summit meeting to accompany foreign and defence ministers. The participation of these officials would demonstrate the intent of allied governments to work together toward a financial future that enhances the security of the allies, individually and collectively.

## The Means

18. Further recognition of the dilemmas faced by the allies could be communicated by



agreement on a pragmatic approach to defence requirements. There already are dangerous gaps in allied capabilities that could worsen if further spending cuts are not taken wisely. Those gaps include shortages of trained soldiers and civilians in key functions, shortages of precision munitions (demonstrated by the Libya experience), deferred maintenance, failed replacement of damaged and destroyed equipment, and cutbacks in training and exercising that are essential to ensure that allied forces are capable of working, and fighting, together.

19. The allies have already begun to focus on developing a “Smart Defence” approach to security requirements. NATO officials, led by Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, are seeking to develop ways to improve pooling and sharing resources across national borders in the Alliance.
20. One of the more important ideas in the “Smart Defence” process is that NATO should have a mechanism for nations to inform and consult on pending national decisions that could affect Alliance capabilities. More often than not, national decisions are made and then reported to the other allies. In the austere economic environment expected for the coming years, many governments will be forced to cut defence expenditures. If consultations were to take place before decisions are final, allies could react and comment in ways that might help shape the reductions and reduce the impact on allied security. To give the consultation process a relevant point of reference, the allies should begin developing a “must-have” list to establish priorities and to put red-lines around some programmes and capabilities.
21. The US National Defence University has been working on a proposal to create “Mission Focus Groups” (MFGs) organised around the core capability requirements of the three Strategic Concept tasks (collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security), and led by European allies and Canada. These working groups would concentrate on critical areas of responsibility to help define defence spending and investment priorities for participating allies. The goal would be to use available resources most effectively while meeting essential mission requirements. The work of the groups should be integrated with the resource and planning decisions of the North American allies and with NATO’s existing planning processes.
22. Past initiatives within NATO or the EU to promote role specialisation have all foundered on the question of trust, namely the fear that other countries will not bring missing capabilities into play when needed. However, the allies are living in a different world today and role specialisation is in reality occurring anyway at an accelerating rate, but in an unplanned, uncoordinated manner. Placing responsibility for the preservation of core requirements within smaller groups could potentially generate a positive dynamic leading to more intelligent role specialisation, with countries’ developing higher quality capabilities in fewer areas rather than spreading themselves too thinly and inadequately over too many sectors.
23. At Chicago, therefore, the allies should produce consultation mechanisms, including possible creation of MFGs, and goals that: set priorities at Alliance level that allies agree will guide national budget and program decisions; develop pooling and sharing arrangements, particularly among European allies, that avoid duplication and maintain critical capabilities; facilitate collective planning for redeployment of forces removed from Afghanistan; and establish priorities for replacement of equipment and supplies used up in the Afghan and Libyan operations.
24. The reforms of NATO’s command structure agreed at Lisbon should lead to further force structure reforms that reflect the need for more efficient but still capable Alliance formations. In particular, the allies need to look carefully at the NATO Response Force and the fact that it has proven not to be as “responsive” as was originally intended. NATO needs command and force structures that sustain habits of cooperation, are sufficiently flexible and agile to adapt to new crisis environments, and can be put to use when they are needed.

25. One of NATO's past weaknesses has been produced by national resistance to contingency planning, fearing that agreeing to plan against contingencies implied willingness to act in case they should eventuate. In order to develop more effective crisis management approaches, the allies must put all such resistance aside, while making it clear that contingency planning is a necessary step toward a decision to act, not the decision itself.
26. In addition, the allies should strongly reaffirm their intention to develop new initiatives designed to revitalise non-proliferation efforts. This should include attempts to reconcile conflicts and tensions that give rise to weapons proliferation. Prevention is more often than not less expensive than the cure.
27. The preceding ideas and approaches would marry up NATO's message about resource constraints and security challenges with its means: the deeds would speak as loudly as the words.

## **Strengthening Partnerships**

28. Because common security depends on and can be challenged by events well beyond NATO's territory, NATO needs to be an outward-looking Alliance that seeks out and strengthens both regional and global partnerships. The allies should strengthen those partnerships as part of their goal of supporting democratic values on which the Alliance is based. Those values and ideas have served the Alliance well in the continuing struggle against al Qaeda and its affiliates, and will continue to do so.
29. NATO's operations in Afghanistan have been supported by a wide array of non-NATO states, which sent forces and made other contributions to NATO's United Nations-mandated mission there. Such contributors do not necessarily aspire to and do not have to be offered NATO membership. However, the allies need to ensure that countries making important contributions to NATO operations have seats at the decision-making tables in appropriate recognition of their roles.
30. One of the most notable aspects of NATO's Libya operation was that, under a mandate from the United Nations, NATO forces were partnered with Arab states in the region to help protect Libyan civilians from Muammar Gaddafi's forces and, ultimately, to bring down Gaddafi's regime. The allies should work to enhance and deepen cooperation with Arab states that are willing to act on behalf of values and interests represented by the transatlantic Alliance and endorsed by the international community. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, the Partnership for Peace, and the Istanbul Cooperative Initiative have quietly built foundations for such cooperation. NATO ally Turkey needs to take on a special and elevated role in this region, demonstrating that a state with a majority Islamic population can successfully implement democracy and a secular government that is based on the values represented by the transatlantic Alliance.
31. Although less prominent in recent years, partnerships in Northern Europe strengthen the security of the Alliance. NATO commands, working with national commands in the region, should deepen their relationships with Partnership for Peace members Sweden and Finland, linking Air Policing missions, to achieve a coordinated policy towards typical regional issues ranging from monitoring the effects of climate change to maintaining a constructive engagement with Russia in the region.
32. NATO's partnership with Russia has been limited more by Russian choices and residual antagonism and suspicion than by NATO's willingness to expand that cooperation. Understanding that NATO's enemy image in Russia may continue to play well with domestic audiences there, NATO should keep open the hand of mutually-beneficial cooperation in every area that Russia may be willing to grasp it. This applies to a variety of contemporary security challenges such as missile defence, terrorism, cyber security, and arms control, particularly in the areas of non-proliferation and in consolidating the conventional arms control regime in Europe. Further, the question of the large overhang of Russian tactical nuclear weapons facing Europe should be



addressed with the goal of adding stability and predictability to the European security environment.

## **Comprehensive Approaches and the NATO/EU Nexus**

33. In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the security of the transatlantic allies and international stability more generally cannot be assured simply through military means alone. Defence cooperation among the allies is a necessary but not sufficient means for protecting the member states. Instability and conflict grow out of a number of sources, including unresolved political differences within and between states, historical animosities, ideological beliefs that inspire the use of violent means toward desired ends, resource conflicts, poverty, and perceptions of gross material inequities between states and groups. NATO was not designed to manage cooperation among the allies in response to such sources of instability, but has increasingly taken into account the need to do so. Successful intervention before tensions lead to armed conflict can limit the extent to which the allies must rely on the use of force to defend their territory and interests.
34. One lesson already apparent from Afghanistan is that security challenges should be met with advance planning that integrates all tools of statecraft. This means that diplomacy, military planning, intelligence sharing, development assistance, financial cooperation, police and security collaboration, and other non-military security instruments should be combined to try to prevent crises from turning violent and to deal with them when they do. But attempts to develop comprehensive trans-Atlantic approaches that integrate military means with the panoply of non-military instruments of power available on both sides of the Atlantic have so far failed.
35. NATO's Lisbon Strategic Concept developed a more detailed Alliance "comprehensive approach" to security challenges. However, given NATO's mandate and the level of political consensus about NATO's purposes, it may have gone as far as it can on its own in this area. The protection of allied interests therefore will call on a broader approach to the idea of transatlantic cooperation, calling for more intensive cooperation with the European Union and the United Nations, and perhaps also for new consultative arrangements and frameworks.
36. Although the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is still young, it is developing a solid base of experience in applying the comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and crisis management. Since 2003, the CSDP has launched 24 civilian missions and/or military operations in a variety of theatres, deploying more than 80,000 personnel, including soldiers, policemen, judges, custom officials, monitors, and rule of law experts. Continuing improvements are needed, as for example, the generation of sufficient civilian capabilities for deployment has been very challenging, and actions on the ground have not always been translated into the desired results. Nonetheless, the CSDP record to date represents impressive progress in the deployment of civil-military missions to promote peace, foster stability, and build state capacity.
37. However, attempts to meld the resources of the two most important Euro-Atlantic institutions, NATO and the European Union, and the work of UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations, whether in Afghanistan or more generally, have run into serious political obstacles. Those obstacles have nothing to do with the perceived need for such approaches – everyone agrees in principle on that goal. The problem is that other political issues or bureaucratic turf concerns get in the way. For example, as noted above the EU can call on significant non-military capabilities to support security goals, but was reluctant to get too intimately involved in Afghanistan, at least partly out of concern that it would become subordinate to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. In Brussels, NATO and EU consultations, which should cover the whole range of security issues, are limited to their shared roles in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

38. Institutions are instruments of nation states, even in the European Union. NATO/EU working level cooperation has improved, but policy/planning discussions on collaboration beyond Bosnia are blocked by festering differences between NATO members Greece and Turkey over Cyprus
39. Adding urgency to this challenge is the fact that NATO's new Strategic Concept will do nothing to improve the lopsided burden-sharing equation (with the US doing much more militarily than the allies). Given that fact that all governments will have constraints on future defence spending, more effective collaboration on non-military aspects of security - an area in which European allies and the EU have many useful resources – could help create a better holistic balance in security efforts.
40. In the meantime, there is the possibility that institutional issues may continue to crop up between NATO and the European Union. For example, the September 2011 pledge of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland to establish a “European Operational Headquarters” to command future EU military operations will be seen by some in NATO as unnecessary duplication and divisive of transatlantic cooperation. Given the projected limits on resources, some might argue that such a headquarters will make more efficient use of European military capabilities, but others might see it as duplication that produces no real added security benefits. The plan has already divided EU members, with the United Kingdom opposing the plan and the five advocates apparently intent to go ahead without the UK if necessary. In any case, development of the proposal is likely to be regarded with some suspicion from the other side of the Atlantic.
41. If the allies wish to advance cooperation in implementing a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and crisis management, they may need to look beyond existing institutional frameworks and develop cooperation at the transatlantic level that will bypass the existing political and institutional obstacles. They also need more effective integration of soft and hard power: soft power not backed by hard power will often be “limp power”; hard power not backed by soft power is at great risk of being illegitimate power.
42. The allies, therefore, to make more effective use of their prodigious non-military resources, should seek to convene an intergovernmental forum, perhaps in parallel with the Chicago summit, among all NATO and European Union members, to formulate plans for cooperative programmes of crisis prevention and avoidance, drawing on all non-military resources of all NATO and EU members, as well as of the two institutions and willing regional and global partners. Such a forum could initiate a running dialogue on comprehensive approaches to security among NATO and EU member states, in which all participants represent their nations rather than any organisation. The relevant institutions could be involved as observers and sources of multinational expertise. If the dialogue produces ideas around which cooperation can be built, those ideas could be introduced into the relevant institutions for action.

### Summary Conclusion

43. NATO's Chicago summit may be one of the most challenging for the Alliance in recent years. It has been increasingly clear for several years that resources for defence would likely decline in most allied nations. Now it has become the reality. Whereas in past years the United States has been able to fill gaps created by cuts made by other allies, that may no longer be the case.
44. Many observers now consider the restoration of Western financial stability as the most important challenge to transatlantic security. At the same time, regional instabilities and terrorist activities will likely continue to threaten allied interests and international stability. The expansion of commerce and economic activity necessary to pull allied economies out of the recession cannot thrive in an unstable and insecure international climate. With fewer resources available for defence, the allies will have to be more

careful about the commitments they take on, more prudent and efficient in the use of their defence resources, more willing to share and pool resources, more agile in the use of non-military instruments of security, and more alert to opportunities to intervene in crises to mitigate the chances of tense situations becoming open conflicts,

45. Most importantly, allied governments must commit firmly to the idea that their countries will be more secure when working together with their transatlantic allies than they would be alone or in smaller clusters of states. Majorities of the public on both sides of the Atlantic still seem to support that proposition. Institutions deliver what member nations want. At Chicago it will be up to the leaders of the NATO nations to demonstrate in both words and deeds that they take this commitment seriously.

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