

NATO at 60: Celebration by Re-evaluation

Seminar on the NATO Summit in Strasbourg/Kehl

By: Berdien Wiegant

On 18 March 2009 the Netherlands Atlantic Association organised a meeting on the upcoming NATO Summit in Strasbourg/Kehl in April. In Press Centre 'Nieuwspoor' in The Hague different speakers evaluated the past 60 years of transatlantic partnership, looked ahead at the possible topics on the agenda in Strasbourg and discussed NATO's future. The meeting was led by the chairman of the Netherlands Atlantic Association Piet Bukman.

Maurits Jochems



Ambassador Maurits Jochems, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Operations and Planning at NATO Headquarters, started by highlighting some elements of **the complex context in which NATO was established 60 years ago**. He mentioned the decolonisation process in which many European countries were involved, the question of German unity, the process of economic recovery after the Second World War, and above all the security concerns about the Soviet Union. During the following decades NATO developed, adapted and reinvented itself. According to Jochems '9/11' and Afghanistan were a clear breaking point. It then became clear that developments outside of the Euro-Atlantic area may affect the Alliance's security.

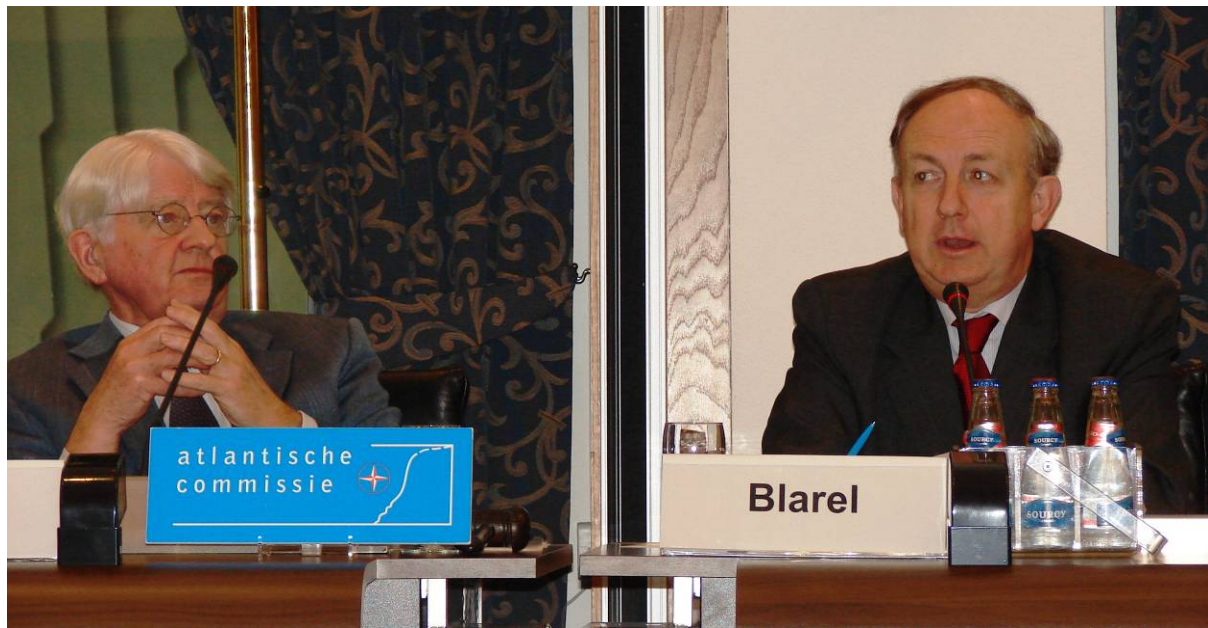
He then discussed **NATO's accomplishments**, such as its role in ending the Cold War and its role in ending the division of the European continent, the promotion of arms control and disarmament, providing (smaller) states with the opportunity to have a political say at one table with the USA, and providing for the possibility for individual European states to make a contribution to peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Jochems also briefly stressed NATO's famous enduring values like the consensus rule, the inclusive character of NATO, the common guarantee of Allies' territorial integrity, and military cooperation.

Jochems finally discussed **NATO's challenges and opportunities in the future**. He mentioned the possible impact of the financial crisis on NATO, the relationship with Russia (where do we disagree and where do we have common interests?), enlargement, and the cooperation with other international organisations, such as the European Union, the African Union, and with non-governmental organisations. As NATO's Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer argued at the Munich Security Conference in February, Jochems stated that we run the risk that we or some of the member states approach 21st century challenges, such as international terrorism or energy security, with a 20th century mindset. None of these challenges fit the narrow definition of an armed attack or a military threat. Therefore we should also expand our institutional 'toolkit' to better cooperate with other international institutions. Jochems was more than ever convinced of the relevance of NATO. No state alone – not even the U.S. – can take care of its security interests all by itself.

This year is an interesting year for NATO: a new U.S. administration, French reintegration into NATO's military structure, further enlargement, and the financial crisis. Jochems wondered which challenges would be reflected in the **Declaration on Alliance Security** and in a possible new Strategic Concept.

Jean-François Blarel

The French Ambassador to the Netherlands, Jean-François Blarel, started by saying that this meeting was a great opportunity to address **the French 'comeback'** into NATO's military structure. He stressed that France was a co-founder of the Alliance and that the reintegration should not be overstated. France has always been a faithful member, continuing to hold a seat in the North Atlantic Council and participating in all important NATO missions as the fourth largest military contributor to the Alliance. The French return should instead be seen as a long linear process.



According to Blarel France will sit in all committees and 'beef up' its presence in commands and NATO structures, but will stay out of the Nuclear Planning Group. Second, many things remain unchanged. France will keep sovereignty over its troops and over its nuclear arsenal.

France is strongly in favour of a new Strategic Concept. The ambassador stressed that NATO is as relevant as it ever was. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty is and will remain the cornerstone of our common security. Blarel made clear that "collective security is the essence of NATO".

Blarel said that French President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel have publicly announced common proposals to strengthen the Alliance, underlining that no country can solve global problems alone. These proposals included:

- Burden-sharing: NATO is based on shared values and responsibilities; its members should face their responsibilities and contribute effectively to their common security;
- The partnership with Russia should be revived.

A credible **European Union defence capability** remains very important to France. However the key question is: would European defence weaken the Alliance? Blarel argued that it is France's firm belief that a strong NATO and a strong European Security and Defence Policy go hand-in-hand.

Blarel stated that the 'strategic partnership' between NATO and the EU must be reinforced and that both organisations must develop in a complementary manner.

Konrad Arz von Straussenberg

Minister Counsellor Konrad Arz von Straussenberg from the German Embassy in The Hague remarked that the year 2009 is a historic one for Germany. It is 90 years since the end of the First World War (the Versailles Treaty) and 70 years since the beginning of the Second World War. 60 years ago NATO was established and 20 years ago the Berlin Wall fell. It is also symbolic that France and Germany together organise the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in an area that was ravaged by war between the two countries only some decades ago.

Arz looked ahead at a possible **new NATO Strategic Concept**. He stressed that Art. 5 is very important to Germany as well. Conventional and nuclear disarmament must have a prominent place in the new Strategic Concept. The Concept should also discuss further enlargement, capabilities, ambitions, and efficiency, especially in times of economic crisis.

The German minister counsellor praised the Dutch, because of their “openness” in the public debate about their military contribution to the NATO-led ISAF mission in Afghanistan. He also mentioned the comprehensive approach as carried out by the Netherlands. The Dutch Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs/Development Cooperation are working together in a “harmonious way”. In that respect Germany could learn from the Netherlands, according to Mr Arz.

As a closing remark the speaker asserted that **NATO** should not change its character, but it **should intertwine with other international institutions**. This will be a major challenge in the future.



The afternoon session was chaired by Ms Monika Sie Dhian Ho, second vice chair of the Atlantic Association.

Dana Allin

The meeting continued with Mr Dana Allin, who currently is the Editor of *Survival* and Senior Fellow for Transatlantic Affairs at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. Allin elaborated on the current transatlantic relationship, the items on the NATO agenda and the return of France to the Alliance’s military structure.

Allin argued that the Obama Administration and the financial crisis will be dominating the transatlantic discussion. **U.S. President Obama and most of the European leaders are on**

the same wave length regarding the issues that matter and that is essential for achieving progress.

He then discussed the items on the agenda of the upcoming NATO Summit.

- According to him a major issue would be the **French return** to NATO's military structure. Although France already was a key player in operations, its return would be a symbolic recommitment to the Alliance.
- The relations between **Russia** and Georgia were another major issue. Allin stressed that further enlargement with **Georgia** and **Ukraine** would create serious problems, not only with implementing Article 5 but also with the dissenting regions of Georgia and anti-NATO public opinion in Ukraine. The situation in Abkazia and South Ossetia would definitely create problems for the Alliance.
- **Afghanistan** was the third issue on the agenda. The U.S. faces great problems in Afghanistan and might face more of them because of European ambivalence toward the mission. The United States is bombing targets in Pakistan, while anti-American feelings are spreading among the Pakistani people. According to Allin the Obama Administration is aware of the possible consequences. Though the Afghan mission's strategy might be questioned, its legitimacy is not in doubt. Allin concluded by saying that if NATO fails in Afghanistan, it will survive, but the mission will be decisive for Mr Obama's presidency.

Panel Discussion

Five members of the Dutch Second Chamber of Parliament went on discussing NATO at 60. Mr Arend Jan Boekestijn (Liberals/VVD), Mr Harry van Bommel (Socialists/SP), Mr Martijn van Dam (Labour/PvdA), Mr Maarten Haverkamp (Christian Democrats/CDA), and Ms Mariko Peters (Green Left/Groen Links) discussed the Obama Administration, the future of the Alliance, Art. 5, NATO enlargement, and the Dutch mission in Uruzgan, Afghanistan.

