

# **NATO on the Eve of the Riga Summit**

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I would like here to put the Riga agenda within the broader framework of the changes that are facing the Alliance. The simple fact that the NATO Summit will be held in the city of Riga speaks volumes about the changes that have taken place, not counting the fact that NATO's role in Afghanistan will be one of our major items on the agenda. 'Riga' and 'Afghanistan' are synonymous with NATO anno 2006 – a NATO with new responsibilities, with new member states and partners, and with new requirements concerning its political role and military means.

## **A Changing Alliance**

The most important question with regard to the Riga summit is about the intentions with which the heads of state and government will arrive, and what they expect from the Alliance at this juncture, a juncture that is characterized by proliferation issues such as Iran and North Korea, the battle against terrorism, developments in Afghanistan and Kosovo, as well as the conflicts in the Middle East and Darfur.

What direct or indirect role is there for the Alliance in addressing some of these questions, and how does the Riga summit fit into all of this? Riga is a summit that has to make clear that the Alliance is not only suited for its political and military tasks as they are phrased in the Treaty of Washington. It also has to show that there is a new task to fulfil with regard to projecting stability far beyond the Euro-Atlantic region.

Every one of us has been able to notice that during the last couple of years our political and military tasks have changed and expanded rapidly. In early 2004 NATO commanded approximately 5,000 troops in Afghanistan. This number has now risen to more than 30,000, including important contingents of non-NATO countries. With KFOR, NATO still has 17,000 troops present in Kosovo. When we include our other operations and missions, we reach a total of more than 50,000 soldiers who in almost all cases have been deployed on the basis of a UN mandate. A training mission in Iraq, support of the African Union in Darfur, aid to the United States after hurricane Katrina and to Pakistan after last year's earthquake are activities that you and I would not have associated immediately with NATO a couple of years ago.

However, it is not only military operations and missions that determine our agenda in Brussels. Parallel to these activities, and partly in support of them, we have been busy extending and deepening our partnerships. We consult with Russia, with Ukraine, with Georgia, with the candidate countries of Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), with the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) countries and with the countries of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). But we also talk to countries like Japan, Australia, South Korea and New Zealand.

New military tasks also imply new military means – a far-reaching modernization in all NATO member states in order to have men and means at our disposal that can be deployed over great distances. This transformation process received an impulse at the summit in Prague in 2002, and it should culminate this year, among other things, in declaring the NATO Response Force (NRF, a rapid reaction force of about 20,000 soldiers) at full operational capability.

In short, we talk about an Alliance that at the moment consists of 26 member states, that carries out a large number of operations and missions, that is expanding and strengthening

its network of partnerships and that is working on far-reaching modernization of its military means. This sounds simple enough, but it is not self-evident. It means that time and again the member states have to reach consensus about the scope of NATO's political and military activities: about deployment and size; about the increasingly necessary common funding of our operations; and about broadening and deepening our relations with partner countries.

We have to deal with both the moderates and the orthodox when it comes to the Alliance's ambitions, often in relation with other international organizations. Still, I think that it is *acquis* (to use a Brussels term) that the current range of duties should come with a bigger and more pointed political profile. This is something that I have advocated from the beginning of my tenure. After all, the Alliance does not operate in a political vacuum, it is not available on demand, and a decision on military deployment – within or outside a UN framework – will always be based on its own political judgement. In this respect, the importance of both parliamentary and broad public support for NATO operations cannot be stressed enough.

### **The Riga Agenda**

What can you expect in Riga? How can the Alliance demonstrate that through its military activities, its partnerships and the military means that are available to it, it will make an important contribution to the solution of the international issues that confront us?

#### *Military Operations*

First, I will consider our military operations and missions. Without a doubt, 'Riga' will confirm NATO's support to Afghanistan – an operation under a UN mandate with which the Alliance contributes to the battle against terrorism. It is a difficult and dangerous mission to which the Netherlands makes a large and valued contribution. And it is a task that aims to realize and sustain the preconditions for the development and reconstruction of a country that has been completely disrupted by decades of fighting, and that had become a haven for international terrorism that formed a direct threat to all of us.

It is not an easy task, and also one that will only show sustainable results after a long period of time. It is not only a test for NATO, but for the whole international community. NATO can and will help to create a stable security situation, but it is the task of other important international organizations and donors to tackle reconstruction swiftly and ambitiously, setting up the rule of law and the battle against opium cultivation. I expect from those member states that are militarily active in Afghanistan that they will argue for the importance of a coordinated international approach in the other bodies of which they are part. This is in their own interest and in the interest of Afghanistan, because mere military presence, for whatever period of time, will not bring a sustainable solution any closer. If this development fails to materialize, it will in time put under pressure the willingness of NATO member states to take part in these expensive and risky operations.

#### *Partnerships*

NATO's partnerships will be high on the agenda in Riga as well. The question is twofold: how can we give more meaning to existing partnerships; and in what way can we expand the network of partnerships? Linked to this subject is the question of what message Riga should send to the candidate countries of FYROM, Albania and Croatia, and also what signal we want to give to the other countries in the western Balkans, keeping in mind the negotiations about the status of Kosovo.

I do not expect difficult discussions about deepening our relations with the so-called MD countries and with the ICI members. We can use instruments that are at our disposal in the framework of the Partnership for Peace. In view of our cooperation with these partners, we

are now working on a training initiative that could result in a training facility in one of the countries concerned.

There will be more debate about the question of whether the Alliance should have closer ties with countries like Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand. Some member states are concerned that the Alliance will then have less time for its core tasks, as emanating from the Washington Treaty. Others, the aforementioned 'orthodox', are critical of a broader political role for the Alliance. They see in such a development the seeds of a NATO that wants to take on a global role. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. NATO has neither the ambition nor the means to fulfil such a role. It is, however, self-evident that an Alliance that is active far beyond its own territory, and that is supported in this by third countries, will strengthen its ties with these countries – so not a worldwide NATO, not a world policeman, but a NATO with worldwide partners.

These are also the partners that like to share their own security considerations and strategic insights with NATO and that voice their concerns about, for instance, proliferation issues. I hope that the Riga summit will endorse the importance of these partnerships and will enable us to arrange our relations with these countries in a flexible way.

NATO enlargement is not on the agenda in Riga, but I do expect that a clear message will be sent to the aspiring members. If the developments in the candidate countries continue in a positive way, it is likely that the Alliance will be able to take further steps in spring 2008, when the next summit will probably take place.

The summit in Riga comes at a crucial moment in negotiations about the status of Kosovo, and it is in the interest of everyone that we do not have to wait too long for the final result. The summit will definitely confirm that NATO will continue to play an important security role in Kosovo, even after decisions on Kosovo's status have been made. With regard to our relations with Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, I hope that circumstances will allow us soon to offer them the Partnership for Peace.

### *Military Means*

Finally, I consider the third volet of the Riga summit: the military means that are at our disposal. As I said earlier, I expect that at the summit we can declare the NRF to be fully operational. This is not only an important tool that can be deployed anywhere if required (think of Pakistan after the earthquake), but it is also a vehicle for the imperative adaptation of deploying men and means in the NATO member states – in short, our military transformation. Directly linked to this is the necessity of having our own strategic lift capabilities. This is a capacity that in some member states is widely available on an individual basis, but that NATO itself lacks. I have every hope that in Riga we can make important progress.

### **Political Dialogue**

Riga will show once again that NATO is the most important transatlantic forum for politico-military deliberations. The tasks that the Alliance performs at the moment, such as our operations and missions far from home and our various partnerships, require constant political dialogue among the member states themselves, and between NATO and its international partners – not only individual countries but also, and especially, the EU and UN.

This internal political dialogue is necessary to secure mutual solidarity and create as broad a basis of support for possible decisions. This would include discussions about subjects that do not have operational decisions attached to them, such as questions of proliferation and energy security.

It makes common sense that political and practical cooperation with the UN and the EU (both the Commission and the Council) is necessary when we prepare and carry out activities where we have a common task. By strengthening each other, we can achieve maximum results. As the summit in Riga will show, the call for this kind of harmonization is increasing. And rightly so, because with missions such as the one in Afghanistan where great risks are being taken, we have to make every effort to improve the circumstances as soon as possible. This is in our own interest and in the interest of the Afghans. There should be no room for institutional fear of commitment or *Alleingang*.

Riga will be an important snapshot of a future-oriented NATO, which through further enlargement and a broader partnership network, and through far-reaching military transformation, will continue to perform its international tasks.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The text above is a slightly adapted translation of his speech on 12 October 2006 in The Hague as part of the conference 'NATO on the Eve of the Riga Summit', which was organized by the Netherlands Atlantic Association.