



Report

“An Innovative Agenda for NATO’s Next Summit?”

June 25th, 2018, Press Centre Nieuwspoor, The Hague

Speakers: Marjanne de Kwaasteniet, Jamie Shea, Roland Freudenstein, Kenneth Gardner and John Hulsman

Moderator: Robert van de Roer

On Monday June 25th the Netherlands Atlantic Association organized a seminar in light of the developments, challenges, and innovative ideas that will dominate the upcoming NATO summit in Brussels on July 11th and 12th. Marjanne de Kwaasteniet (Dutch ambassador to NATO) discussed the agenda of the summit and the Dutch view. Jamie Shea (NATO Headquarters) discussed the goals and objectives of the summit. Then, Kenneth Gardner (U.S. Embassy in The Hague) and Roland Freudenstein (Wilfried Martins Centre for European Studies) offered American and European points of view, respectively. After the lunch break, John C. Hulsman (president of global political risk consulting firm John C. Hulsman Enterprises) shared his thoughts on the subject matter and the current political-strategic landscape, including some background on Trump and his electoral base. In between the keynotes there was room for discussion and critical questions from the audience. The seminar ended with a wrap-up with some of the speakers, all of them relatively optimistic about the future of the Alliance. Approximately 120 participants attended the seminar.

Robert van de Roer gave a short introduction on the current tensions and challenges facing NATO. The growing divisions between the U.S. and Europe and the fear for the end of the ‘rules-based world order’ create uncertainty for the future sustainability of the alliance. Will we see more commitment and transatlantic unity, or will it end up like the G7 summit? Food for thought for the first key-note speaker, Marjanne de Kwaasteniet.

Marjanne de Kwaasteniet

De Kwaasteniet started off by arguing that the new NATO Headquarters building symbolizes the adaptability of NATO in an era of challenges and disagreement. She stated that NATO is in good shape, and identified four topics to support this argument. First of all, safety. The Alliance is capable of keeping us all safe. However, NATO needs to be more assertive, especially towards Russia. De Kwaasteniet stressed the importance of measures that increase readiness, responsiveness and military mobility. This last point is also a key goal in EU-NATO cooperation and is strongly supported

by the Netherlands. Second, NATO is making its neighbourhood more stable. Mutual cooperation with neighbours and partner countries is required to create a stable environment. Third, NATO adapts to new, often hybrid threats, like cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns, mainly posed by Russia. Although the NATO-Russia relationship is constrained, it is crucial to promote dialogue, of which the Netherlands is a great advocate. Lastly, NATO achieved better cooperation with the EU. According to the ambassador, NATO and the EU could make each other stronger. She believes European leaders are not aiming for strategic autonomy, but for *strategic responsibility* — the ability to look after your own citizens. At the summit, they plan to sign a new declaration confirming their commitment to overcome obstacles which hamper efficient cooperation. In conclusion, the world is more interconnected and close cooperation and unity are necessary for safety and stability. “What divides us makes headlines, what unites us makes progress.”



The keynote was followed by some questions from the audience and Robert van de Roer. Van de Roer asked whether Trump would declare NATO an obsolete organisation, to which De Kwaasteniet answered that he has no reason to do this. NATO adapted and we all committed to the 2%. In addition, the American commitment to NATO should not be questioned. Then, there were some questions on the possible membership of Georgia. According to De Kwaasteniet, even though being a valuable partner, Georgia is not ready yet for the next step and its membership will not be discussed at the summit. Lastly, there were questions about NATO's attitude and strategy towards Russia. According to De Kwaasteniet, even though the dialogue should be kept open, Russia should be seen as an adversary which poses both military and hybrid threats.

Jamie Shea

Shea began his speech by introducing three fronts that require a strategic approach by NATO: the East, the South and the hybrid sphere. In general, these challenges require greater military mobility and rapid decision-making. This depends on efficient cooperation with the EU. Also, Shea expects that NATO will divide its attention more evenly between the South and the East. While Crimea required an immediate response, the southern migration question is also highly pressing.

Furthermore, he expects the summit to make a strategy on how to respond to hybrid threats. He sees NATO as the fundamental institution of the Western order that survives only when unity includes solidarity, implicating a fair financial burden sharing. Shea argued that the EU should take up a greater security role and that NATO should get out of its “defensive mind-set” in order to decrease European dependence on U.S. military protection. For next year’s summit, he expects a more long-term Russia strategy which includes a roadmap for dialogue and engagement.

Van de Roer asked both Shea and De Kwaasteniet whether they are irritated by the voices coming from Washington. They both feel annoyed, but the relationship has witnessed many crises and at the end of the day preserving NATO has been the most important goal, which shows continuity. About the long-term strategy towards Russia De Kwaasteniet agrees with Shea that this should be developed, however the key points will still be deterrence, defense and dialogue. The audience was also curious on how to incorporate younger generations in the hybrid warfare decision-making process. Both Shea and De Kwaasteniet argued that younger people and their digital skills are very important for the area of cyber, something Kenneth Gardner later on mentioned as well.

Kenneth Gardner

Kenneth Gardner stated that both the U.S.-Dutch relationship and the U.S.-NATO relationship suffers from disagreement. A strong point of contention is the earlier mentioned burden sharing and the lack of financial contribution planning by at least 10 countries to reach the 2%-norm by 2024. Although the Netherlands is a proponent of enhanced military mobility, as already mentioned by De Kwaasteniet, it too lacks such planning. Gardner also mentioned the speed of cyber warfare. A quick



and effective response requires decision-making by younger generations that can keep up. Lastly, he said not to define the transatlantic relationship by the rhetoric. Even though he recognizes that rhetoric may not be helpful and influences the state of the Alliance, he describes the current relationship as “solid”.

One of the participants mentioned that attacking infrastructure is not something new, since Russia has done this before (by cutting gas). The question is where NATO should draw the line as to whether article 5 should be invoked. Gardner sees the need to have the discussion on what kind of attacks can trigger article 5.

Roland Freudenstein

Freudenstein recognizes that the transatlantic relationship has deteriorated. He attributes this to several flaws and developments. First of all, he mentioned the threats to the ‘rules-based world order’, posed by leaders like Trump, Erdogan, Xi Jinping and Putin. Freudenstein specifically highlighted the problems Trump poses to the relationship, as his superficial view on NATO creates misunderstandings within the Alliance, for example through conflating the 2% line with practical contribution to missions. However, the U.S. is not the only one to blame. In addition, Freudenstein mentioned a split between the East and the West within NATO. The split adds upon existing, controversial differences in priorities and values, which are influenced by one’s geostrategic location. Therefore, Freudenstein is sceptical about the formation of a European army. He concluded that in an ideal world the EU would step up on its defense policies and cultural differences are recognized while listening to the other side. Although this is not the case, it offers opportunities for improvement. Freudenstein agrees with Gardner that parts of the rhetoric and miscommunication between Europe and the US damage the alliance, but NATO will not fall apart because of this.

During the discussion, someone mentioned the fact Turkey was missing from the keynote. Freudenstein argues that we should keep Turkey as an ally and call Erdogan’s bluff on flipping over to Russia as Turkey also benefits from being a NATO ally. Should we also call Trump’s bluff? Freudenstein answered that Europe is about to do this on trade. Gardner was more cautious: calling someone’s bluff could be dangerous, when he is in fact not bluffing.

John C. Hulsman

In contrast to the other speakers, Hulsman argued that the EU is not yet ready for solo work and it still needs the U.S. for military support. However, Trump is increasingly abandoning the Wilsonian foreign policy which stressed the importance of the multipolar world. The Wilsonian view has led to 40 years of neglect of a certain group of people within the U.S. that, before Trump, had never captured the White House. Trump defends these so called ‘Jacksonians’, who are mainly sovereigntists. Regarding international relations, these people maintain a transactional perspective implicating, for example, that countries that do not meet the 2% guideline do not deserve American protection. To keep his electoral base satisfied, Trump is actively pushing his transatlantic allies to meet the 2% agreement, which constrains the relationship on both sides. Hulsman argued that European countries should meet the defense spending guideline in order to save transatlantic cooperation, but also to become less dependent on the U.S and maintain influence on the world stage.

A question coming from the audience was whether Trump would agree to the rules-based order when all Allies get to the 2% and whether this would give Europe more influence. Hulsman thinks it will, but European Allies should first reach the guideline and only then start talking about greater power.

Discussion between Freudenstein, Hulsman, and Shea

The panel discussion started with Shea reacting to Freudenstein's somewhat pessimistic point that the 'rules-based order' has never witnessed more attacks than nowadays. Shea stated that we should not overdramatize the state of the transatlantic relationship. The problems are not unsolvable. Then, Van de Roer asked whether the financial strengthening question will dominate the NATO summit. They all agreed that it probably will, however Shea mentioned that not only spending should improve, other contributions are also important for progress within NATO. Eventually, Van de Roer asked the question we had all been waiting for: "Will NATO change as a cornerstone of international security under Trump?" All panellists think there will be adaptations, however NATO is too important to lose and it will therefore survive the Trump era.



Lastly, the audience could ask their final questions. One participant was curious whether we need a dramatic security event to reach the 2%. Hulsman and Freudenstein argued that such an event will certainly be 'helpful', but it still remains a political choice. Shea added to this that politicians should justify why and where the money is spent, otherwise it will be difficult to get to the 2%. Finally, how should we deal with China? Is China on the agenda for the NATO summit? Shea answered that China is not yet on the agenda, but it is a long-term force to be reckoned with.

Van de Roer ended the seminar with a positive view: NATO will survive Trump and the Alliance will get stronger financially. However, he added, "We are leaving this room as optimists, who are in reality well-informed pessimists."

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