

NATO: AN ALLIANCE FOR FREEDOM
PRESENTATION AT THE NDA

November 30th, 2005

Bruselas

Thank you very much, Giles, for your kind introduction. It is a pleasure to be here with you, in this event hosted by the New Defense Agenda. Since its inception, just a few years ago, NDA has served as a main forum where to expose and debate new ideas about hot strategic issues. You can only have to see the list of seminars and publications to realize the enormous effort undertaken by Giles Merrit and his team to keep pace with the fast moving world in which we are living today. Keeping alive a platform to exchange ideas about our own security and defense is worthwhile no matter how exhausting it could be.

I know the difficulties of running a think-tank. Probably you don't know that after retiring from active politics I become the executive president of FAES, a think-tank linked to the Popular Party and committed to the defense and promotion of liberal values. I discovered the strength of bad ideas, but I also discovered how to battle and defeat them.

The report we are presenting today, *NATO: An Alliance for freedom* is the result of months of practical work at FAES. But above all is the consequence of long years of concerns about the state of the Atlantic relations, badly damaged by Iraq, but at risk since September 11th and, in fact, altered by the changes of 1989.

Let me say that I do believe in the Atlantic relations. I cannot explain Spain or Europe with an Atlantic dimension, as I also think you cannot explain America without taking into account Europe. That's what I say to my friends here in Europe and in America.

But the Atlantic link is more than a historical reference. The values and interest we share are too big and important to give up and accept that our relationship is beyond repair. Do nothing, I believe, is not a good option since the fragile status quo we are living now means, in reality, moving backwards. The security requirements of our nations, as well as

the international stability, call for an agenda for change. Or since we are here, a new defense agenda.

During the last months I have heard many things about the state of affairs in NATO, from declaring NATO dead to consider the Organization more effective than ever. It is true that NATO is nowadays more active than never before. Who could have thought fifteen years ago that NATO would deploy troops in the Balkans, run a reconstruction operation in Afghanistan, or would give airlift support to the African States Organization for Darfur? Simply, nobody. But against all odds, NATO is doing it, leaving its Cold War agenda well behind.

Nonetheless doing a lot of things doesn't mean necessarily that the important things are done.

Far from me the idea to criticise the peace support operations in which NATO is engaged. I think the evolution NATO experimented in the 90s has a desirable impact in terms of effective conflict resolution as in its internal restructuring. NATO lost its focus on the Soviet Union, because there was no Soviet Union left, and moved into a kind of stability exporter organization.

But to me, NATO is in a real and very deep crisis, despite its hyperactivity. The 90's were years of strategic holidays, all celebrating the demise of the existential threat the URSS represented to all of us, and confident that we were so powerful that we could intervene and put an end to all civil and ethnic conflicts if we decided so. As Sir Winston Churchill said once, "they were all pigmy wars" compared to the most powerful military machinery of all times, NATO.

The problem is, as we know now, that the 90's were also the years in which a new enemy was preparing to hit a fatal blow against us. The attacks of September 11th were not the breaking out of hostilities, since we can trace the day one many years before, but it was a kind of revelation: we discovered that instead of living in a benign world, we were in reality facing a new existential threat. Not only because terror became mass terror, but because Islamist terror had a clear strategic vision and plan which was- and is- incompatible with our way of life.

September 11th was also a revolution for NATO. Traditional concepts like containment and deterrence were no longer viable, and to rely just on passive defence, like NATO for more than four decades, meant to put at risk the lives of too many citizens. Going into the offensive, or taking preventive measures was something NATO was not prepared to deal with. It never did so before. It never needed.

To change, nonetheless, takes time and usually involves a painful process. The Alliance activated for its first time in History the provisions of article 5 by which an attack upon one of his members is considered an attack against all. Though NATO did little in practice, leaving to its members to cooperate bilaterally with the US in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Some people say that was impossible for NATO to do something tangible of a major scale since it did not have the assets and means; others point to the US reluctance to replicate the war by committee we saw in Kosovo. The debate is still open.

In any case, as we witnessed during the whole Iraqi crisis, NATO's lack of commitment was not always due to a lack of military capabilities, but to deep political and strategic divergences. Of course NATO members, particularly the Europeans, should do more and better in defense, but solving the capability gap won't solve automatically the crisis

within the Alliance. That's my personal assessment, of course.

NATO is in crisis because to some we are now living at war. We are supposedly facing an enemy who declared war upon us, and we must fight in a conflict in which a stalemate is not possible. Our enemy has such a determination that is they or us, our victory or our defeat. The Global War on Terror (GWAT) being some more than just a rhetoric expression, the dots that connect New York and Washington, with Bali, Madrid, London, Iraq or Amman.

To others in the Alliance, the Islamists, radicals, extremists, jihadists or terrorists, do not represent an existential threat to the western world. The political Islam being a phenomenon to be dealt with intelligence services and police forces as their members are considered criminals not combatants elements, fighters or warriors.

I have to say that I do believe we are facing a mortal enemy. And I believe those who prefer to see the islamists terrorists as a problem that can be contained are wrong.

So here it is the NATO current paradox: NATO is perceived to be everywhere, because is almost everywhere, while the feeling of vulnerability and insecurity of its citizen's members is growing. Dou you think is natural and acceptable for any politician in Europe to go to the public and argue for the multi-deployment of NATO in far away places, while people is blowing apart in trains and buses on European soil?

I think keeping NATO aside the fight against terror, just because is devoted to peace support operations, or is entangled in what kind of relationship wants and may have with the EU, something that have taken so much time and energy I also add, is the wrong answer. NATO was created to increase the security of its members, and

for protecting our freedom and prosperity. It is truth, NATO was re-created somehow in the 90's and moved beyond our soil trying to keep the peace in our periphery. Now it is time to re-think what NATO is for again.

Rethinking NATO is not a new activity, with so many changes undertaken by the organization all along its life. Giles Merrit and the New Defense Agenda organised last may a seminar called actually "reinventing NATO". So I don't think I'm discovering you too much.

Nonetheless, the report I'm presenting today takes a slightly different approach to the future of the Alliance than most of the works I know.

Many people seem to be quite happy with the NATO we have today. Some, because it could evolve in an acceptable tool-box from where to organise coalitions of the willing; some because the political relevance will pass to the EU hands. Just

a few minor adjustments is what is needed, they both groups say.

I strongly disagree. I do believe what NATO needs is a bold transformation. Reinvigorating, revamping, re-launching, you name it, is in my view dependent of major changes in the organization.

First of all, NATO must become the venue where to express clearly what its members are, liberal democracies, committed to defend collectively our freedom and values, and their strategic interests. We should be proud of what we are and we should not accept any blackmail or pressure from the terrorists or their ideologues to renegade of our heritage and principles. NATO cannot be an aseptic institution, value-free.

Secondly, NATO members must recognise the fact that we need an organization for our collective defense. Because we are under attack, outside our borders as well as within them. We have been

attacked several times now, and our enemy's offensive is not going to stop unless we counteract accordingly. The happy days when we thought that we were free from threats are over and NATO must do what always did, secure our people, and secure our interest from our enemies. Jihadism has replaced communism, as communism replaced Nazism as an existential threat to liberal democracies. I believe NATO should recognise this new strategic environment in a new Strategic Concept.

Thirdly, we must accept that today is impossible to draw a clear line between international security and internal or homeland security. Mohamed Atta came from Frankfurt to the US, but the perpetrator of March 11 bombing in Madrid were living in Spain for many years, and the terrorist in London, last July were Britons on paper.

In this sense, one of the main proposals of the report is the development by NATO of a homeland security dimension. I propose that interior and

homeland security ministers will meet at the North Atlantic Council level, together with their foreign affairs and defense counterparts. It is unconceivable that NATO could not serve as a meeting point of those responsible of homeland security and defense because of bureaucratic and corporative vested interest. NATO must become the meeting point of those responsible of guarantee our security, irrespective of their portfolio.

Beyond that, the allies should consider the creation of a functional command dealing specifically with counterterrorism. To me this is the only way to give consistency and coherence to our effort to defeat jihadism collectively.

Fourthly, terrorism is not limited to just some isolated acts of cruelty and violence. It is something more. It is the tip of the Iceberg of a radical and extremist Islam that really forms a kind of global insurgency. It is a global phenomenon to say the least. Furthermore, it is something that cannot

be separated from the problem of proliferation, since we know that Islamists have no red line whatsoever and they are willing to kill as many people as they can. That's why an effective counter-terror policy must be global and taking into consideration counter-proliferation measures. Also, that's why any effective counter-terrorist strategy must be collective. The battlefield has become truly global and multidimensional and no nation, not even the US, have all the elements at hand to prevail alone in the struggle.

I believe NATO is the best collective organization we have, the western democracies, to face this historical challenge. But not the NATO we have today, but a new NATO.

I already mentioned the need of a homeland security dimension. In order to win this battle against the terrorist evil, NATO must expand its geographical scope. That's, I think, is the second major change we defend in our report. NATO enlargement has been

focused up to now in the central and Eastern Europe as a consequence of wishing to overcome the unnatural division of the continent from the Cold War years. It was a Historical debt we all owed to the East. But now it is time to change direction. What NATO needs is to expand to reflect better what we are, nations willing and able to cooperate to eliminate the real and present threat of Islamist terror, nations willing to defend our values, prosperity and freedom. In that regard we propose in our report that the next enlargement process would be opening NATO's doors to countries like Japan, Australia and Israel, as well as to build a strategic partnership with other nations like Colombia, all of them in the fore front of fighting terrorism.

There are many other proposals. Some of them more practical than other, some of them that could be implemented very rapidly. You could read them in detail in our report. For instance, NATO should transform its Mediterranean Dialogue into a Partnership for Freedom, where cooperation should

be linked to the promotion of political freedom, economic liberalization and religious tolerance in North Africa and the Middle East overcoming the deficiencies we encountered in promoting change through NATO or the EU.

Finally, some changes must also take place in the internal functioning of the Alliance. For years we have been discussing the difficulty of managing an ever growing membership. I think it is time to move beyond the unanimity and consensus in the decision making process. NATO should borrow from the EU its concept of constructive abstention and allow moving forward when a majority of nations decide so.

There are many practical steps to improve NATO's operations. And as far as I know the current Secretary General, de Hoop Scheffer, is pushing in the right direction. I very much support the idea to create a common fund to finance NATO operations. But in any case, I believe that NATO cannot fall into complacency just because it is more active

than ever. The essential value of NATO is to increase the security of its members. If its members cannot count on NATO to preserve their security, NATO will be in deep trouble.

The experts who worked in the report have met more than two hundred persons in more than a dozen countries, and they discussed their concepts in great detail. Not all the people liked all ideas, obviously, but at the end of the day I really believe it is a document that can contribute to the debate NATO badly needs about its future and ambitions.

So far this report has been endorsed by the bipartisan Committee for the Present Danger with members ranging from former secretary of State George Shultz to senator Joe Lieberman and Jon Kyl, as well as former director of the CIA, James Woolsey or Vaclak Havel from the Czeck republic.

My goal, our goal at FAES, was to make a positive contribution in the face of the important NATO summit at the end of the coming year, 2006.

Let me conclude by saying that I'm specially grateful that the very first public presentation of the report *NATO: an alliance for freedom* in Europe has taken place here, hosted by the NDA, an organization devoted to expand our intellectual as well as practical horizons on defense. NATO is a kind of a zombie organization due to the lack of interest from the US side topped by the lack of commitment from the European allies. We all, that believe in the Atlantic relationship, must joint forces to transform NATO into a truly strategic multinational organization that serves to the defensive needs of its members. That's my ambition.

Thank you very much.