



Press Release

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Promoting a more transparent and accountable NATO

Experts set out recommendations for future NATO strategy

Albright report strongly backs NATO involvement in territorial missile defence and calls for guidelines for future missions abroad

A 12-person Group of Experts headed by former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright yesterday presented their [analysis and recommendations](#) to Alliance ambassadors. Appointed by Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen to lay the groundwork for the development of a new strategic doctrine for NATO, the Expert Group report describes the Alliance as *"as an essential source of stability in an uncertain and unpredictable World"*. Over the next decade the Experts expect NATO to be *"tested by the emergence of new dangers, the many-sided demands of complex operations, and the challenge of organising itself efficiently in an era where rapid responses are vital, versatility critical, and resources tight"*.

NATO is currently drawing up a new [Strategic Concept](#) (which was last updated in 1999) designed to make it more flexible and better able to deal with modern threats such as terrorism, cyber warfare and piracy. NATO leaders are set to finalise the doctrine at a November summit in Lisbon. During a [press conference](#) at NATO Headquarters in Brussels to launch the Expert Group report, Rasmussen described the Strategic Concept review process as the *"most transparent and inclusive in NATO's history"*.

Dr Ian Davis, director of NATO Watch said, *"The publication of the Expert Group report and the extensive consultation that preceded it is a welcome boost to transparency and an important contribution to the ongoing debate about the future of NATO"*. He added, *"NATO urgently needs a new script infused by the language of reason and morality that can resonate across a multi-polar world. But this document for all its qualities doesn't quite cut the mustard"*.

Most of the Group's recommendations flow from two basic conclusions: that the *"Alliance has an ongoing duty to guarantee the safety and security of its members"*; and that it can achieve this only if it *"engages dynamically with countries and organizations that are outside its boundaries"*. It concludes that NATO must maintain a flexible mix of military capabilities, including conventional, nuclear, and missile defence.

For the foreseeable future *"the prospect of direct military attack across the borders of the Alliance is slight"* and the most probable threats to Allies in the coming decade are unconventional, according to the Expert Group. Three in particular are thought by the Group to stand out:

- an attack by ballistic missile (whether or not nuclear-armed);
- strikes by international terrorist groups; and
- cyber assaults of varying degrees of severity.

"A host of other threats also pose a risk", the report says, *"including disruptions to energy and maritime supply lines, the harmful consequences of global climate change, and financial crisis"*. *"There is a continuing need to transform NATO forces from the powerful but static posture of the Cold War into a posture which is more flexible, mobile, and versatile"*, the report stresses. However, having established that the future threats are principally *"unconventional"* the 55-page report sets out largely conventional military responses. The main recommendations include:

- Halting the *"precipitous decline"* in national defence spending. The primary limiting factor hindering military transformation, according to the report, has been the lack of European defence spending and investment – but there is no mention of the debilitating consequences of the excessive level of US military spending both in terms of its impact on interoperability within the Alliance and on the federal deficit in Washington, which even the [Financial Times](#) has recently questioned;
- New institutional reforms and efficiencies, including reducing NATO HQ operating costs and shrinking the number of committees and agencies. The Secretary General is also encouraged to

make further proposals for streamlining the decision-making process within NATO, while preserving the consensus rule for the most important decisions such as those involving Article 5 commitments, budgets, new missions and new members. And the report suggests “*giving the Secretary General or NATO military leaders certain pre-delegated authorities*”, based on agreed rules-of- engagement, to respond in an emergency situation such as a missile or cyber attack;

- Affirming (within the new Strategic Concept) NATO’s full support for efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and “*progress towards a world free from the fear of nuclear war*”. This phrase stops well short of endorsing President Obama’s [nuclear weapon-free world agenda](#), and in suggesting that NATO prepare for “*in-depth consultations*” on the future role of nuclear weapons in its deterrence strategy, the report also repeats the stance adopted at the recent NATO Foreign Ministers meeting at Tallinn, when it states that any change in NATO nuclear policy “*including in the geographic distribution of NATO nuclear deployments in Europe, should be made, as with other major decisions, by the Alliance as a whole*” and that consultations with Russia should pursue “*increased transparency and further mutual reductions*” (emphasis added);
- Recognising territorial missile defence as an “*essential mission*” of the Alliance to defend against “*the threat of a possible ballistic missile attack from Iran*”. The report calls for an expansion in NATO’s Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence System to provide the core command and control capability for such an Alliance-wide system, despite [growing criticism](#) of President Obama’s missile defence proposals;
- Training to help NATO countries improve their cyber defence programmes and a NATO-wide network of monitoring nodes and sensors to expand the Alliance’s early warning capabilities;
- More creative and regular use of consultations under Article 4 to prevent or manage crises;
- Pursuit of a policy of engagement with Russia by “*focusing on opportunities for pragmatic collaboration*” such as missile defence, arms control and the fight against terrorism, drugs and piracy – but once again, stopping short of any hint that Russia might one day be offered membership to NATO; and
- Continuation of NATO’s ‘open door’ policy.

Dr Davis said, “*Where an enlightened and emboldened approach to the new challenges ahead is required—to deal with nuclear and missile proliferation, for example—the report retreats into outdated concepts of deterrence and missile defences. And where it does show signs of promise, such as in promoting a role for NATO in preventing genocide or other massive violations of human rights, crisis management, disaster relief and in improving relations with Russia, the approach is far too timid*”.

While the report insists on the continuing need to send out military missions beyond the treaty area “*when required to prevent an attack on the treaty area or to protect the legal rights and other vital interests of Alliance members*”—the sort of expedition already seen in Afghanistan—it does at least argue that the new Strategic Concept should prescribe guidelines for the Alliance as it makes decisions about when and where to apply resources beyond its borders. While accepting decisions to deploy out of area can only be made on a “*case-by-case basis*”, the report suggests that weight be given to a number of factors including, the extent and imminence of danger to Alliance members and conformity with international law.

The report also identifies several key lessons from Afghanistan, including the need for NATO’s military forces to operate under a unified chain of command, national caveats to be minimised when contributing troops to Alliance operations, a greater stress on the protection of civilians and the treatment of prisoners and detainees in accordance with the principles of international law. The report also sets out a global goal to “*help to shape a more stable and peaceful international security environment*” by providing military and police training, coordinating military assistance, and cooperating with the governments of key countries.

Finally, the report calls for the Alliance to strive to attract and maintain public and legislative backing for its operations through “*transparency and effective public communications*”, but again, without setting out how this might be achieved . “*At a minimum, the Expert Group should have called on NATO to adopt a formal information disclosure policy, since it remains one of the few intergovernmental organisations without one*”, said Dr Davis.

NATO Watch is an independent, not-for-profit ‘virtual’ think-tank which examines the role of NATO in public life and advocates for more openness, transparency and accountability within the Alliance. See our detailed [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and our [Vision and Mission](#).

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