



High-level Seminar  
*NATO at 70: Refocusing for Change?*  
Atlantic Council, 1030 15th Street, NW, 12th Floor, Washington D.C., USA

27<sup>th</sup> of June 2019

### **NATO at 70: Refocusing for Change?**

To celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Atlantic Alliance, the NATO Defense College Foundation created an event in Washington D.C., where in 1949 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from 12 countries signed NATO's founding treaty. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, the NDCF organised the high-level conference *NATO at 70: Refocusing for Change?*, in cooperation with the Atlantic Council, Philip Morris International, Leonardo S.p.A., MBDA, the NATO Defense College and the National Defense University.

The Foundation's first overseas event gathered some of the most relevant European and American decision shapers to discuss in two panels the current state of the Alliance, the evolution of the global strategic environment and future prospects for NATO's security and defence policies. Closing the working day, former Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright**.

Ambassador **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo** (President of the NATO Defense College Foundation) opened the conference stressing the need to profit from such an important anniversary in order to consider the profound mutations of the global geopolitical situation, as well as the internal and external adaptations that a great alliance as NATO needs to undertake. "It is clear that the world is changing fast, perhaps too fast, and that we cannot live on past glories anymore. The international environment is becoming increasingly difficult, actors of various kinds are emerging, and we have to reflect on the kind of adaptation that has become necessary. Fragmentation is dangerous, and we need security providers more than ever as well as a global governance for this world".

While NATO is facing a new array of challenges and internal divisions, though, "the United States and many of its allies are actually strategically aligned in grand strategy perhaps more than they have been since 9/11 or 1989", **Damon Wilson** (Executive Vice President of Atlantic Council) said. The US and its allies, he explained, are beginning to agree on the view that the future will be defined by "the competition between the free world and authoritarian, corrupt, state-led capitalism, and chief among them China and Russia. [...] They need to understand that they need to put their alliances, and NATO in particular, in the core, not in the periphery, of their strategies".

Despite numerous political attacks, today the Alliance enjoys a vast consensus by 75% of the Americans and the Europeans. At the same time, it is a fact that NATO needs to redefine common values and goals, as well as to rethink and implement its strategies after the past 2010 Strategic Concept.

On the burden sharing debate, **Anthony Cordesman** (Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies) stated clearly that the 2% guideline is useless, counterproductive in terms of effectiveness and politically harmful. New standards based on the capacity produced, and not on single states' expenditure, are needed. "You do not base the assessment of the Alliance on defence expenditure. You cannot force allies to spend the 2% without changing their defence structure. We need to be honest, stop this mindless bullying exercise on burden sharing and set a realistic threat assessment".

Among the other topics discussed, the need to invest in the emerging dimensions of space (competition, protection and deterrence regarding space assets) and cyber, as well as in deepening NATO's global partnerships, looking especially to the Euro-Asiatic region, both to expand its capabilities to meet new global challenges and to help export the Alliance's model to other regional organisations. As **Charles Kupchan** (Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations) argued: "NATO should be very active with the African Union, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and with the Gulf Cooperation Council"; empowering these groups will be important as "we are moving into a world in which the United States and its NATO allies are not going to be the providers of last resort anymore. We need to create the capacity, the public goods, for other bodies to do what NATO has done".

Closing the event, the concluding remarks by **Madeleine Albright**, who underlined once more the importance of the Atlantic Alliance. Of course "people and institutions at seventy need to have a little refurbishing" and the transatlantic organisation is no different, she said. "But I do think that NATO remains central, and we need to make sure that it works. We need to work with our allies, with our fellow members, and realise that some of the things that have happened all over the world end up being linked. Then we need to explain to people, especially to the United States, that the things happening abroad comes home to each of the countries, and the way to deal them is through strong allies". Albright finally challenged the next generation of the Alliance's leaders to once again find its central purpose, saying there is a chance for a "renewal of our vows" as NATO enters its eighth decade.

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