

Sergio Balanzino
*“NATO's New Strategic Concept in the light
of the European Security Challenges”*

Thank you very much. I'm very grateful for the invitation that was extended to me to be present today and have first, this morning, exchange of views with Polish authorities and this afternoon to address and have a dialogue with this distinct audience.

There will be a summit, heads of state and government summit of NATO in Strasbourg at the beginning of April. At the summit that took place in April last year NATO was tasked to prepare the Declaration on Alliance security to be presented and adopted by the incoming summit. The one in Strasbourg. So NATO has been working mostly, if not exclusively, on the preparation of this – is working rather – on the preparation of this Declaration.

A draft of the Declaration should be circulated by the Secretary General of the United Nations possibly the end of January beginning of February. What would be in this Declaration? Well, nobody knows exactly because – as I said – it's a work in progress. But from what I heard in Brussels where I return on a different capacity from my previous one, the Secretary General intends to submit to heads of states and governments a Declaration short and crisp. These are his words. Possibly two pages. Now, in two pages you can't go too much in depth in describing or in identifying subjects and future goals for the Alliance. But I tend to believe that the Strategic Concept, whether new or adapted from the present one, improved... that the Strategic Concept will have at least a paragraph or a sentence in the Declaration. Something

that could somehow trace a guideline for future bodies or future committees, whatever, that will be in charge of preparing a new document for the heads of state and government, for their meeting in Lisbon in 2010.

So at this point in time there is not much that one can say based on documentation or statements, that one can say about the content of the Strategic Concept to be adopted in Lisbon. One can guess. The Strategic Concept has to – for sure – reconfirm some basic, key elements of principles that have guided the Alliance. Namely – I would say – two: territorial defense and openness of the Alliance towards the outer world. Outer world – I mean Europe.

Other topics, other elements that can be added. Well, there are ideas circulating but of course those are individual suggestions. The transatlantic link, of course, transformation, enlargement, better responses to security challenges, lessons learned from operations, more deployable capabilities, new relationship with partners etc.

As I said, in two pages, if Declaration will consist of two pages, little meat could be added to the bones of this topics. But nonetheless what, in my view, the Alliance should project for the years to come, 10-15 years to come, is first that NATO is there and is alive and kicking. That NATO is determined to defend with all necessary means, which does mean necessarily only military means. Diplomacy and other – how could I say – soft power instruments could be used and should be used by the Alliance leaving the military tools as the extrema ratio operational instrument. It could or it should also – the Strategic Concept – cover the relations between NATO and international organizations. First of all European Union, United Nations and other possible international

organizations. In other words extend constructive availability to cooperate. In the division of labor NATO cannot do everything. NATO first of all cannot be expected to act as global cop. There are limits to the capacity and – I think – to the will of allies to intervene. But other international organizations can act on the global scale. And NATO can in specific instances support, provide help, support to the initiatives of those organizations.

Another important topic would be: how to deal with Russia. In other words is it necessary to revise the existing relations with Russia, the existing instruments of contact that were established in 1997 with the signing of the Founding Act of Relations between NATO and Russia. Do we have to revise and take a different course towards Russia? How far and how fast should NATO go in enlarging its membership? Enlargement has – I would say – a double significance and a double effect. It opens the doors of the Alliance to new members, brings new members in and can also raise tensions, problems with countries that are not part of the Alliance.

In the late 1990s, I think specially of 1999, when the first post-Cold War enlargement took place, when Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary were admitted, the key word, the principle that ruled admission into the Alliance was that new members should be not only consumers of security but also providers of security. If this principle is still valid than new members should be carefully measured with this yardstick and determined whether they could fit in the Alliance or whether they should still wait for a while to be admitted into the fold.

There is also another item which most likely will appear in the new Strategic Concept: should NATO confirm, insist and continue its policy of going out of area, something that started in the mid 90's with the Yugoslav crisis, mostly in Kosovo etc. and now beyond the borders of Europe – Afghanistan. Should expeditionary missions be included as part as NATO's mandate in order to try to guarantee NATO's security at the source, at the root of threats when they emerge. Without waiting to be attacked inside the Alliance should move out and confront those threats whenever they become manifest.

A thought that is not totally new. Because in the mid 1990s another key words circulating in the Alliance was “out of area or out of business”. This is why interventions in Yugoslavia were justified. NATO had to carry a new mission so to say: defense and protection of human rights in areas which were not comprised within the Alliance but in neighboring countries. This concept can be pushed much further if we speak of violation of human rights. You have it on television and in the press daily – the risk of human rights being violated. Civilians and innocent people being mistreated by aggressors or – in any case – by foreign powers. So these is somehow the possible menu for NATO to examine, to choose and to be included, to be embodied in the new Strategic Concept.

Now, I do not hide from you and from myself the fact that there is no unanimity within the Alliance about which new tasks or new initiatives should be included in the Strategic Concept and what missions should NATO embark upon. There is a line of thought, a school of thought that focus is above all and in first instance about the core defense, the defense of the core of the Alliance so strictly speaking Europe in the present form. But, and this is another school of thought, Europe

is one pillar of the Alliance. NATO is an Alliance on two pillars – North America and Europe. So the transatlantic link and the transatlantic relation should be looked after and taken care of. Canada and the United States are very much – how could I say – decided and strong on maintaining the transatlantic link at the very top of the list of NATO's tasks and missions.

There are other topics that may appear that were not contemplated in the previous or in the existing Strategic Concept. For example energy security, cyber security – security against cyber attacks, mass migrations – whether dependent on climate changes, on civil wars, whatever. But the fact that mass migration could affect and alter the stability of at least some members of the Alliance is a fact and is a problem and should probably be dealt with by the Alliance somehow. Well, as I said, there is no unanimity for the time being but also there is no clear project, there is no clear text of the Declaration first and of course even less of the new Security Concept. But at the bottom, at the basis of all our considerations there is one very simple and I would say essential element: the political will accompanied by the financial means.

If we look at what is happening in Afghanistan and if we consider the difficulty for the Alliance to put together a strong force to counter Taliban aggression or the conflict with Taliban, one could have doubts about the ability and capacity of the Alliance to take on its shoulders tasks that could not be supported either with human resources or with financial resources. So it is a problem that each government, each military diplomatic parliamentary community should reflect upon: are we willing, are we capable to support a new phase in the life of NATO, of the Alliance?

It's not an issue where only a group of nations take upon their shoulders the responsibility of caring out missions. And I am thinking of Poland as one of those courageous volunteers supporting the Alliance especially in the present situation in Afghanistan. Is there a common will? A common availability. If not, NATO may risk to turn into a talking shop. A place that will not disappear. International organizations never die. Almost. Neither fade away like American generals. But their usefulness will really become very thin, unreliable or unnecessary. This is what – I hope – will not happen. Gathering of will and capability of supporting a new Alliance with new missions – this is what should happen. And – as I said – each government should put their right hand on their heart and consider seriously that services that the Alliance has rendered for 60 years should not be discarded or dropped because there are national interests or illusionary expectations of an era of peace and good neighborly relations over the horizon.