

SACT

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The last 4th of April marked a very special event, while largely unnoticed. It was on the 4 th April 1949, in the wake of 2 world wars that 12 nations decided to create what would become one of the most successful stories of the modern age: The Atlantic Alliance.

Today, before addressing the challenges that our Alliance is faced with in this very puzzling 21 st century, I would like to pay a tribute to the far seeing leaders who were wise, courageous, and innovative enough to bring to birth NATO and to those who have pursued this outstanding endeavour for 65 years.

As a matter of fact, for many of us, this Alliance has been there all our life through, embedded in our environment, whether we realize it or not. So it is certainly worthy to start with recalling that the Atlantic Alliance has contributed to deterring a major conflict in Europe for almost 7 decades, and has brought peace and security to nearly 900 million people within its now 28 nations, and more largely it has contributed to more stability in the world.

NATO has constantly and successfully answered to the call of post-Cold War crises when it was asked by the international community.

If the Atlantic Alliance has been so successful, it is not by chance, it is mainly because NATO is not a coalition of circumstantial choices.

The enduring, fundamental principle to keep in mind, is that, from its inception, the strength of NATO has been to bring together diverse national and regional security concerns and strategic interests bound by the very glue of our Alliance, our shared and common values for freedom, democracy, rules of law...

So, in this 21st Century NATO's cohesion keeps on relying on its ability to cope with the diversity of national interests and threat perceptions from the East to the West, from the North to the South, to cope with different regional perspectives, with the many political changes and social culture evolutions. Therefore today more than ever, NATO's relevance depends on its solidarity nurtured by strong, consensual, political and military commitment.

In fact in 2010, during the Lisbon summit, the 28 Heads of states and Government agreed on a very wide encompassing and very committing Strategic concept which assigns 3 main missions to NATO: collective defence which remains the corner stone of the Alliance, crisis management which acknowledges NATO's role in the last 2 decades major crisis....., and cooperative security which stresses partnership as

the best way to promote defence and security cooperation with non NATO nations.

Considering the large spectrum of possible tasks ensuing from these three broad missions, one of our major challenges is obviously to find the right balance of effort to answer to this demanding strategic concept, which in fact reflects the reality of today's and most probably the framework of our future geostrategic environment.

As far as its collective defence is concerned, NATO's deterrence relies first and foremost on its nuclear status reaffirmed 2 years ago in Chicago; therefore the renovation of the NATO's airborne nuclear weapons remains for us a key project. In the same time the alliance has committed itself against new threats, such as Ballistic Missiles, or Cyber. But we mustn't forget that our collective defence still relies on credible conventional forces well equipped and well prepared. During the last 2 decades those forces have been have been stretched from one crisis to the other, they have learned to cope with asymmetry, with counter-insurgency, with short notice, long range, enduring deployments.

We have asked a lot from our people, more readiness, more effectiveness, more precision, greater ability to face the uncertainty and complexity of new environments in the Balkans, in Libya, in the Horn of Africa, in Afghanistan. They have learned as well to work, to fight together in stressing the value, the multiplicative effect of interoperability. Today, one major challenge for our Alliance is to capitalize on this invaluable operational experience, on the vast amount of lessons learned and to reinvest for our people, in their education, training and exercises. This is the aim of the Alliance in developing the Connected Forces Initiative led by ACT to promote more collaboration, more synergy and more efficiency between the nations in preparing their forces together for tomorrow challenges.

But, as we say in ACT, the future starts now; we must not forget that NATO forces are still committed in Kosovo, in the Mediterranean Sea, off the coast of Africa, or in Afghanistan. Transition in Afghanistan from offensive operations to training, assisting and advising Afghan security Forces is planned by the end of this year, it is very well advanced thanks to the commitment of Afghan forces and to the leadership of NATO's military commanders..... Despite the pessimistic forecast of some Cassandra, Afghan elections are already considered as a success. And I can ensure you that we are working hard to prepare the future RSM

while hoping a quick solution to current political problem by a new elected Afghan government.

A few months ago, I would say a few weeks ago, some other prophets of doom were foreseeing more or less Afghanistan transition as a final stage in NATO history, they were wrong again, very much like their predecessors were wrong in predicting the end of the story in the early 90s after the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact.

From my perspective, these visions are based upon the false assumption that NATO needs an enemy to survive as an Alliance. In fact in this 21st century NATO needs not to survive but to keep on striving to deter, to prevent current risks to transform in major threats for peace and security. That leads me to the crisis situation at the eastern borders of our Alliance. First and foremost I would stress that Ukraine, while not a member of NATO has been a very close and reliable partner Nation for many years despite internal political changes. UKR forces have been involved in Afghanistan, in many NATO exercises and even in the NRF, and we hope to be able to carry forward this fruitful partnership. Concerning the annexation of Crimea and the events in East Ukraine, I will not come back on the very strong and clear condemnations expressed by many NATO political leaders. We also fully understand the concerns of some Eastern Allies with this crisis situation because of their recent history and their proximity. As it is known by most of you, NATO

military authorities (under SACEUR leadership and with my full support) have been working since the beginning of this crisis to propose sensible and responsible reassurance measures, to improve NATO prevention and deterrence posture while avoiding any kind of military escalation or any potential exploitation through a thoroughly designed communication campaign as we have seen for weeks in Russian speaking media. Among those reassurance measures, I can quote the reinforcement of Air policing in the Baltic States, the increasing of NATO situation awareness with NATO AWACS flights, the deployment of NATO maritime elements in the Baltic sea as well as the pre-positioning in the Mediterranean, close to the Black see and, I must stress, in full respect with existing international treaty and conventions (Montreux)

Some bi lateral measures have also been decided such as the training of US Army companies with Eastern Allies Land forces.

In addition in the scope of CFI, ACT is actively working on a reinforced program of exercises, to raise NATO forces preparation and responsiveness.

I must stress that there is no state of nervousness in our organisation, as this plan takes place in the scope of our Crisis Response Process.

In summary, NATO is doing its job, and it's doing it pretty well. Waiting for any further questions on this hot topic, I would say that today the best assurance for all our eastern Allies is clearly their membership in NATO.

But everybody must understand that there is no military solution to the crisis in Ukraine, which requires a global, approach including political, diplomatic, economic, energy, social, and defence and security perspectives. In fact, the need for a comprehensive approach in crisis management is for NATO and for the international community, as a whole, one of the main lessons of the last decades' crisis, from the Balkans to the horn of Africa, from Libya to Afghanistan, from Georgia to Ukraine.

Another key consideration when we consider the peace and security challenges for our Alliance in the 21st century is the future geopolitical or geostrategic map of NATO.

Recently, NATO's foreign ministers stressed that they supported a continuing open door policy, while setting demanding criteria for future new members. That will be certainly a key question during the forthcoming NATO summit in September in Wales, which will largely concentrate on NATO's transformation. Obviously, the Alliance presents a great power of attraction; our will and aptitude to answer to the applicant countries will be a key factor for the future.

In addition I would suggest that in our interdependent and interconnected world, its geographic borders do not solely define the multi-dimensional map of NATO.

First, as it has been recognized in the strategic concept, cooperative security is a key component of NATO inventory, based upon a very proactive partnership policy. As it has been demonstrated in almost all recent operations (including Afghanistan), NATO's future will be significantly influenced by the role and place we will give to our partners and the interactions we will build together in all our strands of interest. This is true for the many partner nations NATO enjoys, but it is crucial as well with international organizations like the UN or the EU. The more and the more we work with the UN to share lessons learned, to improve interoperability and to develop a common understanding on critical issues such as the Gender, children in armed conflict or a building integrity initiative for reconstructing countries.

The most strategic partnership for NATO is certainly the one it shares with the EU. Today 22 European nations are members of the 2 organisations and many Non-NATO EU countries enjoy a very close partnership with NATO (Sweden, Finland, Austria represented in ACT alongside with many other partners) There is a clear interdependency between NATO and EU that we strive to capitalize on in developing coherent capabilities and multinational projects (SD, P/S) EU and NATO

are part of the same peace and security equation and they must complement, reinforce each other, which strengthens the irreplaceable Transatlantic Bond.

Coming back to the multi-dimensional map of NATO's interests in the 21st century, the interconnection and interdependency of Nations, international organizations, private sector, and individuals have been appealing for some time to develop a coherent and prospective approach to the freedom of access and the security of our global commons, our shared spaces of life for international communication, exchanges, trade, on the seas, in the airspace, in space, and more and more in cyber space. In short, our ability to address collectively this common issue with other organizations will be a key factor for NATO's future.

One cannot seriously address future challenges without some, at least generic, economic perspectives. At this point, I could use a joker, taking the quotation of a renowned 20th century physicist, **Mr. Niels Bohr** who said that, "prediction is very difficult, especially about the future," and I would add, especially in the field of economy. For sure when the economy underperforms, defense budgets are primary targets for cuts, even if anybody serious would recognize that defense is a long term investment and that major budget reductions produce their effects in the

long run. This is why in planning for the decade to come we have to take realistic financial assumptions and a permanent cost to value assessment approach.

Furthermore, we have to make clear that there is no magic recipe to keep a suitable capability inventory against enduring fiscal pressure. Therefore, multinational initiatives such as Smart Defense, pooling and sharing, must be seen as ways to anticipate, to mitigate budget constraints' long term impact and certainly not as a pretext for further cuts.

One could argue that Allies' economy will recover, and it is true that there are some positive signs on both sides of the Atlantic. At this stage, it is worth remembering Article 2 of the Atlantic Treaty of Washington, 65 years ago, I quote, "Allies will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any of them." Let's assume that this is still relevant for the future of the Alliance as negotiations are underway for a future Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the US and the EU, just as a similar agreement has been taken forward between Canada and the EU. That would certainly open the road for a global "transatlantic renaissance". But still I would posit that we would need a very strong case to convince our citizens and our political

masters that they do need to reinvest in defence. In that way, at least, the Eastern Europe crisis could help!

As a matter of fact, there is an impressive defense effort in many 21st century power nations outside of NATO, in Asia, the Middle East, in Russia, which cannot be ignored in assessing the global future geostrategic balance. That emphasizes, by the way, the very problematic strategic choices the US is facing today, too often oversimplified by the famous pivot to Asia. For the Alliance the role of the US as a global power in a global world reinforces the need for a better responsibility and tasks sharing with other European and non-European Allies in NATO.

As far as European countries are concerned, they face as well a problem of balance in defense efforts, as fewer and fewer nations are able to achieve the 2 percent of GDP ratio for defence budgets. The last European Council on defense stressed the need for a more coordinated and ambitious approach within the EU. The success of this endeavor will be crucial for NATO.

So hopefully for our Alliance and for future generations we will succeed in our quest for defence reinvestment, but we cannot afford to wait for better days. We must shape the future - now; we must tackle the

problems of today – now; we must find new paths to answer the current and future challenges, and we must better prioritize our efforts.

That would need a continuous day-to-day effort of imagination, of innovation.

I do think that effective, pragmatic, efficient innovation offers us solutions to tackle the many challenges I just depicted. This is why I put so much emphasis on developing innovation in ACT. I think as well that we must learn to work much closer, more efficiently with industry, with University, with Think tanks to anticipate the impact of new models, of new sociology of new technologies on military capabilities.

Putting a premium on technology and innovation is all the more relevant considering the exponential pace of technological progress which has created a “Law of Accelerating Returns” as described by Raymond Kurzweil, American director of engineering at Google.

An important aspect of this law is that a large part of new technologies will be available to a greater number of players, making the fog of future warfare even thicker. I do not want to overstate the case, but if we are not able to rapidly and smartly exploit technological breakthroughs, others will likely not miss the opportunity.

But, let's remind ourselves that the best technologies, the most sophisticated capabilities equal to nothing without the commitment, the skills, the courage of our brave men and women.

As ACT strives to adapt NATO to its present and future environment the human factor remains my first and foremost concern.

In particular our ability to educate, to transmit our common values to the next generations, to make them understand that there is a price to pay to protect and, if necessary, to defend these values; that peace and security have not been guaranteed so far by chance or by legacy, but by will, sacrifice, by common political and military commitment, by indefectible solidarity.

What the past has taught us is that will, commitment and imagination have brought our Alliance to this superb organization it is today. Let's carry it forward together into this 21st Century for the benefit of peace and security for our Allied Nations and in the world.

This is why, as a matter of conclusion, I would like today to thank your community and specially the WAC for your efforts in outreaching political deciders, community leaders as well as the youth and delivering this crucial message.