

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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Summary of CFR Symposium on NATO at 60
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As NATO approaches its 60th anniversary summit this April, many questions have been raised about the alliance's future. In the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the alliance has struggled to redefine itself. The events of September 11th and the invocation, for the first time, of Article 5 presented an opportunity for NATO to prove its worthiness in a post-Soviet world. However, as ISAF has become mired in a difficult counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, internal tensions between member states has, yet again, led many to ask whether this 20th century organization is fit for managing 21st century problems.

Policymakers, analysts, and observers gathered in Washington, DC on February 25 - 26 for the Council on Foreign Relations' (CFR) "NATO at 60" Symposium to discuss these and other issues in advance of the Strausbourg-Kehl Summit. The event, funded by the European Commission and the Robina Foundation, explored NATO and the international system, enlargement, the mission in Afghanistan and external relations with Russia and the EU.

It was widely acknowledged by symposium participants that divergent threat perceptions and disagreements over foreign policy have weighed heavily on the alliance. Domestic constraints have limited troop contributions and led to national caveats that limit the type of combat missions national contingents can engage in, prompting fears of the development of what Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has called a "two-tiered alliance." Participants agreed that it is too early to tell what impact the global financial crisis will have on NATO, but the crisis and calls for significant domestic stimulus suggest that member states will be facing downward pressure on defense spending for the foreseeable future. "[T]he time of unflinching transatlantic unity, if it ever existed, is gone," said **Radoslaw Sikorski**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland, in the event's opening speech. Prof. **Stephen Walt**, academic dean and Robert and Renee Belfer professor of international affairs, Kennedy School, Harvard University, pointed to the number of studies focusing on renewing, revitalizing, and restoring the transatlantic partnership. "If so many smart people think NATO needs help, it probably does," he said.

Nevertheless, participants were generally of the view that concerns over NATO's potential demise are overblown. Managing expectations was a broad theme of the event's first panel on "NATO in the International System." "[I]f we see NATO as more of a political community and a security community, we may arrive at a more upbeat set of conclusions about the stickiness of the alliance and its ability to function reasonably well moving forward," said **Charles Kupchan**, senior fellow for Europe Studies at CFR, and the event's organizer. Several panelists pointed to the potential of an alternative and more inclusive security architecture, which would be better suited for the shift in the global balance of power and which would allow Russia to play a more active role. "[I]n the meantime, maybe regrettably, NATO is the only show in town," said **Lord Robertson**, former Secretary-General of NATO.

Symposium findings included:

- The mission in Afghanistan must be clarified and a consensus reached over a reasonable end-state. Our evaluation of what a reasonable outcome might look like should include a regional assessment that goes beyond domestic Afghani politics. Our Afghanistan policy should be closely aligned with our policy towards Pakistan. “Once clearly-defined goals have been reached, that will be the beginning of the possibility of having an intelligent discussion with our allies about a division of labor,” said **Barnett Rubin**, director of studies and senior fellow at the Center on International Cooperation of New York University. Perhaps as importantly, argued Lord Robertson, this mission then needs to be articulated – clearly and uniformly- by the member states.
- There was relative disagreement on whether NATO could be doing more in certain non-traditional security areas like non-proliferation, energy security, and cyberdefense or whether NATO should be taking a step back and realigning itself more with a more traditional interpretation of “common defense and the protection of state sovereignty. We may be closer to that traditional paradigm than we thought we were a while ago,” said **Stewart Eldon**, UK Permanent Representative to NATO. This debate may be resolved by more robust relationships between NATO-EU and US-EU. “We should be thinking about the transatlantic relationship more in terms of comparative advantage...the United States is relatively good at projecting military power, the European Union is relatively good at projecting these other power resources...” said **Andrew Moravczik**, Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, “...The political risk-sharing should be tailored to comparative advantage.” One practical but important step would be to minimize the bureaucratic hurdles and barriers to information sharing which currently render cooperation on important issues difficult.
- The development of ESDP was widely regarded to be a positive. “[T]he days when the United States and/or NATO corporately might have regarded the development of ESDP, the European Security and Defense Policy, as some sort of threat are long gone,” said **Eldon**. That said, a more robust NATO-EU partnership is crucial.
- NATO-Russia relations will continue to be a complicated issue as Russia’s attitudes towards NATO expansion are unlikely to change. We should seek Russian cooperation in areas of mutual interest, like Afghanistan and Iran. “We can never be strategic partners; we have too many differences...we could be partners on strategically important issues,” said **Konstantin Remchukov**, editor-in-chief of Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper. The Obama administration should be open to talks with Russia about Medvedev’s proposal for a new pan-European security architecture.
- Europe suffers from a security deficit of its own that needs to be addressed. Addressing this will make a positive impact on NATO as well as the European security community at large.
- Some of the internal “micro” issues that were discussed were “how to develop infrastructure, organization, procurement, interoperability at an updated level,” said **Ole Waever**, professor of International Relations at the Institute for Political Science, University of Copenhagen. Panelists were divided on whether the decision-making process of NATO is in need of restructuring, “[W]e need to look soberly at a different kind of decision-making mechanism in which countries may want to opt out or disagree, but in which we can no longer assume that unanimity of one sort or another is going to carry the day,” said Kupchan.