

NATO at 60: Transformation to a Global Security Provider?

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of NATO, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung organized an international seminar on NATO. For the first time the role of NATO in the security order of the 21st century was analyzed together with relevant actors from Thailand. Panelists included Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Thai Defense Ministry, General Vaipot Srinual, Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee of German Bundestag and the president of the Atlantic Treaty Association, Dr. Karl A. Lamers and , Dr. Karl-Heinz Kamp Director Research at the NATO Defense College. Academics and leading experts from the Thai Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs discussed current topics of global security. This event has broadened the understanding of NATO's provision and role to Thai authorities. Moreover, one of the controversial issues is on terrorism that has become one of the most vital and challenging aspect to the future role of NATO.

While some journalists have derided NATO – and NATO's secretary-general has called it a "nasty old lady" himself – Dr. Lamers argued that NATO is a success story as the world's only functioning defense collective. He further explained that during the period of the Cold War, the Alliance had the major role to guarantee security and stability in Western Europe. After the collapse of the Eastern Block NATO did not disappear but played a significant role in securing peace throughout the united Europe. The Balkan Conflict in 1990s was considered as the first successfully succeeded test of NATO in an active military role. With the looming threat of terrorism, NATO is a proven mechanism that can help prevent terrorism from being

exported abroad. And increasingly, it can engage with countries like Australia, New Zealand, and Japan to address areas of common interest. The topic of the international Islamic terrorism and the enduring of asymmetrical war in Afghanistan – the most important battleground of the global fight on terrorism – have also been mentioned by Dr. Lamers. He believes that to win the war in Afghanistan, the world's potential terror-export country, one needs to win minds and hearts of the people; the latter especially by offering them opportunity for future development, e. g. improvement of infrastructure, education etc. In the future, the major task of NATO apart from peace-keeping will be the maintaining of stability and assuring the territorial integrity for the member nations. About the accession of new members to the Alliance, Dr. Lamers has denied any external interference. In the future, the issue of cooperation and partnership with non-member states will be even more crucial in order to effectively fight against border-crossing threats and global challenges. The fundamental principles for prospective NATO partnerships according to Dr. Lamers are shared values and ideas or common interests. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative – offering countries of the Near and Middle East long-term bilateral security cooperation – could be considered as a role model for further cooperation.

Dr. Karl-Heinz Kamp divided NATO's life into three phases: its founding (from 1949-89), post-Cold War involvement in reshaping the political order (1989-2001), and post-9/11 global security provider (2001-present). To give some sense of its accomplishments, he noted that forty percent of NATO's members were now former members of the Warsaw

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Pact, it had 75,000 troops at its disposal, and operates on three continents with missions in Afghanistan, earthquake relief efforts in Pakistan, and airlift programs with the African Union. The proliferation of missile technology meant that virtually any country in the world could be subject to a strike at any time. NATO could play a larger role in providing security in the world, although the power of the US, with a navy bigger than the next fifty nations combined, had to be recognized. Dr. Kamp argued that NATO did not desire to become a global policeman. A police that has to ask 28 countries before taking action may be anything but not a police. Regarding to the question of interference to other countries' conflict, a world police would always act guided only by the willingness to protect human rights and justice. For NATO this is not sufficient. Based onto the consensus principle, the interests of all member states must be concerned. The fact that the organization is consensus-based and member-driven, however, means it is subject to constraints, such as limited financial resource commitments and domestic politics. Dr. Kamp recognized the potential for NATO to cooperate with important non-members, such as India, Japan, Israel, Australia and New Zealand to support the goal of global security. He also expects that the global partnership based on shared values and ideas – will ultimately lead to a recreation of the so-called "Western World".

General Vaipot, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defense, has represented Thailand's and ASEAN's perspective on NATO. General Vaipot told the audience that when ASEAN was looking for a security model for the region, NATO was considered as one model. However, he drew attention to the diversity of countries in the ASEAN region and suggested that the region needed to create its own security model that would fit its own unique situation. From his point of view NATO is more a regional than a global alliance. Gen. Vaipot added that he had no objection to NATO's possible role as a global security provider, although he would prefer to see NATO retain its status as a regional security provider, since it would be more efficient for each region to

solve its own problems. For the development of security architecture in Southeast Asia, ASEAN provides a good frame, Gen. Vaipot said. After 40 years, it had developed the ASEAN Charter, which includes issues of security. According to Gen. Vaipot, a good cooperation between NATO and ASEAN should at first involve representatives from both organizations studying each other's charters in a way that demonstrates mutual respect. Speaking about ASEAN in terms of security politics Gen. Vaipot told the audience that it has to be based on Asian values first.

In conclusion, the discussion was concerning the future provision of NATO, the relationship towards Russia, the conflicts in Afghanistan and other existing problems on global security politics such as so-called failed states, global terrorism, energy security and proliferation of weapon of mass-destruction (WMD). Many participants have agreed with the statement that a solution for the global security problems can be achieved only through strong cooperation.