

REMARKS
AT THE NATO STRATEGIC CONCEPT CONFERENCE
Ambassador Lee Feinstein
March 15, 2010
Royal Castle, Warsaw

It is a privilege to be a member of this distinguished panel. I want to thank my good friends, Janusz Reiter and Gienek Smolar, for the invitation and to congratulate the Center, which plays an important role in Warsaw's intellectual life.

It is also a real delight to be here with my friends and many former colleagues from the world of think tanks. In Washington, they say that serving in government means the end of reading. I can attest to you that is not my experience. But what is certainly true in Washington and I suspect as well in Warsaw is that think tanks provide an opportunity for practitioners to recharge their intellectual batteries. Vibrant think tanks, like the Center, are an important asset for any country.

Of course, now I have the privilege of serving as Ambassador in the center of Europe, in Poland. And in that capacity I will briefly address Washington's priorities as NATO seeks to update the strategic concept, which was last written the same year in which Poland became a NATO member. Clearly a lot has changed in those 11 years.

Let me begin with a few underlying premises. The first is a central insight in President Obama's foreign policy: that no one country, no matter how large or powerful, can confront the challenges of the 21st Century alone.

And from this important insight derives a second premise, which is that in confronting these challenges, nowhere are there better or more serious or more valuable partners than in Europe, where we engage with prosperous, militarily-capable nations. And also, importantly, democratic nations, who share fundamental values and interests.

This insight is fundamental. Because as Secretary Clinton has said, transatlantic solidarity is essential to meeting the challenges we face in the new century, whether the issue is promoting a Europe that is whole and free, Afghanistan, Iran, or energy security.

This brings me to a second premise, which is that while there has been debate in the past in Washington, Secretary Clinton and President Obama are clear that the United States looks forward to working with a strong, cohesive Europe as a partner in meeting the security and economic challenges of the 21st century.

It is precisely because we look forward to working with a strong European partner that we welcomed the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December. And we strongly support the Government of Poland's emphasis on strengthening the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy and its efforts to strengthen cooperation between NATO and the EU.

In light of these premises, what then should the strategic concept seek to achieve?

First, as others have said, it should be clear that no one is trying to reinvent the wheel with this strategic concept. The task instead is to recommit ourselves to our common defense and to hone the missions and purposes of NATO -- to use what we have learned over the last decade to craft what Defense Secretary Gates has called a "succinct document that is both comprehensible and compelling for a new generation of citizens" coming of age in a new century, long after the events that initially brought our nations together in an alliance.

In this regard, I'd like to stress four points.

First and foremost, is that NATO's security promise remains unchanged. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which says that an attack against one is an attack against all, remains the bedrock of the alliance. As President Obama said, Article 5 is a bond for our time and a bond for all time.

No adversary should ever question our commitment in this respect. In spite of the threats we face in other parts of the world, we view peace and stability in Europe as a prerequisite for meeting challenges elsewhere. This is the *raison d'être* of the alliance. For the United States, the only Ally on whose behalf Article 5 has been invoked, this is an obligation that will not change over time.

And in order that Article 5 operate effectively we need to be prepared through exercising and planning to show and ensure that NATO is prepared to confront the threats that we face to the territory and citizens of NATO. President Obama has said that NATO must have contingency plans in place to deal with new threats wherever they come from. This task needs to be reflected in the strategic concept, and that is what we're asking it to do as it is revised.

History has taught the United States that security risks in Central Europe are a threat to all of Europe and that the security of all of Europe is a vital national interest of the United States.

Second, part of our Article 5 responsibility for territorial defense includes missile defense. The United States has responded to our threats not only by maintaining our nuclear deterrence, but also by developing a missile defense system that is designed to protect our territory, our population and our forces throughout NATO. We believe NATO needs to develop its own missile defense architecture so that it can defend nations of Europe. The Obama administration's new approach to missile defense, the Phased Adaptive Approach, will be our contribution to that new architecture.

Three, NATO must deal with new threats, like energy security and cyber attacks, which are very much a feature of the central European landscape. Energy security is a particularly pressing priority. Countries vulnerable to energy cutoffs face not only economic consequences but strategic risks as well. The United States is determined to support Europe in its efforts to diversify its energy supplies, and in that regard welcomes the establishment of the U.S.-EU Energy Council.

Fourth is the issue of reform. We need to make sure that the institutions we have are effective and efficient. The reform of NATO, which remains an institution, a headquarters, and a common structure that is still stuck in the Cold War, is now a high priority for everyone.

Finally, there is the question of Russia. Where we have common interests with Russia we shall seek to cooperate. Where we have differences we will not hesitate to voice them. None of this cooperation has come at the expense of our principles or our friends, whether on the issue of Georgian territorial integrity and sovereignty, the importance of human rights in Russia, or our unshakeable Article 5 commitment to the defense of our NATO allies.

On the 11th anniversary of its NATO membership, Poland is a source of both military capacity and intellectual energy for the alliance. That is manifested in many ways, and Poland's contribution is very much on display here today at this conference.

Thank you very much.”