International Security Challenges and the Future of NATO

Franco Frattini
President, Italian Society for International Organization; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy (2002-04; 2008-11)

Chair: Dr Patricia Lewis
Research Director, International Security, Chatham House

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Question 1:

I agree very strongly with Dr [Patricia] Lewis that post-Afghanistan and post-Iraq, the public in all our countries are more questioning about foreign security policy and to combat that, you are right, we have to build a consensus; we do that by sharing information with the public. Our assembly pressed NATO to start publishing its accounts, which the North Atlantic Council has agreed to do from this year onwards, but we’ve also made a suggestion that the secretary-general should reply to written parliamentary questions from parliamentarians who are members of our assembly. Would you agree with that and more generally what is your view on transparency and openness?

Question 2:

You talked about what we call RPAS, remotely piloted air systems, rather than the horrible D word, drones. There is a huge amount of distrust amongst the public in the use of drones, largely I would suggest generated by American policy, perhaps not military policy, but CIA policy, in their use. What role can NATO play in having transparent and clear guidelines in rules of engagement across NATO that could perhaps help build public confidence in a legitimate use of remotely piloted systems?

Question 3:

You’ve mentioned two important priorities, cyber and the south, a slight change of atmosphere I think there, but if NATO’s going to be effective in areas where it isn’t necessarily in the lead, it comes down in the end to interoperability and capability, and I just wondered if you’d say something about the interoperability gap which is more and more worrying, and the capability gap which is for good understandable political reasons growing also in the alliance.

Franco Frattini:

Well thank you very much. The first question, I do agree with the importance of getting in touch constantly with parliament. In my capacity as vice-president of European Commission I was in charge of security and home affairs and I used to go before the LIBE Committee (The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs) of the European parliament at least twice per week, because dealing with two extremely sensitive issues like the so-called CIA
secret presence in Europe, I had to consult with the parliament to avoid to put forward an unbalanced communication, and fortunately I succeeded only thanks to the broad support of all the political forces that sit in the LIBE Committee.

So, frankly speaking I believe that the contribution coming from parliament, in this case parliamentary assemblies, enriches the possibility to have a vision or to implement a strategy, but there is unfortunately the wrong old idea is that parliaments are there to put problems. On the contrary, in my personal experience I had to face Italian parliament during the Iraqi war, during the beginning of the Afghan is crisis and war, I was there always to ask for contribution and even in a country like Italy which is not so often united, I succeeded by asking support from parliament. So, I have a personal experience both in the parliament of Brussels, at Strasbourg and in the parliament of Rome, so I attach the greatest importance to the issue you mention.

**Patricia Lewis:**

So that means you’re going to answer the written questions when they come?

**Franco Frattini:**

Oh yes, sure, absolutely. I accepted - just to tell you another thing, I accepted a proposal that was made to me in European parliament to have a question time session every week, that was the first time that a commissioner for security, but I thought it was normally, and frankly speaking I was helped from the members of parliament, not discouraged or attacked.

**Patricia Lewis:**

And you like to be on the record?

**Franco Frattini:**

Absolutely, always. When one has nothing to hide, it’s much better to speak in public on record. Use of drones; you are right, there is the problem which is behind the issue you mention, which is a trust gap between institutions and people, between institutions and public opinion, especially in the field of security, because public opinion tend to believe that everything is not transparent, everything is, I would say, hiding something wrong and this a
vicious circle. Public opinion is increasingly aggressive. Government that have to save themselves and get votes sometimes prefer to cut horizontally defence budget instead of making a political choice, where is possible to invest more, where is necessary to cut, and this is why we don’t have transparent rules of engagement.

My opinion, even though of course I am extremely respectful of national sovereignty, particularly in an organization like NATO, we cannot run the risk to overcome national sovereignty, we have to bear in mind that states are the members, and capabilities belong to the state not belong to NATO. NATO has not an army or capabilities on its own. But that said, member states of the alliance will have to understand that to do so within leadership, again I repeat this word, that it is in their interest to fill the gap and to try to mitigate tensions between the public opinion and the institutions, and this is why rules of engagement are needed, not, again like the case of the parliament, to put new obstacles before the governments. These are not obstacles, these are rules of engagement that are useful to work better, not with more problem. This is my point of view, but I’ve already tried to do so in many cases now, we have no time to make too many examples, but I think this is the reason why rules and transparent rules are necessary, because thanks to rules you work better rather than not having at all transparent rules. It’s not an obstacle, it’s a help, in my point of view.

The third question, it’s again another key point, interoperability and capability gaps. There are still now. I said already that capability gap depends on financial constraints but depends also on the lack of political decisions on making choices, and there I can make an example. Once during one of the meetings of the foreign ministers of NATO we realized around the table of the council, that in Afghanistan we had so many warplanes at our disposal as NATO and not enough helicopters. While warplanes are not necessary at all or practical at all in the territory of Afghanistan, helicopters are badly needed, but all the member states were running to offer warplanes at disposal of NATO, not used, and not enough helicopters. Why? Because there was no coordination; this is the example of capability gap. Capability sometimes the gap depends on the fact that there are too many capabilities of one kind and not enough capability of the other kind. This is the reason.

What to do. Again, better coordination and instead of horizontal cutting of defence budget for example, and relying more on partners and the other members. If we rely more on our partners for example, in some cases interoperability gap can be filled because we don’t have in many cases interoperability between capabilities that belong to a given state or to another
state. If I think about partners, think about Arab partners of NATO. They have been working with us with their warplanes. They play a terrific role in Libya, but in many cases our capabilities are not interoperable with their capabilities. How is it possible to fill the gap? Working together and better coordination; this is the only possibility we have.

**Question 4:**

In his speech in Munich, [NATO Secretary-General] Anders Fogh Rasmussen expressed concern over the deployment of Russian offensive weapons in Europe, and in 2013 after a hard push from the Baltic States we had the Steadfast Jazz exercise, but you said that the southern dimension is priority number one; it was unimaginable that it was not the priority. Are the eastern states wrong in worrying about the Russian re-emergence, or can NATO have two different priorities, how do you view? Thank you.

**Question 5:**

I have a question about civilian casualties in Afghanistan caused by the international forces. As we know these have reduced I think since the [General Stanley] McChrystal doctrine or whatever, but they have been considerable over time and if you could reflect on this please, how do you think about this question from a moral and ethical perspective, what steps have been taken to learn lessons and how would you make sure that these were reduced in future operations, and have the kind of accountability and investigative response to this issue been sufficient and effective in Afghanistan?

**Question 6:**

My question is about a future security challenge which is only on the horizon at the moment but which later this century could become very serious indeed, and that’s the effects of global warming and climate change, because I think if the nations of the world don’t get their act together and take better action than they’ve taken up to now we could have a situation of rising sea levels, flooded coastal plains, flooded cities, desertification, parts of the globe becoming uninhabitable and at the same time by the end of the century the United Nations thinks we’ll have another three billion people in the world. This is going to presumably cause all kinds of tensions, frictions, possibly conflict
even between states over questions of water and this sort of thing. I wonder does NATO give thought to this at the moment, and if not do you think they should or is it perhaps too early, are the threats not sufficiently specific at the moment?

Franco Frattini:

Well, thank you also for these three questions. I said already that in my opinion Article 5 and Article 4 remain pillars for NATO, so the eastern dimension of security should be kept as a true priority, also in the future of NATO of course, not only in the past. I also agree with the - I was exactly a few days ago the end of the Steadfast Jazz mission in Lithuania, in Vilnius, and I spoke at the Vilnius University exactly about that, and I said, and I repeat easily here, that I think it’s absolutely necessary to continue to monitor the initiative of the re-emerging Russian power which is full of mistrust towards EU and towards NATO. You know that in the last summit between European Union and Russia, positions again diverged hugely and this is why I think our Eastern members of NATO and European Union are right to be very attentive to monitor this evolution, which is to me not a threat but should be monitored closely. On the other hand, the Russian Federation has to understand what has been repeated so many times that our strategies are not against Russian Federation, our missiles are not against Moscow, because many asymmetric threats coming from many regions of the world that impose to go ahead with the missile defence strategy, not because of Moscow. So we have to break this vicious circle, but we have to break mutual distrust. This is the problem between NATO, European Union on one hand and Russia on the other. So, monitoring is absolutely to me necessary.

Second point, civil casualties. Well this is not only a lesson that we have to learn but should be a priority, especially in a moment where we gradually replace combating troops with training, institution building, stabilization help, this should go hand in hand with the new strategy focusing on human rights. This cannot be, of course, the only mission of all those that now in NATO are dealing with, for example, relations with the civil society, reaching out to civil society to know and to do what is possible to do to better engage the local populations but this should be, for example, this importance of protecting right of the population in the regions of post-conflict of European Union.

European Union has been playing as a soft power exactly that role, helping for human rights strategies, engaging with the civil society, this is the division of labour. That said of course, for NATO should be a clear priority not only to
avoid civil casualties which is absolutely obvious, but we should work proactively to pave the way to avoid that happens, because otherwise it’s very easy to say civil casualties should be avoided, this is nothing, but we have to engage with civil society, dividing our labour with European Union soft power exactly focusing on that. And you know that EU mission in Afghanistan is dealing with human rights, with rights of women, with the protection of children and so on, and of course taking a strong political commitment as NATO to work also on that when after 2014 the mission will be changed in NATO.

Third question, climate change. I not only agree, but I would add to climate change another real risk to become a geostrategic threat for the world, the war for water. Water scarcity in many regions, think about the broader Middle East, how important water, drinkable water is today and will be in the near future. So complexities of global phenomena like desertification you mentioned or climate change or global warming are, I’m sure, real priorities to be studied but, frankly speaking, I would not engage directly NATO on that. There are needs for studying phenomena, to having prevention measures, of course, to be ready to intervene in case of need because even after 2014 preparedness, a rapid reaction and prevention capabilities should be strengthening NATO. So that means in case a new crisis emerges requiring presence of NATO, we should be ready, we should well prepare with rapid reaction, and I am sure that if you think about African continent, global warming, desertification are at the origins for example of mass migration phenomena, and mass migration pose a real problem to fragile states that can become very easily failed states. And if a state fails problems are for us, not only for Mali or for Somalia or for Sahel countries, but they are reverberating on all of us, members of NATO and members of European Union, so these are phenomena that not concern only the African continent or the Asian continent, they concern all of us.

**Question 7:**

Mr Minister, you mentioned that EU and NATO successfully cooperate in Balkans and that’s a good example. In this context how do you see the possible future NATO enlargement; what is your vision of NATO enlargement?
**Question 8:**

Mr Minister, I am not trying to be difficult and I’m not trying to throw any curveballs, but you did mention that the public opinion thinks that NATO in many ways is not transparent and public opinion became more aggressive. I would argue with good reason. We have had plenty of examples where transparency and really true debate did not take place. In my previous life I was ambassador in Washington. We all know what happened in Iraq. You rightly mentioned that we destroyed the infrastructure of Iraq and the institutions; that was a massive mistake. How much independence can any secretary-general have in issues of transparency and in really answering to parliament and really being accountable, or as the other side would say too much of this would simply mean that NATO can become inoperable, I mean that they would be decimated and therefore will not be able to take the hard decisions, go do it, get it done and finish it.

**Question 9:**

I was wondering if you could say something about what is your read of cyber threats, cyber-attacks and cyber security around intelligence, and what’s your vision in terms of what NATO should be doing about that?

**Patricia Lewis:**

Are you particularly looking at things like resilience?

**Question 9:**

Yes, exactly, resilience.

**Franco Frattini:**

Well the first point, enlargement. As an Italian I would respond, immediately my answer would be my country has been always in favour of keeping open the doors for further enlargement of those that are candidate or aspire to become one day members of NATO. But at the same time I have to stress that this will depend on the respective merits of each and every candidate to become one day a member of NATO. It’s not a final destination that can be taken for granted. The same applies to the European membership, but this is for NATO particularly important if I would mention two areas where rightly
NATO attention has been always very high; rule of law and state of play of promotion and protection of human rights. And if I consider these two elements I can say rightly there was, I would say, a situation of stalemate concerning some potential future members of the alliance. I would mention only one country, Georgia, that has changed the government, institution, the president. Doors are open provided that all the criteria are fulfilled. I did not intentionally even mention Ukraine, that is absolutely now out, even of consideration, for obvious reasons.

Western Balkans the situation is very different. If I would mention Montenegro, Montenegro has been making huge progress. I have been in Podgorica some months ago. I found the situation quite promising on both negotiations for European membership and preparedness for NATO. I don’t think, but it’s not up to me to decide, I don’t think that the next summit in September will have as point in agenda enlargement. I don’t think so, but one thing is clear, we should make distinction. One case is Montenegro, other case is Georgia. For example, Serbia, there is a cooperation between Serbia and NATO, operational cooperation, but, frankly speaking, in a moment where we welcomed the starting of negotiation for European membership of Belgrade, I do believe it’s premature even to talk about Serbian NATO membership. So each state has a tradition, history, situation, position that we have to take into consideration. But I repeat open doors policy under strict and transparent conditions.

Second point, well I agree. I have to acknowledge what the public opinion believes about NATO sometimes is based on some arguments, but I would go beyond that, knowing quite well Arab world and Arab states. In the Arab world NATO is seen now today as an actor of war. People don’t care about institution building, about training experiences. They have in mind warplanes and if you consider one billion of Muslims in the world you have to take into consideration that we have to change dramatically public diplomacy of NATO and to go ahead with transparency.

I commend the secretary-general of NATO for having established a department on public diplomacy. This is the right way. It happened recently but in the future public diplomacy and reaching out to the civil society should be political priorities for NATO and its member states, because we like or not but if NATO is seen as an actor of war we have to change the mentality, otherwise how can we rely on partners in the Arab world if they consider us as warriors against the Muslim world. This is matter of fact, and knowing and having so many friends among the Arab leaders, I know what are their opinion despite their very good cooperation in the Istanbul cooperation
initiative or in Mediterranean NATO initiative, but this is in their background because there is in the background of their public opinions that count a lot, especially after the Arab uprisings and Arab revolution. Public opinions have relevance, not only in western countries like our countries but in their countries. So, this is one of the political keys of the, I would say, cooperative security. Cooperative security is one of the priorities in the Chicago, in the Lisbon summit, I suppose in the next summit. How is it possible to implement a cooperative security if there is no mutual trust among the partners and between the partners and their public opinions; this is absolutely necessary.

Last question, cyber security. Well, in very concrete terms the fact that cyber security became a priority, I’m convinced that it is a priority. This will have an impact on two areas. First of all, interoperability and having comparable cyber security standards among the partners, among the allies and between the members and the partners. Why? Because, as you know perfectly, we don’t have yet comparable common cyber security standards, even among the allies, so we have to have common criteria for cyber security standards, we have to work on that, because all the member states of NATO are in agreement that cyber security should be one of the key priorities.

And the second area where it will have a strong impact on the meaning of Article 5 because you know perfectly all the members of NATO are obliged to intervene in case of an attack against one of the members. What happens? In case of a cyber-attack against one of the members of NATO, is Article 5 to be interpreted in evolutionary way in the sense that in that case and not only in the traditional attacks other member states have to intervene if one state is under cyber-attack. This requires legal discussions, legal basis maybe, but it requires political goodwill, my personal opinion, particularly given my experience with the attack on Estonia that a case like that cannot be excluded in the future. We should think about the evolution of the meaning of Article 5 to include the case of cyber-attack against one of the members. This is evolutionary meaning? Yes it is. Is this requiring a legal basis? Yes it does, but to me it's necessary.

Patricia Lewis:
Well I want to draw your attention to two forthcoming conferences at Chatham House, one is on cyber security, in May, and the other is on autonomous technologies, which is in a couple of weeks’ time. I do commend them to you, if you can look at them and see if you are able to come, it would be great. I think they’re going to be excellent. So that now leaves me, unfortunately our
time is up, to thank you very much indeed, Judge Frattini, for what I think was a really engaged and thoughtful conversation that you had with us here today. I want to thank you very much for the way in which you were very candid about many things and very forthcoming and wish you luck of course in your candidacy, and we’d like to, of course, welcome you back to Chatham House at some point in the future.