

*Joseph Hammond (Washington D.C.)*

Europe is in need of a *corpus callosum*. That was one of the more colorful analogies used by Estonian President Toomas Ilves during his speech "The Future of NATO" given at the Atlantic Council, an American think tank in Washington, D.C.

While calling NATO and the European Union "the two great successes of liberal democracy in the 20th century," the Estonian head of state called for increased communication and coordination between the European Union and NATO on common defense issues. Unfortunately for political reasons coordination between the two groups is impossible.

Ilves, who has a Master's degree in psychology from an American university compared the situation to the severing of the *corpus callosum*: the small part of the brain which allows the right and left side of the brain to communicate with one another. In doing so Ilves expressed frustration with a system in which key leaders "can't talk to themselves" to resolve issues.

He noted the severity of this problem, which has resulted in the "complete and utter inability of the EU and NATO to work together on security issues, even though if you take a Venn diagram of the overlap between the EU and NATO, it's rather large," he explained.

Most vexing for the future of NATO is the lack of communication between EU and NATO forces. This has resulted in a headache for commanders leading operations, from Afghanistan to the anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. In many tactical situations *ad hoc* solutions are formed to get around these political restrictions and allow communication between forces in the field. This precarious situation works to the detriment of European security.

President Ilves made it clear that unless a solution to Northern Cyprus is found, Europe is likely to be facing this problem for some time to come. This conflict has resulted in an enduring rivalry between Turkey and Cyprus. Cyprus routinely blocks Turkish involvement in European Union affairs, and Turkey returns the favor by blocking Cypriot involvement in NATO planning.

The Estonian president also spoke at length of NATO's identity crisis. Such an identity crisis was inevitable, Ilves argued during his half hour speech. NATO set for itself a goal of winning the Cold War. Having achieved that, NATO's next task was to expand into Eastern Europe. While many in NATO and the EU have spoken of expansion fatigue, Ilves called for continued growth of European organizations.

The Estonian leader noted, with irony, the attitude of many Europeans, who want countries on the European periphery to develop along European lines though are hesitant to allow them into the European Union. Ilves opined that "we want them to be more like us, we want them to have rule of law, we want them to have open markets and we want them to have democracy but not too much... let god forbid we will have to take them in[to NATO and the EU]," he noted.

In a question and answer session following his remarks he made clear that Estonia is probably one of the biggest supporters of Turkey in the EU and could see a future date when a democratic Russian Federation was a member of NATO. Contrasting his beliefs with those of

former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, President Ilves made clear his belief that de-mocracy was not culture specific. All societies and cultures were ca-pable of developing the rule of law, free markets and other ingredients necessary for building a stable and vibrant democracy.

Ilves also warned those pres-ent that the United States and the Western European capitals have not seen eye-to-eye on many issues surrounding the global financial crisis. Ilves argued that "The eco-nomic crisis should not be used as an excuse to let the transatlantic relationship deteriorate." Instead, the Estonian president empha-sized that the partnership should focus on common threats, which include Iran, Afghanistan, the Balkans, terrorism, and cyber-security.

The issue of cyber-security has taken on increased importance to Estonia since the 2007 cyber-attack on the country following the Bronze Soldier controversy. The attack was one of the largest cy-ber offenses in the history of the Internet. This specific attack led to the creation of the NATO Coopera-tive Cyber Defence Center of Ex-cellence in Tallinn. The president pointed out that, since 2007, mas-sive cyber attacks have also been launched against the United States and the French and British defense ministries. Ilves made clear his be-lief that an attack on an Internet server through cyber warfare that originates in another country is the same as a physical attack on that server from a missile, and thus something that can lead a nation to invoke Article 5 of the NATO Trea-ty and to ask for defensive resourc-es from fellow NATO allies.

In speaking before the Atlantic Council the Estonian head of state was following in the footsteps of other European leaders who have discussed other elements of the transatlantic relationship at the forum recently, such as Spanish Prime Minster Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and Viktor Yushchenko the then president of Ukraine.

President Ilves is committed to the Atlantic Council and is a founding member of the Estonian Atlantic Council and has spoken at previous Atlantic Council events in Europe.

*Article from [The Baltic Times](#) .*