

Dear friends,

I am honored to address this distinguished group to talk about security from the perspective of Estonia. As you have already seen on your invitations, the title of my talk today is "NATO in Estonia and Estonia in NATO".

This is not a play on words, but rather a description of the division of my talk. Under "NATO in Estonia", I shall discuss the new level of security that Estonia enjoys today as member of the Alliance. That is to say, NATO as an anchor for hard security, a deterrent for potential enemies, and also as a source of something that, though only part of a national psyche, might actually be considered just as important – an increased level of security perception and self confidence.

In the second half, "Estonia in NATO", I shall talk about how NATO membership has enabled Estonia to sit at the table where most important decisions affecting European security environment are made. And not only sit but also shape those decisions. "Estonia in NATO" also means, of course, that we not only reap the benefits of added security but also share the burden of responsibility for our common, forever challenging, security environment. However one looks at it and whatever one's feelings, the decisions made by NATO do affect us all, members and non-members alike, and thus I can only say – for a country that for so long was merely decided about by others, it does feel rather good to be in the club that makes these decisions, and to be able to have a say in the decision-making process.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Where exactly does Estonia stand, what is our security environment today, on December 1, 2008, incidentally the 84th anniversary of an attempted military coup against Estonia by the Soviet Union in 1924, when the Red Fleet anchored off Tallinn bay awaiting for a call for "fraternal assistance" from a self-proclaimed Soviet Estonian Republic? A call that never came.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Iron Curtain of ideological and military division of the world, we went through a period of exhilaration and hope, exemplified best perhaps by Francis Fukuyama's neo-hegelian metaphor of the end of history. Fukuyama perhaps has been the victim of over-simplifications and cheap misrepresentation by too many commentators. Fukuyama was actually right, we are no longer engaged a clash of ideologies, everyone agrees that liberal democracy has won as an idea; no one offers an alternative ideology. But that does not mean that history is over, or that admitting there is no ideological alternative that this is of any consequence.

Alas, today we see clearly that history in its non-ideological sense is hardly over. Nor is it "back": it never ceased to exist.

No one recognizes this better than the citizens of a small nation. We know all too well that there are no natural buffer zones, no margins for error. For us, history is with us at every turn, every step, even when we wish to pass over it. We are not allowed to forget it. For us, hope and wishful thinking is not a feasible security strategy. Neither is passivity, which seldom leads to

anything but isolation.

I believe that the only strategy a small state with a size, geography and history such as ours can truly rely on is one that conceives its security beyond the natural constraints of geography. We know all too well that the consolation of isolation and dreams of autarkic defense were our undoing 70 years ago.

For a country like Estonia, security can best be achieved and guaranteed through cooperation: only through strong alliances can we provide our nation with the strategic depth that is the sine qua non of effective defense.

I am proud to say that since joining the North Atlantic Alliance, Estonia's security is no longer bound to the borders of Estonia; our security has become synonymous with the security of every other ally, to the security of the whole alliance, which is greater, more powerful, and more vital than any other in history.

At its core, NATO's task is security. This distinguishes the Alliance from other international organizations: the protection of our common security is NATO's core task, and hence a priority that is not clouded by any other dimensions.

The Washington Treaty states that an attack against one ally is an attack against all. This formulation is both simple and elegant: it defines our purpose, the goal of our cooperation, and the scope of our alliance. No other international mechanism can claim the same, and none has been as successful as NATO in providing for the security of its members. And in doing so, NATO has guaranteed peace and stability for its members in the Euro-Atlantic area for 60 years, and counting.

NATO's longevity and its continuing vitality is mainly the result of its core mission: it is an alliance for protecting the fundamental values that underline our societies, that unite Europe and North America: the principles of democracy, human rights and freedoms and rule of law. You cannot join the alliance unless you meet these requirements.

Precisely for the reasons I outlined above - in a world without ideological confrontation, but where threats remain, collective security alliances are sustainable only if based on shared values.

Unlike narrow self-interests, which tend to change in time, freedom and democracy are fundamental, standing values. This is why NATO has staying power as an alliance: notwithstanding our interests in narrow issues, which may sometimes lead to disagreements over policy options, the Allies' commitment to the fundamental values of democracy never weakens, and our desire to protect our common way of life remains strong.

Friends,

No observer of the international arena can argue that the world today is more secure than it was yesterday; that the end of the Cold War brought us to the threshold of a Kantian Perpetual Peace. As we are forced to observe over and over, with 9/11, with the Georgian-Russian War, with the sickening news from Mumbai last week, liberal democracy is a fragile and easily

wounded way of organizing society. Without a muscular defense, brutalization will win.

What makes our situation worse than during the Cold War is that before, we used to know the enemy of Open Society, its capabilities and intentions; now, we are confronted by expanding insecurity, numerous interdependent problems, and potential developments that might lead to catastrophic results.

We know that international terrorism, failed states and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose significant security threats. We do not yet know how these threats function, what capabilities our enemies possess, and, in some cases, we may not even know who the enemies are. What we saw in New York in 2001, Madrid in 2004, London in 2005 and Mumbai in 2008 was each time unexpected.

Further still: we have a general understanding, that attacks in the cyber world can render a state as helpless as a conventional strike, but we are not yet certain how to pro-actively defend against, much less deter, such threats. Conventional war has its well-developed principles of appropriate response. What, however, is the appropriate response when your infrastructure is knocked out not by a missile but a Distributed Denial of Service attack on the computer systems running that infrastructure? Similarly, we have noticed the active use of aggressive information operations that target our home audiences by our enemies, and yet it is unclear to us where these operations might lead, and what it is that we can do to counter them.

We know today that petro-dollar bloated state corporations of illiberal states can buy politicians, that Lenin's dictum of selling capitalists the rope with which they will be hanged was wrong in the details; the democrats will be bought with the euros and dollars they pay for the petrol to keep their cars running and for the gas that keeps their homes warm. But that is enough to get them to sing the praises of regimes that stifle free expression, silence critics with death if needed, and flout all accepted rules of international behavior. It allows western politicians to betray the foundations upon which liberal democracy is built.

These new challenges are not the stuff of science fiction or far-sighted, speculative intelligence analyses. They confront us every day, be it in our lives as public officials or security experts, or as private citizens, on CNN and BBC around the clock.

The emergence of these new challenges has, unfortunately, not diminished the potential for the re-emergence of traditional menaces. As much as we may wish otherwise, classical military aggression remains a tool of inter-state relations. There still remain those who consider their right to power as more important, more justified, than others' right to liberty, democracy and rule of law.

Conventional warfare in Europe was supposed to be a historical relic, rightfully belonging to the trash bin of history, emptied in waste treatment facilities meeting all the requirements of the EU waste disposal directive. Yet the trash bin has turned out to be open; the relics of the past have turned out to be the walking about amongst us today.

Dear friends,

The world remains a dangerous Hobbesian place, especially for small states. Might, alas, still makes right. Small states perforce have less might, but they are not less right. This is why we are in NATO.

NATO is an organization of collective defense, and indeed we plan to defend ourselves against all and any threats, including the ones that seemed to be unthinkable until the attacks of September 11, 2001, or the events in Georgia this past summer.

Security, as we in NATO understand it, is a wide term. We understand that the world is changing, and that in our globalizing environment, threats to our way of life may emerge from near, as well as far away regions; from the physical, as well as virtual realms. From symmetric threats measured in terms of planes and tanks as well as asymmetric threats where we do not even know what we need to measure.

NATO is adapting to these trends not by ignoring the changes in our security environment, but by acquiring capabilities to meet these new challenges.

That the Alliance has established a Cooperative Cyber Defense Center in Tallinn is a case in point: we, not as self-interested states, but as a concerned community of liberal democracies, are looking for ways to adapt the principles of the Washington Treaty, including its fundamental collective defense clauses, to the challenges of a globalised, interconnected 21st Century.

Hence it is not the core mission of NATO that is changing, but the character of the challenges that confront us. Be assured – our active discussions concerning the Alliance's out-of-area operations, its transformation, and the new capabilities needed for fulfilling new missions, are not an example of strategic confusion, but rather to the contrary. These discussions demonstrate that even as some of the elements in the threat-environment have changed, we adapt, and continue fulfilling our core task of security.

Today, threats are often out of area, militaries must be transformed, the capabilities of yesterday are insufficient to meet the challenges of today

The fact that NATO is serious about its security has proved to be a powerful deterrent. Indeed, only an actor as irrational as Al Qaeda has dared to gamble with an attack against the world's strongest conventional, nuclear, economic, and political organization. It is precisely because NATO is serious, that we hear that it is an anachronism or that it must be replaced.

As this summer showed us, the reasons for NATO have not disappeared, but have in fact returned, if not with a vengeance, then certainly with a strong taste of revanche.

I am personally rather perplexed by the logic that since no longer the old rules – no change of borders through military action, respect for territorial integrity – work, then we need a new order, when this argument is advanced by the country that itself broke those rules. Were my five year-old to break a toy in order to demand a new one, I would know what to do. When a country breaks the rules in order to create new rules, then I am no longer so sure.

In the aftermath of these events it has become even more evident that while we do need a more effective and institutionalized cooperation between NATO and the European Union, the EU is not an institution that is able to respond to the hard security challenges of our continent.

Nor was it, of course meant to be.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia is secure today because NATO is in Estonia. NATO expands Estonia's security, it makes us a part of a whole that is far greater than anything that we could achieve on our own.

At the same time, membership in NATO greatly enhances our political options, providing us with opportunities and options that we would otherwise lack were we to be out of NATO.

NATO is in Estonia, providing for our security, and we are in NATO, engaging in discussions that shape the Euro-Atlantic security environment.

Make no mistake about it: the democracies of the Euro-Atlantic area are vigilant, we are awake, and we are informed, sharing intelligence and defense planning. And we, in NATO, do discuss the situation and future development of our region's security architecture. We do this in a permanent dialogue on these issues in an atmosphere of trust.

As a member of the Alliance, Estonia has a seat at the table, a voice that, when we make a rational case, speaks much louder than in other organizations and that otherwise could be expected from the actual size of our nation. That is because collective security is not an area where you can dismiss or ignore the concerns of a member simply because it isn't as large as you.

Membership of NATO advances both our multilateral and bilateral affairs. As a multilateral framework, NATO is an arena for international cooperation unlike any other: being concentrated on security, and founded on shared values and mutual trust, the debates in NATO are active, relevant and purposeful.

NATO is, of course, a consensus-based organization. But unlike others, its core mission is certain, and thus the basis for discussion clear. It is for this reason that debates in NATO tend to be more open, mission-oriented and concrete than in other structures. There is no need, indeed no place for vagueness and oblique speech.

At the same time as it provides a flexible multilateral framework for international cooperation, NATO performs as a catalyst for closer bilateral ties between the allies: for instance, when I meet with the President of the United States, we discuss issues that are far wider than the traditional scope of our bilateral relations. Indeed, the bulk of our discussions pertain to issues not traditionally bilateral.

Three weeks ago, Estonia hosted a ministerial-level NATO-Ukraine Council meeting, where the Alliance and Ukraine's defense ministers discussed the future of security in Europe and Ukraine's role in contributing to that security. We discussed Ukraine's road to NATO membership, the options available for membership. We discussed not only broader security but also the need for Ukraine to work on domestic issues like corruption, political maturity and consensus and the need for greater public support for NATO membership. I cannot conceive of

any other forum than NATO where this would be possible, especially given the recalcitrance of the EU to seriously engage with its new neighbors at this level.

Our diplomats enjoy the trust and access accorded to an ally in all NATO Capitals; and our bilateral meetings are always filled with substantial security-related discussions.

Having detailed the activity and scope of the discussions within the Alliance, I must stress that NATO is not about discussions for the sake of discussions. The security agenda remains too broad to permit us to hold a talking shop. We discuss in order to act. We discuss the new, untraditional challenges as well as the ever-present traditional security issues. We discuss these not out for academic interest, but to find genuine solutions we can use today and in the future, in order to deter and defend against threats from all sources, old and new.

Allow me to give a few concrete examples of the Alliance's recent activities.

We are in Afghanistan, as part of ISAF, the Alliance's most important out-of-area operation. This operation has taught us a lot: ISAF has become one of the engines of the transformation of our forces. Afghanistan has helped us understand that security can only be guaranteed through a comprehensive approach.

A year ago, our British and French allies came forth with the so-called helicopter initiative. Through this, we are looking for ways to deploy more mission-capable helicopters. Essentially, the initiative concerns the upgrading of helicopters for the Alliance's missions through a common fund.

The Allies offer their aircraft to be upgraded and then are used in Afghanistan. Estonia participates in this initiative, but in a different way, offering our pilots, not aircraft. This is a case in point of the Alliance's flexibility: our pilots will be operating British helicopters, in our common mission in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has further demonstrated that sufficient air capabilities are something of a shortfall for NATO today. This is why our defense ministers decided in Budapest a month ago, to formally launch the Alliance's strategic air-lift capability, and collectively procure C-17 aircraft – the most capable strategic transportation aircraft in the world. This clearly demonstrates that the Alliance is able to fulfill capability gaps in order to meet our level of ambition. For Estonia, such initiatives expand our capabilities far beyond anything we could achieve in isolation: today, we are the co-owners of three C-17 aircraft, alone, we could purchase none. Estonia is pleased that Finland, as a NATO partner nation, participates in this initiative.

The C-17s enhance our common deployability in strategic distances. At the same time, the Alliance maintains its capabilities in our own region, as evidenced by the on-going 24/7 NATO air-policing mission in the Baltic States. NATO's fighters are deployed in the Baltic States, and I can assure you, that in 2011 the latest, these fighters will be able to operate not just in, but from Estonia.

Being in-area is just as important as operating out-of-area. This is the Alliance's common position, as was evidenced by the discussions at the recent defense ministers' meetings in

London and Budapest.

In London, we re-emphasized that collective defense remains NATO's core task, and that the Alliance must remain capable for the full range of its missions, including the most demanding, and important, ones – Article 5 operations.

The Budapest meeting further demonstrated the Alliance's consensus regarding the need for more deployable and usable forces, both in terms of out-of-area, as well as in-area operations. It is clear that such forces are necessary for the fulfillment of our missions far from our shores, but equally critical for conducting collective defense operations in Europe.

These discussions have strengthened NATO's credibility, and through that enhanced our deterrence.

This is one of the primary reasons why NATO remains relevant in the 21st Century. There is no better format than the Alliance to discuss issues that can only be successfully dealt with in cooperation.

My friends,

Before Estonia joined NATO, we had a general idea of what the Alliance is: we had our pre-conceptions, a set of dreams, and a number of fears. It is only after we had joined when we found out what the Alliance is not.

Some feared that membership in NATO would lead to an end to our self-defense capability, to our conscription army. We now know these fears were baseless: collective defense relies on self-defense capabilities no less than our isolated defense did before membership. The changes entailed by membership helped make our armed forces more deployable, usable, and capable. Before, we stood alone, now we are interoperable with the defense forces of every other ally. And we still have an army primarily based on conscription.

Others contended that NATO would lead to an end to the principle of territorial defense. It did not. To the contrary, the collective defense of NATO complements the principle of territorial defense by making it more credible, capable and powerful. The Defense Ministers of the Alliance have reaffirmed at the London ministerial meeting in October that for some regions, territorial defense remains relevant and appropriate.

Others thought that NATO membership would lead to over-extension in out-of-area operations, that is to say that we would be too involved elsewhere, turned out to be another misconception, as NATO only engages in operations that directly affect our everyday security. Certainly Afghanistan – NATO's key out-of-area operation – is geographically a distant country, far from our shores, but the processes ongoing there affect our security regardless of Alliance membership. Of course Estonia participates in ISAF, but so does every far-sighted and responsible democracy. But as a member of NATO, we participate in the decision-making.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia firmly believes in the right of all people to democratically elect their leaders, and the right of all nations to freely choose their allies. We believe that right to be inalienable, regardless of the nation's geographic location or history. It is in fact alien to the very nature of democracy and democratic choice that any other criteria be considered in a sovereign nation's choice of its alliances. Any acceptance of the notion of someone else's "privileged interests" outweighing one's own democratic choice means, when you get down to it that democracy does not matter. Or is an option only for a geographically privileged few. For if a country makes a democratic choice in favor of NATO and is not allowed to join for extraneous reasons then we have just told that country that all of our rhetoric about democracy is false. Given our own past, we can never accept telling a country what its security choices may be.

We have made our decisions. The sense of a new level of security and involvement has raised public support for NATO enlargement to new levels. Our history – recent as well as long-term – has proven our decision right, for us.

Thank you.