



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

# 100<sup>TH</sup> ROSE-ROTH SEMINAR REPORT

ENGAGING NATO PARTNERS:  
CELEBRATING THE ROSE-ROTH  
LEGACY AND CHARTING THE  
WAY FORWARD

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This Seminar Report is presented for information only and does not necessarily represent the official view of the Assembly. This report was prepared by Steffen Sachs, Director of the Political Committee.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 100<sup>th</sup> Rose-Roth Seminar provided ample opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's flagship partnership initiative. Reviewing approximately 30 years of engagement with partner countries, speakers stressed the seminar series' important role as a platform for parliamentary dialogue and the promotion of democratic values. There was also a general agreement that the Rose-Roth seminars series continues to make a significant contribution to confidence building and strengthening the resilience of parliaments and societies. The seminar took place in Brussels on 25-26 April 2019 and brought together numerous prominent former Assembly members who had been closely associated with the seminar series over the years. Overall, more than 100 members of parliaments from NATO and non-NATO countries, independent security experts, as well as current and former government officials from NATO and partner countries participated.

## II. THE LEGACY OF THE ROSE-ROTH SEMINAR SERIES...

2. **Ambassador Nadine Olivieri Lozano**, Head of the Division for Security Policy of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, recognised the seminar series' meaningful contribution to assisting the transition of newly independent states towards a governance structure based on the rule of law and parliamentary control. In this context, she emphasised the three pillars of the Rose-Roth programme: dialogue, exchange of expertise, and promotion of democracy.

## III. ...AND NATO'S PARTNERSHIP AND "OPEN DOOR" POLICIES

3. The Rose-Roth Seminar has "played an essential role in advancing the partnerships of the Alliance" according to **Alejandro Alvargonzalez**, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy. **Ruben Diaz-Plaja**, Senior Policy Advisor in the Policy Planning Unit in the Office of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, commented that "partnerships have been crucial in terms of building capacities and societal resilience against existing and evolving security challenges both in member and partner countries". The presentations and exchanges revealed a generally shared view that partnerships make NATO stronger and more effective. In this context, several participants argued that partnerships enhance cooperative security, which is an essential focus of the Alliance, together with collective defence and crisis management. Ambassador Alvargonzalez recognised that the Rose-Roth Programme has also made an important contribution to NATO's goals to build capacities, support reforms, strengthen institutions, respond to and manage crises.

4. In addition to complementing NATO's engagement activities with partners, the seminar series and the Assembly as a whole have been instrumental for the "Open Door" policy of the Alliance. NATO PA President, **Madeleine Moon (United Kingdom)** reminded participants that both the NATO partnerships programmes and the Open Door policy of the Alliance are vital for a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. She said that she was proud that parliaments, and the NATO PA in particular, took part in this process. In fact, the NATO PA was sometimes trailblazing the policy of the Alliance, she and others suggested. "The Assembly was often ahead of the game on partnership issues" because it encourages dialogue among policymakers representing different views and interests, according to **Simon Lunn**, former Secretary General of the NATO PA and key architect of the seminar series on the operational level. This view was echoed by **Jean-Michel Boucheron (France)**, former NATO PA Vice-President and former Chairman of the Assembly's Mediterranean and Middle East

Special Group, who highlighted the role interparliamentary dialogue can play in building trust and security. He elaborated on the Assembly's activities with Mediterranean partners by saying that building trust requires patience and continued efforts, particularly with countries where public opinion is often critical of NATO. However, the parliamentary links that have been created have been instrumental in lowering tensions and promoting mutual understanding. Another participant noted that the Assembly seminars played a particularly important role in the early 2000s in Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus region when NATO membership was not on the table. The NATO PA was still able to play a positive role in the Balkan crisis, for example by organising training for newly elected parliamentarians; many of them went on to become senior government representatives in Balkan countries. The NATO PA thus empowered parliamentarians by providing them with instruments to be relevant and making their countries' progress.

5. A vivid example of the Assembly's groundbreaking role in opening up to the East was given by **Rasa Juknevičienė (Lithuania)**, former NATO PA President and former Defence Minister of Lithuania. She reminded the participants of the first Rose-Roth seminar that took place in Vilnius, Lithuania in December 1991 – only a few months after the Soviet Union recognised the Baltic states' independence. Lithuania was then still occupied by the Soviet army which earlier that year had sought to crush the country's struggle for independence. The Vilnius seminar was the first interparliamentary forum where delegates from NATO countries discussed the withdrawal of Soviet forces with their counterparts from the Baltic states and Russia. "The seminar was the beginning of Lithuania's journey to NATO", Ms Juknevičienė concluded.

6. **Karsten Voigt (Germany)**, former NATO PA President and Member of the Governing board of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) stressed that "NATO enlargement would not have happened without the NATO Parliamentary Assembly." "The NATO PA has no power, but it has influence", he said. He elaborated on this point by emphasising the seminar series' pivotal role in shaping NATO parliamentarians' view of the future European security architecture through information exchange and open debate. With their newly gained insights, many NATO PA delegates became leaders in their national debates about NATO partnerships and enlargement.

7. Active participation in NATO partnership programmes, including the "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) programme, was an important stepping stone for aspirant countries' eventual membership. However, joining the Alliance was a more time-consuming process than many applicant countries appreciated. NATO PA Secretary General **David Hobbs** reminded participants that the acronym "PfP" was often half-jokingly dubbed "Programme for Postponement". Mr Diaz-Plaja, noted that in the early 1990s, these partnerships were crucial to building confidence and dialogue with the new countries of Eastern Europe. As the enlargement moved up the agenda, the partnership mechanism evolved as a key for building resilience and transformation.

#### IV. NATO AND RUSSIA

8. The changing relationship between the Alliance and Russia has been part and parcel of NATO's partnership policy. The importance of this interaction was also reflected in the discussions among participants. Mr Hobbs explained that NATO made serious attempts to engage Russia in a genuine partnership after the end of the Cold War. As the Alliance contemplated its relationship with the countries of the former Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s, it reviewed its *raison d'être* by defining what NATO stands for and not what it stands against. **Robert Pszczel**, Senior Officer for Russia and the Western Balkans in the Engagements Section of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), underlined that the Alliance has pursued

a consistent approach towards Russia since the end of the Cold War. Dialogue, transparency, and partnership have always characterised NATO's policies towards Russia, he commented.

9. The working assumption in the early 1990s among the members of the North Atlantic Assembly (NAA), as the NATO PA was then called, was that the Western model of democracy was so attractive that everyone would naturally move in this direction. Moreover, in the years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO enlargement was not an issue, Mr Voigt pointed out. **Jan Petersen**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, recalled that Western policymakers "had high hopes for what was happening in Russia - communism was dead, we heard promising things from Russian parliamentarians about them building market economy, etc." With the end of the Cold War, Russia changed considerably; it abandoned marxism, the command economy, and introduced the liberal market. What is more, Russia renounced military confrontation with the West, according to **James Sherr**, Senior Fellow at the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute of the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS). In hindsight, however, Western parliamentarians "did probably not understand Russian society enough", Mr Petersen acknowledged.

10. Former President Boris Yeltsin and Russian officials also expected NATO to recognise that "Russia naturally has a right of predominance over its traditional zone of influence", the "Near Abroad". However, by 1994, NATO recognised the strong determination of newly independent states to reach independence and to no longer be part of a zone that Russia considered its "natural entitlement". Central and Eastern European countries, however, considered themselves to be in a "grey zone" of security. As NATO partnerships evolved, and Central and Eastern European countries efforts to join the Alliance increased, the mood among NATO Allies was slowly changing.

11. In Russia though, NATO enlargement was considered as an anti-Russia policy. This perception among Russian policymakers has intensified during the years, Mr Sherr underlined. Russia's view of NATO became more critical in the wake of the Kosovo air campaign and the Iraq war, but particularly after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. In the view of President Vladimir Putin and senior Russian officials, the promotion of democracy, NATO enlargement, and even EU enlargement represent a penetration in Russia's zone of influence, Mr Sherr argued. "Regime change" and military intervention all constituted a single coherent Western threat to Russia. He was sceptical that engaging in a dialogue with Russia would make a difference, at least in the short term. "Russia today observes no rules", he said.

12. Time and again NATO stressed the right of these independent countries to choose their foreign and security policies and international alignments freely. However, no matter how hard NATO tried, Russia considered this policy negatively and continues to do so, Mr Sherr reminded participants. Therefore, the reality of what happened in the NATO-Russia relationship in the post-Cold War period is therefore very different from the Russian narrative that the West was just "kicking them in the teeth", as has been propagated by official Russian media outlets and members of the government of President Putin. "NATO has not moved to the East, the East has moved to NATO", ambassador Alvargonzalez stressed.

13. Mr Pszczel and other speakers argued that Russia, however, has changed its view of the outside world. Since 2014, Allies have felt that is no longer business as usual in their relationship with Russia. The Kremlin is taking an aggressive and provocative stance against NATO Allies, he said. Russia is challenging the West and partner countries, particularly Georgia and Ukraine, through hybrid warfare and disinformation campaigns to undermine their societies. An important aspect why the Kremlin pursues a "reckless" approach to scare the West is that President Putin is afraid of losing power, **Konstantin Eggert** of Deutsche Welle argued. In contrast, Western policymakers are not used to such a provocative foreign policy approach, in part because they are responsible to an electorate and are operating in a different media context with more pluralistic media, which requires them to persuade their constituents,

which is not the case in Russia. Moreover, the Kremlin has been rather successful in selling its narrative of the NATO-Russia relationship to its own population. To underline this argument, Mr Pszczel said that over 70% of Russians today look positively at Stalin. During the height of the NATO-Russia cooperation, this number amounted to only 25%. Moreover, currently, over 50% of Russians believe that the *perestroika* and other reforms were not worth it, he continued. Today's Russia is quite militarised in terms of public discourse, the speaker concluded.

14. However, while President Putin continues to enjoy considerable support among Russians, recent polls by the Levada Centre had shown that Russian's are starting to take notice of their deteriorating living conditions. Russians recognise that their disposable income is falling, and they are also apprehensive about the costs of Russia's foreign interventions like in Syria and the Donbas. They also question the costs of infrastructure investments in Crimea, such as the bridge connecting the mainland with the peninsula. Public support for President Putin is starting to wobble because of economic difficulties and apprehension about the pension age, and the president is paying close attention to these trends, the participants learned.

15. Mr Sherr was optimistic that the Alliance will be able to maintain unity in its approach towards Russia. He pointed to the sanctions that the Allies have put into place to make Russia change its policy. In a similar vein, Mr Pszczel reminded participants of the steps that the Allies have taken individually and collectively: the enhanced forward presence in the Baltics and Poland, multiple exercises, steps to improve command structures and cooperation with the EU, and Allies' increasing defence expenditures which are moving them closer to the 2% goal. These steps are extremely important, he noted and added that governments also need to make the case for a unified Russia policy to the public. In this context, Mr Pszczel said that "there is a political dimension to our readiness: the confrontation with Russia is a challenge, but it is not the choice of the Alliance". The Alliance is not seeking to challenge Russia, but it also cannot close its eyes to what is happening, he explained. Mr Sherr warned that the proponents of compromise at all costs are strengthening Russia's strategy towards the West and prolonging the confrontation.

16. In the ensuing discussion, delegates exchanged views on possible ways to get the NATO-Russia relationship back on track. A delegate suggested that NATO's strategy on Russia should concentrate on the Russian people and on being tough on the regime. The next step would be to invite Georgia to NATO and to lay out a special plan for Ukraine, which is crucial for a strategy against Russia. A rather different view was expressed by another delegate, who referred to Norway's experience with Russia. He argued that conveying the message that "every nation has the right to choose its own path" is not an effective approach but rather a "provocation". The delegate was also sceptical that sanctions will bring back Crimea to Ukraine.

17. Georgian and Ukrainian seminar participants underlined their countries' commitment to joining the Alliance. Several Georgian interlocutors expressed the view that NATO had been too cautious in advancing their progress. **Giorgi Baramidze**, Member of the Political Council of the United National Movement and former Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, commented that it would be wrong to ask Georgia to wait until Russia changed. He and others argued that being members of the Alliance enabled Poland and the Baltic countries to normalise their bilateral relations with Russia. Concerning Ukraine, all participants condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and its aggressive actions in the east of the country.

18. **James Mackey**, Head of Euro-Atlantic and Global Partnership, Political Affairs and Security Policy Division at NATO, stressed that the door of the Alliance remains open to applicant countries that fulfil the membership criteria. The role of parliamentarians in the decision of accepting new member countries remains crucial, according to

**Ambassador (ret.) Robert Hunter.** He elaborated on this point and reminded participants that NATO parliamentarians represent the people of their country and that the national governments of the Alliance need robust parliamentary support to underwrite a strategic commitment.

19. Mr Mackey also reminded delegates of the important benefits that participating nations can derive from NATO's partnership activities. Most importantly, NATO is shifting its emphasis towards developing individual partnerships with countries which should be of particular interest to countries not aspiring to membership. This approach allows partner countries to adapt their individual partnership as much as possible to meet their individual needs. While NATO continues to adapt its partnership tools according to the security environment and the specific needs of participating nations, the programmes remain focused on some core areas.

20. Generally speaking, NATO works with countries on the individual, state, and regional levels, Mr Mackey explained. At the level of individuals, NATO programmes focus on education and training which provides individual participants the professional skills to work in their ministry. At the state level, NATO helps the respective countries to initiate and implement reforms and capacity building (particularly in the security sector). A key component here is the establishment of democratic oversight over the military. At the regional level, NATO partnership activities promote coordination and interoperability among participating countries which enables them to work together at the multilateral level when needed, according to Mr Mackey.

## V. THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE, AND FOR THE ROSE-ROTH SEMINAR SERIES REMAINS AS HIGH AS EVER

21. Seminar participants also unanimously agreed that the need for dialogue and for the Rose-Roth seminar series, remains as high as ever. Paying tribute to the initiative's "founding fathers", United States Congressman Charlie Rose and Senator Bill Roth, **Ian Brzezinski**, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, noted that "as we celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> seminar, we have to realise that the mission is not done". In a similar vein, Ms Jukneviene said that "we have to have dreamers and to dream about the future". More specifically, she said that she "is dreaming of a democratic Russia in the future" and that "countries like Ukraine can help Russia to be different".

22. Rose-Roth seminars help to tackle a "tendency towards authoritarian rule and weakening of parliamentary control" according to **Thomas Guerber**, Director of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF). He explained that stability in the transatlantic space is still a major area of concern and pointed out that democratic processes are under strain in the West, which shows that democracy is a continuous process that needs to be tended. There is also a tendency towards more authoritarian rules, a weakening of parliamentary control, and an increased turnover of parliamentarians, he said. He also noted the erosion of rules-based approach as a consequence of the increasing weakening of normative values for the benefit of power politics. Moreover, the balance between sound governance and the strengthening of military capacity has suffered, he added. These developments and the high level of rotation among the parliamentarians make it necessary to continue efforts like the Rose-Roth seminar series. Mr Diaz-Plaja agreed with this view, underlining that parliaments play a crucial role in maintaining stability and in preventing negative forces from playing against the Alliance. The Rose-Roth programme was and remains crucial because it strengthens the resilience of our parliaments and societies, he said.

23. Mr Mackey, noted that there are "still lots of misperceptions about what NATO is and what it has done" in NATO partner countries.

## VI. THE FUTURE OF THE ROSE-ROTH SEMINAR SERIES

24. In addition to reviewing the development of the Rose-Roth programme and taking stock of its achievements, this milestone seminar also charted possible ways forward for the Assembly's outreach and engagement with partners.

25. There was a general agreement that the strength of the Rose-Roth seminar lays notably in its capacity to bring together members of parliaments and of the civil society. The exchanges among the participants generated numerous ideas on how to develop the Rose-Roth seminar series in the future. These included, among others: reaching out to universities and engaging future policymakers, addressing newer challenges, such as fake news, focusing on the immediate neighbourhood and NATO aspirants while also continuing to engage more sceptical audiences.

26. Whether or not the Assembly should continue to pursue a regional approach for North Africa was also briefly raised. Regarding the future of the Rose-Roth seminar series in the Western Balkans, one delegate commented that political discussions in the region have considerably deteriorated since 2013. He stressed the need to reestablish new, friendly dialogues and argued that the Rose-Roth seminar plays a crucial role in achieving this objective.

27. Whether NATO and the NATO PA should devote more time and energy to Belarus was also briefly raised. Warning against the negative impact of increasing Russian influence over Belarus one delegate argued for more engagement with Belarus. However, NATO is conflicted about the extent to which it should engage with a country that has a terrible human rights record and is not even democratic in name. He noted that the balance between helping facilitate change and holding back cooperation due to the realities on the ground was one faced by NATO every day with regard to Belarus. As a result of this balance, the NATO-Belarus relationship is more restricted than that with any other partner, participants learned.

28. Another question asked about Asia and Central Asia and the prospects for cooperation with these regions. Although there seems to be less interest among the countries of this region to engage, one delegate suggested that the Assembly should increase its activities there.

29. One participant suggested that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly should develop a toolbox of different means of cooperation that are appropriate for the range of situations that partners face. He also noted the importance of flexibility when deciding whether to pursue a bilateral or regional approach with a partner.

30. Others suggested that more individualised, tailor-made programmes would enable the deepening of partnerships, for example in the sphere of parliamentary control of armed forces. A delegate also underlined the potential for creative cooperation between the NATO PA and DCAF in this region.

31. Whether and how to adapt the format of the seminar series was another point of discussion. There was a general view that there is an opportunity to test new formats. In this context, one participant suggested including students and the young generation in the Rose-Roth seminar. The added value of such an approach would be that it would expose the new generations to strategic thinking and raise issues such as why security matters to democracy and not just defence spending.

32. The value of the Rose-Roth seminar series in a time when "fake news" seem to be ubiquitous was the general consensus among the participants.

33. Mr Hobbs praised the Rose-Roth seminar as a magnificent programme but warned the audience of the necessity to adapt to survive. He singled out some of the PA's unique features: adaptability, flexibility, and ability to bring parliamentary and civil dimension to NATO partnerships. He suggested engaging NATO more in the Assembly thinking by moving more thematically and applying some tools that work well with some partners to other regions. For instance, he offered to use the Baltic and Nordic models of cooperation to apply them to the Balkans and Caucasus. He was optimistic that the Assembly will evolve its agenda, and that of the Rose-Roth seminar series in particular. In a similar vein, Mrs Moon promised that the Rose-Roth Seminar will continue to be ahead of the curve by adapting its agenda. Reminding parliamentarians of their role to oppose the tendency to compromise on foundational democratic values to maintain domestic peace, she concluded by calling on the audience to be more dynamic and to reinforce among their young people and colleagues the imperative to protect our values.

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