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**“The New NATO”**

**by**

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# **The New NATO**

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The changes in structure and orientation of NATO that has occurred since the end of the Cold War and again since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, reflect and contribute to the profound transformation of the international system that was characteristic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the security problems of Europe and the globe as a whole become more intertwined and NATO will have to adapt its role accordingly. Moreover, with the shift of security challenges from classical problems of aggression to the complex challenges of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and intra-state conflict the North Atlantic Alliance will have to assume new responsibilities and create the necessary capabilities and structures for their exercise.

## **I. NATO’s transformation before September 11, 2001**

It has often been argued that the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, have changed everything, created a fundamentally different world and consequently require totally new approaches. NATO, it was then concluded, would have to be seen in the same context. In reality, however, the watershed was not quite as clear as it is often argued. Many of the problems which are now at the centre of our attention, existed before or were only enhanced in their impact by the events of September 11, 2001.

The "old" NATO which had been an essential part and product of the Cold War inevitably changed with the end of that conflict in 1989/1990. Indeed, it can be argued that a process of marginalization started then for several reasons.

First, with the demise of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact the classical danger of a large scale aggression for which the original NATO had been created receded into the background and became but a theoretical possibility as the 1990's progressed. Planners, who at the beginning of the 1990's still included the possibility of the revival of a Russian danger into their calculations, began to write it off by the mid 1990's. Instead, the new dangers of the Post-Cold War area began to dominate security policy and the actual planning of the armed forces structure. The "New Strategic Concept" of NATO of 1999 is the result of this fundamental change of perception.

Second, the transformation of the West's relationship with Russia, the country which had been the very cause of the creation for the Alliance, could not but change the meaning of NATO. Enlargement, it must be remembered was always pursued as a "double strategy" combining an effort to include the emerging democracies of East, Central and South East Europe with a renewed and co-operative relationship with a Russia on the way to democracy and market economy. Not only the partnership with the former main adversary but also the enlargement by three new Central European democracies (now to be complemented at the Prague Summit by seven more countries) increased NATO's heterogeneity and political character thus moving it away from a classical defence alliance.

Third, the activities of NATO in the Balkans, notably the peace-keeping forces, its military intervention in Bosnia and in particular in Kosovo, made the Alliance proceed in ways, for which it had originally not been created. Peace-keeping was not on the agenda of NATO during the Cold War, and when the Alliance went to war in Kosovo it did so without activating Article V, i. e. without being

attacked (and even without a UN mandate). The actions of the Alliance reflected a new changed perception of its role and responsibilities quite different from the preceding era of the East-West conflict.

Fourth, during the 1990's the creation of a "European pillar" of security policy inside NATO increasingly changed the character of the Alliance despite the continued disagreements on the relationship between an emerging European security and defence policy and NATO as well as on its orientation among the members of the European Union. During the 1990's it became increasingly clear that this question redefined the structure and division of labour of the Alliance.

Fifth, the events of the 1990's unleashed a debate that continues to this day how the transatlantic character of NATO could be maintained within the internal debate in the United States the relevance of a continued US presence in Europe, notably in the Balkans was increasingly questioned, thus raising concern among Europeans that the US might move toward a new division of labour, assigning European security problems to the Europeans and global questions to the United States. The post September 11 debate which the United States triggered on the concept of "the mission defines the coalition" has its true origin in the earlier discussions on who should play what role in the Balkans.

## **II. Dealing with terrorism after September 11, 2001**

The initial reaction of the Bush Administration to the terror attacks of the September 11 positively surprised many of the earlier critics of the US Government who had expected a unilateral and possibly ill considered instantaneous action. However, the new strategy of Washington represented a victory of Realpolitik and pragmatism over ideology and reaction by instinct. It was based on a careful analysis of the situation, advocating a policy of "patient accumulation of success" (President Bush) rather than quick fixes. Moreover, the US reaction was strikingly multilateral involving the United Nations in a

creative and unprecedented manner, building a new global Alliance against terrorism with countries not traditionally allied to the US, such as China and Russia and advocating a “multidimensional” strategy including economic, political and military elements. President Bush explicitly pointed to the necessity of “nation building” and of avoiding a “clash of civilisations”.

Throughout the preparatory and active face of America’s new anti-terror policy NATO played no significant role. Despite the mentioning of global terrorism in the 1999 “New Strategic Concept” of NATO its organisation had not done any planning for this eventuality nor was its structure suited. To be sure, the expedition of AWACS planes to relieve American planes over US territory was greatly appreciated, and the activation of Article V was considered as a most welcome sign of solidarity in the Alliance, but NATO as an organisation did not get involved beyond these two measures. If an anti-terrorism strategy was to be treated in its broad sense of comprising cultural, economic, political and military means, the established structure of the Alliance was ill prepared to fulfil that function. It was the clear feeling of the US military planners that during the war in Afghanistan American action would only be hampered if submitted to the often cumbersome procedures of NATO institutions. As a result America acted alone and called on individual allies, such as Britain, France and Germany to provide assistance on a bilateral basis.

Article V was activated for the first time in NATO’s history and under circumstances for which it had not been originally created, namely to deter or provide assistance in case of major armed aggression. Though the activation of Article V was essential to provide the necessary legitimacy for the use of military force among the democratic member countries of NATO, e. g. in the case of Germany, it supported primarily the action of national states and not of the Alliance as a whole. Moreover, it is entirely unclear when the activation of this Article ends, for unlike a war where the termination of hostilities also indicates the end to Article V, that matter is entirely unclear with regard to the

fight against terrorism. Will Article V be deactivated when the last terrorist is defeated?

In its campaign against terror the United States created a new Alliance of global scope that included such diverse members as the NATO members Japan, Russia, China, Pakistan, or Arab States. Comprising established democracies, emerging democracies, dictatorships and autocratic kingdoms it remains inevitably fragile but nevertheless united by the single purpose of fighting terrorism. Unlike America's old Alliance with the European democracies it was an effective ad hoc group manifesting the degree to which American security policy had turned away from Europe to global problems.

### **III. Tasks of the New Nato**

Reflecting about the future of NATO it must be remembered that this Alliance has played a constructive and positive role in several areas which continue to remain immensely relevant in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, NATO was and continues to act as an obstacle to a re-nationalisation of security policy. Thanks to its co-operation and integration of national military and security structures NATO substantially contributed to the historic achievement of the democracies of the West namely the exclusion of war as means of politics among and thus transforming this group of nations into a functioning peace system. The preservation of this historic achievement remains vital if a minimum of order is to be preserved in a new era of instability.

Second, NATO has become the essential framework for stability in Europe. Through enlargement it has and will continue to support the process of democratisation and reform of the economies in Central and South East Europe. NATO's new relationship with Russia is likely not only to have the same effect but in addition to create an overarching relationship of co-operation with

Europe's largest power. Moreover, NATO remains vital for preserving peace and stability in the Balkans and thereby the preconditions for the establishment of democracy there.

Third, NATO remains the most essential link between the United States and Europe. Though the security problems of the modern interdependent world can originate from any corner of the globe consequently requiring approaches to deal with them a global level, NATO remains a framework of likeminded countries united by common values, interests and a well established system of co-operation. If and when the United States look for allies in any particular crisis it is here where they are likely to find them as was proven in the Afghanistan campaign in which NATO members made most valuable outside contributions to the American effort.

The fight against globalized terrorism, in particular in its deadly combination with weapons of mass destruction, cannot be won by one country, not even the United States, the world's most powerful one. In a world of interdependence, vulnerable societies and open borders many allies are necessary. For these reasons the continuation of the anti-terror Alliance, created by the United States, remains an essential prerequisite for success. Moreover, "failing states" as potential generators of terrorism must be dealt with. This can only be done through a time consuming and complex strategy of nation building. Any medium and long term anti-terror strategy must deal with the roots and conditions of terrorism. An essential instrument for defeating terrorism is the spread of democracy which in turn requires social and economic development and consequently a more substantial and successful effort of the industrialised countries in this direction. Moreover, an anti-terror strategy has a greater chance of success if accompanied by progression or solutions to the great conflicts of our time, notably the Israeli-Palastinian conflict.

What conclusions will the NATO countries have to draw if the Alliance is to become a more relevant instrument for dealing with the problem of terrorism. First, NATO countries have to take part in the global effort of co-operation among likeminded countries to install a well functioning system of information exchange and common action among police, intelligence systems and development agencies. In that same context they will have to make an inevitably time consuming effort to establish a dialogue with those forces in Islam that oppose the abuse of religion for extremist purposes.

Second, the new NATO, soon to be enlarged further, will play a meaningful role in combating terrorism only if it expands and redefines its role in four different areas:

- It has to enlarge the geographic scope of its action since the openness of modern society, the vulnerability of its structures and global interdependence that jointly make distant threats an immediate danger to NATO countries will require that NATO deals with the problems "where ever" they begin. This could mean tasks of peace-keeping and intervention by economic, political and sometimes military means in relatively distant areas. The old disagreement between Europeans and American about a global reach of NATO has been bypassed by the events of September 11, 2001.
- NATO will have to reorient its purpose from an Alliance to defend against an aggression which has become but a theoretical possibility to an Alliance that deals with available means of diplomacy, development policy and military means with problems as they arise and turn into a security threat. This will occasionally require forms of intervention to prevent such problems from escalating to an unacceptable level of threat.



- NATO will increasingly turn into a framework to organise a “coalition of the willing” whenever threats arise and according to the nature of such challenges. As a consequence it must enhance the capability of the Alliance members for interoperability and co-operation. The NATO response force proposed by the United States and to be created in the near future, would hopefully be a flexible instrument to provide a framework for changing “coalitions of the willing”.
- If the new NATO is to become effective the new group of 20 states formed with Russia must play a central role in dealing with shared security problems.

Third, the new NATO requires a better equipped Europe, i. e. European members with a technologically more advanced military capability and an effective European Security and Defence Policy that can play a meaningful role inside the Alliance and, as an autonomous European force. The intervention force of the EU which is in the process of being formed should not only fulfil these requirements but also be able to contribute to a NATO response force to be created.

Fourth, of all the problems of security in the forthcoming years the question of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction should deserve unquestioned priority. The combination of terrorism and these weapons as well as their potential use in volatile regions can have such a disastrous and destructive effect that the Alliance should devote particular attention to preventing the spread of these weapons, of materials for their production as well as means of delivery.

#### **IV. NATO and World Order**

The present era is similar to the period following World War II when the international system was fundamentally remade. This assigns a special responsibility to all major actors, in particular to the United States as the pre-eminent power. The way rules are being remade and structures of world politics and institutions changed will profoundly shape international politics for many years to come. The adaptation of NATO to the new global problems is part of this process because this Alliance will have to deal with essential security challenges of the new era and because three of the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council are NATO members.

The debates that have surrounded the question of how to deal with Iraq and its programmes of weapons of mass destruction have been so controversial because they relate to the functions and redefinition of basic rules of international law and, in particular of the United Nations Charter. If the international community continues to passively accept a continued non-compliance of Iraq of the disarmament order of the Security Council, the authority of the UN will undoubtedly be undermined. On the other hand, a military intervention without a mandate from the Security Council, given the potentially destructive impact of such an intervention, would undermine the validity of the UN as well. If war becomes a means to change a regime, however autocratic or evil it may be, it would undo a basic rule of international law since the peace of Westphalia of 1648 which made territoriality and non-interference in internal affairs a basic rule of international law. The same is true for a doctrine of pre-emption. While it cannot be denied that the security problems of the modern era, notably the combination of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, may require forms of intervention in order to prevent a problem from escalating to unacceptable threat proportions, the establishment of a right to pre-emptive strikes would unhinge Article II of the UN Charter as the central element of world order.

It will be the task of NATO members and likeminded countries in dealing with the security problems of the modern world, to make sure that the essential rules of the multilateral order that was established after World War II are preserved. If adaptations are necessary they should not be executed through unilateral action but in a co-ordinated manner on the basis of a dialogue among the major actors in world politics.