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**REFLECTIONS ON THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK\***

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These reflections are prepared as if the reader were seeing a transcribed speech as delivered to an international audience fifteen years in the future. The author's intentions in using this mechanism are to explore the uncertain future of international relationships using the readers' lenses in viewing a fictional individual's retrospective. The readers' familiarity with many of the public discussions currently regarding NATO activities and its fourth enlargement may act as a baseline upon which these reflections are intended to build.

The fictional speaker is a retired government official who speaks from experience on a wide range of NATO issues, including service within NATO headquarters, a national defence establishment and NATO military command. The readers may wish to envision themselves upon the speaker's lectern similarly presenting their perspectives on the transatlantic issue.

Good day ladies and gentlemen:

I'm very pleased to be with you today. I was first a visitor to this city many years ago, prior to German unification, before Poland's NATO membership, and prior to Turkey's joining and success within the EU. It is very nice to be back with you.

My topic today is what NATO and history have called the 'Transatlantic Link', and I'm pleased to share my thoughts with you on the significant changes I've seen to it over my lifetime. While the term remained in force for many years in the NATO vocabulary, the meaning has over time sustained many changes. I will address today what I consider to be the three major periods of change in the linkage relationship during the twentieth century and the very beginning of the twenty-first.

The Transatlantic Link has always meant to me the wide variety of multinational issues, desires, goals and challenges linking North America and Europe to each other during the years of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. This relationship changed dramatically over time, as did all the nations within NATO. I suggest that this Transatlantic Link has moved through three stages or phases—first, that which I would call the 'Tzedakah phase'—from the Hebrew word meaning 'righteousness' or doing the right thing, second, the Burden phase, and third, the Separation and Re-evaluation phase.

Among the NATO nations, no two of them, let alone any of us citizens, shared precisely the same

perspective on when one phase ended and the next began. I do realise that our perceptions are our realities and that the filters colouring our perceptions vary by nationality, religion, sex, age, health and so on. But please remember that I'm giving you a very personal, and perhaps a very American perspective today, simply because I've had the fortune to mature during the first phase, to work within NATO during the second phase, and to teach NATO international affairs during the third phase.

The Tzedakah phase, then, was the first phase of the Transatlantic Link. I suppose we could also call this phase 'your father's NATO'. Let me explain. Among the emotional, moral, physical and social destruction of much of European society at the end of World War II, our parents saw a great need for doing the right thing, for tzedakah. The United States provided aid. It came from a military officer turned diplomat, from George Marshall, whose work in US President Truman's administration led to the expenditure of over \$13bn of aid to Western Europe for reconstruction. Now, I'm not an accountant, ladies and gentlemen, but \$13bn in the United States in the 1950s would be worth great multiples of that amount in today's Euroland market. You do the numbers yourself for Dollarland or Asialand currency. We're talking significant monies here.

So who remembers that phase now, and why was it important? The historians among you understand the issues of reconstruction, the movement of renewal from a fragmented aggressor, Germany. The sociologists among you remember the Holocaust and the societal changes the Nazis and German occupation wreaked upon the European nations. The economists remember the rebirth of their private sectors following the war. Business leaders, of course, did what they do in every post-war period. They dust themselves off, pick up as best they can, and begin again. European states moved from being recipients of tzedakah to various phases of growth and development.

Phase two marked the Burden phase. My countrymen in the United States saw a financially growing—if not blossoming—Western Europe; I began my college years; and the post-war upheaval of Europe blurred into an economic engine humming smoothly, ever more efficiently, and many would say, ever more powerfully—and all these decades before the emergence of the euro. The engine of Germany purred then, as do now the power plants of Daimler-Chrysler Aerospace, Boeing-Siemens, and the German-Dutch Bank and her financial colleagues. Western Europe was wealthy from Northern Norway to Istanbul—or at least some of my countrymen in New York and colleagues in Ottawa saw her that way. I was told that the growth of a strong economic and social engine in Germany even before the 1989 unification worried many of you in Europe. Concerns over a resurgent Germany were alive and well during this period.

But in the midst of the post-Cold War economic prosperity, my parents' generation and then mine began to speak with our parliamentarians, questioning exactly why US and Canadian military forces were needed in Europe? Canada withdrew her forces toward the end of the last century—did you miss them? Did the tachometer of your economic engine even fluctuate? When my US countrymen withdrew two-thirds of their force structure in NATO late last century, who here cared? Oh, perhaps in Germany, or in individual small villages relationships were effected, friends missed friends. Perhaps some businesses were closed, some jobs lost? But across Europe? No. I think the United States could have left the NATO party altogether then—perhaps we'd have missed a few dances and a little of the punch—but back then, I think you here in Europe only had eyes for each other. You felt no threat, your risks were economic and humanitarian, and your vision was predictably rather short-sighted.

If what I say was true for Western Europe, was it the same here in Warsaw? Did you Poles, or the Hungarians or Czechs want the United States present in Europe? What about the other Partnership for Peace nations? You needed private investment and Western style structural development. Among other nations of the world, the US represented market, financial infusion of hard currency and drive.

I remember being told during my first job in Warsaw that you sought the twenty-first century and NATO membership with the same force as the German eastern states in the late 1980s had sought the West. They wanted it all, and wanted it now.

The United States was courted, charmed, manipulated and seduced. But it was a willing liaison. The United States kept a degree of influence in European affairs—at least during the first years following the 1999 NATO summit, the fourth NATO enlargement. We were back in the Balkans then, and your proximity and support was needed, logistically, politically and militarily—if only because my countrymen thought there was little here in Europe for which they wanted to sacrifice their sons and daughters.

During those years in the latter part of the last century, particularly 1998 and 1999, I spoke with many audiences in Eastern Europe. I asked for the adjectives that these future NATO citizens used among each other to describe my nation and my countrymen. Among the platitudes were a number of honest terms I didn't much like—but I respected the candour we'd developed that allowed me to hear them. Those adjectives were 'arrogant', 'naïve', 'unrealistic' and 'impatient'. Those were the terms I heard. It's odd, of course, because I've used those same terms—minus 'impatient'—to describe my European colleagues. I did know exactly what they meant.

So my nation shared—and perhaps unwillingly, if you had listened to our constituents—your defence burden. We saw the alliance from different angles, and, predictably, at least two of those angles looked like this. From one angle, we had the European preoccupation with process; you spent weeks and months agonising over process and arguing over words in thousands of documents. From another angle, we had the result driven Americans to whom the product, not the process, is key. At NATO we had a blend of the two. My colleagues and I learned that the process within NATO is the product in peacetime. But during the unpleasantness that followed in Bosnia, Kosovo and the Middle East during the first years of this century an apparent consequent paralysis throughout Western Europe left many of my European colleagues' nations ill prepared to reassume a results driven process. Which of your nations accompanied the United States into the Middle East just a few years ago? Where were you during the inflammation of the Transcaucasus? We can save that discussion for my following evening with you.

Now to the third phase: Separation and Re-evaluation. NATO enlarged in 1999. Among the nineteen Alliance Nations I saw movement from the concerns of border security and article five of the Washington Treaty to that of risk analysis, threat reduction and regional stability. Cold War perceptions of an article five guarantee taught that there was only one tool in the NATO toolbox—and it was a hammer. Those perceptions shifted during this phase of the Transatlantic Link to an understanding that changing risks necessitated other tools in addition to hammers. NATO nations went in search of those other tools, and during this initial search period, there was an estrangement between a number of the seventeen European nations and North America. A new strategic concept was adopted at about the same time the disparity between European and American defence expenditures became more obvious and publicised. Immediately prior to the fiftieth anniversary summit, a showcase on defence technology organised by the US showed what some commentators described as a lack of interest in European eyes to spend more on their defence against

a less obvious but much broader series of risks. You may remember the terms ‘asymmetrical threats’, ‘transnational risks’.

If the US wished to create a widening gap between her and European military technologies, so my Euro colleagues suggested, so be it. Some Euro analysts described it as Europe not rising to the hi-tech bait of the United States, but it always seemed to me during that period that there were enough bait companies on both sides of the Atlantic for any prospective fisherman. You economists and private sector businessmen in the audience will challenge me on this during our discussion.

During this period came the century’s last involvement in the Balkans. Some of my colleagues argued that academic interest in NATO during the years immediately following the 1999 summit was held only by the continuing instability of the Balkans—that were it not for the Balkans and the engagement of NATO forces outside their traditional ‘area’, that the alliance would have yawned itself into disuse and importance. You will remember that NATO’s first use of military force, but certainly not last use, occurred in this region.

I remember discussing with one regional senior military officer what he described as zones or spheres of instability—areas of interest to NATO extending well beyond the political borders of the NATO allies. This perspective from Europe was also shared by some of my colleagues at Allied Command Atlantic. The officer realised that the NATO toolbox now contained tools that had previously been unused. They were not new tools—in fact, individual nations long had used military forces on other continents for multilateral purposes. But for NATO nations to consider their alliance as capable of conducting peace operations was a fresh look inside the toolbox. There were other options besides the use of article five.

What we nations learned in the early part of this new century was that, with the use of different tools, came new challenges. Which nations would provide what funding and with whom and on what would they spend it?

A word here on a major change within Europe about this time. The Balkans was the Euro crisis du jour. In its fiftieth and fifty-first years, NATO’s nineteen nations had many problems ‘at home’ with which they had to first attend. Germany had after many decades elected a coalition government of what was then called the Red-Green alliance. A portion of this alliance was the Green Party—the environmentalist party. The ‘no-nuclear’ stance of my countrymen from the 1960s was re-established by the Greens and quickly spread through other European states and Canada. Constituent perception that there was no military threat led to the shrinkage of German forces. Other states within Europe said that if Germany could afford to shrink her forces, then so can they. The domino effect was fed by the resultant increase in non-defence related spending by a number of national European governments. It was a feeding frenzy that debilitated defence industries, hollowed out the military forces and played beautifully to the socialist parties growing in popularity among nations.

Simultaneously within NATO, the fourth enlargement was not without growing pains. The consequent growth in nations desirous of flag officer positions in both regional command headquarters of Strategic Command Europe led to a decrease in US officers stationed in both regional European commands. France was heard in many diplomatic circles to say, ‘I told you so’—that she had expected the US to abandon Europe and it now was happening. But the faces within each NATO Strategic Command were already changing. Polish and Czech officers joined Regional Command North, Hungarian officers joined Regional Command South with a liaison team

at Regional Command North. Following Spanish integration into the military structure, Spanish officers similarly sought senior billets at both Strategic Commands as well as Regional Command South. Ultimately French officers did the same in both Strategic Commands and both European regions.

It was not only the United States who gave up positions the other nations would occupy. German forces, whose importance was perceived even less credibly under the coalition Red-Green administration, received smaller defence budgets and suffered a concomitant decrease in status among the German public. Their numbers were decreased in NATO's military commands. The United Kingdom, whose parliament saw fewer German and US forces in NATO, could do little more than scale back accordingly during a period of 'belt-tightening' brought about in part by Britain's slow embrace of the euro as it began its growth phase.

You could say that the times were challenging then for the Alliance. It's why I say this third phase of the Transatlantic Link could be described as a separation and re-evaluation phase. The strategic concept had changed from a post-Cold War idea of fuzzy risks to one of active engagement in whatever the then nineteen allies saw as inherent interests—we called them 'projections of stability' if they became so involved. But with the decrease of American forces in Europe, there came a perception of separation. America saw herself as pushed aside by Europe—Europe saw herself abandoned by the techno-agile Americans.

I imagine that many of you in this audience enjoy the global strategy games played in our various policy simulation centres—or, for that matter, the ones we enjoyed on earlier versions of unlinked computers. The simulation events one next would play following what I've just described are perhaps obvious to some of you, and we of course saw them actually happen. NATO was concerned at the beginning of this century with transnational issues—including drugs, terrorism, syndicated crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and mass movements of population.

The instabilities my colleagues predicted resulted in loss of life, property and social 'glue'. We saw nations send UN, then NATO, then EU forces into lands our citizens could not have found easily on a map. Our headlines screamed. Why were we involved, what were our vital national interests? In my nation, one of the more stimulating headlines was "Europe on its own—We're free at last".

The United States turned to the oil fields of the Caucasus, the issues of Asia and the development of Latin America. Bankers turned their attentions less to the euro and more to Asialand. The separation wasn't so much quarrelsome as it was a parting of interests and a disparity in tempo. The re-evaluation came as time and demography consumed our respective financial interests. Asia and Latin America were growing in population and Europe was not. You were greying—like me—but your children went elsewhere. They had fewer linkages to national cultures as they matured; they had no linkage to national military service as you abandoned conscription, and they certainly had no linkage to World War II and the Cold War period. Their votes eased your leadership's decrease in defence expenditures. The EU facilitated easy movement and your young followed the euro and the dollar to other corners of the globe. We in the United States absorbed them as we had my grandparents' generation from Europe. We grew ever faster.

We in the United States re-evaluated our position within NATO. If we once had been the policeman of the NATO world, we became less interested as the calls for our assistance became fewer and fewer, and as we combated those transnational threats in other regions as well as within our own

borders.

You know that I cannot point to a single event as the major cause of the separation. You also understand that, like any separation, it was not a major shock which precipitated the estrangement, but a series of smaller events. We lived through Bosnia, Kosovo and the emergence of other nuclear players. We watched the euro change in value. Asialand played ever more in U.S. considerations, and with the doctrinal shift we underwent in the US with the administration of 2008, the United States re-evaluated all of its strategic relationships.

So where does this leave us? Has the United States finished its re-evaluation phase? Has your nation? Let me take the time available to us now and ask for your comment—I want your intellect here, not only for our generation, but also for our children's. Tell me about your vital national interests and NATO.

*\*The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or the US Government.*

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