

## **Prospects for US-European Security Cooperation in a Volatile Global Strategic Environment**

Both US and Europe are undergoing major changes: processes of profound reorientation

- not really reflected in official documents except in terms of a stated need for new strategic concepts (however, EU..., US...).
- Any visit to a serious bookshop these days displays a large bulk of books on the future of the US and to a degree the state of Europe.
- Among them a number of outstanding books:
  - not political-science nor just polemical but
  - from authors who have reflected on the US-European relation for years and recurrently shaped the debate on either side of the Atlantic, e.g. Joe Joffe, Walther Laqueur, Francis Fukuyama or Timothy Garton Ash.
- They are all deeply rooted in history with a strong sense of the pivotal importance of a common fabric between the US and Europe. However, one way or another they all reach the conclusion that changes **within** the US and Europe or indeed the compelling need for change in the years ahead are bound to impact on how the US and Europe will deal with each other in future circumstances.
  - The US tends to lose its inner *raison d'être* at a stage where it needs to constrain its overwhelming global power in order not to fail by becoming “a lonely city on the hill”. Not to overplay its leadership while providing leadership is imperative for the US.
  - For Europe and above all the EU it will be fatefully important to respond to external increasing pressures and to engage externally in ways that will also boost its internal formation. Looking at the panoply of challenges – the impact of enlargement, migration, the differential of involvements in globalization, increasingly uncertain dependencies on supply of energy and raw material, the threats from terrorism, organized crime, the conflict potential in the EU's

neighbourhood and a whole new strategic environment – all these taken together describe what needs to be on the EU’s agenda.

- For the US the imperative thus is to guide its global commitments in prudent and restrained ways, for the EU it is crucial to become and stay relevant to how its global environment will develop and to constitute itself to be commensurate with the required responses.

Key politicians seldom find the time to consume such studies – at least while in office. Undoubtedly, some of the assessments quoted will be more relevant for shaping the future than whatever document may come out of the Riga Summit. The key issue before us thus is how a conceptual framework (and of course concurrently the institutional structure and political base) will evolve that can channel processes on either side of the Atlantic to secure, adapt and strengthen commonality between these two still most congenial continental entities while surrounded by tectonic changes.

In this vein I will briefly focus on what role NATO can and will play. I will emphasize three aspects:

- There still does exist a US/European *acquis*.
  - The Alliance and specifically NATO has developed mostly under external pressures.
  - Either side can choose between four alternatives.
1. There still exist an *acquis*: foundations that hold and provide backing without staying at anyone’s political disposition: like the often quoted “*prose*” one hardly knows about. It is historically grown and tested by big events, e.g. World Wars, and for decades there exists a basic sense of reciprocal commitment – strong enough even to allow week governments to engage in mutual discriminations and alledged emancipation as a vehicle to ensure a political base at home.

Long ago François Duchêne has described this state of the Alliance as the “endless crisis” – i.g. the normalcy of a non saturated, though indispensable condition. This exists irrespective of declaratory policies, changing moods (see the latest GMF polls), intensifying events or crises or even in spite of rather thorough reciprocal and I stress recurrent irritations on either side over values (examples are numerous and I refer them to our discussion).

This *acquis* is different from the Alliance, let alone from NATO. In fact, for the US NATO – and even more other multilateral manifestations – has long ceased to be central to US basic interests, except that the US has recently rediscovered the

expediencies of having allies (note: in a basic recent US strategic document Mexican help in New Orleans came on top of NATO!!). For Europeans reliability on the US continues to be taken as a given, yet without a sense of rewarding it nor (as Blair recently discovered) with the expectation of being rewarded by the US. The acquis exists, but their tend to be limits to what keeps it politically alive.

2. What role then can the Alliance and can NATO play in such circumstances?

It is important to remember that the Alliance plus NATO has typically developed in stages and in response to external events and challenges:

- 1949 the Korean War (plus first Berlin crisis) that resulted in renewed US military presence in Europe and the creation of NATO,
- 1956 the Suez crisis (plus the Hungarian uprising) that led to political consultation within NATO,
- 1961 the Cuban missile crisis (exacerbated by the second Berlin crisis) that initiated US-Soviet bilateralism and reshaped US strategy in terms of more flexibility,
- 1968 the CSSR intervention and its aftermath that translated into a growing primacy of détente of either side of the Atlantic,
- 1989-91 the Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe and the eventual collapse of the USSR that changed the European political landscape profoundly. However, the new strategic concept that was to result from the Rome NATO Summit in 1991 did not even refer to these changes. NATO's subsequent development was dominated by its Eastern outreach, though without prior redefinition of its European *raison d'être* (just like the EU failed to consolidate first before engaging in enlargement).
- In 1999 the Washington Summit (50 years after the Washington Treaty) was meant to prepare NATO for the 21st Century. It mostly provided the concepts for preserving existing capabilities and structures (except for some streamlining and economizing).
- I do not wish to ignore that NATO's adaptation and modest transformation processes brought about some useful improvements. But the political and strategic rationale for NATO as a framework for coordinating US and European strategic behaviour is less clear than ever even and it is no longer anywhere near the center of political debates on either side of the Atlantic.

3. I take it that the debate can be summarized in terms of four models:

- (1) Restoring NATO as a primary political framework to be fully restored at the time of the Riga Summit. This has already largely disappeared from the agenda although it is not long ago that Chancellor Merkel and others called it a top priority.
- (2) Maintaining NATO as one of several strategic relations possibly with decreasing relevance. This view is at least latently widely spread, but NATO would lose its potential effectiveness even to a point where the *acquis* is in jeopardy.
- (3) Developing as US/EU/NATO strategic triangle. However, this leaves NATO undefined in view of both the US strategic framework and the range of plausible EU developments.
- (4) Shaping a US/EU binary relationship over time where both sides and possibly for very different reasons keep NATO as an instrumentality for major crises that require US-European military cooperation and indeed US military key assets. This is in no way self-propellant, and how to keep NATO's force planning and capacity for crisis management up to date would become a major challenge. But the US and the EU are the entities that have both inner political dynamics and a broad range of means.

It is outside the scope of my talk, and in fact time would not permit, to evaluate these models and the respective requirements w.r.t. the range of scenarios both the US and the EU will have to prepare for. I may just mention an increasingly disconcerting confluence of interests between Mexico, Venezuela et al. I may also mention the plausible scenarios for disruption of the vitally needed oil and gas supply for Europe. The debate on these challenges has hardly started, and if such scenarios – and many others – begin to resemble possible situations, the instrumentality of NATO and to a large extent national capacities for coping with crises of such dimensions developing may not exist. It will require major efforts to get prepared if ever our political classes will live up to these challenges as they ought to.

Thank you!