

NATO at the Crossroads - the Prospects for Success at the Istanbul

Summit

Rede von General a.D. Klaus Naumann auf einer Veranstaltung der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Außenstelle Washington am 5.5.2004

I have chosen the subject since I'm still convinced that NATO is the truly indispensable alliance for both US and Europe and beyond that a truly global anchor of stability. It does not seem to get the attention it deserves on either side of the Atlantic. This is the view of someone who is no longer in the office but believes in the necessity of a strong transatlantic alliance.

Despite some rapprochement and the one or the other improvement I still see NATO as being badly damaged. Moreover, I do not see too much interest in NATO in some quarters of the USA and I do not see the political will in many European countries to honor the commitments which they entered at the Prague Summit in order to narrow the often mentioned capabilities gap.

On the other hand Americans and Europeans must understand that neither side will be able to shoulder the burden of securing peace, stability and welfare of our nations alone. They must acknowledge that there is no better way to achieve this goal than to maintain the transatlantic cohesion which allowed them to prevail in the Cold War. To repair this truly irreplaceable alliance the US and Europe must no longer over paper their differences, they should embark on a profound strategic dialogue in order to emerge stronger and more united than ever and they should not be afraid of such a dialogue since rationality will tell them that there is no alternative but to stand together shoulder to shoulder as it was epitomized by German-American partnership during the days of East-West confrontation.

This requires on the European side to abandon the erroneous believe that multilateralism is a value in itself and they must renounce of all attempts to use multilateralism and international law as instruments to check American power. On the American side it must be understood that most of the problems of our days require more than only military approaches, more than American hard power, more than an American revolve to shoulder it alone and that means allies who wish to be consulted in order to arrive at common decisions

A New Vision for a New NATO

The opportunity to begin repair is the Istanbul summit end of June, but it comes at a time when NATO's truly indispensable member is for obvious reasons as much looking inward as the European nations do who have to digest the EU enlargement. The Summit should therefore not expected to be one of the summits which take ground breaking bold decisions as it was the case in Prague 2002 when NATO agreed on transformation. It will be a stock taking summit and

a summit which may pave the way for or at least should open the door to a next round of transformation. Such an initiative is in my view necessary since the military transformation is under way but the political transformation is its infancy and, more importantly a new vision is lacking, NATO can no longer be seen as the night guardian who is there to watch out and prevent an event which no one regards as being likely in the foreseeable future, an all out attack on Europe. NATO has to shift its main emphasis from Europe to Europe's periphery. NATO can also not be seen as an organization which reduces its role to peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilization. It is simply wrong to believe that AFG is good enough to secure NATO's future. To identify its proper role and mission, to define a new vision it should start by stating that the North Americans and Europeans who did so extremely well when they stood shoulder by shoulder in ending first the Cold War and then in managing the transitional period which so often in history followed the end of empires still have common interests. I firmly believe that there are interests which both the Americans and the Europeans see as truly vital and common interests. Moreover, I believe as Henry Kissinger does that it are shared interests which keep nations together and not emotional bonds such as friendship or esoteric aspects such as common values.

I see two truly strategic common interests which neither the Americans nor the Europeans can handle on their own:

1. The unfinished process of establishing lasting and durable stability in Europe which requires the transformation of Russia into a true democracy in which the rule of law prevails will never be brought to a successful end unless the US and the Europeans cooperated smoothly and coordinated their approaches carefully.

2. Neither the US nor Europe will ever live at peace if the European periphery remains as unstable as it is today. At the centre of this instability is the Middle East for which one cannot find a solution without a comprehensive strategy for the Greater Middle East.

Should these two points be correct, and I believe they are, and then the US will need more than temporary allies brought together in a coalition of the willing. The US will need an alliance since we talk about tasks which most probably will not be accomplished within a decade or so, we talk about tasks which may require a generation's effort.

Such an alliance could easily be a transformed NATO provided both the US and the Europeans had the political will to use NATO as their option of choice for crisis management and provided the USG accepted that this means partnership and not execution of American decisions.

Should the US follow such a line then the allies need to understand that the challenge they have to take on is to develop in close cooperation with the US a comprehensive strategy for the Greater Middle East and more importantly to have the political will to implement it and to see it through.

What does comprehensive strategy mean? Do not worry; I am talking about another "Gesamtkonzept", which haunted the United States and Germany in the

late eighties. I also do not want to touch on the elements of NATO's strategy which are and remain valid such as collective defense but I add that a NATO which saw its main task in collective and reactive defense would soon become irrelevant.

What I have in mind is a vision which embeds elements such as AFG and Iraq and which is reliable to our nations in such a way that they will support it. That we need since, remember we talk about a generation's task here. The transformation of the greater Middle East is the central challenge. Americans and Europeans have to combat preventively the reasons for terrorism To this end is a fundamental shift in Western strategy is necessary and is nowhere more urgent than in the Greater Middle East if we are to confront the forces that create the dangerous nexus between terrorism, failed states, rogue regimes, and mass destruction weapons. Such a shift requires ending the double standard that has led Europeans and Americans likewise to downplay or ignore the pursuit of democracy and human rights in the region for the sake of so called stability which was often nothing else but the preservation of economic interests, It is time for the NATO nations to put themselves squarely on the side of building human rights, civil liberties, market reforms in a region which is suffering from home made deficiencies due to a systemic inability to reform. Hence, I do not talk about rogue states only, but also in "moderate" countries like those on the Arabian peninsula and Egypt or in the Levant. Helping to bring reform about must however never mean to impose a Western made concept on a region of incredible diversity. The NATO nations should make a genuine offer of dialogue. Such a dialogue should take NATO's extant Mediterranean Dialogue as point of departure and it should take into account the lessons learnt from PfP

Such an initiative which could well be launched at Istanbul should extend a hand of friendship to the Muslim world and it should invite reformers from the region to cooperate with NATO in developing and tailoring concepts which take into account the heritage of the nations concerned as well as the aspirations of those who wish to see the rule of human rights. Such an effort will require dedicating more substantial resources, intellectual as well as financial, to support reform in the greater Middle East. It is for this reason that I believe NATO would be the right place to take such an effort on since there we can bring to bear the expertise as well as the resources of the US and Europe and there Europeans and Americans can combine hard and soft powers. The aim of such a preventive part of a NATO effort to produce security in its southern and south eastern periphery would be eliminate reasons for conflict and terror through a combination of aid and dialogue plus the orchestrated international pressure on ruling elites to reform. Obviously a success of efforts in Baghdad to help Iraqis establishing a representative government will inspire and encourage democratic reformers elsewhere in the region. This is the reason why Iraq is a concern for all NATO nations regardless whether they supported the war or not. Whether we liked the war or not, Europeans and Americans have common interests there and this will require to shoulder responsibilities collectively, should an Iraqi government ask us, the US and Europeans via the UN to help.

But the issue goes beyond Iraq. Iraq, Israel and Iran are connected to each other in the one or the other way. There will be no lasting stability in the Middle East without a settlement with Iran and there will never be stability without tangible progress in the Israeli/Palestinians conflict. The centre piece has to be to forge a peace that gives Israelis security and Palestinians dignity. Neither the Arabs nor the Israelis nor the NATO nations can afford continuing fighting between the Israeli and the Palestinians. We must prevent this and the only country that can move the peace process forward is the United States. But the US lost credibility in the Muslim world and recent indeed intolerable events dealt it a further heavy blow. Therefore, the US needs to be backed by its European allies and by the EU. Then the chances are likely to grow. The two, the US and the EU will have to make another attempt which proves to the Palestinians that they will live in their own state and which tells them that not everything proposed by Jerusalem will simply be accepted by the so called West. On the other hand there must never be the slightest doubt in anybody's mind that the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state in the Middle East is not negotiable at all.

This brings me to next part of an emerging comprehensive NATO strategy for the Greater Middle East. Peace settlements will often need accompanying stabilization efforts and no organization is better placed than NATO to do this although this means to commit forces for rather time consuming deployments. NATO has to concentrate its future building and post-conflict stabilization efforts on the periphery of Europe which is primarily the Greater Middle East. This would allow to focus and to tailor command and control as well as logistics thus reducing manpower, cost and overlaps created until today by national reservations. One NATO command responsible for operations from Afghanistan through Iraq and in the long term possibly for other peacekeeping forces elsewhere seems to be both sensible and feasible. Having said this I should add that the idea of NATO taking responsibility of one sector under overall US command does not seem to me to be ever acceptable. But prevention and reactive stabilization operations do no longer suffice to maintain peace and prevent armed conflict. NATO must have the political resolve and the military capability to intervene proactively outside the NTA in order to keep the risks at a distance from allied territory thus fighting terrorism in its home bases. Thus NATO might be able to restore deterrence to some extent and to act decisively when all other options do no longer promise success.

So, in a nutshell, what I have in mind is a NATO concept for the Greater Middle East which I would call not a Harmel but another two track approach: Conflict prevention through dialogue and cooperation and security on NATO's periphery through, if unavoidable, armed intervention and post conflict stabilization operations. I do not talk of a concept which serves NATO to rally behind a new vision in order to heal its rifts, what I have in mind is a concept which sincerely promises the US, the Europeans and the nations of the Greater Middle East lasting peace and stability.

I am fully aware that such an approach requires a fresh look at many aspects. This makes it impossible to agree on such concept at short notice. They need to

be discussed, so inter alia international law issues and I assume that they will. Istanbul could therefore be a door opening summit ushering in a process at the end of which a new strategic concept for NATO will emerge.

What NATO should therefore do at Istanbul is to clear its mind on the challenges it must cope with. Such mind clearing will reveal that NATO has to take on the two tasks which reflect the common strategic interests of both the Americans and the Europeans:

- NATO has to strengthen and to foster its partnership with Russia by sending a strong signal to Moscow that an increasingly undemocratic behavior will damage Russia's position as a respected player in the world and as a partner of NATO;
- NATO has to shift its point of strategic interest from Europe to the Greater Middle East and to become the ultimate guarantor of peace and lasting stability in this region.

This will lead over time to a new, a revised Strategic Concept which must be brought into sync with the NSS of the US and the Strategic Concept of the EU.

A refurbished NATO will thus respond to three challenges

- The responsibility to protect human lives at home and abroad;
- The duty to prevent failing states, spreading proliferation and increasing terrorism;
- The responsibility to stabilize NATO's strategic perimeter.

It follows from that that NATO has to modernize the armed forces of all NATO Nations and to adapt them to a new and wider range of missions that the Alliance has to align its political processes to the reaction capability of its military forces and that NATO has to widen its tool box far beyond the military instruments.

May I end by saying that NATO is indeed at the crossroads, more than ever before. It will either agree on a new vision or it will over time simply fade away. The latter must never happen since a divide between Europe and the US plays into the hands of those who hate us, i.e. the terrorists. The rift which weakens NATO at this time can be healed if there is the political will on both sides of the Atlantic and if our political leaders had the courage to present a new and a bold vision to the NATO nations: This alliance will not cease to protect freedom and to safeguard peace. This Alliance will not rest on its laurels it will remain the vibrant organization which ties together the North American democracies and Europe in the common attempt to eliminate terrorism and to guarantee peace and stability for North America and Europe including its periphery.

I therefore hope that both the Americans as well as my fellow Europeans understand the recent crisis as the last wake-up call to save a happy marriage, the only liaison by the way which promises to give all of us a chance of achieving durable peace and lasting stability in the northern hemisphere of our globe.