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NATO and the European Union —Transformation and Security

The greatest challenge for the EU and NATO may prove to arise not from an external threat or out of the transatlantic tension, but be something completely different.

During the Cold War, NATO's role was to strengthen the position of the US, their Western European allies, and Canada. The European allies of the US and Canada participated simultaneously in the integration process, starting with economic cooperation and incrementally involving an increasing number of European states. Since the downfall of the USSR, the process has also encompassed Central Europe. Following the accession to NATO of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, other states have joined the process, and at the same time a special partnership between NATO and the Russian Federation has been created. Ukraine will also join NATO. The defensive alliance will thus include almost all European states and maintain the partnership with the Russian Federation. The evolution of the world system and the Russian Federation may also progress in such a way that both Russia and the remaining European states will attain NATO membership, but conjecture about this stage is beyond the scope of the present considerations.

NATO is undergoing a process of enlargement, which is simultaneously resulting in the growth of its internal diversity. This diversity is also increasing due to the ongoing European integration, as the EU develops specific functions of a state by institutionalising its foreign and defence policies and developing criteria for EU security. This involves its transformation or confederalisation and the scope of these process also falls within the NATO orbit. Thus

most EU member states are presently integrating within two parallel systems, which is a source of certain complications.

The transformation, growth, and internal diversity of NATO also comprises a functional evolution, which translates into a growing number of tasks. The experience of the Afghan operation will not be the last of its kind. We can easily imagine, for instance, various operations in the Near East, from an “Iraqi” one to an “Arab-Israeli” one. New functions involve more than just a new territorial aspect. At least some of them, as operations (interventions) motivated by humanitarian reasons or of a pre-ventive nature, will probably also constitute unique cases from the point of view of international law. Some may be conducted on a long-term basis, which will be more risky and will be a function of the hegemonic policy of the US.

One of the possible responses to the challenges which NATO is presently facing is modernisation. Modernisation of NATO is necessary, even though the process generates particularly strong tensions. NATO requires efficient military forces and needs a command structure adequate to the modernized forces, as well as more soldiers equipped in a more up-to-date manner. Presently the number of soldiers participating in NATO operations is 55 thousand. Taking into account the entire personnel turnover, the total NATO headcount is a quarter of a million soldiers. The official headcount, however, is approximately 1.4 million persons (not including the reservists). Then there is the problem of what is referred to in the NATO staff headquarters as usability or deployability, as we are more capable of producing ten rather than twenty NATO divisions, and future tasks may require greater force. Lord Robertson also often mentions capability to act, meaning also sustainability—the ability of a military force to remain in a given military theatre territory for the required (often long) period of time, measured in units of time and criteria of task fulfilment. Increasing the capability to act requires better weapons, which needs to be worked out by the respective Ministries of Finance of the member states. It is also necessary to take into account the changing legal conditions which accompany technical progress; we need regulations concerning patents and copyrights as well as new US legislation regarding the exportation and protection of state secrets. We need to coordinate the use of licences for equipment produced in the USSR. It is also absolutely necessary that we do something more to decrease the probability of an error-induced nuclear attack (one of the subjects to be considered

by the Russian Federation-NATO Council). We must take into account the inevitability of bilateral agreements between the US and some NATO member states regarding missile defence. There will be a problem concerning the location of command headquarters. Nevertheless the creation of the NATO Response Force has already been initiated. While we will now have to face the issue of incorporating of new members, the “old ones” also still have a lot to do.

The conclusion to be drawn from the intervention in Iraq is the same for all, i.e. that it is necessary to organise a transition phase between the end of the main operation and the transfer of sovereign power to local institutions. This phase requires the participation of a considerable number of personnel with an administrative background, and such formations have been eliminated since the end of World War II. The US used to have 15 thousand active soldiers of this kind in their occupation zone in Germany alone; now the number has probably been reduced to no more than one thousand (Civil Affairs personnel) in Fort Bragg ready to be transported by air, maybe two hundred of whom are now in Afghanistan. There used to be an institution called the School of Military Government in Charlottesville. I do not know what the idea of liquidating the Peacekeeping Institute in the War College of the American military forces is supposed to improve.¹ However, this status quo opens up a new area of activity for the European NATO members (and Canada?). This is an area where we can do something which is urgently needed, which will provoke no conflict in transatlantic relations, and which can be realized quickly. We can at the same time cooperate with the Iraqis, including many of those who recently wore a military uniform or the attire of state officials. Such cooperation will necessarily be difficult in a country whose people compare the very low casualties of the intervention military forces in this ultramodern and rapid war with their own high civilian and military casualties, interpreting the disproportion as the symptom of an “unjust” civilisational advantage enjoyed by the foreigners. We are dealing with a clash of cultures in Iraq. The problem of the army’s capabilities in the area of state administration in post-war foreign operations concerns all NATO members, not only those states with a current military presence in Iraq. It also concerns the current NATO presence in Afghanistan, as well as our readiness to be

¹ Since the article was published in Polish, the decision has been reversed.

present elsewhere tomorrow. I do not, however, suppose that the problem will be solved by the military alone.

Poland's participation in the NATO transformation is also connected with our participation in the ongoing EU enlargement, with our own transformation, and with our relations with the USA. An attitude of total support for the government of Republican President George W. Bush is fiercely demonstrated in Poland by the Social Democrats who are presently in office, placing Poland at the side of its American ally when the ally most needs it. Let us hope that the effect of this situation will be a symmetry of benefits and the achievement of goals beyond the requirements of legitimisation and the psychology of politics.

As regards the international and public discussion on the relationship between future NATO tasks and EU evolution, Lord Robertson stated in Warsaw on October 27 this year that the problem consists of facilitating cooperation and avoiding rivalry between NATO and the EU. He also noted that the adopted solution to the problem assumes that the EU will have access to NATO resources in those cases in which NATO does not intend to take its own action. It may be presumed that a further development of the related procedures will now take place and that NATO is facing a period of development, albeit rather slow due to its dependence on a number of factors.

Robertson's words may constitute a good practical directive. The NATO Secretary General and Chairman of the North-Atlantic Council always emphasizes that the tasks assigned to NATO should be feasible. It's hard to disagree with this, but what will not be discussed today will not be assigned tomorrow. Let us then discuss scenarios.

The long-term institutional goal should not be the tactical avoidance of NATO/EU international parallelism, but its strategic elimination. One scenario could assume that all European NATO member states become EU members and all EU member states become NATO members, that the institutionalisation of EU policy becomes finalized (with specific state functions developed by the EU as a result of its confederalisation), and that the individual membership of European states in NATO is replaced with EU membership in NATO. Each NATO member (and there will be three of them) could then act individually or in a particular coalition including some member states if collective action of all members is not possible (through the exercise of a veto).

Another scenario is also possible, however, in which the EU's development of specific state functions will stop at more or less the present level (institutional stagnation), and the function of ensuring EU security will be still managed under the leadership of the USA—with "leadership" being the key word here, as this is the essence of hegemony. In this scenario it will be even more difficult to obtain the results sought in the aforementioned practical directive referred to by Robertson, as the concept of restricting the reformed NATO resources to the military sphere will raise even more doubts.

The difference between the former and the latter scenarios is also dependent on the dynamics of change in the world system. I predict that in some time, when the Asian powers develop further, the US will no longer be able to maintain the position of a solitary hegemonic power and will form a hegemonic tandem with the EU. However, this tandem may be based on various principles—such as the principle of balance of power between partners or one whereby one of them has the advantage. The latter, consisting in all probability of US advantage, will come about in the case of EU stagnation—first institutional, and consequently and subsequently demographic, scientific, and technological.

The transformation of transatlantic relations may progress in a different manner, but nothing can release us from the obligation to consider the long-term conditions of Poland's security in the EU. In the meantime, however, we are dealing with NATO modernization and its further enlargement and more extensive development of its functions. We are also dealing at the same time with the transformation of the EU.

Nothing should weaken NATO and the EU. We must, therefore, ensure that the aforementioned transformations do not result in even a momentary deterioration of our security. The transformation and the growing internal diversity in NATO, i.e. producing tensions and functional growth, a growing number of tasks etc., may relate to the way in which the allies' obligations are fulfilled, may influence their fulfilment, and may unfavourably change due to their fulfilment. After all the transformation, though necessary and desirable, also means movement, discussion, change, and lack of clarity, which in the opinion of a rogue state or terrorist force may create a convenient situation for the achievement of aggressive goals in a cunning way, such as an attack by a saboteur who decides that the transformation is distracting the attention of the NATO members and making it more difficult for us

to apply Article 5 and forces us to deploy our forces in individual, solitary actions. This, in turn, poses the question of the consequences for our security, i.e. that of Poland and our partners in the EU and NATO. The greatest threat to the EU and NATO members, and thus to Poland as well, may be a politically unclear conflict in the context of the NATO and EU transformation.² This is why the greatest challenge for us all—both in NATO and the EU—is to manage the transformation processes in such a way that will avoid the weakening of our security.

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² One possible change in the nature of the threat, not very probable today, is presented by Zbigniew Brzezinski in “Polska w okresie przemiany geostrategicznej” (Poland in a period of geostrategic change), *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, vol. 2, No. 3 (7) 2002, pp. 13–14.