

Kenneth Allard

Précis of remarks to the Warsaw Conference

Let me begin my remarks by noting what a privilege it is to be in this place and in this distinguished company. If that sounds like the usual comment one makes on such occasions, then please remember that it comes from a soldier who spent over four years of his life in NATO, wondering about those armies of the Warsaw Pact. A soldier who remembers as well the joy of watching as the Solidarity movement and Poland's strong religious heritage provided history's most compelling answer to the question once reportedly asked by Stalin: How many divisions does the Pope have?

It was also one of the greatest honors of my military career to spend some of its final days serving alongside the Polish contingent during the IFOR deployment to Bosnia. It was one of those great ironies of history that those superb Polish troops were part of a combined Nordic Brigade that was led by a Swede, subordinated under US operational control that answered in turn to a British-led NATO command there in the former Yugoslavia.

I should also adhere to the British tradition of "declaring an interest" at the start of one's remarks. Having spent a great part of my military career in its ranks, my interest is that I believe in NATO and what it represents—the partnership of free people united in the common defense of the Western heartland. NATO also embodies one of the great lessons of the 20th Century - that Europe and United States need each other.

That complex interdependency is an overarching point to which I will return presently. However, our conference theme deals with strategic questions of the 21st C as they affect Europe. My task here is to present an American perspective. So let me suggest to the conference that there are four strategic challenges that are shaping American views about future security policy.

The shift toward Asia

It is a truism that the flag follows trade and for some years the bulk of American trade has reflected our roots as a Pacific as well as an Atlantic power. Despite its current difficulties, Asia is a

current and future economic powerhouse. It is also a source of political instability, much of it linked to the uncertainty surrounding China and future Chinese ambitions. It is much too soon to do as some have done in identifying China as the emergent threat to American strategic interests in the 21st C. But it is also true that American strategists have begun to re-examine their fundamental assumptions about what such an emergent threat would require. Issues of logistics, transportation, equipment and force structure in the future Pacific theater are now being raised, much as the thinking of a generation ago led to the well-developed plans for European reinforcement which were such a staple of Cold War planning and defense assumptions.

The growing political and economic maturity of Europe

Freed from Cold War strictures, it is natural to see European economic and political integration growing more powerful, seemingly by the day. With the former East-West line of confrontation now having become a zone of engagement (and with Mr. Milosovitch safely out of office) there is also a sense that most of the major questions regarding European security have been settled – at least for the time being. In light of our global responsibilities, some Americans are increasingly able to persuade themselves that Europe can finally fend for itself. And for Europeans, the classic problem of burden-sharing is being transformed into the more fundamental question of what Europe must do to be prepared to defend its own interests.

The rapprochement between Russia and the PRC

I have the privilege of working for an internet intelligence company called Stratfor.com (www.stratfor.com) that conducts strategic political-military analyses. For some time now, we have been pointing out the budding relationship between Russia and the PRC. This trend was most recently illustrated when the Russians stepped in to offer the Chinese the airborne surveillance system denied them when American lobbying succeeded in canceling delivery of a comparable Israeli system. What this partnership may mean is far from clear, but it is likely to be used as a

counterweight to what is seen as American hegemony, especially as it affect Pacific Rim security issues.

The search for more usable military instruments

This search is natural enough when there are so many new dimensions of international security to contend with. It takes many forms, from the technology-based “revolution in military affairs” to the new missions of peacekeeping in so many areas of political conflict. It also includes enabling regional security organizations around the world to assume more of the burden of policing local conflicts. And in NATO it is fueling the need for more streamlined military structures – in defiance of the standard principle that “bureaucratic layering is the first law of combined operations.”

These four trends are beginning to shape American strategic thought, even though that debate has barely begun. But it is comparatively easy to understand why Europe seems to be on the “back burner” as more urgent regional security problems are considered. My task here is to argue that we should be alert to any tendency to let that perspective, however justified, get out of hand. In addition to worrying about the pressure being exerted by a shift in American strategy away from Europe, I am also concerned about that trend being exacerbated on this continent by the cavalier suggestion that Europe would be better off without direct American military influence.

That threat seems to be coming from two directions: Russia and France. For Russia, this concept is a natural extension of Soviet policy that sought with admirable consistency throughout the Cold War to drive a wedge between the US and its European partners. For France, which sometimes seems to espouse similar views, the motivations seem rooted in some equally enduring psycho-nationalist fantasies. But no matter the source, we should remain resolutely focused on keeping European – American security linkages intact. There is clearly much more that Europe can do for itself. But the EU should not become a substitute for NATO. And the monies spent by the defense ministries of our European partners should be focused on the perennial issues of modernization and interoperability, as well as the new challenges of peacekeeping.

Now if that theme sounds familiar...well it should. We cannot afford to miss the very great opportunities of the 21st C by spending more time and treasure re-learning the harsh lessons of the Twentieth. Those lessons—General MacArthur once pointed out in a different context—re written in red from the Argonne forests to the Normandy beaches. And in our own day, the tragedy of Bosnia should remind us of the futility of imagining either Europe or the US on its own. To conclude by returning to my major premise: Europe and the US need each other because their mutual security in the 21st C will be what it was in the Twentieth: indivisible.