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ALLIED STRATEGY AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

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It is a privilege to be the first speaker at this timely conference which again testifies to the significant contribution, both national and Alliance-wide, which the Institute for Strategic and International Studies makes to the development of political thought. In this regard, may I particularly acknowledge the presence of Senator Sam Nunn, whom I have the good fortune to have as co-panellist. My assignment is so broad that it covers a good deal of the subject matter of the entire conference; it would be counter-productive to attempt to fill the bill. I thus intend to be fairly selective in my treatment of the topic. If a NATO officer is called upon to speak on a subject matter, like the present one, it would be foolish to expect much novelty or surprise. Listeners can safely expect to be told that Allied strategy is ideally suited and intrinsically stable, and that transatlantic relations are in a state of more or less permanent bliss. As an institutional speaker, of course, I have to keep as close as possible to the weighted average of the views of 16 Allied nations. That, by necessity, makes my remarks more descriptive than analytical and on the whole sadly unexciting.

Nevertheless, the enquiry implicit in my topic is a crucial one. In this period of unprecedented change for the Alliance when many cherished assumptions about the East/West relationship, the nature of the Soviet threat and the structure of the international community are called in question, it is particularly important to determine where the stable features are. The least one can say is that the stability of NATO's strategy is a desideratum of the highest order, for the cohesion of the Alliance and for the degree of reassurance needed to address the comprehensive processes of current change. My talk will thus be about stability and its prospects.

There is obviously an inseparable relationship between strategy and its transatlantic dimension. At the time when the Alliance approaches its 40th anniversary, it becomes even more aware of its uniqueness, of the historically singular fact that this free association of nations has been holding together with its huge geographical spread from Hawaii to the confines of Persia, with the Atlantic Ocean as its geographical divide. To ensure transatlantic cohesion is no doubt the most vital task the Alliance has had to perform throughout its existence, and the more so since the strategic principle on which collective defence hinges is characterised by a basic structural unevenness. We refer to it as the transatlantic bargain: the commitment of the United States to contribute to the collective defence of the Alliance with US nuclear weapons, while the European Allies, in addition to Britain's independent nuclear potential, contribute most of the conventional resources. While the central security problem of the Alliance lies in Europe, the weapons that most effectively contain it, are American.

The strategy and the mechanisms to implement it overcome this structural unevenness by coupling the two geographical parts of the Alliance together. Thus, strategy stresses strategic unity and the indivisibility of the security of all Allies. NATO's institutions serve transatlantic cohesion: the dense network of political consultations on the way to collective decision-making, specifically the nuclear consultations in the Nuclear Planning Group and in the nuclear phase of crisis management, the concept of nuclear solidarity, i.e. the involvement of the non-nuclear Allies in various nuclear rôles, and most clearly the integrated military system culminating in the military command structure. SACEUR's function is a living embodiment of NATO's attempt to overcome the structural unevenness of the Alliance and to provide coupling. SACEUR personifies the US nuclear guarantee for Europe while, as the Commander-in-Chief of the US Forces forward-deployed in Europe, SACEUR is also the guarantor of the aermanency of the US military commitment to the collective defence in the entire European Allied area. NATO's political organisation and command structure also provide the core instrument through which the European Allies, on their part, seek to exercise influence on strategy and arms control decisions and on the general exercise of the US world power rôle. NATO's command structure and its strategies are interdependent.

Thus, NATO's institutional framework creates the link between the two transatlantic sides of the Alliance on the one hand, and strategy on the other.

Let me now lay out some of the features which tend to encourage the stability of both, the stability of strategy over time, and the political stability of the transatlantic relationship.

There are many such stabilising features. In the first place, there is the stabilising and cohesive force of NATO itself, as an institution that provides a number of comforts to governments. The long, reassuring habit of doing business together, based on the communality of values and a shared overall world view has shaped in a continuing and dynamic way Allied perceptions on both sides of the Atlantic. This reassuring effect is strengthened by the confidence which has flown especially in later years from the conviction that NATO has had a unique record of success and that, in the historical evolution of the East/West relationship; it is the West who enjoys the tail winds of history. But NATO also protects against temptations. Ministers can find reassurance and mutual support on the part of their peers when they come to NATO and they can use NATO's display of collective firmness as a political tool against the pressures of policy at home. NATO indeed forms a bulwark against those recurrent waves of fashionable doubts regarding our strategic tenets and policies on which the strategic

community likes to feed. The institutional network holds surprisingly firm against the oscillating constraints of domestic politics of the members.

This has given strategy a degree of consistency which has greatly contributed to the stability of the strategic relationship with the East, and to the stability of the East/West relationship in general. Flexible response especially is the finely honed compromise between the need of the European Allies to enjoy credible deterrent support from the US, enabling them to keep conventional capabilities vastly inferior to those of the East and yet to assure forward-defence, on the one hand, and US reluctance to make a nuclear commitment that would immediately involve the US continent. Institutional gravity has re-enforced the view that there is no alternative for this compromise and that it needs to be maintained with at most small gradual adjustments such as are contained in the Political Guidelines of 1986 or NATO's current attempt to restructure, at a low level, the non-landbased leg of deterrence in the INF range.

Beyond institutional strengths, the most senior levels of the Alliance have devoted particular attention to this strategy and the transatlantic bond. At the Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government in March 1988 NATO's strategy was forcefully confirmed by the participants. Deterrence for the prevention of war based upon an appropriate mix of adequate nuclear and conventional forces was reaffirmed without a doubt and the summitteers affirmed that the presence in Europe of the conventional and nuclear forces of the US (and the conventional forces of Canada) provides the essential linkage with the US strategic deterrent. That this presence must and will be maintained is a ringing confirmation of the validity of the transatlantic bargain. The Summit also affirmed that conventional and nuclear weapons will continue to be kept up-to-date where necessary. Amplifying on that language, Ministers from those Allied countries that endorse flexible response, at the subsequent meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group, affirmed NATO's need to possess diversified, survivable and operationally flexible nuclear forces in Europe across the entire spectrum of ranges which take account of the scale and quality of the threat. This means that the Allies have excluded any thought of a nuclear-free Europe, and of a third zero option, – the elimination of remaining US land-based nuclear weapons on the continent, unilateral or negotiated in arms control. By contrast, they have clearly approved – albeit in a non-quantified way – the need to maintain nuclear weapons up-to-date, and to prevent their degradation by technical obsolescence. This high-level affirmation of strategic tenets, in the face of public doubts generated by the SDI debate, the ripples of the Reykjavik Summit, the public echo of the INF Treaty in some quarters, and Gorbachev's beckoning for a non-nuclear world by the year 2000, has a very specific quality; nobody

can walk away from it in any of its features. There is a political self-binding effect which nobody inside or outside the Alliance, can underestimate. In its 40 years, NATO has had a mere 8 substantive Summit meetings. The fitting metaphor to characterise Summit language is a papal encyclica.

Conceptually, the very nature of deterrence provides another element of stability. Allied strategic planners have predicated the effectiveness of flexible response upon a highly stratified arsenal of nuclear deterrent weapons covering a multitude of options in terms of ranges, stationing modes and means of delivery. From this diversified and operationally flexible nuclear force derives the credibility of deterrence and NATO's confidence that a military conflict can be prevented and, if deterrence fails, contained ate the lowest feasible level. The painstaking effort of military planners to provide this seamless web of deterrence, praiseworthy as it is in strategic terms, does however rely on the prudent principle of built-in redundancy. If deterrence is to impress upon the decision-maker on the side of the potential aggressor that both NATO's resolve and its technical means will inflict upon him incalculable and unacceptable damage in case of aggression, then deterrence is in the first place a politico-psychological category and not a technico-military one. This means that the decision-maker on the other side will not be deterred by one single element of the deterrent ladder but by the overall effect of the conventional and nuclear deterrent force that is stacked against him. This means that deterrence has a large margin of manoeuvre for the deterring side. NATO's strategy can very well remain stable even if changes or diminutions occur in the precise structuring of the deterrent force. Since the test of deterrence is in the perception of the beholder, he may well overlook some minor holes in the deterrent texture. Thus deterrence can be constructed in many ways. This degree of flexibility of its composition makes the strategy relatively crisis-resistent and stable.

Looking beyond the past and the present to the future, it is clear that the strategy can only continue to display these stable features in the longer run if the political understructure also is firm, if the political dimensions of the transatlantic relations remain stable. The inquiry into the degree of stability of strategy is related intimately therefore to the inquiry into the stability and possible changes of the general political relationship among the Allies. And here the key issue is clear: whether the political commitment to Europe on the American side and the readiness to fulfill the US side of the "bargain" are still as strong, and likely to remain so, as they originally were. On the European side the enquiry must focus on evolving European perceptions of the transatlantic partnership and on the question whether continuing commitment on the

US side is still likely to be matched by the European readiness to accept nuclear protection and to provide the foundations of European solidarity on which it rests.

The solidity of the general political underpinnings for a pro-Alliance stand is easy to demonstrate in the US. There is excellent material from polls to prove that there is no variation of the strong sentiment on the part of the Americans that there is a communality of values with the Europeans and that the feeling of friendship for America's closest Allies has not diminished. There is also a continued view that Europe is vital to America's security and that the US commitment to Europe serves America's own interests. Americans may now feel less inclined to send troops for outside involvements and generally there may be more doubt about the use of force in international relations. But the commitment to the basic idea of the Alliance with its reminder of historical US ties and political and geographic interdependence is unbroken. In fact, there is today a welcome coincidence of views between the US and the Allies on many of the major features of the international system. Transatlantic views on the challenges of the Gorbachev era – and how to respond –, on arms control and on the objectives to pursue in Eastern Europe and vis-à-vis the Soviet Union have rarely coincided more than at present, so that the various mechanisms in the Alliance that are to make sure that none of the transatlantic partners stray away from the medium line, need not be invoked. The growing conviction, on either side of the Atlantic, that we are likely to face a long-drawn further period of détente and an enhancement of the co-operative features of the East/West relationship re-enforces the present unity. Testifying to this unity, the US have willingly submitted over the last few years to an exemplary consultative process in NATO on strategic and arms control matters which has helped to ensure parallelism of Allied policies. No out-of-area issues, such as have troubled the Alliance through decades of painful debate, currently beset NATO's consultative processes, and none seems presently in sight. Rather, concerted actions of Allies in the Gulf have produced a serene and up-beat atmosphere.

The larger pro-European trends in American society also must not be overlooked. It is interesting that exactly under a US Administration that was so clearly, from the origins of its main exponents, orientated towards the Pacific, a policy has resulted that had the interests of Allied Europe particularly at heart; nobody has recently seen the need for a "Year of Europe", such as seemed required 15 years ago. In a curious reverse process, the European and US life styles have also become more similar. If Europe submitted to "Americanisation" immediately after the war, US life styles are at present Europeanised to an unexpected extent. The fears attached to the advent of the famous

successor generation have never materialised and even the demographic and ethnic changes in the US so far have not affected US perspectives.

This is en encouraging basis for continued fruitful transatlantic relations and for future successful management of the transatlantic bargain; but even the most exuberant NATO representative cannot overlook some of the possible future challenges as well.

There is first the question of a fair share of the Alliance burden. From its status of a periodic trouble-maker in the Alliance this topic has now moved to the level of a serious long-term challenge of Alliance management, never again to respond to mere placebo treatment or to disappear altogether. NATO's recent report "Enhancing Alliance Collective Security" analyses the shared rôles, risks and responsibilities in a novel manner, providing an objective and often rigorous standard for measurement of performance by the Allies. It conveys the harsh insight that many Allies have not done enough and that there is considerable room for improvement for individual contributions to the Alliance and, more importantly, for collective gestures for better resource management and improved returns from the defence investment. From the report it also emerges that the burden-sharing issue is by no means a transatlantic problem alone. The pacifying effect of this piece of NATO’s work on US legislators and the new Administration will depend on the pace of real improvement it will generate in Allied defence economics and resource management. If the report is not to be taken simply as an end in itself, but rather as a challenge and yardstick for achievement, then the hope must be that progress will be made as a result of this first systematic effort to move towards a better balance of burdens and benefits in the Alliance. There is a real danger that US/European relations in the Alliance will turn sour if appropriate efforts are not forthcoming. That said, it should be recognised that in the nature of things it will be difficult to affect the level of nations' military and financial contributions and the broad, politically sensitive elements of burden and benefit sharing in any significant way in the very short run.

The true importance of the burden-sharing issue and the dimensions of its future development can only be understood against the background of deep-seated and intense misgivings of the US Government and Congress on the wider issues of economy and trade. Here, the European Communities' plan for completion of the Internal Market by 1993 appears in the process of creating almost traumatic fears, fears that may spill over into US positions in the Alliance, especially if the European Commission takes a hard line over the extent to which member countries may waive import duties on defence equipment and on what basis it can be done under community law. As far as the Common Market's further evolution goes, myth needs to

be separated from reality. Americans must be brought to understand that the current efforts to carry European economic unity a quantum leap forward is likely to produce only relatively limited results on the continuum of slow development towards European unification, probably with only minor detrimental effects on trade. On the contrary, to the extent that a growth burst will come of the 1993 venture, transatlantic trade will have the chance to grow rather than shrink. The captivating slogans about the completion of the Internal Market should be seen not as heralds of a revolutionary change but rather as an effective internal rallying mechanism for the considerable effort needed to overcome national egotisms. The evils of transatlantic misunderstandings should be exorcised more effectively by a process of mutual explanation.

However, on the question of import duties on defence equipment, it seems fairly clear that the European Commission's recent proposal, as it stands, would mean that equipments regarded as dual use including small arms and ammunition, explosives, non-armoured vehicles and electronic equipment, which are exempted at present, would become dutiable. This would clearly be detrimental to the defence budgets of some EC NATO members and to the objectives of armaments co-operation, with adverse consequences for burden-sharing and Alliance cohesion.

There is also the question of what the US sees as the risk of a trend to provide excessive Western commercial credits to the Soviet Union with the accompanying fear that our chance to force the Soviet system in the long run into an even more fundamental rethinking of its security premises because of economic constraints, might be bargained away for easy and temporary gain. This US apprehension, however, could be attenuated if Gorbachev continues to demonstrate his readiness to build-down his military posture and to accommodate western arms control proposals.

These economic worries also need to be seen in the wider context of American perceptions of the US rôle in the world. Theories of US relative decline and economic overstretch which dominated the discussion as recently as a year ago, however, may be receding and America may be more conscious of its undiminished economic dynamic. Still, the awareness of major economic disparities, symbolised by the two deficits, vis-à-vis the emerging economic powers of the Pacific Basin and an emerging Europe are real and perceptionally important elements that need to be factored into intra-Alliance policies.

Then there are the characteristics of an obviously emerging new security environment, – not perhaps "strategic pluralism" and a host of new sinister threats to US and Allied security, but still, a number of new, uncomfortable factors on the global security scene.

One should not belittle the challenges and new threats these may offer, but there are also the more re-assuring perspectives of a more co-operative Soviet Union, the simultaneous disengagement of the two world powers from regional conflict, a greater resulting autonomy of regional tensions and perhaps, – in the East/West relationship as in most other parts of the world – a slow diminution of the military factor. This would indicate that out of area issues, in the precise military sense of the term, could become gradually less cumbersome for the Alliance. Certainly, Europe, as a natural consequence of its growing economic strength and political consciousness, will have more and more reason to act beyond the continent in support of its interests. In the future, the Allies may be able to develop new patterns of co-operation and political division of labour in working for regional and global stability with non-military means, each in areas where they can work best. Thus, perhaps with the exception of the Middle East, the out-of-area problems of the Alliance may tend to become less complex to solve while new patterns of Alliance leadership and a better division of labour in foreign policy make a more effective contribution to intra-Alliance burden-sharing.

That leads me to a discussion of those features of the security environment that impinge more directly upon strategy and Allied defence policies.

It is obviously not for me to provide a comprehensive scenario for all further developments in Alliance strategy. I will thus merely examine the interface between the transatlantic relationship and Allied strategy. In this logic I will limit myself to three developments of relevance: the stationing mode for North American forces in Europe, the future of short-range nuclear weapons and the implications of conventional stability, at lower levels, if ever it can be achieved, in the Atlantic-to-the-Urals area.

Acceptance by the European Allies of stationed US/Canadian troops and the provision of a hospitable and militarily meaningful environment to them are vital elements of the transatlantic strategic bargain. To anyone but the Allies themselves who have successfully managed to reconcile the notion of sovereignty with the security imperatives of accommodating stationed troops over 40 years, this component of Allied defence would seem to be an abnormality. Yet, the collective security of the Alliance vitally depends on this geographical transfer of armed forces and the implied effect of coupling.

However, while accepting the principle, many European Allies have, over time, developed varying degrees of disenchantment, and the US and the Alliance as such have had to pass through critical times, especially in periods when bilateral stationing

agreements with the US were up for renegotiation. The misunderstandings and atmospheric disturbances that developed during US-Spanish bilateral negotiations in the aftermath of Spain's accession to NATO are still fresh on everybody's mind, and negotiations on the renewal of the Greek/American stationing agreement still portend a difficult final phase. Yet, the worst in this series of renegotiations seems to be over and the Spanish decision to terminate stationing rights for the F16 Fighter Wing has, thanks to the good sense and loyalty of the Italian Government, even been turned into a modest triumph for Alliance solidarity. The increasing difficulties that the German population has concerning training patterns and exercises of Allied forces on German soil may offer a new challenge to American patience. But it is to be hoped that the immaculate, long-standing record of the Germans in hosting an enormous number of foreign stationed forces and the general spirit of hospitality for these troops will prevail over temporary misgivings and excessive interpretations of German sovereignty. The European Allies must never forget that neither do they extend charity by allowing stationed Allied troops on their soil, nor do these troops themselves come for charity's sake. Common security is at stake and there is no doubt that it can be managed with tact and good sense on either side.

Given the somewhat ambivalent view which the Europeans take of American deployments, be they nuclear or conventional – too much appears as a burden on sovereignty, too little as an ominous indication of American indifference or loss of commitment – fears about impending American troop withdrawals may very well occur simultaneously with protests about their activities. Both the outgoing and the new US Administration have made it clear that even in the case of increasing difficulties in the defence budget every attempt would be made to maintain the American military engagement in Europe at current levels. And, indeed, at a time when conventional stability negotiations are just about to begin, everything argues for steadfastness in order to maintain all possible bargaining chips for later agreed reductions. It may thus be relatively easy to withstand the siren calls for unilateral NATO reduction measures in the aftermath of Gorbachev's New York speech. However, the question of actual US troop levels and their preservation should not be dramatised and eventual consequences of the US budgetary strains not interpretated necessarily as a loss in US strategic commitment.

The future configuration of future US nuclear short-range missiles is, as everybody knows, uncertain and the political difficulties in updating and reconfiguring current arsenals are in the forefront of current debate. Against the apprehension which the subject evokes, it is good to recall the existing consensus: that short-range nuclear

weapons are needed to underpin forward defence and to maintain a full complement of US troops in Europe, that only up-to-date weapons can be effective deterrents, that there must be – at a point to be determined – an arms control perspective to Allied decisions on short-range weapons, in the precise sense of the Reykjavik communiqué, and that steadfastness in the implementation of the Montebello Decision is an essential prerequisite for the success of any potential arms control approach in this field. There is also agreement that the future reconfiguration of the short-range arsenal must evolve in a step-by-step approach, i.e. according to a well conceived calendar.

The importance of this issue for US perceptions of the validity of the transatlantic bargain is clear. For the US side the acceptance of nuclear weapons by the Europeans, for their own protection, remains a key test, a test which the Europeans have admirably met at the time of INF deployment. Once can thus not overrate the symbolic as well as the strategic importance of a successful implementation of Montebello, under the conditions of the post-INF area. Yet, the problem cannot but benefit from deliberate dedramatisation. It is particularly important in my personal view to regard the question of SNF modernisation and deployment not as a one-stroke decision for or against, but as a carefully managed process with many phases and subphases, where the Allies will emit, at each stage, precisely the signals which the US Congress and the new Administration need and which, at the same time, the domestic political traffic in Europe can bear. That means that every decision in a longer decision sequence has to be taken at its time, and that co-operative management, in the Alliance and by bilateral consultations is the key requirement for the solution of this thorny problem. Thus it will be possible to decide when, how much and in what configuration SNF will have to be developed, produced and deployed and the arms control perspective will have to be factored in with equal subtlety. If this co-operative management is forthcoming, any threat to the stability of the strategy can in all likelihood be avoided.

My third point is more speculative and is prompted by the surprising perspectives which Gorbachev’s UN speech has all of a sudden opened up. An important test for Allied strategy and transatlantic involvement may come if one makes radical assumptions about where the Gorbachev train is moving. One possible interpretation of Gorbachev’s New York decision to undertake major unilateral reductions in significant areas is, that he wished to heighten the chances of the forthcoming negotiations; leaving the entire necessary build-down to a negotiated solution would have overtaxed the CST, and the enormously asymmetric package might have been unacceptable to the domestic Soviet players, if undertaken in one stroke. If one assumes that Gorbachev’s UN move is only

a first indicator of a genuine strategic turn-about on the Soviet side or if one assumes that the CST negotiations see unexpectedly early and complete success, the core problem of Allied security will all of a sudden come nearer its solution. This raises the question of what the future of the nuclear and conventional mix in Allied strategy will be, a mix which has too often been justified in Western public diplomacy by the enormous conventional superiority of the East. There is no doubt that such a dramatic reduction in the threat level will generate persistent calls in the domestic political arena of many European countries for the removal of the nuclear component – at least at the substrategic level – in Allied strategy and perhaps equally strongly for the reduction of the North American conventional presence in Europe. Under such a scenario it is particularly important to insist, on both sides of the Atlantic, that the strategy will not change, if the threat level does, and that conventional parity can indeed, as the Summit declaration formulated it, bring important benefits for stability but that only the nuclear element can confront a potential aggressor with an unacceptable risk, thus providing stability in a higher sense.

This means that the Allies will have to place the rationale for their future arsenals of nuclear weapons, including short-range weapons, not on changing patterns of parity and force relationships but on the ultimate role of nuclear weapons as the guarantor of stability and the preserver of peace. Numerical levels of nuclear weapons, as of conventional forces may have to be adjusted down in such an eventuality, but their generic presence would remain essential. Finally, it is wise to recall that even with a far reaching process of conventional arms control the Soviet Union will not become a demilitarised or a military power but is likely to remain a mighty military factor, even though the relative importance of the military component in the East/West relationship may further recede.

There is thus no case, or prospect, for the strategy of the Alliance to become obsolete, even under the far-reaching assumptions of such a scenario.