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THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY DIMENSIONS: THE CLASSICAL PARADIGM REVISITED

"TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS IN TURMOIL: NATO AND THE FUTURE
OF EUROPE"

*Geoffrey Smith**

You have invited me to talk about the condition of transatlantic relations — NATO in turmoil. There is one fundamental reason for the difficulties NATO has been experiencing — the problems in relations between the United States and its European allies. We are, quite simply, paying the price for the end of the Cold War. It is an outcome, of course, that we have all wanted, but none of us would have ever wanted the difficulties we are now experiencing. None of us would have wished that the Cold War would have not ended. However, it certainly does make life more difficult in certain respects.

For NATO, it removes what has always been regarded as the very justification for its existence — to provide a balance in Europe against a hostile Soviet Union. Now there is no Soviet Union. We are not even sure whether Russia is going to be hostile or benign. None of us can

* The following biographical material is contained in MICHAEL A. MOSHER, *GLOBAL PARADIGMS: THE IMPACT OF CULTURES ON TRADE AND DIPLOMACY — SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS* (Univ. of Tulsa 1995):

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For a complete summary of the Global Paradigms proceedings, see MOSHER, *supra*.

be certain about that at this moment. For most people looking at the situation in Europe today, it is very different than what it was in the years of the Cold War. There is no sense, living in Europe, of the threat that the Soviet Union used to present. It is a very difficult matter to hold together an international alliance without there being an obvious, easily recognizable threat. So long as the Soviet Union was there, providing that threat, none of the allies, the United States and its European counterparts, wanted to risk jeopardizing the security relationship between us. It was that realization that stopped any one of us from pushing disagreement on other matters, be it economics, trade, or anything else, too far. There was always the consideration: "Be careful of the security relation. That is what matters. Do not run the risk." First of all, if the Cold War had still been going, the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations would have been completed earlier and with less tension and bitterness than existed before a settlement was reached. Now, without the old Soviet threat, it becomes much more difficult, not only to hold the alliance together in the old sense, but to cope with a range of new challenges that have now emerged. Let me list first Bosnia.

Second, there are differences about the enlargement of NATO. Should NATO take into membership the countries of Eastern Europe that are now clamoring to join? The countries that used to be part of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet empire, now free, are desperately anxious to preserve their freedom and are wanting to come in. Should we not say, "Yes, we welcome you to membership?" If that is what they want, and that is what they believe, then we will secure their freedom in the future. That is what they want, but is it quite as simple as that? This is another issue that has come up now and presents a new and fresh challenge. This is because there are different views and different voices among the membership of the alliance.

A third new challenge is that the different members of NATO are now worried about different security dangers. Germany is particularly concerned about preserving stability in Central and Eastern Europe. Its eyes are focused there in terms of its own security concerns. France, Italy, and Spain look south. They are concerned about the problems presented by Islamic fundamentalists in North Africa and the Middle East, but particularly North Africa. In each case — the Germans looking east, the French, Italians, and Spanish looking south — are concerned about the possibility of instability and of uncontrolled migration, which would cause social and economic problems for their societies. Although there are concerns in each case about the specific kinds of threat to their society, each is looking in different directions. No longer are all the members of NATO concerned, above all, with the same kind of threat from the same kind of direction. This is bound to

cause, as it has done, certain strains within the alliance.

The French, in particular, feel that the United States is neither as sympathetic or as sensitive to its concerns: the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria, for example. There is a feeling that the other countries in the alliance are not as aware as they ought to be of the dangers and problems that we in Europe face. Which raises the question that some countries have of the continued relevance of the alliance in this sense — not all together, but in this sense of their concern that their partners are not sharing the same sense of awareness of the problems that they used to share in the days of the Cold War.

Then finally, among the new challenges there is the growing importance of Asia. Asia seems to eclipse a purely transatlantic alliance, particularly when the United States, the largest, most powerful country in the alliance, is depended upon by all of NATO. It is the United States that is particularly concerned about the rising importance of Asia. Now, if one looks at the new challenges and puts all of these new challenges in the context of the new circumstances due to the end of the Cold War, it is easy to see how NATO could collapse. Before you conclude that I believe that it is bound to collapse, before we conclude that it might not matter if we were to see the death of NATO because it has served its purpose or achieved its historic aim, there are two fundamental questions we ought to ask ourselves.

The first is whether NATO really does still have a purpose in the circumstances of today or are we keeping it going simply from a mixture of habit and intellectual timidity? Are we simply afraid to see the new world as it really is? This is the first fundamental question that I think we ought to ask ourselves.

The second fundamental question is whether there still is a job for NATO to do. Do these new challenges present such difficulties, are they going to undermine harmony and comfortability within the alliance to such an extent that it will be impossible for NATO to be as effective in the future as it has been in the past?

First, does NATO have still a role in the world today? I believe it has. I think it has a double purpose. First of all, and here I am very much covering the very same kind of ground as Peter Rodman has but with a slightly different emphasis, I agree that we need to balance power in Europe. Whether Russia is hostile or not, we certainly need to have strength in Western Europe. I would put it in terms of an insurance policy. We do not know now whether Russia is going to be sour or not. Many Russian experts, and all of us, have probably heard many other Russian experts give their own prognostication on the future of Russia and the countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union. I am not going to attempt to hazard a guess at this moment about that future. I will only say that I do not believe that anybody,

however knowledgeable they may be about Russian history and Russian affairs in general, can be sure whether Russia is going to be a friendly nation or become sour and hostile in the future. However, it is wise for us to make sure that we have an insurance policy. When we pay premiums for health insurance, we do not know whether we are going to be sick, but it is wise to take out the insurance policy.

Equally, in the case of Russia, we know the military strength it possesses. We know that it is now in a politically unstable situation and that it is wise "to pay the insurance policy" and be in a position to balance Russian strength if that becomes necessary. Once NATO has been allowed to wither away and die, it will never be possible to revive it again. Once NATO is over, it will be dead. You will not be able to bring it back to life. As Peter mentioned, with minimal cost, I believe it is wise to keep NATO alive.

The second reason why I think it is wise to adopt the other purpose for NATO is that there are probably going to be a range of different security challenges in the future. Peter mentioned a number of the possibilities. I am not going to guess as to which of those possibilities is the most likely. I do believe, though, that we would be very unwise if we did not put ourselves in the position of being able to meet security challenges in the future. One of the conditions for meeting security challenges in the future is that the United States should be prepared to take action where it is necessary. But the other condition for the United States, intervening wherever there is a really serious challenge, is that the United States not be so alone. I do not think that you would have fought the Gulf War if there had been no allies taking part in that conflict with you. Without the engagement of allies beside you, it would not have been possible to get that vote through the Senate to authorize President Bush to take action. I think that there is a psychological need, and a very reasonable psychological need, for the United States to feel that it is not the only one bearing the burden of preserving stability in troubled spots where action is required. NATO is a mechanism for encouraging cooperation and the habit of working together and thinking together for international security. It facilitates cooperation outside the NATO area, as well as providing a mechanism for action outside that area.

But even if I am right on this, and even if there is this double purpose for NATO in the future, are the new challenges so great that they have destroyed the capacity for cooperation? Are they, in other words, terminal disagreements? I think all of them could be and none of them need to be. Let me just quickly, if I may, run down them again. The first is Bosnia. I cannot, in the time available, say anything very deep or significant or wide ranging on a tragedy of that nature. I just want to make two points. First, the main danger to NATO from

Bosnia, and the main danger to the alliance, is not failing to solve the problem. Tragic though that would be, the main danger is of a military involvement that fails and proves disastrous. It would be very easy indeed for any involvement in Bosnia, any intervention, to fail militarily because this is territory that is ideal for guerilla warfare. Any intervention that stood the slightest chance of success would have to be a fairly major exercise. It would have to include the United States; it would have to include us in Britain. We have troops and the French have troops on the ground operating for the United Nations for the moment, but the scale of NATO operation that would be required for effective NATO military intervention in Bosnia would be on a different scale altogether. I do not believe that any of us have got the political will to do that. Any intervention in Bosnia would be a major gamble with a high probability of failure. If we did intervene and fail, the risk for the alliance, the bitterness between one member country and another, would be very damaging and undermining.

Next is the question of enlargement. The case for enlargement is a very clear and simple one. I mentioned it a few minutes ago, but I want to put three considerations before you to suggest that it is not quite as simple as that. First, the enlargement of NATO, pushing the boundaries of NATO eastward closer and closer to the Russian borders, would cause, or at least encourage, precisely the development that we least want. That is the rise, the revival, of an aggressive Russian nationalism. That objection by itself would not be sufficient to counter my feeling that enlargement would be desirable if it were not for the two other factors.

One is that it would bring a new and sharp division between those countries aspiring to join NATO that were brought into alliance and those that were left outside, whether permanently or temporarily. This would not matter, of course, unless there was a hostile Russia. After all, there is not much point in enlarging NATO unless one fears the real possibility that there might be a hostile Russia. What would happen with the enlargement is that if Russia were to become sour again, we would find that those countries that were most exposed and least likely to be brought into NATO would then be made more vulnerable, not less.

However, it is the third consideration that holds the most danger for the alliance. It would be multiplying commitments without doing anything to increase our capability to meet those commitments. I have been, as always, charmed, and perhaps a little bit puzzled, with the attention that you in this country pay to Valentine's Day. Speaking as an Englishman, we are used to Valentine's Day. We do not take it anything like you do, or as seriously as you do. Scattering NATO commitments around is not the same as sending out a few additional

valentines as a gesture of casual affection. When you bring a country into NATO, the commitment you are making is a very serious one — the commitment that you in the United States, that we in Britain and every other allied nation would be making. It is a commitment to go to war, if necessary, for the protection and defense of that country. During the Cold War, we made such commitments. That is, we made those commitments, we meant what we said, and said what we meant. Our commitments were believed. The alliance was credible. I am not convinced that if we spread those commitments around now — unless we are prepared, you and we, to have troops stationed in Eastern Europe. I do not believe any of us is prepared for that. Unless we are prepared to take steps that would, if necessary, make those commitments seem credible, they would look like paper guarantees. Paper guarantees can have the effect of undermining the credibility that NATO has enjoyed up until now. That credibility has been the main reason for its success.

I have two final points. I was speaking of the threat from the south that is of such concern to NATO members. This connection is a challenge for the alliance where things could go wrong. This will not happen unless some countries feel that we are not as responsive to their concerns, that our own thinking is stuck in the time warp of the Cold War. If NATO is to have vitality in the future, we have got to be responsive to these new challenges.

The last is the burning importance of Asia. We in Europe would be very unwise if we regard this as a threat to us. It seems to me absolutely right and natural that you in the United States would recognize, as you are doing, the greater importance that Asia will have for you. Your connections with Asia will multiply and intensify. It would be very unwise of us in Europe to regard that as a threat to our relationship, friendship, and connection with you.

Equally, I think you in the United States would be wise to appreciate the limits of Asia in providing allies. I do not want to get into a deep discussion — there is not time, and it would not be appropriate — about the political values and ideas of Asia as compared to the United States and Europe. I am doubtful that in the years immediately ahead there is the prospect of the United States having allies with the same extent of shared history, political values, and geopolitical objectives that you share with a number of countries in Europe. These are not alternatives. I am not suggesting that it would be undesirable to broaden the pattern of partnership and bring in more Asian countries. I think that would be highly desirable. Even if that happens, it is not going to happen very quickly and you will not achieve the same degree of depth as in the relationship with Europe. There is no need to choose between relationships with Asia or relationships with Europe.