
THE FUTURE OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

Manfred Wörner

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am making today what my French friends would call a «visite éclair» to Lisbon. Yet, even in a crowded programme of meetings with the President, Prime Minister and senior ministers, I am delighted to have this opportunity to adress a wider audience publicly on the future of our Atlantic Alliance. And I wish to thank the National Defence Institute for giving me this platform and for bringing together this distinguished audience of opinion leaders, officials and military officers all bound by a common interest in security and defence questions.

Today it has become fashionable to speak of an «identity crisis» of the Alliance, because the security environment that gave birth to NATO, and with which it has lived for forty years, has suddenly gone. Some commentators argue that our Alliance has become the victim of its own success or has fulfilled a kind of long-standing dream: to create a peaceful Europe in which a politico-military Alliance like NATO would be altogether superfluous. Others do not go that far, but believe nonetheless that security is today less important or can be had more easily. Well, it is of course true that Europe and the wider world have changed — dramatically and permanently. Old problems have lost much of their saliency. New problems have appeared on the scene or become more acute. Yet, for my part, however much I welcome this change for having made our world order significantly more cooperative and potentially secure, I see nothing that convinces me that security itself is less important. Indeed in a time of rapid change it becomes more important.

In the first place, the lesson of the past two years is that change itself can be sudden and unpredictable. Which means things can change for the

(*) Speech By The Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Manfred Wörner, pronounced at the National Defence Institute.

worse as well as for the better. The Gulf crisis illustrates this. Peace, like democracy, will always require vigilance.

Europe has not yet found its final new shape. Nor has it become a haven of tranquility. The fate of glasnot and perestroika is still uncertain, and it is an open question where the dramatic current developments in the Soviet Union will ultimately lead. Notwithstanding all our encouragement and concrete assistance, we equally cannot yet tell if the courageous revolutions of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, driven by the quest for freedom, will actually produce successful democracies and economic reforms. In many places old ethnic problems, border disputes and power struggles have reared their head. Nationalism, a force we believed was approaching extinction, is trumpeting its resurrection with fanfare in many parts of Europe.

If states give up their defences or allow collective structures of security like NATO to disintegrate, they will only create vacuums around them. These might sooner or later tempt potential aggressors or create insecurity in other states. The result would be a return to the disastrous power politics and unstable alliances of past centuries. Defence would be renationalized. Even in a time of peace we would thereby sow the seeds of future instability as nations once again compete with each other and against each other for their security.

Finally there are new challenges disturbing developments beyond Europe which we cannot disregard. The Iraqi aggression against Kuwait is the deliberate attempt to eliminate a UN member from the world map — what Sir Michael Howard has termed: «state murder».

It is also a challenge to the West on several levels: the moral issue of seeing a small state taken over by a larger neighbour; the political issue of seeing an aspiring regional power acquire weapons of mass destruction; the economic issue of a major disruption in the supply of oil at a crucial moment in the economic reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe and with many Third World states in a precarious situation; the issue of long term stability in the already explosive area that is the Middle East and, last but not least, the human challenge of thousands of refugees and hostages whose lives have been put at risk. Thus the Gulf crisis combines an act of brutal annexation — something of which history of course gives us many sad examples — with a host of new issues which make this crisis not only a threat to our security but also to our efforts to build a new order based on restraint, cooperation

and the rule of law. For both reasons it is a struggle that neither we, nor the international community at large, can afford to lose.

Thus it would be foolhardy for us to treat the residual risks, whether in Europe or the wider world, as the innocuous side-effects or historical upheaval. This Alliance can stamp its imprint on events. Our vision of a Europe whole and free, and of a more secure and cooperative international order, is a realistic possibility. Yet the ambivalence of an era of enormous change — with its opportunities and risks — means that we can have an influence only if we are united and determined; and if we maintain a secure defence.

The most important vehicle for this collective enterprise is the Atlantic Alliance. From the outset it has always been a community of destiny and a forum for nations that are joined together by common values, convictions and basic interests. A political alliance thus, but equipped with military means. Today, at a time when the direct threat to our security has dwindled, its political role is becoming ever more significant.

That role lies

- in the shaping of East-West relations
- in the construction of a new European security architecture
- in steering the arms control process
- in maintaining a healthy transatlantic relationship.

In all these areas the Alliance can and must strive to ensure the development, discussion and formulation of a coordinated Western approach. Where else could this task be carried out, if not in the Alliance? Only the Atlantic Alliance incorporates the United States and Canada as well as important states on the European periphery that are not members of the European Community; and without the North American democracies, European security can neither be built nor maintained.

If the Alliance were to disappear tomorrow, the community of destiny that Alliance has established between the North American and European democracies would be irreparably damaged. Both continents, whose populations will represent less than 10% of the world total by the end of the century, would be isolated; and that at a time when their active solidarity will be as necessary to face the challenges of tomorrow as those of yesterday:

- without a close working relationship to North America, how can the European democracies balance the continuing and enormous military

- might of the Soviet Union which will of course remain a factor even in the cooperative order that we are striving for?
- how could they respond to the immense challenge of social and economic reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe;
 - and, finally, how could they meet the challenges of the North-South agenda I referred to earlier and to which Europe, with its numerous Mediterranean neighbours, and trading economies must perforce be especially sensitive?

Finally the Alliance is altogether indispensable in guaranteeing stability in Europe and even beyond. This is no less true in times of a reduced direct and immediate threat to our security — I would even say more so. For the threat posed by the massive Soviet military presence in Central Europe was in its way predictable and relatively easy to quantify. Now we see new risks to our security that are less easy to predict and to quantify, and which consequently cannot be managed in the same way that we dealt with the European balance of military power in the past.

The new risks therefore are no longer confined to a military attack on our territory but are as likely to originate from a breakdown in regional stability that would either spill over into our Alliance's own area or alternatively be exploited against our interests and solidarity. As, for instance, in using the oil weapon, terrorism or hostages against us.

Over the last two years the Atlantic Alliance has undergone fundamental change. Its centre of gravity is moving from the military to the political role, from confrontation to cooperation, from peace keeping to peace building, from the staving off a clear and present danger to the more long term and prudent provision against future risks, from an alliance under American leadership to a partnership between North America and Europe.

The London Declaration the Heads of State and Government of the Atlantic Alliance accordingly states that «security and stability do not lie solely in the military dimension... We intend to enhance the political component of the Alliance». NATO has always been a political alliance, as is shown in the political objectives and common values already set out in the Washington Treaty of 1949 and subsequently amplified in the Alliance's intensive political consultations. Yet, this political role is now becoming stronger still. In the future, the Alliance will be called upon more forcefully than up to now to contribute to the construction of a new European security

order, and to enhance long term security through new responsibilities: cooperation in the political field, military contacts, confidence-building, disarmament, and verification.

Our main tasks will be:

First will be to build a new European architecture, a new European order of cooperation, to include the Soviet Union and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. We must not allow the old East-West ideological division of Europe to be replaced by a new division based on wealth and living standards. This is a major preoccupation of many of the new democratic governments in Central and Eastern Europe, as I know from my recent visits there. Such a gap may be inevitable in the short term but it will undermine our stability if it persists. Equally we must not isolate the Soviet Union from Europe. It has much to contribute and needs our assistance to overcome its immense domestic problems.

Our Alliance concept or a future pan-European architecture of cooperation provides for four supporting pillars on which such a Europe whole and free can securely rest. First there is the European Community, then an institutionalized CSCE process, then the Council of Europe which we hope to make into a parliamentary assembly for the whole of Europe, and last but not least the Atlantic Alliance as the indispensable underpinning of security.

Of course, no-one can deny that since the Helsinki Final Act fifteen years ago, the CSCE process has been a unique success story; it has, without doubt, developed into a key element of any future European structure; and one that will acquire many core security functions in the light of the probable dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. The increased institutionalisation of the CSCE process is a common goal of all the Allies. By endowing CSCE with a new system of political consultations and giving it pan-European functions in such fields as information exchange, the observation of unusual military activities, the implementation of arms control agreements, and the resolution of conflicts, we can open a new institutional chapter in the political development of our entire continent. Indeed the proposals of our London Summit Declaration for institutionalizing the CSCE have found broad consensus among the 34. Now that a CFE treaty has been practically agreed, we have the basis for a very successful CSCE Summit in Paris in two weeks time which really should live up to the expectation that it will give birth to a new European architecture.

Yet to infer from this that the collective security system of the Atlantic Alliance will become superfluous — even over the long term — would be a mistake. New CSCE structures can bridge old antagonisms, and can lead to new, and common concepts for the enhancement of peace and partnership. However, CSCE cannot provide firm security guarantees against potential future risks. It requires consensus which is difficult to obtain while each of the 34 states has a veto right, and the CSCE states do not yet share common values or common social systems. Thus for the foreseeable future the CSCE cannot ensure stability and the necessary degree of insurance against risks which is provided uniquely by the collective defence capacities of our Alliance.

The relationship between the Alliance and CSCE must be complementary, not one of either/or. It will be the task of our Alliance to provide stability and to build the basis for cooperation. A cohesive Alliance is thus the prerequisite for a smoothly functioning CSCE. The nations of Central and Eastern Europe have in fact been more explicit than many of our own Western opinion leaders in recognizing that the continuation of NATO as a stabilizing element in a European security structure is indispensable.

The European Community will play a key role in the construction of a new Europe. It is in the interests of the Atlantic Alliance that Europe not only unites economically but also politically. But it is also essential that in striving for such unity, we do not marginalize or exclude nations that wish to be part of this process. All of our future European structures will be stronger and more durable to the extent that they are inclusive, not exclusive. Moreover the political union of Europe is not feasible without the inclusion of security and defence. The Alliance's London Declaration explicitly supports this goal. We want a united Europe. A strong Europe means a strong Atlantic Alliance. Such a European security identity will be achieved within the framework of our Alliance, because even a European defence community — which is still many years away — cannot replace the transatlantic link guaranteed by the Atlantic Alliance. As a result, all ideas and developments related to that European security identity should be coordinated with our Alliance from their inception, so that both institutions reinforce each other. In this context we must preserve NATO's integrated military structure. It is a unique achievement, and ensures that no-one will be tempted to renationalize security.

Second we must further intensify our growing contacts with the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The London Summit Declaration sent a

powerful message to those nations: that the Cold War and the years of confrontation are over; that the Alliance considers these nations to be friends and potential partners; that it wishes henceforth to work with them to build a new Europe; and that through our diplomatic and military contacts we can build our future security together and according to strategies and doctrines that give maximum reassurance. Certainly the message that the Alliance is changing and will continue to change, which was conveyed in all the overtures we made at the London Summit to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, has been very well received. For instance this timely message played a key role, just two weeks after the Summit, in persuading the Soviet Union to agree to a united Germany being a full member of the Alliance — perhaps the single most important contribution to stability in Europe. I myself, in visiting the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, have been pleasantly surprised to see how positively our Alliance is now seen, despite years of disinformation and propaganda.

It is this adaptability of our Alliance, reflecting change but also actively shaping that change, which makes me optimistic about the way in which it will fulfil its security mission in the years ahead. The conditions for a new European security structure, that will lastingly guarantee peace by means of a network of cooperative ties, have now been achieved. Provided we proceed sensibly, remain vigilant and use our diplomatic skills to full affect, we can look forward to decades of peaceful evolution in Europe.

Thus our Alliance remains indispensable, regardless of whether the Warsaw Pact is successfully reshaped into a political, democratic alliance or, as seems more likely disappears from the scene altogether. The role of ensuring stability and a secure defence is one that cannot be transferred from the Atlantic Alliance to another body. Only NATO will guarantee the presence of the North American democracies in Europe tomorrow, as it has always done in the past. Without this political as well as military presence, Europe could not be certain of stability, at least for the foreseeable future. Finally no other body but the Atlantic Alliance with its military potential can ensure that military force is never again used in Europe. In a nutshell, NATO represents the political co-operation of 16 sovereign democratic nations. If they stick together they can influence the historical process of transformation towards our vision of a Europe whole and free. So politically it is needed.

Third we must extend the arms control process in Europe to the point at which defensive postures and transparency make war militarily impossible

and politically unthinkable. The signature of a first CFE agreement in Paris in just a few days, although an historic event in the fullest sense of the word, will not by any means represent the culmination of our Alliance efforts to build security and stability through arms control. The immediate consequence of CFE signature will be the initiation of follow-on conventional negotiations, which I expect will focus on manpower issues, and of negotiations on short-range nuclear forces. Linked to these SNF talks will be the proposal we made in London on the elimination of nuclear artillery from Europe. We are also already committed, since London, to longer-term conventional arms negotiations in the 1990s that will go beyond the transitional aim of closing off the vestiges of the Cold War confrontation and will initiate the task of structuring the military configuration of the new era that is opening. And, of course, the START and then START II negotiations and the very important chemical weapons negotiations in Geneva are also high on the Alliance's agenda. We are determined to use to the full the more constructive stance we see now from Moscow to secure as much of this agenda as possible.

Fourth an important task is without doubt the elaboration of a new military strategy. The London Summit has laid down some guidelines for this exercise, specifically in advocating that the Alliance scale back its military forces, as arms control agreements permit, review its force structures and change its political strategy in line with political change in Europe, especially German unification. We will be seeking over the next few years to move increasingly towards a «reconstitution strategy» based more on multinational units and on the capacity to mobilize sufficient reserves and reinforcements in the event of a potential threat. As part of this review, the Alliance will be looking to rely less on nuclear forces and make the minimal number that will remain in Europe to ensure peace truly weapons of the last resort.

Fifth we must, as the US Secretary of State has eloquently suggested, redefine the position of the United States in an undivided Europe so as to form a new transatlantic partnership, «a new Atlanticism». To succeed in this task, the Alliance will also need to provide a framework in which the western European nations continue to become increasingly aware of their global responsibilities now that their economic strength and political stability make them much more than the fledgling democracies of the immediate post-war period.

Sixth, we have to cope with the new challenges to our security, as for example the proliferation of missile technology and weapons of mass destruction.

The Alliance is in good shape. Solidarity and cohesion have made it possible for our policies to be successful. And this success has certainly put the wind in our sails. This in turn has further strengthened the unity and resolve of the Alliance. It has successfully passed the test of overcoming the obstacles to the full NATO membership of a united Germany. That too is cause for optimism. At the same time there are bound to be difficulties in our path that we have to avoid or to overcome. But I am certain that we can and will overcome them, as we have always done. Our past success must never lead, however, to complacency and a false sense of self-confidence or indeed a premature and inappropriate feeling of triumphalism. In the future, as much as in the past, determination, leadership quality, courage and perseverance will prove essential if we are to maintain our cohesion and solidarity.

Lisbon, 5 November 1990.

Manfred Wörner
Secretary General of NATO