THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK DURING THE DECADE PRIOR TO ROMANIA'S ACCESSION IN NATO (1994 – 2004): TEMPORARY DISSENTIONS AND PERMANENT COMMON VALUES & INTERESTS

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Abstract: *During the decade that preceded Romania's accession in NATO (1994 – 2004), the transatlantic link was challenged by a series of divergences, with the United States' unilateralism being considered the most important element of dissention, over many political and military issues.*

The temporary dissentions did not conduct to separation, both the United States and the European officials expressing their commitment to the strengthening of the transatlantic link, within a strong NATO. The USA Security Strategy, the EU Security Strategy, the final statements of NATO summits, stress the importance of preserving the transatlantic link. All NATO members share the same values and have common economic and security interests.

Keywords: *transatlantic link; dissentions; common values; security interests; NATO.*

Since the creation of NATO in April 1949, the transatlantic link has proved to be the backbone of the Alliance, the core of the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Immediately after the end of the cold war, Romania expressed its wish to become a member of NATO, and put a lot of efforts in that direction.[1] Our scientific endeavour aims to review the situation in NATO and analyse the level of importance shared by temporary dissentions and common interests in the general equation of the transatlantic link, during a decade marked by Romania's efforts to get the membership.

We start our work by bringing forward the fact that although based on consensus and unity of action, during the *Cold War Era,* some NATO members had different views on issues like: The European Defence Community Project; The Suez Crisis; Charles De Gaulle's ambitions and France's withdrawal from NATO military structures; The Cuban nuclear missile crisis; The Greek protest; The Euro-missiles crisis.

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In the aftermath of the Cold War Era, United States and Europe sometimes still visualized the world and understood international politics differently. Here are the main dissentions within the transatlantic relationship, in the post cold war era.

1. Temporary Dissentions among NATO Members

Despite the fact the NATO has been seen as a organization that showed unity, there were situations in which not **burden sharing, burden shifting** was the functioning principle. In the sixty-five years of history, there were many such situations: from Cuban missiles Crisis, to France withdrawal from military integrated structure at the beginnings of the Alliance, to the present Iraq and Afghanistan issues. In this chapter, I will refer to most recent dissentions, that were solved using the common values that all NATO members are sharing.

1.1. The Balkan Conflicts

The transatlantic link was put to a test when the first signs of tensions appeared in the Balkans and NATO intervened belatedly in the conflict. In 1995, reluctant to use NATO in Bosnia, Washington eventually accepted its involvement when the credibility of the Alliance was at stake.

The imbalance of risks and the division of labour – European ground forces ran the greater part of the risks, and US aircrafts operated from a safe height – generated a deep acrimony over how to stop the war in the Balkans. On the other hand, the United States were not pleased with the way the organisation worked; the decision making process was too slow, the member states experiencing many problems in getting a common view over the military issues, like the selection and engagement of the targets.

From the beginning, there were legal and strategic disputes concerning the crisis management process in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and the bitter debate within allies states on "the out of area operations". The disputes shifted in 2002 on Afghanistan issue, due to the marginalisation of NATO by the United States, during a campaign based on a "coalition of willing".

1.2. The Iraqi War

In 2003 came the Iraqi War issue as the last collapse in transatlantic cooperation when the United States proposed a doctrine of "*pre-emptive self-defence*", that would allow a country to use force against another country it suspects may attack it at some stage.

In March 2003, the United States of America was able to rally an international coalition, known as the "Coalition of the Willing" to bring Saddam Hussein down

and remove his regime's weapons of mass destruction. *This coalition was predictably criticised, particularly by the anti-American Left, as coercive, unilateral and unrepresentative. Smaller countries in the coalition were labelled "token" allies, and ulterior motives were ascribed to various coalition governments, despite the respective governments outlining highly plausible reasons for their participation. Britain was characterised as isolated in Europe, despite the fact that most European countries were part of the coalition of the willing.*[2]

European countries like Germany, France, Russia, Greece, Belgium, Belarus did not agree with the Americans and were openly opposed to military action in Iraq in March-April 2003. Norway and Sweden had an unclear stand, speaking in favour of the overthrown of Saddam Hussein by force, but then coming out against the invasion, when an explicit UN mandate did not eventuate. The new Spanish Government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero elected in March 2004, also placed itself in this camp.[3]

In the opinion of many analysts and scholars, the strong opposition of France and Germany to American actions in Iraq led to an open fracture into the transatlantic relations. In fact, due to the US unilateral approach, "*somewhere between Kabul and Baghdad, the United States and Europe lost each other. It was not only Paris and Berlin that parted ways with Washington; so did Ankara, a long-standing and loyal ally. ...True, thanks to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a number of old and new allies across Europe did stand by Washington. But many of them did so less because they believed in the administration's approach, than because of their enduring commitment to the alliance. In the court of European intellectual and public opinion, Bush lost his case. The administration's behaviour helped unleash the largest wave of anti-Americanism in decades.*"[4]

1.3. United States' Unilateralism

Another source of dissensions came from the reluctance of the United States to agree with and endorse the multilateral cooperation initiatives, on issues affecting the global community. In this respect, European-US relations have also been affected by the disagreements over the International Criminal Court, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention Verification Protocol, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the United Nations agreement on the trade in small arms, the death penalty.[5]

The dissensions over political, legal and military issues were complemented by many others. On both sides of the Atlantic, voices coming from areas such as environment, industry, agriculture and consumers brought other disagreements inside the transatlantic space.

Over two decade ago, most countries started to think about climate change and considered measures to reduce global warming and to cope with whatever temperature increases. An international treaty, "The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change", and later on "The Kyoto Protocol" were signed, by many of the Allies. Due to the prevalence of its economic interests, the United States "did not feel the heat" and refused to sign.

Divergences also appeared when it came to genetically modified food (GM). European policy-makers, perceived a lack of scientific certainty in the US approach regarding the potential effects of GM foods. For them, GM food policy was closely tied to political responsibility, and had to deal with broader health, environmental and ethical questions.

It is worth to conclude that in the Post Cold War Era the American unilateralism manifested itself in a very visible way. We agree with the general opinion that at the US political level, the victory in the Cold War created a dangerous perception about an independent role and involvement in the global affairs. According to that, once the Soviet Union as the real strong opponent vanished, the United States could manage to preserve its national interests, acting on its own way and disregarding the opinion of NATO allies, in case a lack of consensus occurred.

2. Permanent Common Values and Interests

Fortunately, the temporary dissentions did not conduct to a transatlantic separation, both the United States and the European officials expressing their commitment to the strengthening of the transatlantic link, within a strong NATO. To support this statement we will bring up a set of official positions of the involved parties, expressed at that time.

The US has always supported the transatlantic commitment. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, released in September 2002 recognized the need for a sustained cooperation between US and Europe, the latter being viewed as the seat of NATO, "*the fulcrum of transatlantic and inter-European security*" and the EU, "*the partner in opening world trade*". The strategy underlined that in the light of September 11, 2001 attacks "*NATO's core mission - collective defense of the transatlantic alliance of democracies - remains, but NATO must develop new structures and capabilities to carry out that mission, under new circumstances*".[6]

At the same time, *The European Security Strategy* issued in December 2003 had a very positive approach toward the transatlantic link. It is important

to notice that the link was viewed from a broader perspective, as a contributor to the strengthening of the international community: "*Our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system. ... One of the core elements of the international system is the transatlantic relation. This is not only in our bilateral interest but strengthens the international community as a whole. NATO is an important expression of this relationship.*"[7]

The strategy stresses the need for a continuing strategic partnership, motivating that "*The transatlantic relationship is irreplaceable. Acting together, the European Union and the United States can be a formidable force for good of the world. Our aim should be an effective and balanced partnership with the USA.*"[8]

The necessity of preserving the transatlantic link as the Alliance's cornerstone was reaffirmed by the official representatives of NATO member states, on all important occasions:

-"*the Prague Summit Declaration* " issued on 21 November 2002 stated: " '*We, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance...are steadfast in our commitment to the transatlantic link; to NATO's fundamental security tasks including collective defence; to our shared democratic values; and to the United Nations Charter.*"[9]

-"*the Istanbul Summit Communiqué*" issued on 28 June 2004 stipulated: "*We, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, reaffirmed today the enduring value of the transatlantic link and of NATO as the basis for our collective defence and the essential forum for security consultation between Europe and North America. ...Transatlantic cooperation is essential in defending our values and meeting common threats and challenges, from wherever they may come*".[10]

- the *Statement issued at the Summit meeting of the North Atlantic Council*, in Brussels, on 22 February 2005, almost one year after Romania's accession, underlined: "*We, the 26 Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, reaffirm the enduring value of the transatlantic link, renew our commitment to collective defence, and remain united in our commitment to our shared security and common values of democracy, freedom, individual liberty and the rule of law in addressing today's security challenges.*"[11]

Talking about common values, in the Post Cold War Era the world is changing day by day, but not necessary towards a stable general environment, the United Nations experiencing many shortcomings in dealing with such a development. On

the other hand, only the Euro-Atlantic region is one of the few stable and prosperous areas in the world. In a safe environment provided by NATO, the liberal democracy and market capitalism remain the West's dominant and common values, which gave the solidity to Western societies.

The transatlantic allies understood they have also common economic interests and security. For decades, US and Europe have been indispensable economic partners and will remain as such decades to come. They have an important interest in preserving and strengthening constructive economic relations within the transatlantic community. During the decade prior to Romania's accession to NATO, the strong transatlantic economy had been an engine of growth and development for the global economy, a necessary condition for improving global security and stability.

The common security interests got a new approach, due to the new threats like the global terrorism, proliferation and dissemination of weapons of mass destruction, international organized crime. The ignition moment of a united, determined and relentless response was the day of the terrorist attacks on the US, 11 September 2001: "*Indeed, in late 200I, it appeared that sixty years of cooperation between the United States and its European allies, in the Second World War and in the Cold War, had reached its culmination in the new war against Islamic terrorism.*"[12]

We conclude by underlining the essential facts. Between 1994 and 2004, the transatlantic link was challenged by a series of divergences, with the United States' unilateralism considered the most important element of dissention, over many political and military issues.

The temporary dissentions did not conduct to separation, both the United States and the European officials expressing their commitment to the strengthening of the transatlantic link, within a strong NATO.

NATO members share the same values and have common economic and security interests. They have to face new threats that no nation could deal with alone.

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