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NATO AND DÉTENTE

by

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NATO AND DETENTE

FOUNDED THIRTY YEARS AGO, NATO WAS NOT AS RELEVANT AS ITS
FOUNDERS SURMISED NOR IS ITS RELEVANCE EQUAL TO PRESENT CLAIMS,
AT LEAST WITH RESPECT TO THE SOVIET THREAT. OF COURSE 1949 WAS
THE HEIGHT OF THE COLD WAR AND 1979 IS MARKED BY DETENTE.
STRIPPED OF RHETORIC, THE TWO CONDITIONS ARE NOT ALL THAT DISSIMILAR.
COLD WAR AND DETENTE ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN: CONFLICT
BETWEEN THE US AND USSR PRIMARILY; NATO AND WARSAW PACT
SECONDARILY.

OBVIOUSLY, CONDITIONS HAVE CHANGED SINCE 1949. NEW WEAPON
SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED AND THE SOVIET MILITARY POWER AND
ROLE HAVE ACHIEVED ESSENTIAL PARITY WITH THE US. BUT THE MOST
FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION INVOLVES GERMANY. I HAVE ARGUED
ELSEWHERE THAT THE TRUE RAISON D'ETRE OF NATO WAS GERMANY, NOT
THE POSTULATED RUSSIAN THREAT. FRANCE AND THE LOW COUNTRIES
PARTICULARLY SOUGHT TO COMMIT THE US PRESENCE IN EUROPE TO
POLICE GERMANY WHOSE RENAISSANCE WAS PROMPTED BY THE AMERICANS.
US PARTICIPATION IN NATO WAS A CONDITION REQUIRED BY THE FRENCH
AND OTHERS FOR ACQUIESCENCE TO GERMAN REMILITARIZATION AND ALLIANCE.

WHILE WARY OF US MOTIVES, THE RUSSIANS WERE SOMEWHAT REASSURED BY AMERICAN "GUARANTEES" AGAINST GERMAN REVANCHISM.

THE PRIMACY OF THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THOSE EARLY POSTWAR YEARS WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO EXAGGERATE, PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR. NOTED ECONOMISTS WERE AMONG THOSE WHO ASSERTED THAT A NEW ERA HAD BEGUN WHEN AMERICA WOULD NOT BE VULNERABLE TO CHALLENGE, THAT THE US ECONOMY WOULD ALWAYS DWARF OTHER ECONOMIES FOREVER. NO ONE BELIEVED THAT EUROPEAN STATES WOULD REGAIN THEIR EARLIER LEAD ALTHOUGH BRITAIN WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE AN OUTSIDE CHANCE OF ACHIEVING A ROLE OF SOME IMPORTANCE.

THIRTY YEARS LATER SUCH VIEWS SEEM NAIVE, INCREDIBLE AND EVEN NONSENSICAL. THEY DEMONSTRATE ANEW THE DYSFUNCTIONALITY OF PROJECTIONS OF TRENDS AND CONDITIONS EVEN WHEN BASED UPON "HARD" ECONOMIC DATA. US ECONOMIC SUPREMACY WAS OBVIOUSLY UNCHALLENGABLE IN 1949 OR FOR THE NEXT DECADE; HOWEVER, IN PART CUSHIONED AND PROJECTED BY THE US, GERMANY AND JAPAN EMBARKED UPON A LEVEL OF ECONOMIC GROWTH THAT FAR EXCEEDED ANY EXPECTATIONS.

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE "VIETNAM ERA" USUALLY IS CITED AS THE WATERSHED, AMERICAN ECONOMIC HEGEMONY WAS OPERANT THROUGHOUT

NON-COMMUNIST AREAS OF THE WORLD. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN WESTERN EUROPE WHERE AMERICAN ECONOMIC PENETRATION WAS REINFORCED BY US POLITICAL, MILITARY AND STRATEGIC HEGEMONY SYMBOLIZED BY NATO, BUT NOT PRESERVED BY IT.

FOUR PRINCIPAL FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE RELATIVE DENIGRATION OF THE US ROLE IN EUROPE:

1. GAULLISM AND ITS SUCCESSORS;
2. OPEC
3. THE BRITISH MALTAISE AND
4. GERMAN ECONOMIC RESURGENCE.

WHILE INTERRELATED, EACH IS A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT WHICH MIGHT HAVE SUFFICED TO DIMINISH THE AMERICAN ROLE.

BEGINNING IN FRANCE UNDER DE GAULLE'S PRESIDENCY, GAULLISM'S PRINCIPAL EXPONENT TODAY IS LIKELY TO BE BRITAIN. GAULLISM STRESSED THE INDEPENDENCE OF EACH MEMBER OF NATO FROM THE US. IT REASSERTED NATIONALISM WHEN ALL SAVE FOR DE GAULLE PAID HOMAGE TO MONNET'S GRAND DESIGN. DE GAULLE UNDERSTOOD THAT EUROPEAN INTEGRATION WAS A DREAM, NOT A POLICY AND THAT PURSUIT OF THE DREAM DIVERTED ATTENTION FROM THE BURGEONING AMERICAN PENETRATION AND CONTROL OF EUROPE'S ECONOMIES.

CHAMPIONING "L'EUROPE DES PATRIES", DEVELOPING THE "FORCE DE FRAPPE",
EVI CTING NATO OFFICES AND PERSONNEL AND VETOING
BRITISH ACCESSION TO THE TREATY OF ROME DRAMATIZED FRENCH
INDEPENDENCE FROM THE US, WHILE FRANCE CAREFULLY RETAINED MEMBERSHIP
IN NATO. DE GAULLE STRESSED THE PRIMACY OF (FRENCH) NATIONAL
INTEREST WHILE PROMOTING CONTINUATION OF THE ALLIANCE AND OF THE
US ROLE IN GERMANY.

THE IMPACT OF THE THREATENED ARAB OIL EMBARGO DURING THE
YOM KIPPUR WAR (1973) COUPLED WITH OPEC SUCCESS IN CARTELIZING THE
WORLD OIL MARKET REINFORCED BURGEONING NATIONAL SEPARATION FROM
AND IDENTIFICATION WITH THE US. IT WAS APPARENT THAT EACH OF THE
EUROPEAN STATES HAD TO MAKE ITS OWN DEALS WITH ARAB OIL PRODUCERS
ELSE IT SUFFER INTERRUPTION AS A CONSEQUENCE OF AMERICAN POLICY.
AND THE VULNERABILITY OF AMERICAN RESUPPLY TO ISRAEL WAS MAGNIFIED
BY THE REFUSAL OF ALL EUROPEAN ALLIES TO PERMIT US USE OF THEIR
BASES FOR SUCH EFFORT. ONLY PORTUGAL PERMITTED TRANSSHIPMENT

AND THAT WAS PRIOR TO THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION. NONE OF THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES MADE SINCE 1973 HAS LESSENED THE IMPACT OF THE CHANGES WROUGHT UPON THE US - EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP RESULTING FROM THE ABOVE EVENTS.

OF THE THIRD FACTOR LISTED ABOVE, THE BRITISH MALAISE, LITTLE NEED BE SAID. WHETHER BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC MISFORTUNES RESULT FROM POOR ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT, EXCESSIVE WELFARE-STRATISM, LOW AND DECLINING PRODUCTIVITY OR FROM ARCHAIC LABOR PRACTICES. BRITAIN'S ROLE IN THE WORLD ECONOMY HAS DECLINED, IS DECLINING AND WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO DECLINE DESPITE NORTH SEA OIL AND POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS. THE STRUCTURED WEAKNESS OF THE POUND SPERLING, DECLINING LEVEL OF LIVING, INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE COMBINE TO HEIGHTEN PERCEIVED INSECURITY COMPELLING BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO FOLLOW AN INDEPENDENT COURSE AT A TIME WHEN SUCH INDEPENDENCE IS NOT VERY FULFILLING. NOT EVEN CHURCHILLIAN OR ROOSEVELTIAN METAPHOR IS AVAILABLE

TO SUCCOR THE PUBLIC WITH DREAMS OF BETTER TIMES. AND MEMORIES OF SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE US THAT NEVER WERE, OFFER NO COMPENSATION SINCE THE US IS PERCEIVED IN APPARENT DECLINE.

BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN THE EEC IS AMBIVALENT AT BEST. HARMLESS AS IT IS LIKELY TO BE, THE EUROPEAN MONETARY SYSTEM IS DEEMED TOO CONFINING. CERTAINLY IF THE POUND APPRECIATES, BRITISH PARTICIPATION WOULD BE STRONGER. THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF FRENCH AND GERMAN ECONOMIES IRRITATES AND EXACERBATES THE SENSE OF INFERIORITY.

THE FOURTH FACTOR, GERMAN ECONOMIC RESURGENCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL. UNTIL RECENTLY, AT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS, ONE WAS ALWAYS AWARE OF THE PREOCCUPATION OF EUROPEANS WITH THE PERVASIVENESS OF AMERICAN ECONOMIC HEGOMONY. LARGELY UNNOTICED, THE US ECONOMIC ROLE IN EUROPE HAS BEEN SUCCEEDED TO BY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY. WEST GERMANY IS THE STRONG MAN OF EUROPE. THE DEUTSCHMARK PROVIDES THE UNDERPINNING FOR

MOST OF THE WESTERN ECONOMIES INCLUDING THOSE OF THE
NETHERLANDS, DENMARK, BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND EVEN FRANCE.

GERMAN POLICY RE THE DM HAS BENEFITTED FROM AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

SINCE THE DOLLAR CONTINUES AS THE RESERVE CURRENCY IN EUROPE.

RESERVE CURRENCIES ARE VERY VULNERABLE TO POLICY CHANGES

INCLUDING COLLATERAL ATTACK AS THE BRITISH LEARNED AND

AMERICANS ARE LEARNING.

RECENT GERMAN "IMMUNITY" FROM INFLATION RESULTS IN
LARGE PART FROM POLICY INITIATIVES (DISTORTIONS) ENTERED
INTO AT THE EXPENSE OF THE US AND, TO SOME EXTENT, THE UK,
CANADA, ITALY, ET AL. FRG ECONOMIC POLICY DISCOURAGES
IMPORTS AND ENCOURAGES EXPORTS WHILE RESISTING PRESSURES TO
PERMIT THE DEUTSCHMARK'S BECOMING A RESERVE CURRENCY. THIS
IS PART OF THE MOTIVATION BEHIND GERMAN CHAMPIONING OF THE EMS.
IF EUROPEAN CURRENCY UNITS (ECU) TAKE THE PLACE OF DOLLARS AS

SOME HOPE, PRESSURE ON THE DOLLAR WILL ACCELERATE WHILE THE DM WILL STILL BE PROTECTED FROM OVEREXPOSURE AND VULNERABILITY.

FOR THE NEAR TERM, THE POLITICAL ECONOMIES OF EUROPE WILL BE DOMINATED BY WEST GERMAN ECONOMIC POLICY. AND GLOBAL TRADING PATTERNS WILL REFLECT THE VACILLATING FORTUNES OF THE AMERICAN DOLLAR BUFFETED BY THE WINDS OF CHANGE IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE PROFOUND. POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND STRATEGIC POLICIES CANNOT BE INDEPENDENT FROM ECONOMIC POLICY. CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S ASSERTION OF A POLITICAL ROLE ARISES NOT BECAUSE THE STAKES FOR GERMANY NO LONGER PERMIT THE GAME TO BE PLAYED AS IF GERMANY HAS NO POLICY. OF COURSE GERMANY HAS HAD POLICIES SINCE CHANCELLOR ADENAUER; THE SELF-EFFACING RELUCTANCE TO BE FORTHCOMING HAS BEEN REMOVED.

DETENTE, WE SHOULD REMEMBER, RECEIVED ITS IMPETUS FROM CHANCELLOR BRANDT'S OSTPOLITIK INITIALLY CONDEMNED BY DR. KISSINGER.

DETENTE CONTINUES TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR GERMANY BECAUSE SHE IS SO EXPOSED. BUT DETENTE FOR GERMANY REQUIRES STRONGER, MORE ASSERTIVE POLICIES BY THE US. UNILATERAL CANCELLATION OF THE B1 BOMBER AND NEUTRON WARHEADS, APPARENT VACILLATION IN ANGOLA, SOMALIA, IRAN AND KOREA ALL ENDANGER DETENTE BECAUSE THEY DIMINISH AMERICAN BARGAINING POWER TO ENTICE THE RUSSIANS TO LESSEN THEIR MILITARY BUILDUP.

HENRY BRANDON SAID IT THIS WAY: "WHAT HAS PROFOUNDLY UPSET SCHMIDT IS WHAT IS PERCEIVED HERE (BONN) AS A BASIC AND MISGUIDED CHANGE IN US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE WESTERN ALLIES, NAMELY CARTER'S RELUCTANCE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STATIONING OF MEDIUM-RANGE NUCLEAR BALLISTIC MISSILES IN EUROPE". SCHMIDT HAS ARGUED THAT RUSSIAN INTRODUCTION OF SS-20 MISSILES HAS ALTERED EUROPEAN THEATER BALANCE AND THAT THE EUROPEANS NEED THEIR OWN MEDIUM-RANGE DETERRENT CAPABILITY.

CARTER'S RESPONSE TO SCHMIDT'S ALI STAIR BUCHAN LECTURE (OCTOBER 1977) WAS TO SAY THAT IF THE EUROPEANS WANT SUCH A SPECIAL DETERRENT, THEY SHOULD ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. THIS REACTION WAS VIEWED AS AN ABDICATION OF AMERICAN LEADERSHIP BECAUSE IN THE PAST THE US ALWAYS ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR STRATEGIC DECISIONS.

THE TENSION BETWEEN THE US AND GERMANY IS PALPABLE AND RESULTS FROM CHANGING POLITICAL-ECONOMIC REALITIES MORE THAN FROM DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND CARTER. SCHMIDT IS SAID TO BE DISILLUSIONED IN THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION LEADING TO AN EEC WITH REAL POLITICAL POWER. BRANDON QUOTES A "SENIOR AIDE" TO SCHMIDT: "WE DON'T WANT TO SEE (EEC) DEVELOP INTO A TECHOCRATIC EUROPE, MAINLY CONCERNED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF STEEL, ALCOHOL OR AGRICULTURAL MARKETS. WE WANT IT TO GIVE WESTERN EUROPE A GREATER POLITICAL VITALITY, NOT JUST A NETWORK OF RULES OF HOW TO OPERATE MARKET'S".

SCHMIDT IS CONCERNED BY BRITISH "INSULARITY" IN EEC AND WITH UK FAILURE TO SUPPORT AN ENHANCED POLITICAL ROLE FOR EUROPE. TO GERMANY, THE CHAMPION OF BRITISH ACCESSION TO EEC, TURNED TO FRANCE WHOSE HOSTILITY TO THE US SINCE DE GAULLE HAS CONTINUED UNREMITTINGLY. SO, TOO, HAS GERMANY PRESSED FOR THE EMS, HOPING IT WOULD PROVIDE THE NEEDED IMPETUS FOR PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING A EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

MORE IMPORTANT, EMS WAS, ACCORDING TO SCHMIDT, "AN ATTEMPT ON BONN'S PART TO LOSE THE STIGMA OF BEING A SUBURB OF WASHINGTON. IT IS FOR THIS REASON ALSO THAT WE TRY TO DECOUPLE OURSELVES FROM THE DOLLAR".

EMS IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE SCHMIDT LESS RESTIVE BECAUSE IT IS NOT LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THE SNAKE. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF W. GERMANY REQUIRES GERMAN ASSERTION OF LEADERSHIP BECAUSE GERMANY HAS MOST TO LOSE AND BECAUSE FUNDING

APPROACHES ALTERNATIVE TO THE US ARE AVAILABLE TO GERMANY ALONE IN EUROPE.

THE VITALITY OF WEST EUROPE SOUGHT BY SCHMIDT MUST BE PROVIDED BY GERMANY. AMERICAN INITIATIVES IN EUROPE MUST REFLECT GERMAN POLICIES ELSE THEY WILL BE FRUSTRATED BY GERMAN NON-PARTICIPATION. TENSIONS BETWEEN THE US AND GERMANY MUST BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE SINCE SUCH A TRANSFER OF POWER MUST PRODUCE ANXIETY IN BOTH PARTNERS.

AND TENSIONS WITH THE USSR ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE FOR HISTORIC AND GEOPOLITICAL REASONS. IF SCHMIDT IS CORRECT IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN DETERRENT TO THE SS-20 AND IF THE US CONTINUES TO REFUSE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, WILL GERMANY ASSUME THE BURDEN? IF GERMANY REMAINS CONVINCED OF THE NEED AND OF US RELUCTANCE TO PROVIDE THE MEANS TO MEET THIS NEED, WE MUST ANTICIPATE GERMAN WILLINGNESS TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY. AND WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR GERMANY MAY NOT BE

NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE FOR THE U.S.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN GERMANY'S ROLES IN NATO AND IN EUROPE MAKE THE ALLIANCE MORE DIFFICULT TO MANAGE AND COMPLICATE RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. AS I STATED AT THE OUTSET, THE ESSENCE OF DÉTENTE RESTS WITH THE US - USSR RELATIONSHIPS. THIS IS AN OVERARCHING RELATIONSHIP WITHIN WHICH SOVIET/WARSAW PACT INTERACTIONS WITH GERMANY AND THE REST OF WESTERN EUROPE TAKE PLACE. US-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE GLOBAL AND ESSENTIALLY BILATERAL AS THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE WORLD WAR II. THE NEW ELEMENT RESTS IN THE FACT THAT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SUPER-POWERS DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN THAT THEIR ALLIES WILL AGREE. SIMILARLY, CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR POWERS DOES NOT IMPLY CONFLICT BETWEEN BLOCS, AS WAS DEMONSTRATED SO EFFECTIVELY IN OCTOBER, 1973.

WHILE CONFLICTS IN REGIONS BEYOND NATO'S TERRITORIAL

JURISDICTION NEVER APPLIED DIRECTLY TO NATO, US HEGEMONY
POSITED STRATEGIC MODIFICATIONS UPON THE ALLIANCE. THIS
NO LONGER HOLDS; INDEED, THE US TODAY IS THE TARGET FOR
PRESSURE BY THE FRENCH AND GERMANS PARTICULARLY TO MODIFY
AMERICAN POLICY IN REGIONS QUITE DISTANT FROM NATO.

GERMANY'S NEW STATUS IN NATO AND THE WORLD REQUIRES
STABLE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE MAJOR POWERS AND INCREASES
FRG STAKE IN DETENTE. GEOPOLITICAL VULNERABILITY REQUIRES
GERMAN SEIZING OF INITIATIVES WHICH MAY MAKE STABILIZATION
QUITE TENUOUS. WERE GERMANY TO DEVELOP A UNILATERAL
RESPONSE TO THE SS-20, THE EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL BALANCE WOULD
BE ALTERED SIGNIFICANTLY.

GERMANY'S NEW STATUS CAUSES STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE
ALLIANCE THAT ARE NOT AMENABLE TO COSMETIC CHANGES IN THE
ALLIANCE'S ORGANIZATION. TO BE SURE, GERMANY WOULD BE MORE
SECURE IF RESPONSIBILITY FOR STRATEGIC MODIFICATIONS WERE
BORNE BY A EUROPEAN ENTITY OR BY THE US - GERMANY'S POSITION

WOULD BE LESS EXPOSED. BUT THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION, AND
THIS IS TERRIBLE FRUSTRATING FOR SCHMIDT, INDICATE THAT A
UNIFIED EUROPEAN RESPONSE IS NOT AT ALL LIKELY NOR IS THE
UNITED STATES LIKELY TO ACT AS A SURROGATE FOR GERMANY.