



The Conference of Defence Associations Institute

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Report of the Rapporteur-General The 53rd General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association

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General Sir Arthur Currie's greatest victory was at the Battle of Amiens, which German Field Marshall von Ludendorff described as the "blackest day of the German Army in the history of the war," and which Field Marshall Lord Byng of Vimy described as "the finest operation of the war."

The battle of Amiens launched the "Hundred Days," in which the four divisions of the Canadian Corps defeated 47 German divisions in successive battles, and concluded with the Armistice which ended the First World War.

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This paper is the Report of the Rapporteur-General of the 53rd General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association, which was hosted by the Atlantic Council of Canada in Ottawa on October 31-November 2, 2007. The Annual General Assembly brings together delegations from the Atlantic Councils of all NATO states.

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His international conference papers have included Kings and Emmanuel Colleges of Cambridge University; the German Armed Forces University; the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies; the Shanghai Institute for International Studies; the International Society for the Systems Sciences in Atlanta; and the Atlantic Treaty Association in Budapest, Copenhagen, Edinburgh, Ottawa, Paris, Slovenia, and Washington.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute or its members.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Atlantic Treaty Association for giving me the honour of being your Rapporteur-General for the 5th time. Actually, I could argue that it is the 6th time because I was also the Rapporteur of the Military Commission of the ATA in Washington many, many years ago.

It is interesting to have been the Rapporteur-General on so many occasions because as the Rapporteur-General you are the only person in the room who is compelled to remain awake for every single presentation and to take notes of all of them. As a consequence you gain a unique historical perspective of the ATA as a continuing and living process.

When I reflect on the occasion when I was first Rapporteur-General in Copenhagen in 1993, and on the intervening occasions, I am struck by the way in which the themes that were expressed at that meeting of the ATA in Copenhagen are still the themes being expressed at today's meeting in Ottawa in 2007.

As I have said on each of the other occasions, there are two different ideas on how a Rapporteur-General should approach his task. One is to attempt to provide a summary of each individual presentation, which is not the way that I prefer to work.

I rather take the view that the role of the Rapporteur-General is to try to identify the major underlying themes that have run through the conference and to, as well, examine their implications for future research, conferences, and exchanges of views, for I view the series of ATA General Assemblies as an ongoing and very significant scholarly work that requires and deserves the attention of Alliance scholars and policy-makers.

Sometimes when we do this, we find that the title selected by the framers of the conference is perhaps not quite the title that emerges from the actual discussions that take place. Indeed, when I listened to this particular conference I was struck by the fact that it really had



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taken, as its major theme, an examination of the role, both current and future, of NATO and the search for global security, and then considered the current operations in Afghanistan as a specific case study of how the Alliance is approaching this enlarging global responsibility.

When I reflect on the history of the Alliance I see, in effect, three major time periods in which the Alliance has addressed these issues of global security.

The first, of course, was the period of the Cold War, a period which was very much one in which the focus of the Alliance was "In Area". The need was to ensure that European and North-Atlantic security was maintained in the face of the threat from the Warsaw Treaty Organization. And we know very well of the brilliant success of the Alliance in meeting that very, very serious challenge across that 45 year period.

Following the Cold War, we entered a period in which NATO's focus of interest moved "Out of Area" into "Adjacent Areas" of Central and Eastern Europe. These concerns led to the questions of the expansion of the membership of the Alliance in Central Europe, the resolution of the war of the Yugoslav succession, the expansion into the Baltic, the development of the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the normalization of relations between Russia and the NATO states.

The success of the expansion of the Alliance owed much to two remarkable initiatives, the "Partnership for Peace" program and the "MAP," the "Membership Application Plan" Both of these had profound impacts upon the new member states, impacts that went far beyond the security sector into economic and governance areas. They facilitated the interests of those states, not only in terms of entry into NATO, but also of into entry into the EU. So in that sense, this second period too, was marked by a glorious triumph of NATO diplomacy and relevance in terms of governances and the integration of the states of Central and Eastern European into the West.

This then brings us into the third period, one in which we are dealing with "Truly Out of Area" concerns, and the question that runs through meetings such as this is whether NATO will be able to achieve the same success

in the "Truly Out of Area" as it did in the previous two periods.

We have listened in this conference to some interesting proposals: a proposal to add new members such as Israel, Japan, and Australia who are very much "Out of Area" states but who share so many of the common values of the Alliance; and we have heard a proposal to extend or replicate the close de facto relationship between the EU and NATO; and one which sees an expansion of NATO's ambit into a relationship with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which might serve globally as a civil and economic balance to the physical and diplomatic strength of NATO.

And we have been conscious, too, of the evolving relationship between NATO and the UN. The UN has not been able to achieve the successes we would like to have seen, in terms of stability and security operations, but at the same time it has produced a rich intellectual underpinning for those operations through the development of such initiatives as the concepts of "Human Security" and the "Responsibility to Protect." Since the UN lacks military resources that can be easily deployed, it continues to look to NATO as a collective security organization with a unified military command structure and the resources to be able to achieve something of lasting impact in terms of those objectives.

But this leads to some of the interesting strategic problems that the Alliance now faces. In a nutshell this really comes to the fundamental question as to whether or not all of the nations of the Alliance will provide the necessary strategic resources to it, and more importantly, whether they have the strategic will to take up such an expanding role in the solution of global security questions.

This is a particularly acute question in a time when we are seeing massive shifts in the geostrategic centers of gravity in the world. And I must commend the organizers of this conference in including Mr. Sun Lushan, of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canada, as a speaker in the agenda of this meeting. This decision is a clear indication that the ATA recognizes that these new centers of gravity exist, and must be recognized.

We are and must be conscious that the Asia-Pacific area is now an area of increasing



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weight in economic, diplomatic, and ultimately, perhaps, in military terms. China and India's economic growth has been staggering, and one wonders whether there is now a possibility of conflicts of interest being experienced in the Asia-Pacific region concerning a competition for scarce resources that might require international stability intervention.

When we turn to Afghanistan as the first of these major case studies of NATO's ability to operate effectively as the key agency of global security, we must address a series of serious questions. Afghanistan in microcosm is the test case of NATO's ability to move beyond a Eurocentric vision. And here, we come back to the question of the maintenance of a strategic will that is ultimately derived from public opinion in NATO states. This is a challenge that we have certainly recognized but one with which we have failed to deal satisfactorily.

We must look hard at the strategic resources Alliance governments have made available, and we should reflect upon the fact, that since 1989, which was the de facto end of the Cold War, NATO states have cut their defence budgets, measured as a percentage of GDP, by 55%.

Moreover, as is usually the case when defence budgets are cut, those cuts are made first in the area of equipment contracts which have not yet been awarded. Given that the equipment purchases of today determine the military capabilities of tomorrow, and ultimately in the policy options of tomorrow, the cuts we have seen in the equipment holdings of the alliance are crucial factors in the ability, or inability, of the alliance to deal with the issues it faces.

This is particularly troubling when we are at the same time shifting from a Eurocentric and conscript based concept of operations in which the European states planned to fight a war of positional defense until the reinforcements arrived from North America, to a global environment in which the need is for quick response expeditionary forces of a very high state of professional training, with the logistics to support such operations.

And this is a paramount issue in Afghanistan. We have deployed forces that are quite capable of fighting, especially in the

south of Afghanistan, and we have won a series of holding victories that have been very impressive. The Taliban have been defeated tactically over and over again.

But in order to transform those tactical victories into a strategic victory, we must be prepared for a much greater deployment of resources on a very long timescale. It is obvious that Afghanistan is the textbook case study of NATO's capacity as an actor in the new search for global security, an actor that can ensure that a campaign that is winnable is in fact won

I recall the occasion years ago in Copenhagen when I was given my first opportunity to be the Rapporteur-General for the ATA General Assembly, when I cited a scene from Act Four of Shakespeare's "Hamlet." In that scene, Claudius—who had murdered Hamlet's father—sought relief from his guilt in an unsuccessful prayer for forgiveness, and concluded with the remark, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts cannot to heaven go."

I think that Claudius captures the fundamental question that faces the Alliance at this point and hereafter. Words and thoughts and, ultimately actions are different items.

We have made promises, we have made declarations, we have filled the very air with words.

But the fundamental question remains. Will our words to be followed by our thoughts—and by the actions that demonstrate the reality of those thoughts—actions that will deliver the resources required to achieve victory for NATO for the third time in its existence.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the challenge that lies before us all.

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