

NATO globalization plans advance

by Michael Liebig

In April, the summit will take place in Washington, D.C., marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of NATO. Most assume that the main focus of the summit meeting will be the eastward expansion of NATO, to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. But that is not the case. There is every indication that the trusty “old NATO” will be buried, because, at this conference, a new “strategic concept” for NATO will be introduced. Yet, absurdly, there is absolutely no substantial public debate in political circles, neither in the United States nor in Europe, on what actually is at stake in the Washington summit: It is, in short, a question of war or peace.

Shelton’s London speech

What are we to understand under the rubric of the new “strategic concept”? On March 8, the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Henry H. Shelton, speaking at the London “NATO at 50 Conference,” of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), declared that NATO must “broaden its strategic perspective to protect all of our interests from a myriad of complex, asymmetric threats that span the conflict continuum.” NATO must “place new emphasis on the unpredictable and multi-directional nature of threats such as regional conflict, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism.”

Before proceeding to investigate what is lurking behind the shadowy words of General Shelton, it must be added that Shelton also stated that, “while the Alliance has not yet reached complete consensus on these initiatives . . . it is my hope that we will come to closure on these important issues over the next month.” This remark by Shelton is very important. The new “strategic concept” has been in discussion in a “Policy Coordinating Group” of NATO since January 1998. Quite evidently, among the NATO member-states—primarily between the United States and Great Britain on the one hand, and the continental European members on the other—there has been no harmony, and to the present day, no common agreement on the new “strategic concept” has been reached. Therefore, in the short time remaining, it is urgent to prevent NATO from being transformed into something which is the exact opposite of the objectives that have characterized it thus far.

What the United States and Great Britain want from the new “strategic concept” of NATO is clear. Here, by “the United States,” a differentiation must be made: American foreign and security policy has been largely usurped by the “Gore parallel government,” which includes, along with the Vice President and Shelton, also Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, as well as the apparatus of top officials from the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and the various intelligence services. The new NATO strategy has been under discussion since January 1998, and since January 1998 President Clinton has been in the line of fire of the Lewinsky affair, which has not abated even following the failed impeachment coup attempt. President Clinton thus has not really played any essential role in shaping the content of the “new NATO” strategy.

To understand the debate on the new NATO strategy, the continuing escalation of the internal American political situation as well as of the world financial and economic crisis since 1997, must be grasped. It is out of this dynamic that a fundamental shift in the military-strategic approach has emerged, which has found its expression in the “new American military strategy” associated with the names of Shelton and Cohen.

The essence of it is the triad of air warfare, special forces deployments, and so-called information war (or cyberwar). At the same time, the threshold for the “first use” of tactical nuclear weapons, in case the conduct of war along the lines of the “triad” concept does not succeed, is significantly lowered. The ongoing Anglo-American “undeclared” war against Iraq is a test run for the new military strategy.

The ‘rogue states’ strategy

The enemy image of this strategy is the so-called “rogue state”—currently Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Syria under Hafez al-Assad, or North Korea. On Feb. 22, the military correspondent for the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*, Jacques Iznard, wrote that the United States had declared the “rogue states” as the leading current strategic danger, and the “central threat in the 21st century,” but he wondered if thereby the U.S.A were not “provoking new scapegoats into existence, after having lost the enemy image of the Cold War.”

Anyone who can look beyond his nose in daily events,

will not have any difficulty recognizing that others, beyond the states mentioned, could very quickly be counted among the “rogue states,” if they ostensibly or actually threatened the hegemonic power position of the Anglo-American establishment in the world—be it in the financial-economic or in the political-military realm. Thus, there should be no surprise to see the British-American-Commonwealth (BAC) faction turning China increasingly into an enemy image. In broad layers of the U.S. Congress, as well as among many military and intelligence circles, China has already become a “rogue state,” which supposedly threatens the national security of the United States in a manner similar to that of the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The BAC power group knows that China is still relatively weak and that it would require about ten years to reach the status of a superpower. In purely military terms, China has only 18 land-based intercontinental missiles; its strategic nuclear arsenal is thus much weaker than that of France or England.

The BAC faction wants to stop China, before it becomes a superpower. This has not eluded the Chinese, who have qualitatively strengthened their strategic cooperation with Russia—with its still impressive strategic nuclear forces. The BAC leading elites are committed to breaking this Russian-Chinese cooperation, by any means, to isolate China, calculating that an isolated China could not withstand a “global power struggle.”

At the moment the BAC elites are concentrating primarily on Russia, and are attempting to bring down the Primakov government, through an escalation of the political destabilization and economic crisis in the country. For the BAC elites, India, which has also become a nuclear power in the meantime, constitutes a potential “rogue state” as well; the more so, if India works together with Russia and China, in the economic and political-strategic realm. Such a “Eurasian triangle” has become the great geopolitical enemy image of the BAC elites.

The BAC and continental Europe

This all has to be taken into consideration, when trying to decipher the obscure words of General Shelton. Shelton attacks those “cynics” who “speculate that America seeks to shift NATO toward some kind of global role,” but then he confirms this would-be speculation when he says, that NATO must “redefine its mission . . . to reflect the geopolitical landscape to which it is anchored,” i.e., the “amorphous,” “asymmetric,” and “complex” threats he sees as being located “beyond NATO territory,” but which “directly affect NATO’s security.” NATO must have the ability “to respond quickly and effectively to crises, either within NATO territory or in areas of fundamental interest to the Alliance.”

Behind Shelton’s tortuous formulations lies a rather simple strategic state of affairs. On the one hand, the BAC elites

need the logistical and military potential of NATO in western Europe for their global strategy, because they have lost much real economic and military-logistical substance in the United States over the last ten years, even though this is generally not acknowledged to the public.

On the other hand, they would like to avoid the political tensions and frictions with western Europe which would lawfully emerge in the event of a coalition forged to move militarily against a third party. This is even more the case, if western Europe considers itself not threatened by the third party or parties, or if Europe has substantial common interests with the would-be enemy.

Apparently, the BAC’s desire is for western Europe to accept and adopt, as far as possible, the new American military strategy, within the context of the “new NATO,” but without Europe “meddling” too much in global political and strategic affairs. From this, a “geopolitical division of labor” would ensue between western Europe and the United States, which was decried as follows by the renowned *Austrian Military Magazine*:

“NATO’s strategic orientation will shift from an East-West scenario to a North-South or a West-South-East scenario, and thus cover an operational area which stretches from India to Morocco.” For this “operational area,” a “European Security and Defense Identity” within NATO would be allowed, and even encouraged.

A great ‘Cold War’ and ‘hot’ regional wars

This “new NATO” would quite clearly no longer be the “old” NATO. The “old” NATO was a defensive alliance to secure the territorial integrity of the area of the alliance, against possible attacks by the Soviet empire. The alliance was based on the principle of collective security, according to Article 5 of the Washington NATO Treaty of 1949. This means that any attack against any partner of the alliance, constituted a case of defense for the whole alliance.

In respect to this traditional NATO doctrine, Shelton said in London, “This narrow view of collective defense is, however, insufficient to counter the more sophisticated and subtle dangers we face today. . . . NATO must be prepared to cope with the very real threat to our people, our territory, and our military forces posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. This is arguably the most significant Article 5 threat that we collectively face, and one we must address seriously, together, and soon. We must do more than just acknowledge WMD as a priority challenge; we must turn rhetoric into reality.”

If Shelton were talking about developing a missile defense system for NATO, based on “new physical principles” (directed energy systems) and on strategic agreements with Russia, China, or India, then one could only happily agree. But that is not what Shelton wants.

In the *Le Monde* article, Iznard wrote that in the United

States, the tendency was to “equate weapons systems developed by ‘rogue states’ to the weapons arsenal of the Nazis in the Second World War,” which then justifies the fact that “American policy in this area is first of all aggressive, and only occasionally defensive. This policy of ‘counter-proliferation’ is based on the trust [of allied states] in the information which would be supplied exclusively by the U.S.” These states should thus “be prepared, with or without NATO, to launch military action instantly, on the basis of an early warning signal related to weapons of mass destruction in whatever country.”

War in the Middle East

Here, one further important point should be stressed in connection with the “rogue state” strategy. One “rogue state”—usually a rather weak one—is being hit militarily, but there is also an indirect “message” to other states being delivered through this action. Iraq, or perhaps tomorrow, Syria or North Korea, is bombarded, but the countries actually targeted, are those with a significantly greater economic and military potential, which, however, do not behave like “rogue states.” It is they who should be “taught a lesson” by the bombardments of the “rogue states.”

Iznard referred to a recent statement by CIA director George Tenet in the U.S. Senate, in which he declared that the threat to the United States from the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction was “here and now.” In this statement, Tenet had concentrated on the “North Korean threat,” but at the same time, said that Russia, China, Iran, India, and Pakistan had practically eluded any effective international controls regarding weapons of mass destruction.

The approach to Iraq is similar; here it is to be assumed that in April at the latest, the Anglo-American military operations will escalate qualitatively. Although neither Russia nor China may harbor particular sympathies for the government of Saddam Hussein, they have good reason to vehemently oppose the undeclared Anglo-American war against Iraq. They know that Iraq is to be used, “to teach a lesson,” whose political-strategic implications reach far beyond Iraq. They know what was meant by the fact that the Anglo-American bombardments of last December began just as the UN Security Council was in the middle of consultations over Iraq. Russia and China also know that the failure of air war and special forces troop deployments to overthrow Saddam Hussein, could lead to an escalation with tactical nuclear weapons, because the superpower America and the British—always pushing and hyping the United States—would “lose face” otherwise. The orchestration of a terrorist attack with chemical or biological weapons, as a justification for the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons, does not present any serious problem, for those determined to stage it. A “hot war” in the Middle East—especially with tactical nuclear

weapons—would radically alter the whole world political situation.

The NATO debate must be a public debate

This is the concrete context in which the discussion on the content of the new “strategic concept” of NATO is unfolding. These actions in the Middle East reveal the real content which lurks behind the tortuous formulations of General Shelton. Obviously, western Europe is torn between Anglo-American pressure to accept a radical transformation of NATO, on one hand, and the attempt to prevent a “new Cold War,” on the other.

The long-term economic and strategic interests for Europe’s survival demand that it stay out of any political or even military confrontation of the “West” with Russia or China. At the same time, it is in Europe’s basic interest to prevent a transatlantic split and even mutual hostility.

So far, the discussions of the “new NATO” have taken place almost exclusively behind the scenes. But it must not be left to a Gore, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Shelton, or anonymous government or military officials. Therefore, the debate over what is really at stake in next month’s Washington NATO summit, must be brought out into the open—in the United States as well as in Europe.

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