
REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN SECURITY POLICY. AN AUSTRIAN VIEW

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Working with the Austrian Ministry of Defence and teaching at the University of the Armed Forces in Munich I myself can be called as an example of enhanced co-operation divided only by the common language or the different dialect as you have mentioned before. It is necessary for me to point out that everything I am going to say is my personal point of view. So it is not necessarily the official opinion of the German government.

Mr. Martinusz called the enlargement of the Visegrád 4 by including Austria and Slovenia a kind of revival of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, I will not focus on the past. I am looking into the future. Therefore for me the question is not if we have a common history or historical points which may lead us to co-operation of our countries. I think it is the question of the current situation, whether we have common interests. If we have then we have to do everything to fulfil them. Lord Palmerston who was Prime Minister under Queen Victoria said, 'nations do not have eternal allies, they only have eternal interests'. If we keep this in mind we have to look at all the alliances and associations that actually do exist. Since Austria is not a member of the Visegrád Co-operation I cannot say anything about its future. As Austria is a member of Partnership for Peace, which does not allow full co-operation but to a certain extent involves Austria in the security activity of the members of the group, which all belong to NATO.

On the one hand NATO is undergoing a transformation process. Starting from the first case where NATO as an organisation decided on article 5 of the North-Atlantic Treaty you can see that this decision was not needed. The United States did not want the support of NATO after 9/11. They were looking for bilateral contacts, the coalition of the willing. Offering support and being rejected. I think we can talk about several reasons that led to this situation. First of all you can find a tremendous lack of capabilities. While the United States has highly professional armed forces with the best equipment, the Europeans or the European allies of NATO do not have it. They cannot compete with the military capabilities of the US. You can often hear this saying that while the Europeans have soldiers the US has warriors. This tremendous lack of military capabilities is one and probably the most important reason why the US does not rely on the European allies. And Canada despite being part of the American continent can be called as being part of the European side in terms of capabilities.

Second is that Europe has ceased to be the area of major strategic concern for the United States particularly after the Cold War. This was fully visible after the end of

the war in Yugoslavia, which had kept Europe and NATO in the limelight of the years 1991-2000. Asia and South America are becoming the centres of American security interests.

Third is that the experience from the war in Kosovo in 1999 tells us that consulting NATO is a rather complicated will. The war in Kosovo was called the war by committees. US General Wesley Clark, the Supreme Ally Commander in Europe remembers that during the war in Kosovo NATO agreement was required in many cases and sometimes it was difficult to obtain and sometimes it was coming too late.

Fourth is the overwhelming role of the United States. For the US it is not necessary to find multilateral ways of solving problems. Multilateralism only limits the scale of decisions. You can say that it is easy for you to talk negatively about NATO because your country is not a member of NATO. I think that is not the reason why I have spent a lot of time in one of the major European NATO countries, the Federal Republic of Germany. In Germany even before Schröder's decision on the Iraqi war there was some decline in NATO enthusiasm. To a certain extent due to the special relationship with France the influence of France is growing rapidly. Since NATO cannot be reduced to being an instrument of the US there might be a chance of approving the so-called Euro NATO, which is an old idea of the 1970's. The Euro-group within NATO with its own structure, which is not or should not be dependent on the US. The concept of the Euro-group is going to meet the concept of European security and defence policy within the framework of the European Union.

As you all know not all members of the European Union are members of NATO. There was the question if it is possible to let Austria take part in a battle group with NATO members, Germany and the Czech Republic. On the other hand you may ask whether it is possible to allow the European Union to take part in a battle group. As it is going to be the case, there is a link between the defence policy of NATO and the European Union already.

As you all know European defence policy was created and established in order to enable the European Union to be a noble player. Related to that the European Security Strategy paper was created in a way to allow the observers to play some role. It is so general that it is open to question whether it might be useful.

I think it would be better to concentrate on tasks that the Europeans have decided on, the so-called Petersberg's task. There is a wide range from strictly military to merely civilian ones. I think the question is about the relationship between military and civilian efforts and capabilities. Is there a reason for the creation of so-called soft power skills of the Europeans? The recent establishment of the civil military cell within the framework of the European Union might be one expression that European security and defence policy is going in that direction. Not the so-called heavy military tasks but the soft power skills of Europe which are successful in nation-building and peacekeeping. They can be the task of the Europeans in the future.

Due to the enormous lack of hard military capabilities the European Union will not be able in the next thirty years to close the gap to the Americans and to carry out hard military missions on its own. The creation of battle groups and of the European rapid reaction force, the famous 60,000 troops agreed in Helsinki in December 1999. people recording the Helsinki (18.30) should be oriented that direction. Enabling soft power skills more than hard military capabilities is currently preferable.

Within the framework of the European rapid reaction force there is not only place for the concept of battle groups but also for regional co-operation. Regional co-operation outside the existing structures and organisations can be determined by common interests. Common interests, which have to be the first question in political decision-making. Common interests vary from facing common challenges and threats and for central European states and nations including Austria out of our common geographic situation and position there are common interests...whether we are taking part in the Visegrád 4 as the fifth or the sixth member-state or not.

Common interests particularly of the Visegrád 4 and Austria are also determined by our small defence budgets or, to put it differently, our common lack of money. More in the common position is the increasing demand for military abilities within the European Union.

According to business development common interests can lead to multi-nationalisation by putting together security and military capabilities using the economies of scale within the field of security.

Small and medium-size countries beside Poland and the other countries of the Visegrad 4 just as Austria and Slovenia are not able to fulfil the whole range of military tasks. They can only fulfil them through specialisation. As you all know e.g. the Czech Republic is specialised in biological and chemical protection. You might ask the question of what about Austria. I think Austria has a wide range of experience in the same area. Not to mention the famous special mountain troops of Austria which can contribute to the common structure and co-operation in the field of security. Austria has some experience in the area. In Kosovo the mountain troops are organised together with the German Mountain troops within one sector.

Austria does not have experience only in co-operation with Germany but also with Hungary within the UN peacekeeping missions particularly in Cyprus.

If we find the solution that there are more reasons particularly economic reasons to find co-operation in the field of security then we can move to the next step and face the problems of multinationalisation.

If we take the concept of NATO, we have a concept where the units are strictly national. Only the staff and the command structure are to a certain extent multinational. The concept of the European rapid reaction force can foresee multinationalisation or integration down to the level of battalions already. If we do that we have to face different legal frameworks of the different armies taking part and have to face different philosophies of military leadership. The next step in this development has to be

harmonising legal frameworks and to a certain extent military leaderships. Germany and Austria have already done so. Visegrád countries are at the beginning of doing that and making a study on harmonisation, possibilities and necessities in this area.

The presentation was called 'An Austrian view'. Besides interests of all political parties there is a big difference between the government and the opposition on the multinational involvement of Austria. It is an obvious interest of Austria to concentrate on capabilities in order to achieve maximum efficiency. On that basis co-operation with our neighbour countries can be successful and co-operation should start and be completed in the next years.