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NATO and Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century: Foreign and Security Policy Perspectives, ed. by Michele Testoni

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Michele Testoni, the editor of *NATO and Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century: Foreign and Security Policy Perspectives*, a publication made up of 12 articles written by his students under his supervision, is a prominent expert on international relations and security issues with a deep interest in US security and military relations in the modern world. He has been Assistant Professor at the School of International Relations at IE University since 2013, and Visiting Professor at the “Global Economy and Social Affairs Master set up by the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice” programme, and the International Labour Organisation. His career has always been oriented towards international politics, as evidenced by his cooperation with the top academic institutions in Rome and beyond specialising in International Relations, such as the University of Bologna, Dickinson College, and John Cabot University. His educational achievements include a PhD in Political Sciences awarded by the University of Florence, and a Master’s degree in International Relations received from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. Michele Testoni is the author of many articles featured in *European Security* and

Quaderni di Scienza Politica journals. In the Spanish Political Studies Association and the Transatlantic Studies Association, he is an active member and a part of the academic managing committee. In the years 2010–2012, Testoni was Associate Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe, where he cooperated with Transparency International.

Testoni's *NATO and Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century: Foreign and Security Policy Perspectives* is a collective effort of the editor and his students, who have shared their national perspectives on NATO. In light of my personal interest in the Polish-American bilateral relations, I have found it challenging to review two chapters of this book. The first one is chapter one – “The US role in NATO: past, present, future”, which describes the dubious future of maintaining the leadership of the United States; the second one is chapter seven entitled “Poland's role in NATO: toward a transatlantic bargain 2.0?”, which refers to Poland's desire to put NATO at the forefront before all the other entities and organisations, which proves the country's firm belief in a rather outdated vision of the US as NATO's key player.

In chapter one “The US role in NATO: past, present, future”, written by Michele Testoni's student Jack Thompson, the reader gets a chance to find out about the essence of NATO's transformation from an “unquestioned cornerstone of the US grand strategy” represented by Harry Truman's efforts of strengthening allies between member states toward disintegration with other members during Donald Trump's presidency and his purchasing “unfair trade policies within a security policy perspective”. In this chapter, Thompson attempts to apply both the observation method and the comparative analysis method to look at the chronological sequence of events from the formation and launch of the community to its final disintegration. He refers to role of the US in the North Transatlantic Treaty Organisation as an agent that keeps spiralling down other leaders' position. Nevertheless, the author argues that NATO as an organisation continues to be the primary institution responsible for ensuring peace and stability across Europe and North America. At the same time, he mentions the pressure exerted on NATO with regard to the pace of strengthening its members, which has a major impact on the future of the organisation. In my opinion, this fact is best represented by the quote “if it is the member states that make the Alliance work, then it is the member states that one needs to look at to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the Alliance itself.” The coalition of the member states has weakened gradually, which the author has referred to and has rightly interpreted as alarming signals that he was afraid would prove NATO's helplessness in the event of escalation of conflict from the American point of view.

In Chapter seven titled “Poland's role in NATO: toward a transatlantic bargain 2.0?”, the author, Wojciech Michnik, shows a naive outlook that the Polish governments have had toward one member of NATO, i.e. the US. The author seems to understand the reason that makes Poland bond with the US in such a major way.

It is a real concern in light of the Russian aggression in Ukraine and has increased significantly since this publication was written. Michnik looks for a legal method and notices the growth that can be seen in the field of defence strategy. He also refers to the military forces deployed in Warsaw during the operation in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Poland is willing to host the American soldiers cause it strengthens bilateral relations and guarantees protection in case conflicts spread. According to historical facts, American troops were allocated to Poland due to the geographical location during the Kosovo operation 1998–1999. After the 2001 attacks on the WTC in New York and on the Pentagon, during the presidency of Kwaśniewski in Poland, the United States developed strategies to prevent potential terroristic attacks and engaged allies in the war in Afghanistan by sending CIA representatives to detention canthers in Europe, including Poland.

The author shares a positive example of the well-balanced cooperation between Poland and NATO, where he highlights Poland's visible efforts of spending 2% of the Polish GDP on the army, which is a factor that helps to guarantee better Poland-NATO relations. He also mentions the Newport summit, which stressed the fact of the Alliance's Eastern flank becoming more real than before. Nevertheless, all these manifestations, directed by Poland towards America were, in his opinion, unilateral – especially during the Trump administration. He argues that overly active gestures toward America are Poland's strength in the opinion of the government, but the unlimited pursuit of good relations with the transatlantic partner is risky from the point of view of preserving one's own European identity and dignity, and self-interest. Poland is shamefully known for failing to fulfil its obligations to the European Union – author dwells it is maybe because too much attention and financial effort is being devoted to pleasing the US. For example EU's initiative, the National Reconstruction Program, has been suspended for Poland due to a lack of respect for independent law-making process. In turn, Poland ignoring the Regional European Organizations not only is viewed as an unstable country in the region and across the Atlantic Ocean, but is also compared with states with autocratic governments like Hungary. Hence Poland is losing its reputation – and a chance of potential aid in case of the crisis. Michnik states that the Polish government has been trying desperately to maintain good relations with the United States, neglecting its relations with geographically closer allies, such as Germany, or Brussels. As the author rightly notes, Poland, arguably the closest pro-Atlantic ally around, has been counting on the fact that after NATO's enlargement to include the Czech Republic and Hungary, due to its proximity, Poland would be a strategic partner in the NATO 2.0 negotiation process. Nevertheless, even though Poland is an important member of the eastern flank, it requires the support of other members in ensuring peace, and it does not seem to cope with this task in the best possible way, as Michnik points out. In fact, he sees the issue of Poland's attempts to maintain a strong collaboration

with its neighbours, like e.g. Germany, which can lead to a further disintegration of NATO. As an example of a diplomatic error, Michnik mentions the withdrawal of 9,500 American soldiers from Germany and their transfer to Poland. He is also sceptical of the Polish plans to make Poland responsible for sponsoring the maintenance of American troops in Poland with USD 2 billion. This, in his opinion, creates an image of ingratitude, and could be taken as a *faux pas* towards Brussels.

To sum up, this publication rests on the assumption that currently scholars devote more time to NATO as an organisation than to its individual members, an assumption which the author tries to corroborate. The publication is different in many respects: it is a breath of fresh air in this subject area, and at the same time, the author looks at the criticism expressed by the Member States towards NATO in case of a confused role of the US, or an excessive enthusiasm on the part of Poland, thus showing that that NATO's member perceive the organisation differently.

Admittedly, there are far deeper divisions within the Alliance itself than it seems, and they have been recently exacerbated by a number of events, such as e.g. Brexit, the presidency of Donald Trump in the US, Emanuel Macron's claims that NATO is experiencing a "brain death", or the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. All these factors have pushed Michele Testoni to consider the future of the strained transatlantic architecture. What I find interesting in this publication is the reality seen through the eyes of a younger generation of academics who criticise the "Western" core values and democratic principles, a trend that tends to be neglected by Polish experts and law makers. Hence, the text brings forward a clear point of view reviewed by a few generations who are citizens of different states that make up the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The analysis of the two chapters mentioned above represents totally different points of view and shows that the author is right: there is no unanimity within the organisation and/or alliance of its member states. The perception from the point of view of its members, the so-called second image, allows to get to know organisations and their challenges in a much better way – in a way that allows readers to look at the interests of countries that come together to achieve their own goals, but also to learn to control the strengths and weaknesses of other countries. On the whole, what really matters is the future, and NATO needs a united voice to answer the question of whether or not its expansion to the east was the right decision. Is the question of Georgia and Ukraine waiting in line to join the Alliance justified? And, last but not least, what is the top threat in modern transatlantic relations – terrorism, global warming, or the militarisation of Russia?