

NATO's Needs

An Interview with The Honorable Dr. Solomon Passy, Founder and President, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Solomon Passy founded the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria in 1990 and continues to serve as its President. From 2001 to 2005, he served as Bulgaria's Minister of Foreign Affairs. In addition, he was Chairman of the UN Security Council in 2002 and 2003, OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 2004, and Chairman of Parliamentary Defense/Foreign Affairs Committee and MP from 1990 to 1991, as well as 2001 to 2009. He was the principal negotiator and signatory to Accession Treaties of Bulgaria with NATO in 2001-2004 and the EU in 2001-2005. In 1990, he was the one to endorse the first Parliamentary Bill in New Europe for the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and enlargements of NATO and EU Eastwards. In recognition of his efforts in Antarctica, a Peak Passy is named after him, on Livingstone Island, Antarctica.



The Hon. Dr. Solomon Passy

What is your opinion on current developments in NATO, its priorities and performance, and its relevance to future global threats?

Observing NATO under a microscope, it comprises a new strategic concept, ongoing internal reforms, political consensus, and good management, so it is on the right track.

Looking at NATO through a telescope, it seems far away from its 21st century mission: to become the global security actor to address the challenges of the next decade, not only those of the past.

Can NATO retain its relevance in the future and provide efficient security to its members?

In order to provide security for its members, NATO should provide security for the entire world. Today, security cannot be geographically isolated. The threats are contagious and the policy to protect only ourselves does not work. On the other hand, we spend more efforts on potential defensive reactions rather than on preventive political behavior, which could cost less and deliver more.

What should NATO do to strengthen Euro-Atlantic relationships?

The NATO-EU relations have been in an embryonic form for 60 years. To upgrade this status, EU and all its members and institutions should recognize that EU is part of NATO's defense umbrella and all EU members benefit from it. We need the common EU defense policy to become the European pillar of NATO's strategies in the future and to maximize the effect of our defense expenditures. NATO should offer the EU a kind

of collective membership – stronger than the one EU requests from the UN – and the next EU members should first be invited to join NATO. This could be secured by a caucus, the 21 (soon to be 24) members of both NATO and EU, which could take leadership on the cohesion.

NATO needs new members professing the Euro-Atlantic political traditions and values such as Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Australia, New Zealand, and Cuba after expected reforms. We need for many more Cold War taboos to be given up.

Shall we have to wait for this to happen before taking preventive steps? What should those steps be?

We have several geopolitical priorities to address immediately. We should treat Russia as a future member of NATO. We should convey this message to the Russian people, which will catalyze the democratization of the country.

We need to establish a NATO-China Cooperation Council, similar to the NATO-Russia Council, and propose to China a strategic partnership on certain global issues. This will contribute to the democratization of many countries around the globe, which are heavily influenced by China and its investments.

These approaches to Russia and China will yield new relationships between NATO and the UN Security Council, and eventually NATO will be recognized as the global security player.

NATO should establish and formalize a dialogue with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to bridge the differences between these two cultural worlds. Our failure in efforts with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, and others is that we treat these countries as a part of our own cultural tradition, taking them out of their cultural habitat.

NATO should also pay attention to ASEAN, the African Union, and Latin America.

In addition, NATO should take care of its own image worldwide. In contrast with the world public opinion for our Alliance, NATO deserves a Nobel Peace Prize for what it has done in the past. Therefore, we should do much more in that regard and the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria is one example showing what should be done and how.

How do you characterize Bulgaria's foreign policy and what kind of issues is your country pursuing globally?

After joining NATO and the EU, the countries from the so-called New Europe found themselves without visible strategic priorities in foreign affairs. So far, the Lisbon Treaty has not created EU

common foreign policy. It has only raised high expectations and discouraged New Europe from defining its new foreign priorities. Bulgaria appears really active: our government's pro-active support to the Arab Spring and the inclusion of the Western Balkans in the EU are examples. The activities of the civil society spread on an even larger scale, from Latin America to North Korea and from Antarctica to international space law. But this is not enough. EU does not make proper use of the specific know-how, which New Europe brings into the EU. This has to be overcome.

You and your wife Gergana Passy (former EU Minister of Bulgaria) have championed the standardization of GSM cell phone chargers at the EU level. How long did this take and what were the major challenges?

Gergana and I led a small Bulgarian team that convinced the European Commission and the manufacturers to secure a common standardized charger for all cell phones on EU territory, based on a micro-USB format. We started the process in 2008 and finalized it in 2011. Big manufacturers like Nokia, Motorola, Ericsson, Sony, and others had the instinct to protect their own chargers as a source of profit. However, they realized that the reduction of the price of the cell phones would increase the sales, which increases the profit more than the chargers permit. So the manufacturers, consumers, and the environment were all winners.

This policy will save annually approximately 30 million tons of CO² emissions and electronic waste. This is just one example of how good standards could fight climate change. We have suggested that the European Commission extend this policy in a number of other areas, which could make a great difference globally.

The huge universe of protected by the monopolies batteries, charging devices, and galaxies of appliances have the potential if standardized to save enough money to overcome world hunger, poverty, and disease. We just need leadership.

Your team is also focused on full Wi-Fi Internet coverage in EU.

The Internet has become a universal human necessity. A recent UN Report On the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression declares Internet access a human right. Therefore, the Atlantic Club team has proposed to the European Commission to upgrade its current digital agenda and to include a new policy: to secure universal Wi-Fi Internet access on the entire EU territory. The Internet information, and information is democracy. ●