

a new initiative connected to the EU and leave NATO hollow, that would have a serious negative impact on America's commitment to NATO—and it certainly would to this Senator's commitment to NATO. There was just quiet when I responded in that fashion.

The French reporter who was making this report about the new European defense initiative noted how critically poor America was at peacekeeping, and what a poor job we do at rebuilding a country. I never thought that was true with Japan or Germany.

Then a Brit responded to him. She said she had recently been in Bosnia and it is fact that NATO is going to turn over its operational responsibilities in Bosnia to this European force. She said she heard the Kosovars said, We don't trust the EU, we trust the Americans, which certainly flies in the face of the charge that we are no good at peacekeeping. I thanked her for noting what I did not have to say. The Kosovars and the Albanians believed their freedom came from American efforts—not European Union efforts.

Those are the bad things. Let me tell you about the ugly things.

When I left on Sunday to fly home, I reflected upon 9/11 and the article V guarantee that had been issued and how the European Union had not been able to, or our members in Europe had not been able to, fulfill their Afghan responsibilities. I thought about how unfair it was to mothers of American troops, and we as a government have said credibly so that Estonians can talk to Russians as equals that if they are attacked we will go to war—thermonuclear war, if necessary. But if the United States is attacked, the response in Afghanistan—a NATO commitment—has been we will apply defense for ourselves, and we will fall short of fulfilling our promises.

That is the first ugly thing—the first ugly realization I left with.

The second was this: I heard from country after country in Central and Eastern Europe how they were being pressured as new members of the European Union not to be cooperative with America on security issues.

That makes me angry. I think that is really ugly.

I was reminded of the Commissar about a year ago when these new NATO members put an article in the Wall Street Journal saying they stood with America on the war on terrorism and the President of the French Republic fearing these new countries would be a Trojan horse for the Americans and a challenge to the Franco-German leadership of Europe that was opposing the American effort—that somehow they had not acted “well-born.” Those are his words.

He went on to add, warning: I was sad to learn, that is being administered in subtle but powerful ways to these new EU members. He said it could cost them membership in the EU. It has not done that.

Then Chirac said:

Beyond the somewhat amusing or childish aspects of the matter [the matter being the letter of support in the Wall Street Journal] . . . it was dangerous. It should not be forgotten that a number of the EU countries will have to ratify enlargement by referendum. And we already know that public opinion, as always when it's a matter of something new, have reservations about an enlargement, not really seeing exactly what their interest is in approving it. Obviously, then, [what the central Europeans have done] can only reinforce hostile public opinion sentiments among the 15 and especially those who will hold a referendum. Remember that all it takes is for one country not to ratify the referendum for [enlargement] not to happen. Thus, I would say that these countries have been, let's be frank, both not very well brought up and rather unconscious about the dangers that too quick an alignment with the American position could have for them.

I conclude with the words of Edmund Burke, that nations have no permanent friends, only permanent interests. I also remember the words of Isaiah to ancient Israel, not to lean on a weak reed.

I say to the American people, NATO is not dead, but it is in trouble. As politicians promise you relief through internationalization, I ask the American people to consider reality, deeds, not words and empty budgets.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I will use leader time this morning to comment about a number of matters.

I return, as most Members have, from our home States, and I feel a new sense of optimism about what we can accomplish in America for the remaining months of this Congress.

I had the opportunity to visit with South Dakotans of all ages when I was home. I was reminded during those conversations of the hope and resilience that characterize Americans, even in difficult times. The people I talked with spoke frankly about the serious challenges we are facing, but they also expressed a belief that together we can overcome those challenges. And they are right. Their sense of resolve is a great reminder for us all.

When we left Washington for Memorial Day recess, the Senate had ended 5 weeks of procedural wrangling that left many of us frustrated. We accomplished much less than we should have in those 5 weeks. What we did accomplish, though important, took far too long. Remarkably, when we finally did reach agreement on a couple of key issues, some influential voices actually complained. Why? Because bipartisan progress does not suit their political strategy. They would actually prefer Congress do nothing between now and November because they want to blame Democrats for inaction.

When we left for the recess, I was seriously concerned that such political gamesmanship in the Senate could result in a lot of name-calling and finger-pointing this summer but very little progress for the American people. We owe our country more than that.

On Memorial Day, I spoke at a ceremony at a veterans cemetery in my hometown where my father is buried. There were veterans there from my father's war, World War II, from Vietnam, Korea, and the Persian Gulf conflict. There were guests who have friends and family members today serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Yesterday I spoke to about 500 young men who were attending Boys State in South Dakota. This is the 35th anniversary of my own week at Boys State. The young men who are part of Boys State this weekend are among the best and brightest in my State. They are there because they are natural leaders. They care deeply about the future of our country. Some of them will no doubt join the military. From the oldest veterans at the cemetery to the youngest delegates at Boys State, the people I talked with at home reminded me Americans have always done what was needed to be done to make a better future.

Congress can do the same now. These are difficult times economically for the middle class. The last time we found ourselves in the situation like this was in 1992. Then, as now, the monthly bills were getting bigger but wages were not keeping up. Then, as now, we were told the economy was getting better. But whatever “recovery” there was did not seem to be reaching the middle class. Then, as now, there was a feeling that leadership was out of touch with what was going on in most of America.

But then, over the next few years, the leadership in Washington, our Government, started putting the interests of the Nation ahead of special interests. We focused on creating jobs and reducing crime and balancing the budget. With the help of the American people we did all three.

Between 1992 and 2000, 22 million new jobs were created. We lowered the crime rate and turned record deficits into surpluses. We restored strength to America's economy and strengthened America's leadership position in the world. We worked with our allies and NATO to confront a ruthless dictator in Europe who was engaged in ethnic cleansing and ended his brutal reign. A victory in Kosovo proved how successful we can be with our friends when we work together and share the burden confronting global threats.

The situation today may be a little tougher and the solutions may be more complex, especially on the international front, but the fundamental truth remains. Americans still know we can work our way out of this. That is the sentiment I heard back in South Dakota. We have done it before; we can do it again.

I am confident the American people will rise to the challenges of today as