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## Euro-Atlantic Security and the Value of NATO

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THE COLLAPSE OF the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union has caused some of the most intense questioning of the transatlantic and intra-European security systems seen in recent years. In the United States, political leaders confront various formulas for how best to pursue American national interests in Europe--formulas that run the gamut from further reducing the U.S. troop presence in Europe to maintaining the current level of one hundred thousand troops, and from maintaining the size of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at sixteen nations to either measured or rapid expansion of the Alliance's membership. This questioning is, in large part, a result of an ongoing process of re-defining NATO's purpose in the absence of an easily identifiable, direct threat to its members' security. This process has been complicated by Allied efforts to deal with the tragic situation in Bosnia and the rest of former Yugoslavia; efforts to extend eastward the stability Europe has enjoyed in the Euroatlantic system; and efforts to address the Allies' security relationship with Russia and other former Soviet states, both as partners and as potential adversaries.

What's more, many political leaders in the Alliance's member states, including those in the United States, are from a new generation -- a generation that has not had to establish a stable security system in Europe in the wake of war. Instead, this new generation of leaders responds increasingly to the inward-looking focus of its electorate and struggles to meet expanding social demands with declining resources.

Some of these leaders sense that, at the least, some interests among and between the Western democracies may be diverging.

Parliaments and publics in the NATO countries also question the reasons for maintaining the Alliance now that the Soviet threat is gone. Indeed, some Americans and Europeans see no threat from a renationalization of defense policies in Europe--policies that have so often led to war in European history--if NATO's integrated defense policy should falter. A return to the competitive national defense policies of the past is not regarded as likely, though "why not?" is never explained. No need for continuing the U.S. role as a "balancing wheel" on the Continent is seen.

Many in the United States question whether keeping peace in the world, or even in Europe, is a "vital" national interest. Some Americans want to refocus U.S. attention toward an economically vibrant Asia or a proximate Latin America, while others demand strong U.S. actions such as the immediate expansion of NATO and the speedy lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia. There is a chorus of conflicting voices in the United States today, with some voices calling for the United States to come home and others arguing for the United States to do more, but to do it unilaterally. Some critics accuse the Clinton Administration of being either unwilling or unable to express a clear sense of direction. In short, there appears to be no consensus on U.S. foreign policy goals or the means to achieve them.

These outlooks express very short-term points of view. They take the absence of threats as lasting and ignore the need for systems of maintaining military, economic, and political stability. They minimize the loss of influence the United States would sustain as it pursued its interests if it were no longer involved

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in the security and geopolitics of Europe, and they ignore the fact that maintaining a stable balance of power in Europe may not be possible without the United States. These outlooks neither answer how the security system in Europe could avoid collapse absent the U.S. presence or how the United States would avoid returning to an isolationist and/or unilateral course once relieved of its solemn commitments in the North Atlantic Treaty. Despite their lack of perspective, some of these views resonate within the United States and also have raised in Europe the never entirely dormant doubts about both the Alliance and America's commitment to Europe.

During such a time, it's perhaps best to return to the basics of the Alliance to examine what remains essential to the security of the Euroatlantic area and what can be built upon to address the new security tasks of the post-Cold War world. There is, in fact, much of value to be preserved and enhanced.

NATO, the heart of the Euroatlantic system, has been viewed throughout most of its history as having been driven by an anti-Communist by an anti-Communist design or, more directly, by an anti-Soviet purpose. The Euroatlantic security system is, however, based on something more fundamental: a common commitment to democratic government and market economics as well as a belief that the security of Europe cannot be separated from that of North America. These shared values and the common recognition of a shared destiny both predate NATO and endure after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. They are the basis of not only NATO, the most successful defense alliance in history, but also the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the Western European Union (WEU), and the other institutions that have been so successful in Europe, across the Atlantic, and, in some cases, around the world. These values are the reason why Americans have fought two wars in Europe in this century and why, as the continuing U.S. troop presence in Europe guarantees, Americans are prepared to fight again. They are the bases of the denationalization of European defense policies that permitted Germany to join Europe as a prosperous and democratic nation, and they have underpinned the longest period of peace in Europe's history. Finally, these values

have provided the means of defusing potential conflicts between NATO members such as Greece and Turkey.

Because those "present at the creation" of the Euroatlantic system and their European and American successors had the wisdom to transform and sustain their commitments into a powerful military and political alliance, it has not been necessary to fight in defense of a NATO member's territory. We must never forget that while NATO's military power deterred Soviet aggression, the power of the ideas NATO and the West embody ultimately brought about the bloodless victory over NATO's chief adversary.

NATO, and the solemn commitment it represents, has also been crucial in maintaining support in the United States for its continuing involvement in the geopolitics of Europe. To the American people, NATO is the bedrock of American involvement in the world. It has enjoyed, and enjoys today, an exceptionally high degree of support. That support is high not only in Washington but also among average Americans, as reflected in opinion poll after opinion poll. Without its treaty commitment to remain engaged in Europe, could the United States have avoided reverting to its historical isolationist tradition following World War II? Without NATO, would the United States avoid an isolationist stance in the future?

The Alliance, through its integrated military structure, through over four decades of training and working together, and through confidence in the availability of military resources to meet common security challenges, has also created a more efficient and less costly defense establishment for its members. The Gulf War was a tremendous success technically and otherwise because of the common training and interoperability of the member country forces that participated in that conflict. All NATO members enjoy reduced defense requirements because they can draw on each other's assets--for example, the Europeans can rely on U.S. lift and intelligence capabilities while the United States can continue to benefit from forward bases in Europe.

Americans and Europeans, as fellow members of the Euroatlantic system, should want all of these benefits to continue:

- credible deterrence against a resurgent threat

from the East, the potential spill-over of ethnic conflict on NATO's perimeter, threats from rogue states, and threats from potential nuclear proliferators;

- continued avoidance of a return to competitive national defense policies through an integrated Alliance defense policy;
- an efficient and less costly defense;
- the stabilizing effect of U.S. involvement in Europe;
- the advantages and leverage derived from the forward deployment of U.S. military forces as well as the European provision of both military forces and other support for global contingencies. (Can we truly vital interests in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere in the Middle East without the U.S. force presence in Europe?)

But Americans and Europeans should also want NATO to serve some newer purposes made possible--even essential--by both the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of inter- and intra-state conflict in both what was once called Eastern Europe and the states of the former Soviet Union. NATO has, in fact, already begun to adapt itself to Europe's new security environment. NATO has determined it to be in the interest of its members to reach out to provide a measure of security and stability to its former adversaries in the East; to develop means to use NATO, and the national assets committed to it, to meet the challenges of the new security environment, especially in crisis management, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations; and to foster further European security integration within the Euroatlantic system.

The NATO Summit of January 1994 was a milestone in this transformation. Without diminishing NATO's core mission--the collective defense of its members--the Allies resolved to project stability outward; to integrate the nations of the East into Western security, political, and economic institutions; and to find new and useful ways to cooperate with their former adversaries, thereby seizing the opportunity of making them lasting partners. NATO is in the process of creating a wider group of nations with a shared interest in a democratic and prosperous Euroatlantic area free from external

domination or threats. The decisions NATO made on the Partnership for Peace; on the development of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF); on support for building a European Security and Defense Identity; and on developing NATO to meet new challenges, whether nuclear proliferation or peacekeeping, were the largest steps taken by NATO in its recent history. The subsequent development of the Partnership for Peace, the tentative steps taken toward developing the Russian-NATO relationship, and the current NATO operations in the Balkans all constitute an historic change in NATO's role in Europe.

The December 1994 NATO Ministerial addressed head-on the question of NATO's enlargement, the profoundest measure of safeguarding stability that NATO could undertake, by assuring that NATO's core function as a defense alliance will remain unimpaired. In seeking to enlarge the area of stability that it currently ensures, NATO did not call into question the stability its members now enjoy. NATO is assuring that the process of enlargement promotes not only the security of the Alliance, as mandated in Article X of the North Atlantic Treaty, but also the security of the wider Euroatlantic area. It has agreed that enlargement must enhance stability not only for members, both old and new, but also for nonmembers.

The NATO Allies also realize the importance of extending Article V's security guarantee to other countries as well as the fact that doing so requires approval by all sixteen Allies, including ratification by two-thirds of the U.S. Senate. Enlargement is a tough decision that should not be taken lightly. Those who urge rapid expansion should reflect carefully on whether two-thirds of the U.S. Senate will necessarily agree to extend U.S. and NATO protection to all nations that seek it. For these reasons NATO has recognized that the process of enlargement must be cautious, transparent, and well prepared.

The enlargement of NATO is intimately related to both the expanding integration of Europe and the broader inclusiveness of European institutions that is so clearly underway. As part of the process of expansion, and for its own sake, NATO members must work on Russia's relationship with the interlocking complex of Euroatlantic institutions, including, but

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not limited to, Russia's relationship with NATO. The results of the Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Budapest in December 1994, were major steps in this direction. Although all agree Russia must not have a veto over NATO decisions, including the expansion decision, all also agree that, for good or ill, Russia will remain a key element in the European security equation. It will be an element for stability only if its relationship with both the Alliance and its members is a positive one.

Finally, NATO members must do, and are committed to doing, better at developing their capabilities in conflict prevention and crisis management, in both NATO (CJTF, for example) and the other institutions of the Euroatlantic security and economic complex.

Many have criticized NATO's inability to resolve the situation in former Yugoslavia. Although criticism of the policies of NATO member states toward that conflict may be justified, that of NATO as an institution is not. Given the limits placed on its actions (particularly on the "dual-key" requirements for use of air strikes), NATO's resolution of the conflict should not have been expected. The fact is, however, that what NATO has been asked (and permitted) to do, it has done well, whether it was enforcing the no-fly zone, exclusion zones, or sanctions in the Adriatic Sea. Although the Bosnian tragedy continues, there is no doubt that the suffering would have been far worse and the search for peace more difficult if not for NATO's involvement. No one is satisfied with the international community's collective response to events in the Balkans, but the fault lies not in NATO, but in the differences that emerged between countries as the international community tried, and continues to try, to deal with a security challenge different from those experienced during

the Cold War.

No one should be under any illusions that these are easy questions: about Bosnia, the expansion of NATO, or the identification of where NATO should next focus its energies (for example, whether solidifying stability in Central Europe should take precedence over dealing with potential threats from the southern Mediterranean). What is easy is to recognize that in dealing with these questions, we need to keep in mind the great benefits we derive from the most successful Alliance in history and do nothing to undermine them.

The Euroatlantic security system is responding to the new challenges of the post-Cold War period. As it does so, it is preserving the benefits of denationalized defense policies, an efficient defense, and the transatlantic security link. These must be maintained, or the challenges of the future will be far worse than those of today.

### About the Author

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