

Transatlantic Security: New Tasks And New Challenges

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have fundamentally altered the nature of transatlantic security. Today, the main threat to transatlantic security comes not from any one particular adversary, as was the case in the past, but from the proliferation of territorial disputes and ethnic conflicts that have resurfaced since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist system in Eastern Europe. In addition, the geographic locus of risks and challenges has shifted. During the Cold War, the main threat emanated from a possible Soviet attack against NATO territory. Today, however, the major threats to transatlantic security are not within the NATO area but on Europe's periphery or beyond its borders. However, as Bosnia has underscored, conflicts outside the NATO area can have a significant impact on European security and may require a response by NATO and other European security organizations.

The changed nature of the security challenges has had a profound impact on NATO's role and mission. Collective defense still remains a core NATO mission but in the last few years NATO's mission has expanded to include crisis management. The debate which raged in the early 1990s about NATO being "out of area or out of business" is essentially over. With NATO's military involvement in Bosnia - and more recently in Kosovo - NATO is "out of area and very much in business", to use the words of the late Secretary General of NATO Manfred Wörner. It is now generally accepted by NATO members that developments outside the NATO area can and do have an impact on the security of its members and may require a response by NATO.

NATO's Expanding Role: The New Debate

While NATO's involvement in Bosnia has ended the debate on whether NATO should involve itself in conflicts outside the NATO area, a new debate has begun to emerge about NATO's transformation and future role. A number of American analysts have begun to argue that NATO should put less emphasis on the defense of national territory and focus more on defense of "common interests."¹ These interests are not confined to Europe but in many cases also extend beyond Europe's borders. Such views are not yet official U.S. policy. However, they have strong adherents in parts of the Clinton Administration, which has begun to emphasize the need for the Alliance to be able to "meet common threats that emanate from the North Atlantic area."² At the same time, they are highly controversial because they would require NATO to undergo a far more sweeping process of adaptation than has so far been contemplated. Many members of the U.S. Congress prefer the "old NATO" and fear it will lose its cohesion if it takes on too many new tasks.³ They are thus opposed to expanding NATO's roles and missions - whether in Bosnia or in the Gulf.

¹ See David Gompert and F. Stephen Larrabee, *America and Europe, A Partnership for a New Era* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

² See the statement by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright before the North Atlantic Council in Luxembourg, May 28, 1998.

³ This concern was strongly reflected in the debate on the ratification of NATO enlargement during the Spring of 1998. Many Senators expressed a strong concern not only about an expansion of NATO's membership but also its roles and missions.

Many Europeans also oppose what they term a "globalization" of NATO. They argue that this would change the nature of the Alliance and that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain an internal consensus for a broad expansion of NATO's role beyond Europe's borders.⁴

Some - especially in France - also fear that the Alliance would become little more than a tool for pursuing American global interests. At the same time, there is a growing recognition in Europe that the Alliance's security horizon needs to be broadened, especially to the South.⁵ The real debate is not whether but how far the horizon should be broadened. Many American analysts see the main threats to Western security in the Gulf and Middle East. They feel that Europe should share more of the burden for addressing these security challenges. NATO, in their view, should be the instrument for addressing these challenges. The alternative, they argue, is a growth in American unilateralism.⁶

Many European officials and analysts agree that the Alliance's security horizon has to be broadened. But they see this broadening limited essentially to the periphery of Europe - the Balkans and perhaps the Western Mediterranean - not the Gulf or Middle East. They believe an expansion of NATO's mission to include security challenges in the Gulf would fundamentally change the nature of the Alliance and drag Europe into conflicts in which it does not have a vital stake.

To some extent, this debate can be seen as an expansion of the old burden-sharing debate. But there is an important difference. The old debate was essentially about money - getting Europe to pay more for Alliance defense, reducing the American share of the costs, etc. The new debate is about "responsibility sharing" - broadening the definition of the security challenges and getting Europe to assume more responsibility for meeting these challenges, most of which are on Europe's periphery (Balkans) or beyond its borders (the Mediterranean).

The Washington Summit: Setting NATO's Security Agenda for the 21st Century

The issue of responsibility sharing is likely to be an important sub-theme in the debate leading up to the Washington summit in April 1999. The summit will be an important event. It will not only mark NATO's fiftieth anniversary, but will also take place on the eve of the new millennium. Thus, the summit will provide an opportunity not only to celebrate NATO's past achievements but also to chart NATO's course for the 21st century.

One of the main focal points of the summit will be the revision of NATO's Strategic Concept. The Concept, adopted at NATO's Rome summit in November 1991, was worked out before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the conflict in Bosnia and NATO's enlargement to Central Europe. It is thus in need of a major overhaul in order to take into consideration important changes in the security environment since 1991.

The Strategic Concept will provide the framework for defining NATO's roles and missions in the future. It will also provide guidelines to NATO force planners on what type of forces will be needed to implement NATO's political and military objectives. Without such guidelines, there is a danger that NATO will not have the right mix of forces to carry out its missions.

⁴ Karl-Heinz Kemp, "Eine 'globale' Rolle für die NATO", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, April 2, 1998.

⁵ See Volker Rühle, "Towards a New Strategic Consensus for a New Alliance," speech delivered at the German-British Königswinter-Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, March 26, 1998.

⁶ See Gompert and Larrabee, *America and Europe*, pp. 252-253.

To meet the new challenges NATO will face in the coming decades, NATO forces - especially the forces of European NATO members - will need to be restructured. Greater emphasis will need to be put on lighter, more mobile and more flexible forces which can be transported quickly to crisis areas, most of which are likely to be outside the NATO area. This will require a change in European investment priorities away from forces designed to protect national territory to forces configured for power projection. Greater emphasis will also need to be placed on interoperability and sustainability of NATO forces. Allies will need to be able to work effectively together in areas far from their national homelands.

U.S. forces have long been configured to carry out such missions. Thus, for the U.S. this shift will not be particularly difficult. With the exception of the French and British, however, European forces have largely been designed to protect national territory; they will now have to acquire increasing power projection capabilities. This will require a significant reorientation and restructuring of European forces at a time when defense budgets throughout Europe are declining. Some allies, especially the British, have already begun to move in this direction. But many others have been slow to recognize or, in some cases, have actually resisted such changes. This issue could, therefore, become a source of increasing transatlantic tensions in coming years, especially if European defense budgets continue to decline.

Enlargement

Enlargement will also pose important challenges for the Alliance. At the Madrid summit in July 1997, the Alliance agreed to maintain an "open door" to future enlargement. However, the Alliance heads of state refrained from singling out new candidates for membership or proposing a specific date for a second round of enlargement. Both issues were left open. But as the Washington summit approaches, the pressures to say something more specific - or even to name prospective candidates for the next round - will grow.

Managing these pressures will not be easy, especially since some NATO members have already indicated their preferred candidates for the next round of enlargement. The Alliance would be well-advised, however, to adopt a slow and deliberate policy toward future enlargement and not be stampeded into new commitments before it has successfully digested the first three new members. The new members will need to modernize and restructure their forces so that they can contribute not only to NATO's old missions but also to its new ones. This will take time, especially in light of the strong economic constraints on defense spending that these countries face.

However, it is important that the first round of enlargement is successful. Otherwise prospects for further expansion could be jeopardized. There was strong bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate for admitting Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. However, many Senators - including many who support NATO - have strong doubts about a rapid further expansion of NATO, which they fear could undermine NATO's effectiveness and cohesion. Some, like Senator John Warner (R-Virginia), advocated a three-year legislated pause on any further expansion. While Warner's amendment was defeated, it nevertheless underscores the strong doubts that exist in parts of the U.S. Senate about further enlargement until the impact of the first round has been carefully assessed.

Moreover, at present there are no obvious candidates for a second round. Slovenia qualifies on political and economic grounds but its military credentials are weak. Romania is strategically important and would give the Alliance an important Southern focus, but its candidacy has been hurt by the slowdown in political and economic reform over the last year. Slovakia's prospects have improved since the defeat of former Prime Minister Vladimir

Meciar, but it is too early to tell whether Slovakia will make sufficient progress to be seriously considered for membership in the next round. The same is true for Bulgaria.

Austria also could be a potential candidate down the road. Austria qualifies on economic and political grounds. It also provides an important land corridor to Hungary. However, its defense spending is well below the NATO average. It would need to significantly increase defense spending and restructure its forces before it could be seriously considered for NATO membership.

The Baltic states have made significant economic and political progress since the mid-1990s, but they have a long way to go before they are ready militarily for NATO membership. Moreover, Russia strongly objects to their inclusion in NATO. While the Alliance should not give Russia a veto over enlargement - or over the security of the Baltic states themselves - Russian concerns will have to be managed. This could take some time and reinforces the argument for a slow, deliberate process of further enlargement.

One option, suggested by Zbigniew Brzezinski, would be to admit one or two countries from the South and at least one Baltic country, possibly Lithuania, which at the moment is the best qualified of the Baltic countries for NATO membership.⁷ If Estonia enters the EU as planned, and Lithuania were to join NATO, this would help to anchor the Baltic states closely to the West and send a strong signal to Moscow that the Baltic region was not up for grabs. However, this could leave Latvia, which has no clear Western patron, isolated and potentially vulnerable. Thus such a strategy would need to be combined with strong economic, political, and military support for Latvia in order to discourage any effort by Moscow to put pressure on Riga.

Engaging Russia

A third major challenge will be to work out a cooperative partnership with Russia. Over the long run, a democratic Russia will be a much more cooperative and reliable partner than a Russia that feels isolated or humiliated. Russia's current economic difficulties complicate this process and may lead to some setbacks for market reform in the short term. But it would be wrong to write off Russia. The West still needs to pursue a policy of engagement with Russia, even if Russia's capacity for engagement may be limited by its preoccupation with its own internal difficulties.

As far as Russia's relations with NATO are concerned, much will depend on how well both sides utilize the possibilities for cooperation provided by the Permanent Joint Council (PJC), established at the Madrid summit in July 1997. Some critics have argued that the PJC gives Russia a veto over NATO's operations. Such criticism, however, seems exaggerated, as NATO's handling of the Kosovo crisis underscores. Indeed, the real danger appears to be just the opposite: that both sides will fail to exploit the PJC's full potential and that it will become a dead letter.

Stabilizing an Independent Ukraine

The fourth challenge is to integrate an independent Ukraine into a broader European and transatlantic framework. The emergence of an independent Ukraine is one of the most important consequences of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. An independent Ukraine acts as an important factor of security in East Central Europe and Europe generally. A

⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion," *The National Interest*, Fall 1998, pp. 13-17.

Ukraine reintegrated into CIS military structures would have a profound impact on European security, especially in East Central Europe, bringing Russian troops once again to Poland's Eastern border. Ukraine has opted for a non-bloc status. It wants closer ties to NATO, but has not expressed an interest in NATO membership. At the same time, it worries that enlargement could lead to stepped-up Russian pressure on Ukraine to join CIS structures, including military structures. Ukrainian officials, therefore, favor a gradual or “evolutionary” process of enlargement. A slow timetable, they believe, will give Ukraine time to stabilize and reduce the chances that it would become a buffer between Russia and NATO.⁸

Ukrainian leaders, however, have recently begun to take a more open and positive attitude toward NATO enlargement and ties to NATO. At the Madrid summit in July 1997, Ukraine signed a Charter on a Distinctive Partnership with NATO. While the Charter does not provide explicit security guarantees, it calls for the establishment of a crisis consultative mechanism that Ukraine can activate if it perceives a direct threat to its security. It also foresees a broad expansion of ties with NATO in a number of key areas such as civil-military relations, democratic control of the military, and armaments control and defense planning.

For the foreseeable future, the Charter probably represents the limits of Ukraine’s relationship with NATO. While some members of the Ukrainian elite favor membership in NATO over the long run, important parts of the elite, especially in the more Russified parts of Eastern Ukraine, oppose NATO membership. In addition, Ukraine has a long way to go before it meets the economic and political criteria for NATO membership. Civilian control of the military is also weaker in Ukraine than in other parts of Central Europe.

The main threats to Ukraine's security, however, are not military but economic - particularly the slow pace of economic reform. To manage its economic problems, Ukraine needs more trade with the West and greater access to Western markets. The EU can play an important role in this regard by opening up its markets more to Ukrainian products, which so far it has been slow to do. However, the slow pace of reform in Ukraine could further diminish the willingness of many EU members to provide economic assistance and expand trade with Ukraine. Thus, how well Ukraine addresses its economic problems will have a major impact on Ukraine’s ability to forge closer ties to Euro-Atlantic institutions, especially the EU, over the long run.

Toward a Broader U.S.-European Partnership

The foregoing highlights some of the key challenges to transatlantic security in the coming decade. NATO has a vital role to play in managing these challenges. However, the key challenge is not only to adapt NATO to a new security environment but to expand and revitalize the U.S.-European relationship more broadly. To meet the new challenges in the 21st century, the U.S.-European relationship needs to become more ambitious, more global, and more equal.⁹

Restructuring transatlantic relations to make the U.S.-European relationship more ambitious, more global, and more equal is necessary because the nature of the challenges to basic transatlantic interests is changing. During the Cold War the key security challenge was posed by the Soviet military threat to Europe. Europe was the center of U.S. attention because that is where the main threat to common U.S.-European interests was.

⁸ For a detailed discussion, see F. Stephen Larrabee, ‘Ukraine’s Balancing Act,’ *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Summer 1996, pp. 143-165.

⁹ For a detailed discussion, see Gompert and Larrabee, *America and Europe*.

Today the focus of security challenges has changed. The key security challenges are no longer on the Central Front in Europe but on Europe's periphery and beyond its borders. This shift is reflected in U.S. defense planning. Europe still remains important - hence the U.S. emphasis on NATO enlargement and projecting stability to the East - but increasingly the focus in U.S. defense planning is on contingencies beyond Europe's borders, especially in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia.

Given the constraints on U.S. budgets and the more inward-looking trend in U.S. foreign policy generally, the U.S. cannot manage this new post-Cold War strategic agenda alone; it needs partners. Europe is the most logical partner. The economy of the EU is nearly as large as that of the U.S. Its combined military forces are as large or even larger than those of the United States.

At present, Europe is a global player economically, but militarily it still remains inward-looking and focused primarily on Europe. Its military forces are largely configured to defend European territory. However, as noted earlier, the real threats in the next decade are likely to be on Europe's periphery and beyond Europe's borders. The key challenge, therefore, will be to harmonize the U.S. and European strategic agendas.

This requires a dual strategy designed to:

- Maintain stability in Europe.
- Encourage Europe's emergence as a more global and equal partner.

The basic task can be described as one of "double enlargement."¹⁰

Enlargement I consists of the extension of the structures and institutions of the transatlantic partnership to the newly emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. Enlargement II consists of enlarging the horizons, agenda and functions of the transatlantic partnership beyond the confines of Europe to those areas where vital common interests are threatened.

The two enlargements, however, are closely linked. A Europe successfully on its way to being knit together as a coherent political and economic entity will be far more capable of becoming the kind of partner the U.S. needs. Thus, Enlargement I is an indispensable step not only toward creating a more stable security order in Europe but also toward facilitating the emergence of a more stable and strategically outward-looking Europe as well.

Clearly this new agenda cannot be achieved overnight. It will take time. And it is bound to generate resistance - from Americans who do not want to share leadership and from Europeans who are satisfied with the status quo. But the alternative is the emergence of a dangerous gap between U.S. and European strategic priorities which could have serious long-term consequences for transatlantic cooperation.

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¹⁰ See Ronald D. Asmus, "Double Enlargement: Redefining the Atlantic Partnership After the Cold War," in Gompert and Larrabee, *America and Europe*, pp. 19-50.