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What future for NATO?

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Contents

About the authors

Authors' acknowledgements

Foreword

Reforming the transatlantic alliance: Prague and beyond By Stanley Sloan

1	Is NATO dead?	1
2	The continued importance of the transatlantic relationship	5
3	Containing US unilateral tendencies	13
4	Improving Europe's hard power contributions	17
5	Reforming NATO	21
6	Reforming the transatlantic community	25

Can Europe save NATO from irrelevance? By Peter van Ham

1	Introduction	29
2	NATO is done with and Kagan is right	31
3	NATO: in search of reasons to exist	35
4	Iraq and the 'real thing'	41
5	Standard solutions are no longer good enough	45
6	Conclusion	49

Foreword

On both sides of the Atlantic, the future of NATO is the subject of a soul-searching debate. Many Americans are stressing that NATO can only remain relevant if it is prepared and able to tackle pressing new security threats, such as international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. They add that unless European countries improve their underwhelming military capabilities, America simply will not take Europe seriously – and NATO will suffer as a result. To safeguard NATO's future relevance, the US has proposed that the European allies should help to develop a Rapid Response Force inside NATO. It wants the Europeans to provide troops that would be able to operate 'anytime, anywhere,' alongside America's best-equipped and best-trained forces.

Europeans, meanwhile, have their own set of concerns. They feel that the US is gradually sidelining NATO – as has been the case with the war in Afghanistan. To European eyes, Washington first decides its global strategy, and then looks for European political support and specific military contributions in an ad hoc manner. Many like the idea of a NATO strike force, but wonder who exactly will decide where and when it will strike. Some also feel that because Europeans and Americans often disagree over what are the most urgent security problems – and which strategies work best to tackle them – NATO should concentrate on those tasks on which there is a consensus: conducting peace support operations in the Balkans, spreading stability eastwards through NATO enlargement and bringing Russia closer to the West with the NATO-Russia council.

The prospect of war with Iraq has thrown this debate over NATO's purpose into sharp relief. Some NATO enthusiasts argue that the organisation can play a useful role, not just by offering political support but also by helping to provide a peacekeeping force. They say that NATO will not survive as a meaningful security alliance if, after Afghanistan, it also does not play a role in Iraq. Sceptics, however, doubt whether there will be enough political support in Europe for NATO to go so dramatically 'out of area' and into 'new missions'. It is also unclear whether the Pentagon, with its aversion to 'war by committee',

will want NATO to be involved. The NATO summit in Prague in November 2002 must forge a US-European agreement on all these issues and begin to settle the existential question: what is NATO is for?

The CER is delighted to publish two essays on these pertinent questions. Stanley Sloan, a senior US security policy analyst, argues that NATO is not finished but that it is in need of serious reform. He identifies the key steps that both Europe and America need to implement, such as curbing US unilateral tendencies, beefing up Europe's 'hard power' capabilities and giving NATO a role in dealing with new security threats. NATO's command structure, he argues, should shift from a geographic to a functional focus. And he makes the case that in addition to pursuing NATO reform, Europe and America also need to deepen their co-operation through a new Atlantic Community initiative.

Using a broader canvass, Peter van Ham, who works at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, analyses the reasons for the growing discord across the Atlantic on many international security issues. He argues that this divergence in 'strategic perspectives' is of a structural rather than a transitory nature – and that consequently NATO's role as an effective security partnership between the US and Europe will suffer. His conclusion is that Europe and America should accept this unfortunate reality – but work to manage their differences adroitly. For the Europeans this means they must learn to stand on their own political feet, for example by developing an EU strategic concept. Strengthening the EU's foreign and security policy would be more fruitful than complaining about America, or pretending that institutional tinkering will somehow revitalise the Atlantic alliance of old.

Steven Everts

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Reforming the transatlantic alliance: Prague and beyond

By Stanley Sloan

1 Is NATO dead?

In November 2001, one of Europe's top security policy analysts, François Heisbourg, pronounced that "NATO is dead."¹ If that is the case, what will take its place as the main political and institutional link between Europe and the US? This essay will argue that the need for transatlantic security co-operation did not expire along with the Soviet Union, and that NATO still has an essential role to play in fostering transatlantic relations. If the United States does not want to be the world's policeman, it needs NATO's political and military coalition-building capacity. If Europe wants to become more influential internationally, it needs NATO to link its soft and hard power to that of the United States. NATO should therefore be reformed rather than discarded. However, in the years ahead there is also a need for a new and more broadly based 'Atlantic Community' organisation, to deal with the full complexities of the European-US relationship.

Heisbourg's statement was not quite as dramatic as it sounded. He pointed out that the Atlantic alliance was more than NATO alone. But his remarks did reflect growing European concern that the US has abandoned the alliance, sounding NATO's death knell. Peter

¹ IISS/CEPS European Security Forum, Brussels, November 5th 2001, www.eusec.com/heisbourg.htm.

van Ham's contribution to this working paper is a reflection of this underlying pessimism about US interests and intentions.

There are certainly reasons to be worried. The Bush administration's attitudes and policies, especially after the September 11th terrorist attacks, have convinced many Europeans that rising American unilateralism is eroding the basis of constructive US-European co-operation. A series of damaging comments by leading US politicians have fed the impression that the US has chosen the path of strategic unilateralism, despite all its public pro-NATO rhetoric. Take, for example, Douglas Feith, a top Bush administration defence official. He is widely attributed with the comment that the US should "keep the [NATO] myth alive". He now denies ever having made the comment but that has not prevented it fuelling European concerns that the US no longer values the alliance – and that it is increasingly willing to act outside of NATO.

The crucial couple

The history of US-European relations underscores both the importance of co-operation and the dangers of transatlantic bickering. It is trite but nonetheless true to say that Europe and the US are the crucial couple for global security. Progress in nearly all areas of international affairs depends critically on the US and Europe pulling in the same direction.

Strategic competition between the US and Europe would be disastrous. It would involve a bruising and destabilising struggle as both sides competed for the favours of other major powers such as Russia and China. Conflict in trade would intensify, leading to more messy disputes and reducing the potential for progressive WTO reforms. More generally, open competition between Europe and the US would accelerate the trend in the international system away from co-operation and towards 'great power' competition.

Today, both American unilateralists and 'European Gaullists' risk pushing the debate on transatlantic relations to such an extreme that a transatlantic divorce could take place. NATO is not the sole barrier against this happening, but it is still the strongest institutional link between the US and Europe. If it is no longer up to the job, then it needs to be fixed, not buried.

This essay on transatlantic relations argues that NATO is by no means dead, but that it is severely wounded. Both the US and Europe have an interest in ensuring that NATO not only survives but emerges revitalised in a renewed and strengthened Euro-Atlantic community. Such a revival is also in Russia's interest: it now has a closer relationship with NATO and a big stake in the future of US-European security co-operation. The EU and the US should continue to move towards the progressive integration of Russia into the Euro-Atlantic community.

Finally, there is the more fundamental question of whether the transatlantic relationship remains important to both the US and Europe. NATO is a key part of the transatlantic relationship, but it cannot carry the entire weight of future relations. So while NATO needs some serious work, the overall relationship needs even more radical reform.

2 The continued importance of the transatlantic relationship

The US and Europe might have their differences, but the basic values that underpin the transatlantic alliance remain intact. The US, Canada and Europe remain “determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their people, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law”, as it says in the preamble of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty. Few can deny that the transatlantic relationship remains vitally important to both sides’ interests. The threat of international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction should make the advantages of a strong transatlantic link even more obvious.

That said, the international security environment has changed radically, and therefore the US-European relationship needs to change too. But reform is problematic, because the US and Europe increasingly do not agree on the nature of the international challenges they face, let alone on the solution.

Since the end of the Cold War, the West has seemed stable while the former communist East has changed radically. The West’s apparent stability, however, has helped to conceal fundamental changes in the roles and positions of the US and the EU. In the last ten years, the US has become the only true global superpower, with unmatched military and economic resources, reflected in its extraordinary political influence. The EU by contrast, despite being an important international player, is far from being a coherent international actor, let alone a full political, economic and military union.

Of course, the EU is slowly improving its crisis management capabilities. Moreover, the EU is well equipped when it comes to softer forms of power, including post-conflict reconstruction. The EU's newly acquired clout adds to western democracies' ability to resolve conflicts, foster international stability and promote international economic development. However, the September 11th terrorist attacks on the US, and the subsequent war on terrorism, have highlighted the growing gap between US and European military power. This transatlantic power gap is growing alarmingly. It has raised some fundamental questions. To what extent have different capabilities produced divergent approaches to the use of force in international affairs? And which strategy is more successful?

This is not a new issue – this author posed a similar question in 1985.² And the answer has remained the same: military force matters, but it remains just one of the tools that states use in their foreign policy. In this respect, those Europeans who argue that military force is not always the most effective instrument for dealing with world problems are right. Many global issues should be addressed through a mixture of policy instruments – diplomatic, economic and, sometimes, military. However, countries that possess all of these tools, and that are demonstrably willing to use them, have a great deal more influence. To make the proverbial carrot work well, it also pays to have a stick.

It is clear that a US strategy that relies heavily on military clout is less effective than one that uses diplomatic and economic tools first, with military power in the background. Equally, European attempts to influence international events without the potential to use force could lack credibility.

Those American analysts who argue that the Europeans have rejected the use of force in international relations are wrong.³ Many European governments are trying to build modern, effective military forces that are capable of international intervention. And

Europeans did not hesitate to put their troops in harm's way in Afghanistan, where European forces have fought with distinction alongside US and Canadian troops.

Nevertheless, different capabilities and historical experiences have created different US and European attitudes towards the use of force. Take their contrasting attitudes to Saddam Hussein's programme to develop weapons of mass destruction. The US can at least imagine removing Saddam's dictatorial regime by force, because it has the military capability to do so. It can even do so by itself, if necessary, although base access, over-flight rights and logistical support from some allies could be critical.

The Europeans, on the other hand, prefer to exhaust all non-military options, including diplomacy, sanctions, and promises of help for a post-Saddam Iraq, before resorting to a military attack. Moreover, in a non-military approach, the Europeans have influence and some control over policy. In a military approach, the US dominates decision-making, even though the consequences – good or bad – also affect European interests.

The Iraq crisis will test the ability of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to forge a common strategy, despite these differing perspectives. European views were undoubtedly one important factor behind the Bush administration's decision to seek new international legitimisation, through the UN Security Council, for any eventual attack on Iraq. In this case, European perspectives lined up with US public opinion, reflected in the US Congress, which favoured attacking Iraq only with a UN mandate and allied co-operation. But regardless of what happens with Iraq, Europe and America must face up to the challenge of reforming the transatlantic relationship.

Reforming the transatlantic relationship

Where must the reform process start? Most importantly, the US needs to appreciate better that it needs international co-operation

² Stanley Sloan, *Nato's Future: Towards a New Transatlantic Bargain*, Washington, National Defence University Press, 1985.

³ See Robert Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Policy Review*, June-July 2002.

to realise its policy objectives. For an effective war on terrorism, the US needs the intelligence, financial and diplomatic support of like-minded allies. And for all their evident flaws, the Europeans still are the closest thing the US has to like-minded allies.

For their part, the Europeans need to take their contributions to hard security more seriously. They should not rest on the laurels of the EU's admittedly strong contributions to soft security – development aid, diplomacy, civilian crisis management, peacekeeping, international police forces and so on. European politicians need the courage to make the case for defence spending to their voters, and the foresight to reform defence establishments so that they can better deal with new security challenges, such as international terrorism.

As two leading European defence experts have argued: “There is a need to promote greater understanding among public and political leaders about the role and utility of military power. In some countries, there is a generation, or even two, who have never served in the armed forces and who have little understanding of what is militarily possible or necessary.”⁴ Clearly, Europe must acquire all the necessary instruments to deal with international security problems, and the will to use them. If they do, European nations will be better able to contribute to international peace, and better placed to influence US policies and actions.

All this is easier said than done. Historically, NATO's constant preaching to European allies about their inadequate defence efforts produced some political palliatives, but few radical improvements. Even during the Cold War, the Europeans did enough to keep the US committed to Europe, but not so much to either risk US withdrawal or become a serious defence ‘partner’.

In theory, the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) should provide the internal political momentum for defence efforts that US hectoring could never produce. The UK continues to take

⁴ William Hopkinson and Julian Lindley-French, ‘Europe is not ready to respond to new threats,’ *International Herald Tribune*, February 20th 2002.

defence needs and spending seriously, as does France and a few other European countries. But there is precious little evidence that the ESDP has produced any real changes.

So the current crisis in transatlantic relations features a vicious circle of inadequate European defence efforts, and ever-growing US unilateralist instincts and ideas.

This predicament has led some Europeans to think that Europe should concentrate on the development of soft power, because it can never catch up with US defence capabilities, and because the US seems uninterested in engaging in post-conflict reconstruction. NATO secretary general George Robertson has called this “post-September 11th fatalism”. Europe's emphasis on the importance of soft power in turn reinforces the US tendency to dismiss European countries as serious military partners and to relegate them to peacekeeping and clean-up duties.⁵

It is now common for pundits to say that there is a transatlantic division of responsibilities, with the US taking the lead on hard security and Europe on soft power. But accepting such a formal division would only make matters worse. It would encourage US unilateral tendencies in the use of its military power, while promoting militarily toothless European autonomy.

The analysis of problems and their solutions is often based on available capabilities. Hence, the divergence in capabilities between the US and Europe is one important factor that explains the difference in their approaches to international issues. The US and Europe will be more effective partners if they are both more evenly involved in the use of soft and hard power.

Evolutionary adaptation

Against this backdrop of transatlantic tensions and trends in global security policy, NATO's Prague summit in November 2002 should

⁵ See Julian Lindley-French, ‘Terms of engagement: the paradox of American power and the transatlantic dilemma post-11 September,’ *Chaillot Paper 52*, Paris, EU ISS, May 2002.

produce some constructive decisions to clarify the organisation's future direction.

One aspect of the summit agenda is enlargement. Seven more central European countries are likely to be invited to join NATO, namely Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. That is important for European stability, but it also creates some problems for NATO's credibility.

Many of the candidates do not meet the guidelines laid out in NATO's 1995 enlargement study. This is a problem in itself. But a decision to overlook their political, economic and military shortcomings, in favour of a big bang expansion, would also reinforce the impression that the US no longer really cares if NATO remains relevant, militarily or politically.

To challenge that impression, US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld proposed in September 2002, at a NATO ministerial meeting in Warsaw, that NATO should create a new strike force. The idea, he argued, would be to create a well-equipped, lethal force ready to go "anywhere, anytime, at very short notice". However, at a time when Europeans are nervous about a unilateral war against Iraq, some governments remain reluctant to commit scarce forces to this new initiative. They ask who will decide where and when this new strike force will strike. Many Europeans are also worried that plans for a NATO Rapid Response Force will eclipse the EU's own plans for a 60,000 strong Rapid Reaction Force.

Another big question for Prague is whether NATO can simply evolve, or whether it needs more radical change, in particular by focusing on new security threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Evolution could work. Throughout its history, the transatlantic alliance has responded to a series of crises, and it could yet again evolve sufficiently to meet this one. NATO has already made many of the

changes that are needed to meet the new challenges, and ESDP should in the long run produce meaningful European military capabilities.

As Philip Gordon, a US security specialist, has said: "The eleventh of September does not require a radical transformation of the alliance's mission or purpose, but it does imply the need for some significant new emphases and rapid acceleration of an adaptation process that in some ways was already underway."⁶ In this view, since the 1991 Strategic Concept NATO has formally acknowledged the need to develop new strategies and forces to deal with post-Cold War security problems. That process has been reaffirmed at the time of NATO's 50 year anniversary in 1999 and especially in various NATO statements since the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Gordon's 'continuity' case is a useful balance to the "NATO is dead" arguments, and to the fears that the US and Europe are drifting apart. But even if he is right, and the alliance is destined to survive, the quality of transatlantic co-operation would still depend on the allies taking sufficiently bold steps in response to the current crisis.

NATO's future military relevance depends largely on how well it can co-ordinate US-European operations against a wide variety of security challenges, in and beyond Europe. NATO's collective defence provision (Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty) will remain important. It may be invoked again as it was after September 11th.

But the Treaty's Article 4 may become even more important, providing as it does for co-operation against threats to the allies' security. This provision underscores efforts to anticipate, deter and eliminate threats, rather than waiting for them to develop and culminate in a possible devastating attack. This is not meant to suggest that NATO should adopt a formal 'pre-emptive'

⁶ Philip H Gordon, 'NATO After 11 September,' *Survival*, Winter 2001-2002.

strategy, such as the one unveiled in September 2002 by the Bush administration in its new National Security Strategy. But it is nonetheless prudent to identify and eliminate threats as early as possible.

3 Containing US unilateral tendencies

There is no simple way to eliminate US unilateralist tendencies. They are, to some extent, unavoidable given the current distribution of power between the US and Europe, and indeed between the US and the rest of the world. However, it would help if Washington could reduce its most blatant unilateralist tendencies, as many Americans themselves have suggested.⁷

With respect to security policy, the US should show its willingness to share decision-making with its allies, when they are able to carry a greater share of the international security burdens. In practical terms, the US can show its commitment to constructive co-operation rather than unilateralism in a number of ways:

★ Building and maintaining an international consensus for US policy on Iraq

The initial Bush administration strategy on Iraq was strongly unilateralist in nature, and ran counter to the kind of international system that Republican and Democratic administrations have worked to create and sustain since the Second World War. Some of the damage done during that phase will remain. Nonetheless, a serious effort by the Bush administration to build a strong international coalition to eliminate the threat of Saddam Hussein's regime could mitigate a lot of the negative effects. The Iraqi problem may be at the top of the US agenda at the time of writing, but the overall health of the transatlantic relationship will remain critical to US interests for the long term.

⁷ See Joseph S Nye, *The Paradox of American Power; Why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

★ Staying involved in Balkan peacekeeping

It is vital for the US to demonstrate its commitment to European security and NATO co-operation by sticking to its “in together, out together” pledge. The US threat to desert the UN-mandated operation in Bosnia over the issue of the International Criminal Court seriously undermined US credibility as a partner in peace support operations

The Bush administration has legitimate concerns that US officials and military personnel, performing peacekeeping and other tasks, could find themselves before the Court, facing politically motivated charges of crimes against humanity. However, the escalation of the International Criminal Court crisis through threats and recriminations between the US and the EU was unhelpful.

★ Making a ‘coalition capabilities pledge’

The US should join its allies in making a coalition capabilities pledge, announcing that all future US defence decisions will take into account America’s ability to operate in coalition with its allies. At present, such considerations remain a low priority when the US buys weapons systems or considers changing strategy, doctrine or tactics. For example, one participant in the 2000 Quadrennial Defence Review says that the process revealed Pentagon “hostility” to coalition operations and the demands of working with allies. This Pentagon mentality must change.

★ Improving allied access to information and technology

To make the above pledge more meaningful, the US should examine its policies on information and technology transfer to NATO allies. Current bureaucratic and security constraints should be re-examined in light of the need for coalition assistance in the war on terrorism. NATO secretary general Lord Robertson has argued that progress has already been made. He has pointed out

that the US is undertaking a comprehensive review of its export controls and that a substantial group of CEOs of major US defence firms have lobbied President Bush to promote export control reform.⁸ Of course, deeds will speak louder than words, and there is plenty of room for European scepticism about US follow-through in this area.

★ Hosting a NATO concept development and experimentation centre

To demonstrate its commitment to NATO’s future military relevance, the US should invite NATO to establish a Concept Development and Experimentation Centre. Based in the US, the Centre should make it easier for NATO allies to have a say in changes in US doctrine, strategy and weapons systems (including missile defence developments). All members of NATO would assign officers and experts to the Centre, to establish and maintain an on-going dialogue with the US on developments in military technology, weapons systems and strategic doctrine.

★ Taking a realistic approach to missile defences

The Bush administration is right to say that the new security environment calls for new approaches to arms control and missile defences. However, the search for effective defences against intercontinental ballistic missiles should be balanced with other defence priorities, including defence against unmanned aerial vehicles which are perhaps a more urgent threat than ‘rogue state’ ballistic missiles. The United States should move defensive systems toward production and deployment only after clearly demonstrating that they will work as intended, and will enhance both US and international security in equal measure.

Moreover, diplomatic initiatives and arms control strategies, which by definition are developed in co-operation with allies, should complement missile defence programmes. Diplomacy can produce

⁸ Lord Robertson, ‘Defence and security in an uncertain world,’ keynote speech at Forum Europe, Brussels, 17th May 2002.

quick results, compared with the development of military technology, which often requires a much longer lead-time. And a more balanced approach to missile defence would improve the chances of transatlantic co-operation over weapons of mass destruction and missile defences.

Co-operation between the US and Europe should start with the more effective theatre missile systems. There should be less emphasis on the multi-layered and seemingly open-ended aspects of the Bush administration's current approach.

4 Improving Europe's hard power contributions

★ Focus resources on transatlantic co-operation, pooling and specialisation

The reforms that Europe needs to pursue are equally easy to identify, but hard to implement. As a top priority, European countries should focus the development of their military capabilities on expeditionary warfare and coalition operations – with a special emphasis on coalitions with the US.

This should complement the important ESDP goal of developing 'autonomous' European capabilities. In the short term, improving Europe's ability to work with the US militarily would be the best way to enhance Europe's influence over US strategy and make transatlantic responses to crises more effective.

Moreover, defence spending in Europe should increase. If this proves politically impossible, governments should reallocate existing resources to reflect changing defence requirements. Smaller European countries should focus on developing their specialised skills, such as the Czechs' expertise in biological and chemical weapons detection, and the Norwegians' skill in mountain and winter warfare. Deployment of these niche capabilities should fit easily into transatlantic or European-led coalition operations.

The big European countries also should build on existing military strengths, such as the British Special Air Service (SAS), that are particularly relevant to the new security challenges. Europeans should constantly search for ways to pool resources, for example

by funding common projects that help to plug important shortfalls such as the A-400M transport plane.

★ **European members of NATO should prepare to engage militarily in responses to global security challenges**

The US proposal for a new NATO intervention force challenges the European allies to show their seriousness about dealing with global security threats. The initiative responds to concerns expressed in Europe that the Bush administration ignored NATO in planning its military operations against Taleban and al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan. However, the timing of the initiative in the midst of the debate over what to do about Iraq makes it difficult to get allied agreement on creating a standing force with an open-ended mandate.⁹

Under these circumstances, an easier first step might be to create what is called, in NATO jargon, a combined (including the forces of several countries) joint (meaning inclusion of land, sea and air forces) task force (designed to deal with specific challenges or tasks) (CJTF) to which individual European nations would contribute their most capable forces. A CJTF structure would be less costly and perhaps more acceptable to most European allies than a standing force, which some US defence experts have proposed.

The European members of NATO, led by the UK and France, should work with the US in creating such a strike force in NATO. Europe should be able to deploy forces quickly and effectively alongside elite US forces in any future military contingency.

Even before the establishment of such an intervention force, the allies could establish a new command to serve as the focal point for NATO co-operation in the fight against terrorism. While the allies are debating conditions under which an intervention force would be established, such a new command could get to work immediately, bringing together military officers, civilian counter-

⁹ For the origins of the concept of a European 'spearhead force' see Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler, 'Transforming European forces,' *Survival*, Autumn 2002.

terrorist experts and officials from NATO countries. It would also co-ordinate intelligence sharing and prepare for possible future counter-terrorist operations.¹⁰

These initiatives might require funding at the expense of other European initiatives. However, it is crucial for transatlantic relations for Europe to show that it takes the new security challenges seriously, and that it wants to work alongside US forces to tackle them. Just as the US should continue to contribute forces to the peace operations in former Yugoslavia, Europeans should be prepared to contribute to military operations beyond Europe's fringes.

★ **Accept NATO's global and preventive role**

At NATO's 1999 Washington summit, the allies finessed the US-European dispute over whether NATO could be used for military operations beyond Europe. The US had argued strongly that co-operation would probably extend well beyond allied borders in future, but most Europeans opposed any open-ended commitment to employ NATO on a more global basis.

Since then the war in Afghanistan has highlighted the lack of an agreement on where NATO forces could be used. Legally, there was no reason to argue that NATO could not operate in Central Asia once the member-states had declared that the terrorist attacks on the US fell under NATO's collective defence provisions. But the lack of planning and preparation for operations so far from NATO's borders meant the alliance was not ready to engage in such missions. Moreover, the US military was very reluctant to use NATO for the Afghanistan campaign.

The European allies have already taken the first step in supporting NATO's role in the 'war on terrorism' by invoking NATO's collective defence provision. Now they should acknowledge that Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty commits them to co-operate

¹⁰ See Stanley Sloan, 'Give NATO a combined joint task force against terrorism,' *International Herald Tribune*, November 13th 2001.

with the US and Canada, to deal with the overall threat of terrorism in a broad sense, and not just in response to a specific attack.

Therefore, the Europeans should clearly state that NATO's mandate extends beyond collective defence and beyond Europe. NATO can only start the necessary political and military planning if the Europeans accept that NATO has new missions to fulfil.

5 Reforming NATO

NATO is a voluntary association of sovereign states. Therefore, member governments, rather than the NATO bureaucracy, must initiate and approve any key decisions. In particular, governments should make a big effort to involve parliaments and voters, to ensure future support from the public for a wholesale transformation of NATO. Below are a number of concrete suggestions on how to reform NATO's structures and initiatives.

★ Reorganising NATO commands along functional lines

Creating new NATO commands to deal with counter-terrorism and global military requirements, as suggested above, would introduce important changes in NATO's integrated military structure. More fundamentally, however, NATO's entire command structure should be reconsidered from top to bottom. The integrated command structure has evolved since the end of the Cold War. But this process of change has been slow, handicapped by political and bureaucratic resistance. The time has come for more revolutionary measures.

NATO's military commands should be structured by function, rather than region. Although it makes sense to distribute commands among NATO allies, and between Europe and North America, the regional focus of NATO's command structure no longer responds to the role that NATO must play in future.

NATO does not face an attack across all its fronts, or even against one particular front. It now needs to focus on its ability to project force beyond its borders; initiate and sustain peace enforcement and peace keeping operations; and ensure that NATO countries are able to operate in coalitions, whether under a NATO or EU flag or

as an ad hoc coalition operation. The new command structure should reflect these flexible, functional requirements.

To give an example of this idea in action, the positions of Supreme Allied Commander (SACEUR), the highest US military officer in Europe, and that of Deputy SACEUR, always a European, should not change. The US should keep the SACEUR position, and the Deputy SACEUR should serve as NATO's deputy commander and as the commander-in-waiting of potential EU forces. However, both persons should focus as much on co-ordination as command.

In the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and below, NATO's commands should be organised to reflect the need for NATO to be able to:

- ★ Conduct military operations that can project force if necessary and stabilise conflict zones;
- ★ Support such operations with appropriate infrastructure and equipment; and
- ★ Prepare NATO concepts, military doctrine, technology and personnel to conduct such operations.

In operational terms, this means there should be three major subordinate commands:

★ *Force Projection and Stability Command*

This would include air, land and sea forces. It would be responsible for the any Combined Joint Task Force commands plus the ongoing NATO peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. This command would have the lead responsibility for running NATO military operations.

★ *Force Sustainability Command*

This command would be responsible for organising the logistics and support for the operations conducted by the Force Projection and Stability Command. In other words, it would make sure that NATO operational forces have whatever they need – from blankets to bullets.

★ *Concept Development, Experimentation and Training Command*

This command should develop NATO's coalition culture by ensuring that NATO countries' forces are prepared, trained and equipped to work together effectively. It could be located in the US (essentially replacing the current Supreme Allied Command Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia), assuming responsibility for the proposed Concept Development and Experimentation Centre (see above). It would have a long-term focus, designed to develop the concepts, strategies, equipment and appropriate training for the success of future coalition operations.

All this would involve a significant change to NATO's command structure, and could therefore face stiff opposition from within the alliance. The existing NATO structure ensures that commands are spread around the alliance in politically-acceptable ways. In a more functional structure, command responsibilities and headquarters could still be distributed geographically to engage all allies in NATO missions. But function would be more important than geography.

★ **Rotating command positions among major European allies**

The sharing formula should emphasise the responsibilities of European members of NATO. The positions of Deputy SACEUR

and the commanders of the three new functional commands should rotate among the major European countries. If France decided to participate in this new structure (which it should), the four positions could rotate among the UK, France, Germany and Italy.

★ Pacing the process of NATO enlargement

If the allies decide to invite a large group of countries to join the alliance in Prague, then they should make sure that the candidates at least come close to the performance and institutional standards suggested in NATO's 1995 enlargement study. The simplest way to do this would be to start entry negotiations only with the most qualified candidates in 2003, moving on to others as they improved their preparedness for membership. This approach might help re-establish the point that NATO membership is a serious business, involving real political and military obligations.

★ Developing the relationship with Russia

Neither Russia nor NATO will be ready for Russian membership in the near future. But Russia will be an increasingly important partner for both the EU and the US, if political and economic reforms stay on track. NATO needs to reflect both the burying of old antagonisms and Russia's new proximity to the West.

The new NATO-Russia co-operative arrangements agreed at the Reykjavik summit in May 2002, and especially the NATO-Russia council, are a step in the right direction. They provide a context for Russia to play a constructive role in European security affairs, and for the allies to show that NATO in no way threatens legitimate Russian interests. Moreover, the suggested reforms of NATO's command structure would make it very clear to Moscow that NATO has shifted its attention to new threats, which a democratic Russia also has an interest in countering.

6 Reforming the transatlantic community

While the above-mentioned changes in attitudes, policies and institutions would make NATO more relevant and effective, they would in themselves not be enough to revitalise the transatlantic relationship. Thus, a new initiative to broaden the context of the transatlantic relationship is needed. Such an initiative would give form and substance to the idea that, even in the absence of a Soviet threat and in the face of new terrorist challenges, Europe and America have many shared goals and interests.

The notion that existing transatlantic institutions are unable to do the job did not emerge with the September 11th attacks. In 1995 at the annual *Wehrkunde* Conference in Munich, foreign and defence ministers from the UK, France, and Germany put forward proposals to replace the existing transatlantic bargain with a new "contract" or "covenant", which would result in a new "Atlantic Community".

At the time they offered two main arguments for their ideas. First, they stressed that transatlantic institutions were inadequate to meet the needs of US-European co-operation in the post-Cold War world. Second, they were concerned that the US was drifting away from its close Cold War ties to western Europe – a worry which has only increased during the administration of George W. Bush.

The 1995 initiatives were not, of course, without precedent. The institution building that took place after World War 2 created a web of transatlantic organisations that, taken together, constituted a loosely-knit co-operation community. Some North American and European advocates in the 1950s and 1960s wanted to extend

the co-operation process to build a fully-fledged transatlantic community that would bring together the two regions' political, cultural, economic and security interests. The idea, however, never received serious consideration at the level of governments. There was little official enthusiasm in Washington. And, in Paris, the idea of an Atlantic Community, presumably dominated by the US, was seen as a threat to European integration.

However, in recent years several scholars and former political leaders have returned to the idea that the transatlantic relationship needs to be revived and broadened. Henry Kissinger has written that "NATO will no longer prove adequate as the sole institutional framework for Atlantic co-operation...It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of democratic government as we understand it depends on whether the democracies bordering the North Atlantic manage to revitalise their relations in a world without the Cold War and whether they can live up to the challenges of a global world order."¹¹

And Samuel Huntington has argued provocatively that "if North America and Europe renew their moral life, build on their cultural commonality, and develop close forms of economic and political integration to supplement their security collaboration in NATO, they could generate a third Euroamerican phase of western economic affluence and political influence."¹² Huntington, like Kissinger, concludes with a warning: "In the clash of civilisations, Europe and America will hang together or hang separately."

What would be the practical benefits?

Approaching problems from the broad perspective of an Atlantic Community would allow both sides to tackle those issues that fall outside NATO's formal mandate, but which are important to both. The war against terrorism is a good example. If there had been an Atlantic Community Council on September 11th, it could

¹¹ Henry Kissinger, *Does America need a foreign policy? Toward a diplomacy for the 21st Century*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2001.

¹² Samuel P Huntington, *The clash of civilisations, remaking of world order*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996.

immediately have established working groups to address all aspects of the campaign against international terror.

NATO's North Atlantic Council would not have been required to wait for the Atlantic Community Council to act, and it could still have invoked Article 5 on September 12th. But in the meantime, Atlantic Community Council discussions could have co-ordinated police authorities' response, discussed ways of cutting the terrorists' financial lines, developed public diplomacy themes to accompany military and diplomatic action, and started to devise long term strategies to undermine support for terrorist activities. The fact that such actions were being co-ordinated on the transatlantic level would have strengthened both the image and the reality that the 'crucial couple' was working as a team to develop joint responses to the terrorist attacks.

A new Atlantic Community would embrace, not replace, NATO. It would strengthen the transatlantic link. Because it would be a consultative forum only, it would not threaten the EU's autonomy or undermine NATO's collective defence commitment. In fact, it could help bridge the current artificial gap between NATO's security policy discussions and the US-EU dialogue.

An Atlantic Community would add value by encouraging members to address issues that NATO does not tackle. It might also provide more options for shaping international coalitions to deal with security challenges where some allies may find NATO's involvement unacceptable.

Russia should have a similar kind of relationship with the new Atlantic Community organisation, to the one it now has with NATO. This would help support its development as a constructive member of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Convincing Americans and Europeans to expand the Euro-Atlantic relationship beyond NATO and bilateral US-EU ties would not be

easy. For most Americans, NATO is the transatlantic relationship. But in reality, that relationship is more than just NATO. It is also more than the growing US relationship with the EU. The EU increasingly represents not only united European economic interests in dealings with the US, but also political and now security views. At the same time, the EU does not yet include all European countries, and different views of Europe's future among its members suggest it will be years, if not decades, before the EU equals 'Europe' in all its aspects.

NATO and EU leaders should therefore organise a joint summit meeting in 2003 to consider the future of the transatlantic relationship. At this meeting, EU and NATO governments should authorise the preparation of a new Atlantic Community Treaty. Such a treaty should be based on the values and objectives already found in the North Atlantic Treaty. Military co-operation should remain within NATO, reformed as suggested above, and taking into account the EU's European Security and Defence Policy. The new framework, operating under an Atlantic Community Council, would take on broader issues of transatlantic relations and provide a framework for co-ordination of the entire range of relevant issues.

A radical reinvestment in transatlantic co-operation is necessary to keep the US from drifting towards even more unilateralist behaviour, and Europe from moving towards autonomy based largely on a rejection of US hegemony. The question now is how the US and Europe will respond to this fundamental challenge.

★

Can Europe save NATO from irrelevance?

By Peter van Ham

1 Introduction

For more than half a century, policy-makers and analysts have been debating whether NATO has arrived 'at a crossroads', or whether we should be 'rethinking the transatlantic partnership'. But predictions of NATO's imminent decline have always proved somewhat exaggerated. NATO is evidently still alive, having faced innumerable 'turning points' repeatedly in the last five decades. However, after the September 11th attacks it is clear that NATO is not standing at a crossroads, but rather looking down a dead-end street. Many analysts say that NATO risks becoming too similar to the 55-member Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Indeed, it is likely that NATO will turn itself into a glorious 'OSCE-plus' – a well-meaning but militarily toothless, soft-security institution which celebrates peacekeeping and political consultations with Russia as its main purpose and strategic focus.

But this demise of the Cold War-style 'military NATO' and the subsequent renaissance of a post-September 11th 'political NATO' is not necessarily a sad story. Much of this transformation is natural. There is no real villain in this tale, although some continue to depict American unilateralism as the main irritant, while others blame Europe's military impotence and the ensuing 'axis of petulance'.

This essay will not mull over the many well-known problems and suspicions that now trouble the relationship between the US and Europe. Other recent publications have done this perfectly well. The main objective here is to make clear that the transatlantic security relationship, based on NATO as we have traditionally known it, is now beyond repair. NATO may well be reformed and made more appealing (for example by giving NATO a clearer and more prominent role in counter-terrorism as Stanley Sloan has suggested). But for the Atlantic alliance, such reform efforts are unlikely to suffice. Most reform plans, especially combined with the impending ‘big bang’ enlargement of up to seven central European countries, will destroy the NATO we know and replace it with a forum we do not really need – since we already have an OSCE. Enlargement will increase the number of allies that lack any serious military capability, while complicating NATO decision-making. Inevitably, this will reinforce NATO’s transformation from a clear-cut defence organisation into a predominantly political body.

This essay will therefore argue that Europe – and the European Union in particular – has to learn to stand on its own political feet and begin to think more ‘strategically’ at the same time. America’s drift into unilateralism offers European countries an opportunity to galvanise their ambitions to develop a credible European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) – indeed it requires them to. The handling of the Iraq crisis (‘to intervene, or not to intervene’) will be a test-case for NATO’s role in the management of transatlantic security issues. But it is now unlikely that NATO will pass the test of its continued strategic relevance. It is increasingly clear that the transatlantic strategic divide is of a structural, rather than a transitory nature. The conclusion must be that Europeans and Americans alike would do better to accept this unfortunate reality, and make the most out of it – by managing continuing transatlantic differences adroitly. This would be preferable to merely complaining about each other, or pretending that institutional tinkering can revitalise the Atlantic alliance of old.

2 NATO is done with and Kagan is right

Of all the fundamental causes of NATO’s demise – such as Europe’s apathetic defence-spending and the fast pace of America’s ‘revolution in military affairs’ – the divergence of US and European strategic cultures is the most important. Robert Kagan’s conclusion that “Americans and Europeans no longer share a common ‘strategic culture’”, with the result that “they agree on little and understand one another less and less”, is absolutely right.¹ Kagan argues that this state of affairs has been long in development and is likely to endure. He is right. The obvious conclusion must be that NATO, as the institutional expression of the transatlantic security relationship, will suffer and eventually wither away.

The inevitability of NATO’s demise is important, because the emerging unipolar world order will raise a number of difficult questions for America’s European partners. European allies may well look back nostalgically on the days when they could complain about US ‘heavy-handedness’ or ‘arrogance’ in the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO’s key decision-making body. This was the case, for instance, during the Bosnia and Kosovo campaigns. In the years ahead, however, Washington is unlikely to discuss security matters in NATO in a serious manner. Instead, it will formulate its strategy and then call key European capitals for both rhetorical and political support in an ad-hoc way. What would be the point of consulting with militarily weak allies who do not share American threat perceptions and mostly disapprove of the type of military solutions that the US often favours? Europe’s key predicament in the years ahead will be how it can maintain at least a semblance of influence over Washington’s deliberations on security issues. A functioning and robust NATO is indispensable

¹ Robert Kagan, ‘Power and weakness’, *Policy Review*, June-July 2002.

for that aim. But given the dismal state of the transatlantic security relationship, a robust NATO is very unlikely to endure.

Put differently, the main question for Europe is how to deal with an America that does not want to listen to its former allies, essentially because it feels it does not have to. The self-image of US primacy is crucial. As Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, two US academics, have pointed out, today, “the United States has no rival in any critical dimension of power. There has never been a system of sovereign states that contained one state with this degree of dominance.”² It is easy to understand that most Americans are comfortable with this state of affairs. But for non-Americans, this is gradually becoming a world where the US acts as legislator, policeman, judge and executioner. America sets the rules by its own behaviour, judges others without sticking to these rules itself (by opposing the International Criminal Court, the ICC), and is willing and able to confront the world’s nasties, if necessary alone. For many American strategists, the Next Big Idea may well be that of building a benign ‘empire’. Robert Kaplan, an influential US analyst, has argued that the US should explicitly aim at building a global empire since that concept is “in many ways the most benign form of order.”³ The Bush administration’s National Security Strategy, published in September 2002, clearly illustrates this new attitude by declaring that American forces “will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in the hope of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States.”

However, this emerging *Pax Americana* is a fragile global order, since it carries all its eggs in one basket. For Europe, and the rest of the world, it is an uneasy gamble to bet that US policies and strategies will always be wise and generous. Therefore, Europe must make itself heard. It should not engage in some old-fashioned and useless attempt at *Realpolitik* by seeking to ‘balance’ America. Rather, it should aim at restraining the development of a world dominated exclusively by the US. For historical and geopolitical reasons, Europeans emphasise the role and value of international

law and institutions to tackle global problems, and they prefer a broader definition of security than most Americans. This is reflected in different approaches to the United Nations, the Kyoto Protocol, the ICC and the security aspects of foreign aid and assistance. These differences have led to significantly different strategic visions, and these in turn have affected NATO, weakening its cohesion and relevance.

Therefore, Europe – and the EU especially – should start thinking for itself and not always follow America’s lead, especially where following means disregarding Europe’s own strategic interests. Of course, European solutions to global problems are neither easy to come by, nor by definition superior to American solutions. However, if Washington continues to pay little attention to Europe’s political and security considerations, Europe will have to grow up and leave its strategic adolescence behind it.

² Stephen G Brooks & William C Wohlforth, ‘American primacy in perspective,’ *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2002.

³ *The New York Times*, March 31st 2002.

3 NATO: in search of reasons to exist

The September 11th terrorist attacks inspired NATO-enthusiasts to argue that the new security environment required NATO to take on many 'new missions'. They stressed that NATO could only maintain its role as the key institutional platform for transatlantic co-operation if it played a central role in the fight against terrorism. NATO secretary general Lord Robertson boldly stated that "the world's largest and most effective permanent coalition [NATO], will be central to the collective response of the international community to terrorism, both now and in the long-term." He referred to NATO's unique capabilities ("the interoperability, joint training, compatible communications and logistics that flow from NATO's military structure"), and suggested that "for the moment, NATO is the best – indeed the only – game in town." The EU's ESDP is still only in its early stages, Lord Robertson claimed, whereas the UN and the OSCE lack the "unique composition, strength, cohesion and speed of delivery of NATO."⁴ Others may be more sceptical about NATO's potential as a terrorist-fighting organisation, but Robertson and others are clearly keen to demonstrate NATO's continued strategic relevance.

Certainly, NATO played a useful role after September 11th, but not a pivotal one. On top of activating Article 5, the mutual defence clause of the Washington treaty, European allies offered the US unrestricted over-fly rights and sent AWACs radarplanes to help guard American airspace. In addition to concrete military support, NATO has had another value that is often overlooked, since it is not so obvious and visible. But behind the scenes, the long years of intensive and effective military co-operation – among NATO member-states and with central European and central Asian

⁴ Lord Robertson, 'Attack on us all: NATO's response to terrorism,' speech to the Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington DC, October 10th 2001.

countries – have greatly facilitated coalition-building after September 11th. It was relatively easy for European countries to participate in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – which has been trying to uphold law and order in and around Kabul since January 2002 – because they could fall back on their shared NATO background and experience. NATO also has its own Centre for Weapons of Mass Destruction which promotes co-operation on the protection of civilians and soldiers against nuclear, chemical and biological weapon attacks. All these different aspects of NATO's contribution to the fight against international terrorism should be appreciated and not played down.

But still, much more was, and is, expected from the Alliance. Many Atlanticists had hoped that Lord Robertson's rhetoric would become reality, and that NATO would indeed turn itself into the central plank of western efforts to tackle this new challenge of catastrophic terrorism. But clearly this has not happened. Senior European politicians doubt that NATO can retain its position as the West's most important security institution. Sweden's former prime minister Carl Bildt for example has asked: "Will the Americans ever fight a war through NATO again? It is doubtful. The United States reserves the right to wage war itself, and dumps on others the messy, expensive business of nation-building and peace-keeping."⁵

Americans, meanwhile, have their own worries. Senator Richard Lugar, a staunch Republican Atlanticist, has warned of the consequences of a further marginalisation of NATO. He argues that "if NATO does not help tackle the most pressing security threat to our countries today – a threat I believe is existential because it involves the threat of weapons of mass destruction – it will cease to be the premier alliance it has been and will become increasingly marginal."⁶

Undeterred, Lord Robertson has led the camp that argues for NATO's continued relevance for meeting new security threats. He has stated that terrorism will be the key security challenge for his

organisation in the 21st century. He also argues that since terrorism is global in nature, NATO's response must be global as well. Lord Robertson's conclusion is cogent and straightforward: "NATO and its members must expand its responsibility as an essential platform for defence co-operation to become the primary means for developing the role of armed forces in helping to defeat the terrorist threat." He further identified four areas where NATO could play such a role: in the timely identification and detection of terrorist threats; the protection of civilian and military infrastructure and populations; in the management of the consequences of possible terrorist attacks; and by preparing for pre-emptive military action. This last element is essential, Lord Robertson stressed, since "those who set out to die in support of their ill-conceived causes are unlikely to be deterred through traditional means. Military strikes against terrorists and their networks are often the only effective option to prevent further damage."⁷

This is an ambitious programme, unlikely to be adopted and implemented in the foreseeable future. The idea that NATO could go so dramatically 'out of area', and pre-emptively attack possible threats on a global scale, is a chimera. First, the US would want European support but it is probably unwilling to limit its room for manoeuvre by co-ordinating its own military policy within the NAC. Second, most NATO members are unlikely to accept the desirability and legitimacy of such actions. American ideas to establish a mainly European Rapid Response Force to assist the US in fighting global terrorism, made at the summit of NATO defence ministers in Warsaw late September 2002, have yet to receive a warm endorsement from all the European members of NATO.

Since Lord Robertson's other focus points for the alliance are political in nature, it follows that NATO's direct military role in the fight against international terrorism is likely to remain minimal. But from a political perspective things look brighter. NATO is using the anti-terrorism campaign to strengthen ties with partners in the former Soviet Union, and with Russia in particular. Although

⁵ *The Observer*, February 10th 2002.

⁶ Senator Richard G Lugar, 'NATO must join the war on terrorism', speech to the US-NATO Missions Annual Conference, Brussels, January 18th 2002.

⁷ Lord Robertson, 'NATO-Russia co-operation in combating terrorism: A good idea whose time has come,' speech to the NATO Defence College, Rome, February 4th 2002.

Moscow has its own, very specific interests in (and definition of) combating terrorism – see Russia’s policy towards Chechnya – NATO is now shedding its Cold War clothes on the way towards becoming a system based on co-operative security. This is a courageous decision, although not one without its own risks.

At the NATO summit in Reykjavik in May 2002, the hatchet of the Cold War was finally buried. (Cynics would say: again). NATO and Russia reached an agreement to combat terrorism and other common security threats together. The NATO-Russia Council – which started its work at the Rome meeting of May 28th 2002 – has begun to set joint policy on specific issues including counter-terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, missile defence, peacekeeping and the management of regional crises. This means that on many occasions, NATO will meet ‘at 20’, that is with a representative from Russia around the NAC table. At Reykjavik, NATO leaders, in their final communiqué, declared that in the new council, “NATO member-states and Russia will work as equal partners in areas of common interest, while preserving NATO's prerogative to act independently.” This implies that NATO would maintain absolute autonomy in its ‘core business’ of collective defence, but that on most so-called Article 4 issues – dealing with political consultation – Russia’s interests and points of view will be taken into account.

The decision to give Russia more influence in the NAC, together with the impending enlargement with up to seven countries at the Prague summit, will speed up NATO’s transformation from a classic, transatlantic collective defence organisation, into a fuzzy co-operative security structure. The events of September 11th have thus been a catalyst towards the ‘OSCEfication’ of NATO. NATO’s decision to invoke Article 5, and the subsequent US decision not to make full use of it, have destroyed NATO’s mythical status. It is clear that Article 5 now stands for a glorified declaration of solidarity, but without the automatic, ironclad guarantees of the past. In this way, September 11th has reinforced NATO’s pre-existing political role while diminishing its military function. The

upside is that this will make NATO enlargement less complicated and politically controversial. With Russia involved in the alliance’s dealings, Moscow will have fewer qualms about NATO ‘encroaching’ upon its former sphere of interest. A more political NATO may therefore play a very constructive role in changing Europe’s strategic landscape. But it will lack the dominant military component of its past. Moreover, this still leaves the problem that although the emerging NATO may not be exactly redundant, it no longer serves as the key institutional platform for the US and Europe to tackle practical security problems together.

Apart from its evolving relations with Russia, there are other developments undermining NATO’s future as the dominant transatlantic security hinge. NATO enlargement will further strengthen the geographical emphasis of NATO towards the east, because after Prague both the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council will consist mainly of Balkan and post-Soviet states. Given the key challenges of these regions, NATO’s principal task will be to offer a forum for consultations with ex-foes. Will this be sufficient to keep NATO relevant? For Albanians and Russians, it surely will. But for most West Europeans, this NATO will slowly slide into insignificance because it does not offer them the ‘real thing’: an effective security partnership with the US which assures them a voice in Washington’s policymaking process. This is becoming especially clear in the turbulent transatlantic debate over Iraq.

4 Iraq and the 'real thing'

The handling of Iraq is becoming a trial of America's world-wide responsibility as the security guarantor of last resort. Especially for Washington's neo-conservative foreign policy elite, it is a test of America's resolve. William Kristol and Robert Kagan have argued that in its Iraqi-policy the "[Bush] presidency is on the line. As is the credibility of the United States and the whole security structure – or lack thereof – of the post-September 11th world."⁸

This means that President Bush is now under considerable pressure from the right-wing of the political establishment to go ahead with a military invasion. He himself has upped the ante continuously, which makes the elimination of Saddam Hussein almost a prerequisite for gaining a second term in office in 2004. But what most Europeans consider to be the problems and drawbacks of a military intervention in Iraq – the present lack of a clear legal basis in international law, the danger that Iraq will be used to validate the doctrine of 'pre-emptive strike', and the chance of exacerbating further violence in the region – many Americans refuse to consider as serious obstacles to decisive military action. NATO does not come into the picture since it has nothing to offer that could be of use for the US in its attack on Iraq (apart, perhaps, from symbolic allied support). The strategically sensitive and crucial use of Turkish airspace and the NATO base in Incirlik will be settled bilaterally with Ankara.

Since an American attack on Iraq is unlikely to happen before December 2002 (mainly due to logistical reasons), heated discussions amongst allies will continue over the coming months. With the notable exception of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, many European leaders fear that they will be drawn into a big

⁸ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, 'Going wobbly?', *The Weekly Standard*, June 3rd 2002.

and awful adventure that is beyond their control. Europ's arguments – on the merits of deterrence and containment for example – seem to be unable to convince President Bush that Saddam Hussein can be dealt with without having to go to war. Part of the problem is that Washington hawks often dismiss European views and criticisms out of hand, portraying them as unfortunate whining from European weaklings. In its mild form this reflects the US opinion – most compellingly formulated by Kagan in his *Policy Review* piece – that Europeans favour non-military solutions and are willing to embark upon endless negotiations simply because they are militarily weak, and not because they think these policies more effective. “When the European great powers were strong”, Kagan argues, “they believed in strength and martial glory. Now, they see the world through the eyes of weaker powers.”

This attitude may explain why the US has time and again called upon its European NATO allies to increase their defence spending. NATO's Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) was not only, or even mainly, aimed at assuring the continued interoperability of allied weapons systems. Rather, the principal point was to encourage Europe's willingness to consider military options. But these days American calls for a European ‘revolution in military affairs’ are few and far between. As one American commentator argued, “[if] Europeans want to rearm and join the posse, fine. But we should not be pressuring them. America neither resents nor inhibits European strength (...) Why should we be greater advocates of European power than the Europeans themselves?”⁹ On this side of the Atlantic, Lord Robertson continues to hammer home the point that the “huge additional investment [the US] is making in defence will make practical inter-operability with allies, in NATO or in coalitions, impossible. The gap between American forces on the one hand and European and Canadian forces on the other will be unbridgeable. For Washington, the choice could become: act alone or not at all. And that is no choice at all.”¹⁰

⁹ Charles Krauthammer, ‘Re-Imaging NATO,’ *The Washington Post*, May 24th 2002.

¹⁰ Lord Robertson, ‘NATO: Enlarging and redefining itself,’ Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, February 18th 2002.

This is a simple and sad fact which too few Europeans have realised. The Americans are not prepared to alter their military doctrine for the sake of token allied support during the Iraq attack. The Pentagon is reluctant to put its soldiers at greater risk just to satisfy the ‘liberal internationalists’ at home and abroad. It is an expression of the new doctrine formulated by Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, namely that “the mission must determine the coalition, the coalition must not determine the mission (...) It follows that there will be different coalitions for different missions.”¹¹ This approach is certainly militarily logical but it also implies that NATO is not the privileged and natural institutional platform for the co-ordination of western military efforts in the so-called war on terror. It also means that the European allies will often play only a minor, even marginal role.

Another reason why European views carry little weight is that they are often construed as another sign of anti-Americanism and a lack of loyalty to the US in times of crisis. This may be surprising, especially since the American public and senior members of the US Congress seem to be urging some caution before any military action is taken against Iraq. But the neo-conservative elite often considers the European penchant for multilateralism as a ploy to frustrate American foreign policy objectives. As Jeffrey Gedmin has argued: “[Multilateralism] is the codeword for leveraging up the medium-sized EU and chaining down the mighty Americans.”¹²

Since it is little use to continue the mutual accusations and whinging, the key question is whether a reasonable way out can be found, one that makes American and European policy-makers realise the obvious. This is that acting unilaterally will only cause friction and hinder both; acting together, there is little that Europe and America cannot achieve or solve.

¹¹ Paul Wolfowitz, lecture at the 38th Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 2nd 2002.

¹² Jeffrey Gedmin, ‘The alliance is doomed,’ *The Washington Post*, May 20th 2002.

5 Standard solutions are no longer good enough

Critical but constructive analysts of the transatlantic troubles tend to come up with two kinds of solutions. First, the US must use its unprecedented power wisely and with restraint. Josef Joffe, a German analyst, has suggested that “as long as the United States continues to provide international public goods while resisting the lure of unilateralism, envy and resentment will not escalate into fear and loathing.” His advice to Washington is: “Pursue your interests by serving the interests of others. Transform dependents into stakeholders. Turn America the Ubiquitous into America the Indispensable.”¹³

Second, Europe must make itself more relevant to the US and be both capable and willing to take on the serious military challenge of fighting international terrorism and dealing with other security threats. This means Europe needs to invest more in defence and be more willing to use force when addressing global problems. It also means thinking globally. As Richard Haass, Director of the US Policy Planning Staff, has argued, “America and Europe must reorient their focus and energies beyond the borders of Europe.”¹⁴

Surely, both pieces of advice are sound. Delaying their implementation is unattractive. Kagan has rightly remarked that because of growing impatience with Europe, “the time is nigh (if not already there) that Washington will no more heed the pronouncements of the EU than they do the pronouncements of ASEAN or the Andean Pact.”

¹³ Josef Joffe, ‘Who’s afraid of Mr Big?’, *The National Interest*, Summer 2001.

¹⁴ Ambassador Richard Haass, ‘Charting a new course in the transatlantic relationship,’ speech to the Centre for European Reform, London, June 10th 2002.

Meanwhile, political leaders in Western Europe are faced with a public opinion that opposes an American assault on Iraq in the absence of a clear UN Security Council mandate. Even Tony Blair faces tough domestic opposition to Britain's likely political and military support for the US. As a former British Chief of Defence Staff Field Marshall, Lord Bramall, put it: "You don't have license to attack someone else's country just because you do not like the leadership."¹⁵ German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has made it clear that, unlike in the Gulf War in 1991, his country is not prepared to support any kind of invasion, financially or militarily. For now, France is steering a middle course. French public opinion is apprehensive, but as a permanent member of the UN Security Council the government is keeping its options open.

The American handling of Iraq will show whether Washington still takes European allies seriously, and whether Europeans, in turn, deserve to be taken seriously. But with war in Iraq seemingly close, time may be running out for a genuine US-European meeting of minds. The role of the Security Council will be crucial in determining whether most Europeans will support eventual military action or not. But even if the Europeans were to condone (or even join) an American military action against Iraq, this would still not alter NATO's predicament: its irrelevance as a day-to-day, efficient transatlantic security co-ordinator is becoming painfully obvious.

Lord Robertson and others have raised expectations that NATO will re-brand itself as the West's ultimate counter-terrorism organisation, and some add that it will also play a role in or after a campaign against Iraq. But it is more likely that NATO will not really go into counter-terrorism – and for good reasons. Most counter-terrorist activities centre on intelligence, police and judicial co-operation, which are not NATO fortes. Because Europeans have doubts about US plans to conduct pre-emptive strikes against terrorists or dictators with weapons of mass destruction, NATO cannot fulfil these tasks. It is also difficult to envisage what NATO's practical role could be in any war on Iraq – apart from ensuring that the worst US-

European rows are kept indoors. NATO may play a role in co-ordinating and preparing allied forces for military action in and around Iraq. But it is unlikely to be involved in the shaping of strategy, or the taking of major decisions. Were NATO to take up the important task of organising the peacekeeping and nation-building of a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, this would involve an enormous change in NATO's geographic remit – and is for that reason not likely to happen.

In this period of turmoil, the standard solutions for 'saving military NATO' will be too unlikely, too little, too late. At the end of the day, when the Americans and their West European allies ask themselves what's in it (i.e. NATO) for them, the answer is perplexingly simple: very little.

¹⁵ *The Observer*, August 11th 2002.

6 Conclusion

After concluding that “it’s hard to see where the basis for a functioning alliance remains”, Gedmin draws the logical conclusion from an American perspective: “If the old alliance is gone, it’s time to start building something new.” In a similar mood of iconoclastic thinking, EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy recently asked himself “how far will Europeans go to defend their rule-based systems? Will we take risks, lose lives and pay more? That’s the real question, which we Europeans have carefully organised ourselves not to ask.”¹⁶ Both questions need to be faced head-on. A fundamental revisit of NATO’s rationale and focus has to begin now, before transatlantic quarrels get out of hand.

We should be courageous enough to ask ourselves whether a more competitive US-European strategic relationship might not be more realistic and, perhaps, even healthier in the long run, compared with the crumbling myth of ever-lasting and unchanging transatlantic unity. The implications of this question are potentially dramatic. Ideally, any answer should be accompanied by a decent ‘how-to’ manual, spelling out how to shift from the unpleasant and unsustainable status quo to a more manageable and balanced transatlantic security relationship. Unfortunately, such a political manual would be like most manuals: imperfect and tough to put into practice.

One element of such a how-to manual must be the recognition that no degree of institutional fiddling will be enough to safeguard a leading role for NATO during an Iraqi war. In a serious crisis like Iraq (just as happened after September 11th), it hardly matters whether the alliance is organised along functional, rather than regional lines, or whether SHAPE focuses on force projection.

¹⁶ Quoted in *The New York Times*, July 21st 2002.

Stanley Sloan's suggestions to make these kind of changes may be useful, but they will not be decisive for the long-term health and relevance of NATO as an institution.

The defining question for the US side will be whether it continues to operate with the Europeans through NATO, or whether it pursues various bilateral arrangements. The Europeans in turn must either enhance their own co-operation (most likely within the appropriate EU fora), formulate their security policies as a group and be willing and able to negotiate and co-operate with the US on that basis; or accept continued impotence and growing irrelevance. Events during the summer of 2002 cast doubt on a positive outcome on either question. The US obviously prefers to deal with London and Paris, rather than with the Brussels-based institutions. Moreover, Europeans tend to budge when faced with massive US political pressure, as was the case with the British and Italian willingness to consider offering immunity to US soldiers – even though this would, according to some, undermine the newly-established ICC.

Yet Iraq in fact presents an opportunity for the Europeans to prove the depth of their co-operation and resolve. The political and economic effect of war on Iraq will hit European interests, regardless of the official line they take. So Europe should use Iraq as a chance to demonstrate the seriousness of its security and defence co-operation. So far it has proved difficult to arrive at a united and forceful European foreign policy. The likelihood of EU member-states actually rallying around their EU flag is difficult to predict; there are too many uncertainties at the moment. Much will also depend on how long and bloody the Iraqi conflict will be, and how, and to what extent, it will impact on Israel, Saudi-Arabia and other hot-spots. Since Russia has, for the time being, also spoken out against a military option to get rid of Saddam Hussein, the Europeans, like the Americans, will also have to consider the consequences for their relations with Moscow of a military campaign.

It is important that the EU moves beyond a foreign and security policy of 'just say no' to American solutions. Europe must offer viable alternatives every time it decides to disagree with Washington. In the Iraq case, the European consensus has been that a strict UN inspection regime should be forced upon Saddam Hussein, to give assurance that no WMD programmes are under development. This has been a constructive approach, emphasising the need to obtain the UN's blessing before any military action is launched.

More broadly, it is time for European states to determine what they want to achieve with their ESDP project. Just as the coming year will be decisive for NATO's future as an effective defence organisation, the handling of Iraq will set the tone for the EU's foreign, security and defence policies. Now that the EU's Convention on the future of Europe is in full swing and set to present its suggestions for institutional reform in 2003, the notion of a more independent European foreign and defence policy must be considered seriously. Since many criticise the EU – with good reason – for its inability to think geopolitically and strategically, an EU defence white paper is required. Just another fancy document would, of course, not suffice. What is needed is a change of mindset, based on the realisation that Europe is becoming a major global actor in its own right, whether it likes it or not. This means that EU member-states have to go through a process of rethinking their collective foreign policy, security and defence priorities. Ideally, this should result in a clear and practical European military doctrine.

To some extent, these EU policies will be framed in reaction to America's unilateralist and military approach to international problems. But the EU should learn from the Americans about how to defend interests, and push for aims, more forcefully. For America today, the guiding principle is to do what is in your national interest and then see if you can convince others, either by words or by deeds. The EU should try to emulate this approach, though the concept of 'European interests' must include the defence of a number of public goods, like institutions and treaties.

This naturally includes the public good of a relevant and functioning transatlantic security relationship. A focus on the EU's 'strategic interests' may have the added benefit of kick-starting the long overdue process of 'strategic thinking'. How does the EU – as an organisation, not as a loose group of member-states – interpret its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and how does it defend its interests in this context?

Now that NATO no longer functions as it used to, Europe has relatively little to lose by pursuing an EU option. There is even a chance that, in the end, the US may decide that European political opinions are worth listening to. Since most American policy-makers today are self-proclaimed realists, assuming that power and self-interest determine the dynamics and outcome of international politics, Washington will understand that the EU – with its economic and political might – must chart its own foreign and security policies. This new European emphasis would not mean the the EU became a bulwark of anti-Americanism, at least not any more than Washington could be blamed for being anti-European.

The plea here, therefore, is for Europe to look at trends in US strategic thinking, look at what NATO is becoming, and to draw the conclusion that Europe must stand on its own feet. This approach would certainly lead to a transatlantic rift of sorts. But it would not have to be too dramatic. A positive outcome could be a belated realisation that with the end of the Cold War, and after September 11th, Europe and the US will work together, side by side if possible, to address common challenges. But there will also be times when opinions will legitimately differ, and interests and perceptions will not coalesce.

Optimists will hope that the emerging strategic divide is transitory rather than structural. This author is not one of them. But even if a transatlantic meeting of minds and strategic interests does come about in the near future, NATO's centrality as the

Euro-American security pivot is unlikely to be restored. European and American interests usually overlap, but every so often they are also at variance. It is time to acknowledge this openly and work around the most glaring and painful controversies.

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